Australians at War Film Archive

Margaret Holmes - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 30th January 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1148

Tape 1

00:41 **Thank you very much Margaret for agreeing to do this interview with us today. My first question is if you can give us an overview of your life to date so where you were born right through to say Vietnam.**

Well I was born in 1909.

01:00 Now apparently my parents were married in 1906 and my father was a doctor and he worked as an X-ray man, one of the very early X-ray people in Sydney and he was working at Sydney hospital and he and my mother were apparently trying to have a child without any success for several years.

01:30 And one man said to him, one another doctor said to him one day, 'I think maybe that X-ray is doing something to you,' and they didn't know then of course X-ray work can affect the reproductive system and so he said, 'well I'll give it up then'. And he gave it up and they moved from Macquarie Street, where they lived then to Wahroonga where his father and mother later came and lived too.

02:00 And they bought a house there and very soon afterwards I was born and so you see it may well have been if he had gone on being a radiologist I never would have been here at all. I was born in 1909 at Wahroonga and I was the eldest of five children that they had ultimately. But by the time that war,

02:30 the First World War broke out there were the only the first three of us: myself first and then another sister, Tinsey and then Peter my elder brother. Now Peter was only 6 months old,

03:00 he was born in April 1914 so when war broke out he was only a few months old. Now my father had been in what was called the Australian Army Medical Corps [AAMC], it was a kind of, I think they must have had some kind of voluntary militia or something in those days. There was no compulsory military thing at all but he for many years

03:30 really had been in the AAMC so when war broke out he volunteered. You know that all soldiers in the First World War were volunteers, there was no conscription, you know that don't you? So my father then volunteered and he was sent overseas with the 1st Australian General Hospital

04:00 in December 1914. Now they thought they were going to France actually. Do you want to me to say anything about the photos and things from that time? I've forgotten now you see what we said, the photo of my father saying goodbye to Peter for instance?

Absolutely, if you've got any memories of him saying goodbye?

04:30 Oh yes, I've got memories of him up coming home and saying goodbye with his uniform, this terrific uniform, with a little, the hat with the side up, the way the Anzacs had. Yes, I've got this photo.

Maybe just describe and then later on we can photograph it.

Well what I've got is this photo of Dad holding Peter, this little six months old baby up in his arms. I can just see him there in the garden outside our place

05:00 and then of course he went in the Kiara, the hospital ship of which I have a great many photos also of him loading up the ambulances getting loaded on and all that. And I also have a lot of letters from Dad written on that trip showing the kind of high jinx they went on with because of course that hospital ship had women, you see. They had women, the nurses,

05:30 the nursing staff were also on that ship so unlike other troop ships they had a lot of fun and games with the nurses and fancy dress dances and all that kind of thing, which just seemed so extraordinary on a troop ship, a hospital ship going to a war. Anyhow my mother decided that she should go to England

06:00 and take us three children, and our nurse girl and set up a nice little home for my father to come to because of course they thought that the hospital was going to France or to England to look after the

wounded in the French campaign. This was long before Gallipoli, you see? We didn't know anything about Winston Churchill's bright idea of getting

06:30 at Germany through the tender under belly of Europe like he wanted to through Turkey. Of course Turkey we were at war with too. Anyhow my mother there upon set out in January 1915 on a ship called the Demosthenes. That was one of the

07:00 Aberdeen, yes the Aberdeen Line and she took with her on this ship us three kids, me 5, nearly 6, my sister just 4, just 3 rather and my little brother about 8 months old plus our nurse girl, a young woman called Amy plus

07:30 Mum's sister just for the trip, just to have a little trip and off we set in this boat the Demosthenes and we went via the Cape. Now Dad's boat the Kiara had gone through the Suez Canal and was to go to England through the Suez Canal but when Mum got to Cape Town there was word from Dad there that they were being stopped in Egypt.

08:00 Of course this was in preparation for Gallipoli. Nobody knew about Gallipoli then, this was December, January 1915 you see. Well it was all very hush-hush about Gallipoli. There was poor Mum not knowing if whether she went on, she couldn't go from South Africa up to Egypt that way. And she would have to go on to England

08:30 and try and get to Dad to Egypt, so she went on in the ship. Well of course by that time when we got up further up the coast we started to hear about U-boats. They were the submarines, you know about U-boats? These submarines the Germans had that were going around and starting to attack civilian boats

09:00 or boats bringing goods from America etcetera. Well by the time we got right up past Tenerife, that's an island out in the Atlantic, U-boats were really getting very bad and when we got right up into the Channel, because we were going to Portsmouth

09:30 we started having boat drill in case we were submarined, torpedoed. Now there was my poor mother with these 3 children but she had, there were a whole lot of civilians on it, of course there was nothing but civilians on this boat, lots and lots of married couples and men going to England and people just going to England for a trip really, going home as we used to say, for a trip. And my mother,

10:00 three men offered my mother that they each one would have one of us children if the boat was struck. That one would have me, one would have my sister Tinsey and one would have my brother Peter and she wasn't to be concerned about trying to get the children onto the boat. We used to have this life boat drill. The awful siren would go off, this terrible,

10:30 I can still hear this screeching siren, very high pitch, you know terrible siren, no, not high pitched, very low pitched I think, can't remember now. Anyway very ear piercing and as soon as you heard that you had to rush to your boat. You each had a specified boat. So I can remember this horrible feeling when this thing went off and I have this photo,

11:00 what are we doing about the photo now? I've forgotten. This photo of my brother, not me, held by Mr Seers. He must have been the one who was going to take Peter in the event of a catastrophe and Peter has got his face all screwed up like this and you can just imagine this terrible shrill whistle of course. And then the last night of all when we were on the boat we had to sleep in all our clothes

11:30 in case the boat went down. I can remember this nurse girl, Amy, I had little button up boots that I used to wear, I can still remember here buttoning up these boots with a little button hook and saying, 'I don't want to go to bed with boots on,' and she was saying, 'Well you have to', doing up the buttons very angrily and getting into the bunk

12:00 with all his clothes on. That is about all I can remember about that trip but then Mum took a flat in Leinster Square, that's one of the squares in England, she took this thing and then there came all these letters back and forth from Egypt to Mum, from Dad to Mum and Dad still didn't really know whether he was going to be staying in Egypt or not.

12:30 They really didn't know, they didn't know about Gallipoli yet. And they thought they were staying there for some reason but they didn't know what. And he still talked as thought he might be going to come to England but at last it seemed pretty evident that they were going to stay in Egypt and then Mum said, 'well I think we'd better come over to Egypt and join you there'. So she went to work to try and get us

13:00 to go across Europe by train. Her sister by the way had now separated off and gone elsewhere but she still had the nurse girl and the three children and she was proposing to go across France by train from Naples and catch a boat from there to Port Said. Well she saw all sorts of people at the War Office and

13:30 did her level best to get on some train to go across. But they said to her, 'Look you can't do that, the trains could easily be commandeered by the French Army. Your train could be commandeered and you and the three children and the nurse girl could all be dumped out in the French countryside with no other means of transport and there you would be, what would you do?'

14:00 So they finally decided her that she had better take a boat, so she booked on a boat called the Warwickshire which was a Bibby Liner and it was sailing from that port up north there, Liverpool, so

she had to get us all from London to Liverpool and then she had to get us on this other boat. And off we went on this other boat through the

14:30 Strait of Gibraltar and I can't remember much about that trip really except when we got to Marseilles I remember there was some officer on the boat, an Australian soldier, I can't think of his name now, anyhow his wife was with us too,

15:00 that's right. Oatley I think their name was, anyway doesn't matter. He asked Mum if he could take me up a funicular railway in Marseilles. They had some kind of funicular railway that went up a hill or up a big building or something and you saw a wonderful view of the port and the harbour and everything, so he took me on my own, just with him

15:30 up this. I had never been on one of these, a sort of, you sat in a chair, chairlift I suppose you would call it, yes, chairlift I think or it might have been a funicular railway. Anyhow when we got to the top there was a lookout and souvenirs and everything and he brought me a little brooch. It was in the shape of a French soldier's hat

16:00 called a kepi I think, K E P I, and it was this sort of shape, the kind of shape the French soldiers wore, and this little brooch had written on it, 'sorne kepi', this cap. It was what a French girl might have had but he bought me one of these and I had it for years but I don't know what's happened to it now. And we could look down and there away down there in the bay on the Mediterranean we could see the ship, the Warwickshire

16:30 so that was a very vivid memory but I can't remember anything else about that boat. Oh I might have mentioned, I should have mentioned when we were off Fremantle, on the way over I apparently got sunstroke. I can remember being terribly sick on the boat. I had a temperature of 102 for several days apparently and

17:00 the doctor on board seemed to think that maybe I'd have to be hospitalised when they got to Fremantle. So there was poor Mum thinking what on earth was she going to do if I had to be in hospital in Fremantle and the other children, was she to go ashore with everybody and stay in Perth or what? But I managed to not to get quite get, I gradually got better so they thought I would be

17:30 all right to go on. But I just remember that terrible heat, the awful heat and I suppose I did have sunstroke and very sick indeed. Oh well now when in London Mum took, had us in a boarding house I think it was in Leinster Square, not Leister, but Leinster.

18:00 Now in one of her letters she talks about there being ninety one steps to go up and down from the children's bedroom to the dining room so that every time the children had to be taken to a meal they had to go up and down these. Don't forget my brother Peter was then only just nearly a year old. He wasn't a year old, he was only just crawling

18:30 so it must have been a pretty appalling time because it was winter too. It was we got there in February I suppose. We left in January and we must have got there in February and that's right, Peter had his first birthday in April there. And then there was all this back and forth with Mum and Dad in Egypt. Gallipoli hadn't happened yet.

19:00 This is about February you see by now. Should she come or shouldn't she come? Until finally he said, 'Well look we are going to have to stay here, there's no doubt about it, so I think maybe you had better come,' and that is when they did come.

Can I ask you how your mum maintained correspondence with your dad during that time?

Well it's quite extraordinary really, I have ever so many

19:30 of these letters that she wrote to him. I haven't got letters that he wrote back. I don't know why, she probably couldn't keep them but he kept all her letters and they keep on talking about her going to the bank. He used to send the letters to the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney which was our bank and she used to go just about every day she would go there to see if there were any letters from him.

20:00 I suppose they came on boats. They didn't have aeroplanes you see. They must have come back and forth on boats like this boat we went to Egypt on. It all just seems so primitive doesn't it compared to what you can do now? But they wrote to one another frequently, very frequently. I have letters from Mum, great long, long, long letters all about all

20:30 the relatives she'd been to see and that kind of thing. And one of my father's great uncle's was a doctor in London and she talked about going to him and having help from him, Doctor McThaden. All our family were doctors on both sides really. Now wait a minute, what am I at now? Meeting up with Dad, now you see that is a thing I

21:00 can't remember at all, actually being reunited with him. He had made friends with an English doctor who had a general practice in Cairo, had had for years, a Dr Madden which I often thought was a funny name but it would have been funnier if

21:30 he had been a mental patients doctor but Dr Madden, think of maddening, it seemed so funny. Anyhow this Dr Madden had a wife and family but the wife was back in England because the children were at

school in England so he had this flat in a building called St David's Building right in the very heart of Cairo.

22:00 And my father somehow had got to know him and my father asked him, 'Would he be willing to let the flat to my mother and the family?' And he agreed to do this and he went, I don't know what they paid him I'm sure, but my mother, they may not have had to pay very much because my mother acted as a kind of housekeeper

22:30 for him and saw to the servants. They had two Arab men who were house servants and she had to supervise them and in fact he told her to ensure that they were very clean in the kitchen and that kind of thing. And that was all very until one day she went out in the kitchen and found the cook with his mouth full of water squirting this water

23:00 onto lettuce leaves to keep them nice and fresh for the salad that he was going to serve up. You see that was his idea of hygiene was squirting this water onto the lettuce. Well you can imagine Mum's reaction to that, must have been pretty strong.

Can I ask you, just sorry to interrupt, how long did you spend in England before you then went to Egypt?

23:30 Oh yes, right, well we got there in February and Gallipoli was in April, wasn't it? Now we were there well before Gallipoli, we were in Egypt well before Gallipoli, that's March. Yes, we must have been in England

24:00 five weeks I suppose.

And with the correspondence that your mother and father were having, did they only send letters to each other?

Yes, they had no other means of communication.

Did your mother send anything else?

Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, I should mention that. One letter she mentions the things she had sent him from Harrods, the big store in London.

24:30 All the vegetables and fruit she had sent him so that he could have fresh fruit and she was hoping that they would have carried all right on the boat. See the boat would have taken a week or so to get there like our boat did. I suppose it took that long, it must have gone by sea, couldn't have gone any other way, no air.

25:00 Sending fruit and vegetables to your husband and all sorts of other things she sent him, all kinds of things he asked her for like a tobacco cutter to cut up tobacco with and she went all round London looking for this kind of tobacco cutter and sent him that back. And all sorts of little odds and ends form new socks and goodness knows what was in her letters.

I just have to ask you a question too,

25:30 **how would you describe your mum? Like what kind of woman was she?**

I think my mother must have been a most terrifically strong woman, really strong. She had had a very sad life really. Her father died when she was four. Her brother Fred was only two, he was her younger brother and she had a good many older,

26:00 several older brothers. The brother next to her, older than her, died of typhoid when he was about ten or Mum was about ten and then by the time she was about fifteen, or twelve I think, her mother had died. So by the time she was twelve she had lost her father and mother and one brother and then by that time she was about

26:30 fourteen her eldest brother, who had sort taken over from his father and was by now about twenty two and had been their kind of main stay, he was drowned. He was drowned at Harbord and they used to go surfing at Harbord, very early in the piece, long before surfing had taken on, but they did. And he ran down to the beach after lunch and dived into the water

27:00 and was drowned. We don't know whether he was taken by a shark or just drowned but he died, so she had lost all that number of family and then she and the young brother, Fred, those two were brought up then by her mother's mother, Mrs Stobow and they lived in

27:30 Millers Point, so my mother had a very, very traumatic childhood really. And I think this grandmother was a very firm and strict Scots woman with very rigid ideas about behaviour and

28:00 how you should conduct yourself and all that and I don't think she was terribly warm and loving.

So how did your mother and father eventually meet?

Oh well, yes, my mother was at Sydney Girls' High, I don't know how she used to get from Millers Point to Sydney Girls' High which in those days

28:30 was right in the city. Did you know that? Do you know where David Jones is? Well David Jones is on the site of the old Sydney Girls' High where my mother went. It moved out to Moore Park about 1917 I think and my mother took me out to see the new school. But Mum went to Sydney Girls' High

29:00 where there were a tremendous lot of extremely gifted women like Ethel Turner and Amy Ellen and Matt Lou, probably never heard of these people but there were lots and lots of the early women writers and doctors, people who went on to become doctors. Now my mother wanted, well she was to go for what was called the

29:30 Senior, I think it is called the Higher School Certificate now. It was called the Senior in those days but the year she was to go for the Senior she got a thing called sandy blight which I think is some infection in your eyes. I can't think of the proper name of it but it was

30:00 called sandy blight. Now she was told, or her grandmother was told if she didn't remain in a darkened room for many, many, many, many months and never use her eyes to read or to look at anything, she had a hope of not going blind but if she didn't do that she was pretty certain to go blind. With the result of instead of going for the leaving,

30:30 for the Senior, my mother had to spend months and months of that year in this dark room doing nothing. I don't know what she did to amuse herself and that stopped her going to University which she would have done because she was quite bright. Anyhow she was still very keen about medical matters and after a while she

31:00 became a member of a thing that was called the Sydney Medical Mission. Now I've never been able to find out quite what that was but it was a group of doctors and nurses and chemists and what do you call them? People that give out medicine?

Pharmacists.

31:30 Pharmacists, pharmacists, thank you, who worked in Macquarie Street. Do you know that Macquarie Street then used to run right through Hyde Park? It was called Macquarie Street South. It came up to where Hyde Park is but Hyde Park wasn't there then, the street went right on and it went right on out past the,

32:00 well of course Central wasn't, I think Central was there by then. You know what I mean? Well anyhow the Medical Mission was in that part of Macquarie Street and my mother used to go there and by that time she was living at Paddington with her older sister who had got married by now and Mum was living with her, not with her grandmother.

32:30 So she used to go this place called the Sydney Medical Mission and there were women doctors there and Mum used to give out medicines and weigh out pills and that kind of thing although though she was not trained as a pharmacist. I suppose it was fairly unskilled and Mum was quite intelligent enough to do it and

33:00 she used to work there as a volunteer.

Margaret, I'm sorry to interrupt you, just be careful with the microphone as it's very delicate?

Oh sorry.

Sorry, but it will pick up the sound of your hand.

Sorry, I forgot about that.

That's okay.

Thank you, yes, well then were doctors who gave their time voluntarily there, among whom was this young doctor, W.H. Reed you see.

33:30 Well there were quite a few women doctors there. Dr Julie Thomas was one name I remember but Mum knew quite a few of these early women doctors and my mother by this time had decided that she really did want to so do medicine and she would go

34:00 to Edinburgh and do medicine at Edinburgh for some reason or other, I don't know why. And the story is that she had actually booked her passage to go to Edinburgh when all of a sudden this man, Dr W.H. Reed, proposed to her and she accepted him.

34:30 So they became engaged and she cancelled her passage to Scotland and instead of that they got engaged and then in 1906 they got married. And then they lived in Macquarie Street because my father, as I said, was working at Sydney Hospital and they lived at 219 Macquarie Street

35:00 as it was then. It was in a terrace house just across the road from the hospital. I've got photos of that house where they lived and Dad had a consulting room too. He used to see patients privately as well as free work of course at the hospital, they were voluntary workers at the hospital.

35:30 Well yes, I was trying to tell you about why Mum was such a strong powerful woman. I can't tell really.

When did your mum and dad get married?

Oh they got married at Hunters Hill at the Anglican Church there, because my mother's sister, my Aunt Trixie my mother's older sister, who had come between the two brothers who

36:00 had died, Uncle Harry at the top of the line, then my mother's sister Trixie, Beatrice and then Robert and then Mum. Now Mum had left her grandmother's house and gone to live with Aunt Trixie in Glenmore Road, Paddington because my sister was by then married to a clergyman,

36:30 the Rev Edward Owen, and he was the Rector of whatever church it was in Paddington, I've forgotten the name. While my mother was there, my mother was very musical and she could play the organ and while she was there she used to play the organ in the church and I have a nice little testimonial from the musical people there.

37:00 So that's where she was living while she was coming in to work at the Medical Mission.

Now just as a?

Now, wait a sec, sorry I'll just go on with that, the Owens though, the Reverend Edward Owen was moved from Paddington to Hunters Hill to All Saints Hunters Hill and in 1900 I think it was and my mother then

37:30 was living with them there and so that's why they were married, Mum and Dad were married at All Saints Hunters Hill by my mother's brother in law.

Just as a question about your mum and dad, you have mentioned and told us some things about your dum going on this ship to England and then to Egypt with yourself and your brother and sister,

38:00 **was that an unusual thing for a woman o do that or did your parents have a very special relationship?**

Well I think it was an extremely unusual thing. I don't remember ever hearing of any other family that got transported like that. Certainly I don't think we knew any people. There may have been others that I know not of but I think that

38:30 when I read these letters from my mother to my father they are really so full of passion and love there. It has been a most extraordinary thing to read now. They really were terrifically in love with one another, there is no doubt about it.

39:00 And of course they were both pretty strong personalities I suppose in different ways but they had the same, I think they had the same kind of religious feelings. They were both very, yes, they were really religiously minded

39:30 they believed very much in God and that God would look after them and all this time of thing, very Anglican manner. I could tell you a great deal about their troubles, about the clergy at Wahroonga, but I'd better not get into that.

Well we're right at the end of this tape so we might swap over and get a bit more detail. How are you feeling Margaret?

Oh I feel alright.

Tape 2

00:43 **So was it a sort of risky thing for your mum taking three kids on a ship when a war was being?**

Was it a what thing?

Was it a risky thing?

Risky? Well don't forget that there weren't the,

01:00 the U-boat campaign or whatever they call it hadn't started then. There hadn't been any torpedoing going on of civilian vessels when she set out, don't forget. That only started while we were actually on the ship. Do you know when the Lusitania was sunk?

01:30 I don't either but it was one of the first civilian boats that was torpedoed, which was probably about that time. I am sure she wouldn't, at least I'm pretty sure she would not have undertaken that or Dad wouldn't have let her undertake that if this U-boat campaign had already been in full swing.

02:00 It would have been altogether too dangerous so I don't think there was any fear of that kind of thing and of course they had no aeroplanes, nobody was going to come along in a plane and drop a bomb on

your boat. There was none of the kind of high tech stuff they have nowadays.

What contact did you have with the war when you arrived in Egypt?

02:30 Oh well, you see my father was connected with the, what was it called? Oh the General Hospital that was set up there. Now he had first of all been in charge of setting up a tent hospital

03:00 at a place called Mena out near the Pyramids, but by the time, he was actually in charge of setting that up and I've got a lot of photos of that but by the time we got there he had come back into Cairo itself and was attached to what was called Gazira. There was an enormous big hotel there

03:30 called the Gazira Palace Hotel and that had been taken over or given over or I don't know how they got hold of it, to be a hospital. Now that was to receive the wounded from the Gallipoli campaign and so

04:00 I have photos of the Gallipoli, the first troops off loaded there and taken into that hospital. Now that Gazira Palace Hotel, where they had the hospital it also had a beautiful park attached to it, in which we children could go and play so I've got several

04:30 photos of us playing in the grounds of the Gazira Palace. And what I can remember of about actually seeing people there I can remember, see my mother used to go frequently to visit wounded and taking them little comforts and things and I do remember

05:00 several times Mum taking me along too. Now of course, mind you, I'm sure I would have only seen pretty well men. They wouldn't have been taking a little girl in to see really badly wounded men or men that were very ill or suffering a great deal, I am sure because I can

05:30 only remember these jokey kind of Australian fellows who used to give me their cigarette cards. Have you ever heard of cigarette cards? Oh dear, how ancient I am. It's terrible, I'm sorry. You see cigarettes came in little packages and

06:00 every packet had a cigarette card and it was a great thing among kids to collect cigarette cards, the way they used to collect match box tops, you've never done that either? Well that was another thing kids used to collect but I used to collect cigarette cards and these soldiers would save their cigarette cards out of their packet of cigarettes they'd been given and keep the cigarette card and then when I

06:30 came along they would give them to me and I had a most wonderful collection of cigarette cards. I had a book, like a photo album kind of book full of these cigarette cards. Every packet they would have a series, a kind of series like it would be the Generals of the war and then there'd be photos of different Generals and that would be that collection and then there would be another lot that would be say flags of

07:00 the allies or something, so that is the only real contact I had with wounded people really. But I had quite a lot of contact with Dad's officer friends. Actually my father had several relatives of his who were also,

07:30 our family I think I mentioned was so full of doctors. In Egypt he had his uncle Dr George Reed his father's brother, his younger brother, he was a major there, or captain, major and then he also had his my father's father was a doctor and his sister had married a Dr George Beaston, Joe Beaston,

08:00 from Newcastle. Now he too was in Egypt. He wrote me a most marvellous letter. I used to be called the best child. Now it is terrible for a child to be called the best child, you know that's really shocking, a dreadful thing of my parents to have done but they used to keep referring to me as the best child. It is no wonder my sister was jealous of me

08:30 but Uncle Joe used to call me BC which stood for best child and I've got a wonderful letter that he wrote to me when I got to Egypt that about how glad I must be to be returning to my birth place, BC birth place, and talking about me being able to look in the museum and see my contemporaries, the mummies, BC you know. And talking about

09:00 Joseph and he hoped I had been able to save Joseph from having his coat stolen and all that kind thing. That was Uncle Joe. He was actually on Lemnos, in a field ambulance that treated the wounded men when they first came off from Gallipoli some of them were taken to Lemnos. Do you know Lemnos? A little island in the Aegean

09:30 there where the Australians had set up a field ambulance. Uncle Joe was in that. Now I've got off track. Oh yes, my father's friends, that's right, well as well as that of course there were lots of other doctors in the army that he was friendly with. Now these doctors had rented a boat on the Nile.

10:00 It was called a darhabeer and it was moored beside the Nile and I can remember going down onto that boat and we would have lunch there if they had some time off, or they would go just go down there and relax and get away from the heat. There was a nice breeze coming off the Nile and it was like a little yacht really I suppose and on shore they had

10:30 a steep bank that you had to walk down to get onto this boat, and on the bank there was a thing called a shadoof. Now that was one of these water-lifting devices and you could see this Arab gardener they paid to look after the bank where

11:00 their boat was moored and have a garden growing there. And this shadoof let something down in the water and then the man pulls on it and it comes up and pours the water out, you know the kind of thing I mean, like this? Very primitive, they had them there for thousands and thousand of years, just the same sort of thing so I can remember

11:30 watching this chappie watering the garden there and then having fun on the boat. You can imagine these off duty medical officers all having a good time playing with these little kids and so on. It was quite good and then there were lots of other times that we went to things. I have a photo of our trip to the barrage.

12:00 Now the barrage was further down the Nile. I can't quite understand what it was it was, it was some sort of dam across the Nile but I don't really know what it did but it must have had something to do with the Nile flooding or something. It was called the barrage and you could go down there and have picnics and things like that and I've got a photo

12:30 of myself on a donkey for instance. I must have been having a donkey ride there and then another photo of myself with one of Dad's medical officer friend. We've exchanged hats for instance and he is wearing my little sun hat and I am wearing his pith helmet, that kind of thing so we obviously had quite a lot of fun with these

13:00 people and there is Mum watching a cricket match. You know it just sort of seems so incredible that there was all this terrible carnage going on but the civilian life is somehow there.

Did you ever visit Lemnos?

Oh no, oh no, nobody would have been allowed to visit Lemnos I'm sure.

Just one moment.(TAPE STOPS)

13:30 Yes well, Uncle Fred he was very, very fond of my father. He really thought of him as a brother but he had no brothers. See the other two had died and Dad was very fond of Uncle Fred too and one day he tried to take him to lunch in Cairo

14:00 on the wharf and wanted to take him into a swanky hotel there and was refused because Uncle Fred was a non commissioned officer. He was a private and my father was a major by then I think, major, yes, but he was refused. That hotel didn't accept

14:30 non commissioned people, only officers could come so my father said, 'Very well then, if you won't take my brother-in-law to lunch here, then I certainly won't lunch here,' and they turned around and went off and found some other joint. But you know it just shows the kind, that separation especially in the British Army. Could you cut that off just for a minute? ..... (TAPE STOPS).

15:00 **Actually I was going to ask you why you were called best child?**

Well I'm not quite sure. I think it may partly have been because I was the first grandchild of my father's parents. He was the eldest son and I was the first grandchild

15:30 and they had this long wait when they though he wasn't going to have any children, three years so that it must have been very exciting when they did have a child. But I think I may have been a very precocious child too, very precocious, and quite bright and

16:00 observant and I mean when I read these letters from my mother to my father about the children, all the time she is telling him about my clever little sayings or my remembrances or my way of fixing things. And my poor sister is always something about what she has done wrong or how naughty she has been or how she had pulled the other children's hair and it's just so terrible really to think of it

16:30 that one child would be so favoured over another and this best child business. Some of these letters from my father, 'the best child that was ever was' and this kind of thing, I don't know how I survived it really. I probably haven't, I mean I must have been stuck up. Best child, it wasn't only my parents that called me that,

17:00 this old Uncle and other relatives always called me best child. It's terrible to do to a child, isn't it?

You also mentioned before that people would refer to going back to England as going home?

Oh yes, we always talked about going home.

How patriotic were people to England back then?

What?

How patriotic were people about England back then?

Oh terrifically, you were part of the British Empire. You weren't

17:30 an individual Australian nation. There was no Australian nation then, you were British and even at home

there we had, this was after my father had come home of course, we had on the door of the toilet, the earth closet toilet, we had a great huge

18:00 Union Jack on a poster and it said, 'It's is your flag, fight for it, work for it'. Well you sat there and looking at this thing and we were British. Australians, you didn't seem to think of yourself as an Australian. You thought of yourself as British. I think that was pretty usual and they always used to talk

18:30 about going home and writing home, 'We must write home'. My aunt used to write home every Sunday, she wrote home to relatives in Ireland. Ireland of course was the same thing and of course the whole of Ireland was part of England then, part of the UK.

Just leaping forward a slight bit but we will come back to World War I,

19:00 **did, or had any attitudes changed about England when the Second World War was declared, can you remember?**

About England?

How patriotic were people when the Second World War was declared?

How what?

How patriotic were people to England when the Second World War was declared?

Well you see the Second World War

19:30 was an anti-Nazi war. I think people here were very anti-Nazi rather than anti-German and I think we were much more our own people by then really but I can't really recall felling,

20:00 well of course I was a pacifist by that time so I didn't like the war anyway. You don't want me to go into this matter of the different attitude to Germany do you?

Yes, what was the attitude towards Germany during the First World War?

Yes, well right-o, now the attitude to Germany during the First World War was of extreme hatred and detestation

20:30 of the Hun. They were the Huns and you just couldn't bear them, they were awful people. They used to throw Belgium children up in the air and catch them on their bayonets and all the horrors they did and the whole attitude of the whole populous as far as I was concerned was of utter loathing for a small matter. When I went

21:00 to school at the end of 1915 when I was just getting on for seven, I had already learnt how to knit but I had been taught how to knit in the continental way. Do you know the continental way? Well you do it with this sort of movement whereas our way of knitting is like this, where you move your right hand. The other way you move your left hand, it's a much better way of knitting really. Well when I went to school

21:30 I started doing some knitting like this and the other girls all said to me, 'Oh, don't knit that way, that is the German way to knit', it was the continental way really, well it was German way too. 'You can't knit that way, you've got to knit this way, this is the Belgium way', a tiny little episode like that. People killed their dachshunds because

22:00 they were German dogs and people changed their names, all sorts of country, Holbrook for instance, do you know Holbrook down near south of New South Wales, Holbrook, near Albury? Well what, it sits there and it's quite a big town now. Well it used to be called Germantown because there were a lot of German settlers there well in the First World War that got

22:30 changed that got changed to Holbrook and all over the place names were changed and people's names were changed. People called, yes we had a teacher at school whose name was Mrs Greenwood. Now it was rumoured about that she had her name changed

23:00 from Neiderbraun, which is the German for Greenwood and she wasn't really Mrs Greenwood at all. Dozens of children, or I shouldn't say dozens, quite a few children at school had their names changed. Some friends of my mother whose name was Neitenstein

23:30 it was suggested to them that they should change their name and this man Neitenstein he said, 'no, I am not going to change my name, that is the name my father and grandfather and I am not going to change it. I am not a German now, I have been in Australia and I was born here and I have lived here all my life and I am going to go on being called Neitenstein' and he did.

24:00 But I think probably most people, for instance the Selbys, oh you wouldn't have heard of the Selbys. They were a big pharmaceutical company here called Selby, now their name had been Silverberg and during the First World War they changed that name to Selby. I could go on thinking of others but I don't and up the North Shore line we were

24:30 told of someone, we didn't know him, a man who had actually taken an axe and cut up his Beckstein

piano because it was German. Well I mean it is sort of now, it just thinks unthinkable of people behaving in that manner but do you want me to tell you about why I think it happened differently in the Second World War?

25:00 I think the main reason was because of the Nazi persecution of Jews that happened during the 1930's, all the terrible way they treated the Jews. Now a great many Jews refugees had come out here, ever so many came. I was living, by 1934

25:30 I had come to live in Mosman with my husband. We were married in 1933 and we were living in Mosman and Mosman happened to be a place where a great many of these Jewish refugees came and settled actually. Now you see well they weren't only Jewish, I shouldn't say Jewish refugees, they were refugees from Hitler. Some of them were non-Jewish Germans who couldn't stand Hitler

26:00 and his Nazism and they had left the country, but there were simply just innumerable people here. You will have heard of Sir Gus Nossal? Haven't you? He was 'Australian of the Year' a few years ago. N O S S A L, now he came to Mosman

26:30 as a twelve year old boy escaping with his parents form German. They settled in Mosman he went on and became as I say a very well known scientist. It's a wonder you don't remember that name, a very prominent person but they didn't change their name and none of these other people that came here changed their name.

27:00 We knew dozens of them and people therefore knew you see that there weren't only awful Germans but there were lots of good Germans too and I am sure that made all the difference in the world because we did not have that kind of hate feeling. Mind you we had it towards the Japs. I think there was a lot of hate campaign going on in the Second World War about the

27:30 Japs being derided as being slanty-eyed, as being monstrous sort of people but not towards the Germans but that is my theory about the region. I am very thankful that we didn't have that.

That's really interesting. Just on a slight diversion, you mentioned school earlier and the knitting, and the differences between the knitting,

28:00 **what other things, what other subjects did you do at school?**

Oh surely you know the kind of things you do at school? English, history, French, Latin, later on French and Latin and botany was the only science we did. I went to Abbotsleigh, that's at Wahroonga. Botany was the only science we had. We had maths one and

28:30 maths two. French was the only foreign language you could take, couldn't take German. I said Latin, didn't I?

What kind of school was Abbotsleigh like in those days?

Oh well of course it was very different from what it is now, I assure you, it was very different. It was much simpler

29:00 and of course much smaller. The junior school where I started was a little cottage, demolished now of course. It was a little cottage which became the place where sick boarders would be put if there was an epidemic

29:30 of any kind. The junior school got cleared out and it was made into a little hospital for the sick boarders. We had chicken pox epidemic or a flu epidemic or something then we would all have to go elsewhere into other rooms and the borders would be put down there and it had a little kitchen and it had a little bathroom and a little

30:00 locker room and so on. It was quite a self contained little building that was the junior school, well that's where I started in 1915 at the end of the year I was in elementary class and then I was there for the whole of the next year in the same class because I had missed the first, it was four terms then. In the flu epidemic

30:30 it came after the war. After that the schools were all shut during that and after it stopped the schools went to having three terms instead of four, did you know that? But now they have gone back I believe to having four again. So the first part of my school life there were four terms and then there were three terms.

31:00 I was there for eleven years altogether. Now you were asking me what it was like, well of course it was so small. They had boarders, they had a couple of boarding houses. One was across the Pacific Highway from the main building. It was called Walumbin and then next door to it was another one, between

31:30 Abbotsleigh and the tank, you know that great big tank on the hill there? You haven't been to Wahroonga, up the Pacific Highway? No, well never mind, there's a great water tank there that was there when I was at school and still there. It serves to give pressure to water. Wahroonga is the highest point on the line and this tank was built to give pressure, water pressure

32:00 to the inhabitants of Wahroonga really. It's still there. Well the whole school had prayers every morning,

the whole school. We didn't have any of that great huge amount of building there that is there now. We all just met in one building in the hall and had prayers every morning, the whole school together.

32:30 Now that will show you how small it was. And then that big hall was really in two classes, one at one end and one at the other facing opposite directions which was a bit awful and then we used to march down to the playing fields which were right away, now you don't know that area at all but if you keep on going up the Pacific Highway you come

33:00 to the part where the main road now goes off to the right up north, to go up north. I should be pointing in that direction. Well just opposite where that is now was where our playing fields were. It was quite a long walk form the school but we used to walk down there. Every Wednesday afternoon was sports day.

33:30 I think the boarders probably used to go there every afternoon after school, quite a few. We had tennis courts and a cricket pitch. We played cricket. Cricket was our game and netball and tennis but the whole school could go there on one day, the whole school. Well I mean nowadays there must be thousands of girls at that school

34:00 **How well did you go at the school academically?**

Oh I did very well. I really got a lot of prizes and came top quite a lot and I was very ambitious and wanted to come top and wanted to do well. Maths was my downfall. I couldn't do maths, have never been able to and can't still but I was quite good at

34:30 English and history and Latin and French, I wasn't too bad at them. I was very, very ambitious and wanting to be top and used to have rivals in every class. I think I had a rival, will you be top or will I be top, that sort of thing and of course my father was always so terribly proud of me and

35:00 when Abbotsleigh stopped being a private school it was Miss Murray's private school. In those days quite a few women had schools that they owned. Miss Bailey at Ascombe that was her school. She founded it and she owned it. Miss West down at Frencham, that was her school, and they put their money into those schools.

35:30 They built them, they did all the business side of the school. Miss Fidler at Ravenswood, that was her school. They were their school. Abbotsleigh was Miss Murray's school but when she gave up due to her increasing rheumatoid arthritis actually. She gave up the school,

36:00 it must have been at the end of 1923 when I was in my third last year, yes that's right. She sold it to the Church of England, Anglican I should say now but it was called the Church of England then. Now the Church of England then and still owns

36:30 the school and my father was one of the people on the School Council from the beginning really. Well what I was going to say was he had this horrible naughty habit when he

37:00 was on the Council and at the break up at the end of the year, the Council were all sitting on the platform while the prize giving went on and any time my name came up to come up and get up a prize, Dad would shout out, 'Well done Margaret Reed'. You can just imagine my embarrassment

37:30 and horror at this and I knew it was going to happen too. I was always waiting there sitting for this terrible shout to come out. Yes, I got quite a few prizes. I had a great rival though, I had a great rival who was very really much cleverer than me called Thurls Thomas. It used to be so exciting when the exam results would come out you would be rushing to see if you come top or if Thurls had come top.

38:00 Oh it was terribly, it was terribly keen to have to succeed all the time.

You mentioned you were ambitious as well, what did you want to do when you finished school?

Oh yes, well right, I wanted to go to the uni of course, the university, that was the ambition and I did. I got an exhibition.

38:30 I don't think you have them now but in those days there were things called exhibitions which gave you, there was only the one university then, Sydney Uni and it gave I think it was two hundred exhibitions every year to the top two hundred pupils who sat for the Leaving Certificate. And I

39:00 got an exhibition that meant that you didn't get any money for it, it wasn't a scholarship but it was just a thing that gave you free tuition at the University. Other people must have had to pay fees I suppose. I don't know how that was done then but anyway I could get my University degree without paying any money.

39:30 Well my father let me be at the Women's College. I was in residence there. I started off in residence at the Women's College and doing Arts and I did the sorts of subjects I had been doing at school, English and Latin and history and I also did economics,

40:00 because I thought I should be doing something about economics. Finished the year knowing less than I knew before I started and have never known anything about it ever since but anyway I did that first year.

Might have to stop you there because we're at the end of this tape. We'll quickly change and then we'll continue on.

Tape 3

00:43 **You were telling us about Sydney University, what was it like in those days?**

Yes, well of course it was very much smaller. All those

01:00 buildings that are now there back towards City Road, I can't think of the names of them now, when you go in off City Road you pass on the right quite a number of large, huge buildings well none of those were there. Neither were there any on the left, it was only just a little lodge house there, tiny little thing like that one down at the bottom.

01:30 Then you came to the medical school, that was the first building you came, to the old med school. Now I don't know what has happened to that, that's still there, whether it is still the old med school I don't know and then you had a little road went in and then you came to the main building and then on the far end of the other

02:00 main building you had Science Road going in. And on the other side of Science Road, a little way down, you had the Botany School and then you had the Union steps going down to the Parramatta Road and on the other side of the Union steps you had the Union Building.

02:30 Now you see when I was there women weren't allowed to go into the Union building at all. There was a Union refectory further down Science Road you could go in there if you were taken by a man but you couldn't go in there by yourself. And then you came to the Zoology School and then you came into the entrance to Parramatta Road,

03:00 roadway entrance and then you came to the Vet Science school, which was quite a small building then. Now from that road there, that entrance there, a road went right across to Carillon Avenue, do you know Carillon Avenue? And along that road you came to the Teachers' College and I don't know whether it's still there or not and then after the Teachers' College you came to the Women's Hockey

03:30 Square, on your left and then you came to the new Physics building. It was called the new Physics building because it had only just been finished and it was a long building that went right along that hockey square and at the northern end or the upper end of the Women's Hockey Square there was the back of the Medical School. I hope I'm describing this. I can draw it on drawing for you but

04:00 it is hard to describe it. It was the rear of the Medical School that went right through there, what was called now the old medical school then. Then you went on this long road and it turned a bit and you came to Wesley College and that was one of the men's residential colleges and between it and the Carillon Avenue

04:30 was the Women's College and so is where the Women's College still is. Although it too has been immensely, it's about four times the size, at least four times as big as when I was there but the part I was in is still there, the main frontage.

Sorry to interrupt you, you mentioned before that you actually boarded at in residence at Sydney

05:00 **but you were living quite close to the Uni, but was it difficult to get to transport from where you lived?**

When I left school my father gave me a car. He gave me a baby Austin, the first car I ever had. I could drive when I was fourteen but it was the first time I had a car. I was eighteen by this time and I had this little baby Austin.

05:30 Now at that time the Women's College principal was the only person in the women's college who had a car, not one girl had a car until I came and I asked if I could have permission to put my little tiny car in her garage, which was under the house beside her great big

06:00 magnificent car and she let me. Well now because I had the car I used to go home every weekend. Most girls stayed in college all weekend but I didn't. I used to drive home at weekends either on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning so the whole time I was at College, four years altogether, I hardly ever spent a weekend in College.

06:30 That's the first thing, now you asked about how long it would have taken me to get from Wahroonga, I can't imagine how long it would have taken me by public transport. You see I would have had to, the Bridge wasn't built then don't forget. I would have had to take the train down to Milson's Point and then get a ferry across and then get a tram to go up to the University. No doubtless there were lots of students who were doing that but

07:00 I suppose my parents may have thought it would be too much travelling every day to do that. It would

have been terrible, really would have been awful. That may be why they let me be at the Women's College.

So what was the little Austin like, the car?

It was a tiny little wee car, quite small, almost like a kids car. It only had two seats

07:30 and you could only have two people in it, one each side. It had the kind of hood that you put down and up and it wasn't very big at all. I used to drive across to the University via De Burgh's Bridge that goes over Lane Cove and then across the Gladesville Bridge and then all down Parramatta Road to get to College. I

08:00 can't remember how long it took me but it couldn't have taken me very long. A lot of it was through a very unbuilt up areas and my father said I should have a revolver with me in the car so he gave me this revolver which I used to keep in the pocket of the car. I hadn't a clue about what to do with the darn thing. He said, 'if anybody holds you up just pick up the revolver and point it at them and they will go off,'

08:30 so that was the idea.

Did he teach you how to shoot the revolver?

What?

Did he teach you how to use the revolver?

Oh he just told me you just pull the trigger like that but it didn't have any bullets in it. I think it was just for show.

And what were the roads like?

I can't remember them being all that bad. Of course on the other, oh they may have been pretty bad. Of course when my father was driving, my father used to drive down

09:00 Lane Cove Road, you see I've left out all this. To get to George's Heights where he worked up here after the war, not after the war, during the war when he came back from Egypt he was in charge of that George's Heights Hospital but he lived at home at Wahroonga and he used to drive down the Lane Cove Road, as it was called then, every day. The Lane Cove Road was

09:30 so full of pot holes that Dad had a Dodge, a car called a Dodge, he had big iron bars put in the back seat on the floor of the back seat of the Dodge to hold it down when he hit the pot holes because other wise he would the car would jump up so much that he was afraid he would be jumped off the wheel and he wouldn't be able to

10:00 control the car. That was the main road up the North Shore, the Lane Cove Road was so bad and full of potholes. Well of course by the time I was going to College which was 1927 I started there, I expect the roads were a lot better but I don't think they would have been all that good.

You mentioned the exhibition, the two hundred spots or

10:30 **places that were awarded to people to come to University, were they for women and for men?**

Oh yes, they were just for the top two hundred students, no differentiation.

Was it unusual for women in those days to go to University?

I don't know how unusual it was really. You see at the Women's College

11:00 we had a lot of girls who had come from High Schools but we also had quite a lot of girls who had come from private schools possibly because poorer people would have had girls at high schools and wouldn't have been able to afford the college fees. I never sort of thought about it very

11:30 much. I know there were both girls there but I couldn't tell you what proportion.

So you couldn't tell me the ratio of men to women?

Oh yes, I can tell you that kind of ratio, at least in the medical profession I can because I haven't got onto where I gave up Arts and started Medicine, have I? Well when I did that, I did Arts, I

12:00 should go back and say I did Arts for two years and at the end of that time I thought, 'What on earth am I dong this for? What is the point? What am I going to do when I finish this? I don't want to be a teacher, what else can I be? There is nothing I could think of what I want to do and really what I want to do is medicine'. So I talked to my father about it and asked him and he said well it means I will be able to

12:30 to transfer my exhibition. You could have the exhibition for six years if you did medicine so I said I have had two years of the exhibition so I said I could have four years of medicine for nothing but he would have to pay for two more years as there was six years. And I said, 'There is College too'. He had to pay for that and he said I could do it so I transferred then into medicine.

13:00 So in third year instead of doing my final year of the arts course I did my first year of medicine and in that year there were a hundred students of whom seven were women. Now my granddaughter, a granddaughter of mine, did medicine at Newcastle Uni some years ago now

13:30 and there were more women than men in her medical year, so that will show you the difference. Very few women were doing medicine. In the other faculties there was a women with my daughter at college a generation later, and not this daughter, but another daughter, and that woman did engineering and

14:00 she was the first woman student to do engineering. In my year there were was nobody doing vet science, no women doing vet science and engineering, no women did that until that one woman later so

14:30 it was really very much, there were many more men around than women. In Arts I think it was probably pretty fairly evenly numbered I think the classes I went to. The lectures I went to in Arts were pretty evenly divided.

So what kinds of people did you meet when you were at Sydney Uni?

15:00 Oh well you see I had really lived a very cloistered kind of life till then. I really hadn't had any kind of social life really. I wasn't. I had been a Girl Guide and I had done that away from school and I liked being a Girl Guide

15:30 but I hadn't mixed socially with people very much at all, neither boys or girls. I just knew my school friends and the guides and so on but you see when you went to Uni you were all of a sudden thrown into this very, very heterogeneous group of people. I mean I had never known any girls who went to high school for instance

16:00 at all. I had hardly known any girls who went to any other school than Ashleigh and yet here I was in the middle of this, especially at College, meeting so many different people from so many different backgrounds it was quite wonderful and mind blowing really. I wasn't very happy with regard to the

16:30 other sex. I really was terrified of boys. I didn't know what to do with them and how to handle them. See I had two young brothers but they were just little boys that I bossed around. They weren't peers as it were. I was really very terrified and I couldn't bring myself. Other girls used to ring up boys, men, I should say men, you didn't call them boys, men

17:00 from other colleges and ask them to come around for the dance or what we called hops, little informal dances we had at every term but I couldn't bring myself. I didn't feel I knew anybody well enough to do that and I had to get my mother to find a distant cousin or something to come and be my partner at the first formal dance. And then I came out

17:30 at a ball, at a Settlement Ball that was held in the Great Hall and I didn't know anyone to ask as my partner and my mother finally found some local Wahroonga lad whom I had played with him as a child and she asked him would he be my partner at that the ball. I was so timid and so insecure and frightened and terrified and jittery.

18:00 But then in my second year, are we getting off track? In my second year I got into the Student Christian Movement. It was called the Christian Union in those days. Funnily enough a girl I had been a friend with at Wahroonga called Lucy Waite, I had been a childhood friend of hers.

18:30 She was a bit older than me. Now she was at College too and she was the person who really got me to come to some Student Christian Movement thing, a conference it was, in the second year at Easter and that is where I really had my whole life changed and altered because you see once you got

19:00 into that particular organisation or group all of a sudden you found yourself on exactly the same footing as all these young men. Nobody was behaving in any kind of frightening way or any kind of disturbing way. You

19:30 were just friends, they really were friends. You could be friends with everybody without any kind of connotation of any kind of partnership of any sort. I don't think I ever saw any kissing or hugging or even walking arm in arm between the sexes in the CU but you had the most marvellous friends.

20:00 You could have, for the first time I was able to make friends with young men without having to be bothered about whether they were going to kiss me or hug me or whatever they were going to do with me but I suppose it had always been seething around in the back of my mind and making me feel that I didn't want to enter into this strange world of grown up-ness.

20:30 But this wonderful place, this wonderful organisation where look honestly I have had friends that I made there all my life, they were men and women, without ever having had to have any kind of sex attitude or feelings as far as I know coming into it. You would really be friends on that upper level which I think is terrific really.

21:00 Anyway that is where I met my husband also, which of course other things did come into. I don't say that they didn't come in on all sorts of occasions as plenty of these CU friends got married to each other but I mean while we were there at conferences and so on we would have meetings and working out what to do, it didn't seem to enter into it.

Was it just a social club, the Union?

21:30 No, no, it wasn't a social club at all. It wasn't a social club. It was a, trying to find what life was all about, why were you here, what were you doing, what we were going to do, what was wrong with the world, what was right with the world, if it was wrong what could you do to help make it a bit better and what was the right thing to do.

22:00 I mean that's where you learnt all about socialism, and that sort of thing and a terrific lot of work on social issues that were coming up because the Depression was coming along, starting to come then and then of course later on all this rise of Hitler and everything else was happening. I can't think what to call it. It certainly wasn't a

22:30 social club. We didn't have parties or anything like that. We had meetings and lectures and conferences and wrote very learned articles in papers and that sort of thing. It was a very serious minded lot of people I can tell you, very serious minded but at the same time we had a terrific lot of fun, just

23:00 fun and somehow jollity and I can't explain it exactly.

What kinds of Christian denominations were mainly in the group?

Everything, everything and agnostic people weren't quite sure what they were about were in it. The only thing you had to believe was that

23:30 that Jesus was really the supreme revelation of God, that was what you had to believe. You didn't have to believe a lot about the saving blood or any of that sort of thing like the other religious thing which was the Evangelical Union which is now I believe has completely taken over from the Student Christian Movement and you have to believe this, that and the other, and if you don't, you're out. We weren't

24:00 like that at all. It was altogether a very almost agnostic, no it wasn't agnostic. You had to believe there was a God, I think you had to believe there was God and you had to believe that there had been lots and lots and lots of revelations of God and others were very, very good indeed and you would study these others and learn about them but

24:30 we really did think that Jesus had put forward the best revelation. Yes, that was the only thing you had to say. You didn't have to believe any creeds or anything like that.

Was there any tensions between Christian denominations?

No, not in the SCM there wasn't. We had lots of Methodists, we didn't have

25:00 that many Anglicans actually although we did a fair few. We had Methodists and Congregationalists. The Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterian have all joined together and they are the Uniting Church but there was no Uniting Church then. We had some Presbyterians.

25:30 But I can't think what preponderated. It varied a bit sometimes, no, I can't put an answer to that. My friends who were in it, well Tag and his brother were both in it and they were both Anglicans like I was but lots of my best friends were Methodists or Congregationalists or

26:00 it didn't seem to worry us. We were interested in something else other than denominationalism. And of course there was the Free Thought Movement at the University at that time and that is where the people who went who were really atheists, who didn't believe any of this rubbish that these people go on about. And Professor

26:30 John Anderson was the great guru for them and a lot of people I knew were in the Free Thought Society and they thought the people in the SCU, the Student Christian Union Movement were quite poor little creatures who couldn't get along without belief in some supernatural being or something.

Were there any Catholics in the Christian Movement?

Oh well now, the Catholics had, no, no. We didn't have any Catholics.

27:00 The Catholics had another, I can't think what it was called.

The John Newman Society?

That's right, the Newman Society, the Newman Society they had and they didn't come to any of our conferences and we didn't go to any of theirs. We didn't have any communication with them.

Were there tensions or differences that were clear between the Anglican, Presbyterian etcetera

27:30 **and the Catholics within the University?**

I didn't notice it, I don't think so.

But people wouldn't associate necessarily with each other?

Look I can't really tell you that I don't think. I can't remember any incidents of an active. The people

that

28:00 started to come in before I left in the last couple of years at Uni were the Evangelical Union people. Now when they started to come in there was quite a bit of tension I suppose you'd say between the people who belonged to that and the people who belonged to the Christian Union because you see they had this

28:30 very rigid kind of approach to religion and you had to believe certain things and they didn't like us and I don't think we liked them very much. And of course I think I just said didn't I that they seemed to have entirely taken over now, at least in Sydney.

What their response to the groups like the, did you say the Free Thought?

The Free Thought Society.

29:00 Oh well we at one stage the Christian Union put on a public meeting or seminar of some kind in which we had challenged the Free Thought Society to a debate and the person we got to take our side was a man who was Professor Bailey. He was

29:30 from Melbourne University. You see we used to have these inter-state conferences where you got to know people, you went to the other State and you got to know people from the other universities, which was terrific. But this marvellous man Professor Bailey he agreed to come up here and debate with whoever was the person for the Free Thought Society, it might have been John Anderson, I've really forgotten who it was. We had this public debate

30:00 in the Union Hall and put it on that Professor Bailey was going to put the Christian Union point of view and this other man would put the Free Thought point of view so we had this sort of public confrontational, not exactly, I shouldn't say confrontation, discussion, I would say, discussion. That was I think the only time we had such a public thing as that but hey were whittling all the time at people and we were whittling away at

30:30 the freshers welcome every year. All the different organisations would get up and tell the freshers about their particular interests and say we would like you to join us and we would get up and give ours and the free thought people would get up and give theirs. You would see some little freshers rushing off in one direction and some rushing off in another direction.

31:00 We were all so small compared to what it is now. You could get the whole lot together more or less. Well that's not quite true.

So how did you enjoy the difference between Arts and Medicine?

Oh it was wonderful. I was so thankful I did it.

31:30 I really was so bored with that Arts course. I really, having in English One having to do all this old Chaucer kind of English and having this lecturer get up and read bits of Chaucer in the way Chaucer would have spoken it and I just got bored stiff with it. I really couldn't stand it and then Latin wasn't very interesting. I did

32:00 geography as a sideline in the second year because I was interested in that and we had Professor Griffith Taylor and he was marvellous but in Medicine I was doing the things I really was interested in doing, so it was very different really. Much harder work mind you because I had to do physics for instance.

32:30 In Med One you had to do Physics One and it was at the level of the next year after the Leaving Certificate physics. Now I had never done physics in my life, never, so there was I a fresher in medicine having to do physics

33:00 at Leaving Certificate standard with all these men of course, all these boys had all done physics for perhaps five years at high School and the girls who were in my year who had been at high school they too had done physics but I came from a private school that had never done physics. What got me through physics was having a very good tutor

33:30 at the Women's College who was actually one of the lecturers in the Physics Department, Phyllis Nichol. She was living in College and she was the tutor, then College tutor in physics and now she got me through Physics One I can tell you. Chemistry was pretty terrible for me too because there again I had never done

34:00 and chemistry. Well we had a tutor for chemistry too that helped me a lot.

So in that kind of situation where you have got a very large difference between the numbers of girls and boys, well sorry, men and women, what actually was the kind of interaction between the sexes in the Med course?

Well to begin with

34:30 we had a Women's Room in the Med School, way down in the bottom part, just one, probably about the

size of this, that was for women students. Now mainly it was occupied by massage students. There were quite a few girls doing massage and

35:00 that is where we had to keep our white coats when we dissecting and so on, when we weren't dissecting I mean. But that was our only, and toilets of course and a wash basins and things and that was the only thing the women had in the whole of that Med School and we had to keep there, we had to be there if we weren't at a lecture or in the dissecting room. The men could go anywhere they liked all over the whole place but

35:30 apparently we were supposed to stay in our quarters. Now that was pretty awful, wasn't it? We did manage, I've forgotten what we did, we did ask for something extra. I've forgotten what, maybe for a little bit more room I think it was, to have a little bit more room, a bit more room than usual. But you see in my husband's year, he was three or four years ahead of me,

36:00 there were only four women. I can't remember and his brother did medicine too. He was about two years ahead of me. My husband must have been four years ahead of me I think. In my husband's brother's year there might have been half a dozen and in my year I think I said there were only six or

36:30 seven. Somebody else came in from another state, somebody came from Queensland in my second year and joined us, and that was all.

Just as a slight diversion, when you were at Sydney Uni these were during the Depression years?

Oh well to begin with 1927, I don't think that the

37:00 Depression had really started then. No, I don't think so. I think it started more around about 1929 we began to feel it more. Of course one thing we did know about was how the war had affected people in Europe.

37:30 In my second year we started up an organisation called, a chapter or a branch or what ever you called it of a thing called the International Student's Service. Now that was a thing that had been set up in Europe to deal with helping university students

38:00 who'd been unsettled by the First World War or to help return soldiers in all the different countries, not just our allies but enemy countries as well. It was very international. Now someone came out from England who had been working with that and they told us about this organisation so we set up this, that must have

38:30 been the second year I think, the International Students Service, the ISS it was called, and we worked to raise funds. We had little functions and raised only to give these people to help the students in Europe who were suffering but that was suffering from the effects of the war rather than the Depression I think.

39:00 Now I'm trying to think when we started to feel the Depression. Of course by the time, I suppose it really wouldn't have been until about the 1930's we started to feel much of it here. I'm not very good on dates.

That's okay and when you say you started to feel the Depression, how did it manifest itself?

Well I

39:30 think there was a lot of, just lack of money that people had. I mean students that had to do on very little money. Friends of mine that whose parents might, or whose father rather usually would not been able to support them, had to take after hours jobs

40:00 for instance to earn a bit of money. I remember there was one woman at the college with me who was doing massage and she wanted to do medicine but she hadn't enough money, so she took up massage and she used to work after in the evenings. See we used to have shops open in the evenings in those days,

40:30 at least on Friday evening the shops all stayed open and she used to work in David Jones in the shoe department every Friday evening to earn enough money. And a lot of other people I knew they took after hours work to raise some more money for their needs. I was in a very fortunate position in having parent's who could afford,

41:00 well we weren't an extravagant kind of family but we always seemed to have enough money to do all the things we needed to do or wanted to do.

I might just get you to hold that thought as we're right on the very end of this tape, is that alright?

Tape 4

00:41 **Well Margaret, let's begin, share with me the memories of Uncle Fred?**

Oh well, Uncle Fred was my mother's younger brother as I mentioned and before the war he was working

01:00 on a property up near Lismore, Casino rather, with an aunt and uncle of his who managed a property up there for Dalgety. Now we didn't really see Uncle Fred at that time because he was up there most of the time so that by the time he went to the war I didn't really know him very well. But of course when he was in Egypt, when we were all in

01:30 Egypt we saw quite a bit of Uncle Fred because he was there at the same time. And I can just remember him as a nice big uncle. I can't say I have any vivid memory of Uncle Fred but he evidently liked us children very much and really he loved my mother very dearly. In fact when

02:00 some man said to him, 'Haven't you got yourself a sweetheart yet Fred?' He said, 'Rene is my sweetheart', Rene being my mother, 'Rene is my sweetheart' and he thought of her really as his sweetheart I'm sure. My father he thought of him as his brother as he had no brothers left so that they were very close to each other really.

02:30 When he went to France he stayed in Egypt, when my father came back form Egypt, Uncle Fred stayed there and then the unit that he was in the First Field Ambulance, he was a stretcher bearer. They were sent on to France and he then, his unit took part in the Battle of Pozieres, have you ever heard of that battle? That

03:00 there were two battles at Pozieres and he was in the first battle of Pozieres and I have quite a few letters that he, well he used to write letters to us kids back in Cairo or when we came back here rather. Wouldn't have been when he was still in Cairo, telling us all sorts of funny little things about

03:30 the French there and the aeroplanes like dragon flies in the sky and I can read you out a whole lot of those. A friend of mine has transcribed them for me from his original letters that my mother had kept. But he must have been a very nice man I think really and as I say he was a stretcher bearer and in the first Battle of Pozieres he

04:00 apparently behaved very courageously and was awarded the Military Medal for that. That was presented to him by General Birdwood who was his Australian Commander but then immediately before that, before he was presented with it he had been elevated from being a private to being a second lieutenant

04:30 so by the time he got the military medal presented to him he was a second lieutenant. And then he got some leave because of his actions and he was granted ten days leave and he went to Ireland, where a cousin of my mother's who took him, who was a colonel actually, Colonel Barney Somerville. He took Fred with him

05:00 and he had a lovely trip to Ireland then they went back to France and then of course along came the second battle of Pozieres and this time Uncle Fred was killed. He was killed actually while, by now of course he wasn't a stretcher bearer any more I suppose but he was trying to help some other wounded person in 'no mans land' when

05:30 another shell burst or whatever and the two of them were both killed immediately. This cousin of my mother's, Barney Somerville, he wrote about all this to my mother and for a long time though, for weeks on end, she really didn't know if he was alive or dead, because they had not been able to collect up these bodies.

06:00 It was terrible to think of it the way these bodies were left lying because nobody could go and collect them, because of the bombs bursting all the time and not much point to bring in a dead body if you are likely to be killed yourself. It really must have been horrific that western front, you can hardly imagine what it must be like.

You mentioned earlier that your dad was running the

06:30 **hospital here at George's Heights?**

That's right, well when he came back with the troop ship that he came back on, I'm not too sure of the name of it. Whether it was the Kiara that he came back on I really don't remember, but at any rate this hospital up here had been set up in order to receive back the wounded from Gallipoli, that was the purpose of

07:00 all those buildings that were up there. Do you know they're sort of over the hill a bit, down towards that way and my father was put in charge of that. He was the OC [Officer Commanding] and he was made a colonel then, he'd been a major before, a lieutenant colonel I suppose he was and that would have been the end of 1917 I suppose, would it? I'm getting muddled up now.

07:30 Oh well never mind, whenever it was that they came there he went there and then I've got a whole lot of photos up there and some of the photos are showing buildings that he was in are still there, they're still there falling apart. It's rather interesting to go up and have a look around up there, which I've done.

08:00 But he must have been there for several years, I'm not sure what. Do you know the officers' mess up there? Wonderful building looking out to the south, marvellous building, well that is where they gave him a farewell function when he left. He got a beautiful coffee service given to him

08:30 which he gave me for a wedding present so I still have the coffee service that he gave me.

Did your dad return to normal medical practice?

No, no, no, he never returned to medical practice at all. I don't quite know why. He is alleged to have said that so many other

09:00 younger doctors had set up practices during his absence and certainly there were several doctors around, that he didn't really think it would be fair for him to come back and set up again because he had felt that he'd been apparently quite a popular local doctor, the only one in Wahroonga and he,

09:30 I suppose he thought the patients might want to come back to him and would come away from all these the younger men. How altruistic this was, or how much that he really didn't require the income from a medical practice I really can't say and the truth is that my grandfather, his father,

10:00 was really apparently an extremely wealthy man who had something to do with the Cobalt Copper Mine. He was a doctor too actually but he had practiced in Singleton and he had something to do with opening up of the Cobalt Copper Mine and helping people get going there and he had a lot of money and shares in it and so on,

10:30 which he distributed among his children and so on and a lot of other entrepreneurial kind of, the woollen mills, Victoria so that really we were apparently comfortably enough off for Dad not to have to earn his living and of course able to give me my car when I left school and that kind of thing. He must have had quite some money because

11:00 they really lived I think in a very modest manner. My parents were never throwing money around or being extravagant. Mum was particularly careful with money and always making sure we didn't, and we were never allowed to borrow money and we were never allowed to spend more than we had and we were never allowed to put anything down on credit or add up. We had to

11:30 pay cash for anything we bought, that sort of thing. They were very strict about money and not being, I can't think of the word really. But what Dad did do though was to devote himself to all sorts of public work,

12:00 like being on various, running, helping to run the orphanage or children's home I should call it at Normanhurst and being on the Council, the Ku-ring-gai Council. He was a councillor for a good few years and he used to go out and really taking a very active part, not like some

12:30 councillors but taking a real interest in all the works that were going on. And then Abbotsleigh, when he became on the Abbotsleigh Council he organised and supervised the whole layout of the Abbotsleigh playing fields that the school put in which are an extraordinary collection of wonderful

13:00 courts and everything up there, all done away with the old playing fields that we used to have to walk to. Now they just walk across the grounds to it. Well Dad actually sort of personally supervised all that and used to be up there making sure the men were doing the right thing. I can't tell you what else he was in, all sorts of things, so he was always a fully occupied man but not in the medical profession

13:30 any more.

So what you're saying to me is that he didn't continue on as a doctor for the reasons of what he had seen in the war?

Oh no, I didn't say that, I didn't tell you, no, no, I don't think that at all. I wouldn't imagine that would influence him. I think he was only glad that he'd been able to do things for people and help them there. I don't think that

14:00 made him turn against it. He certainly wasn't against war as such.

Can I ask, I think on the way home on a ship you got the measles?

Oh no, that's not right, on the way there I got sunstroke. Did I get measles on the way home?

14:30 **I hate to say I wasn't there.**

I was but I can't remember getting measles. You're not getting muddle up with the sunstroke on the way there?

Well it may be so. The League of Nations at School?

Oh yes, yes, the League of Nations, we had a very good history teacher at school, a very fine, wonderful history teacher and she was very interested in the League of

15:00 Nations and she started up or formed or got formed a League of Nations Union at school. Schools used to have these League of Nations and you have a little button you would wear that had LN on it or some little device or other and you put the League of Nation Union you proudly put that on. And then we used to have debates

15:30 in that union or that society or whatever you would call it. Different people were allocated different roles to be such and such a country or such and such a country and debate the way the League of Nations did. Oh yes, we were very internationally minded.

With the girls at school were there many girls from different countries or were they

16:00 **mainly just white Anglo Saxons?**

Oh very, very few, hardly any, hardly anybody but Australians were there. There was one, it was a family called Halberg who had come from Denmark but those girls were just like any other girls, they didn't have any

16:30 Danish eccentricities or interesting things. There were one or two girls whose fathers were German but they didn't seem to be any different from us and there were no people of any other kind of races ever. In fact I think probably the only person I had ever seen

17:00 who wasn't an Anglo person was the Chinese greengrocer who used to come round with two baskets over his shoulder and bring in the fruit and vegetables for Mum to say what she would buy. I think that was the only non-Anglo person I had ever set eyes on in my life and then I went to College there was one girl there whose name was Mary

17:30 Chong and she had a Chinese father. She didn't look Chinese I think she took more after her mother I think. I don't remember any person of any Asian or African or any other Polynesian, nothing, they just weren't there, they weren't in the community.

18:00 **Now travelling forward to where Claire [interviewer] was asking questions about university, can you tell me about the meeting of your husband?**

Oh yes, well that happened at the first conference of the Christian Union that I went to, which was in Easter of my second year which was 1928. Now the first time I saw

18:30 him we went a lot of us had been out for a long walk and it was up at Kurrajong Heights. Do you know Kurrajong Heights? Oh it's up the mountains, not on the main part but further north. You don't know about Kurrajong Heights? You ought to go up there, it's lovely. Anyway we had all been out for this long walk and I was walking up this hill to the house,

19:00 the boarding house we had taken and there were these two lads in front of me, these two young men and they were walking along one with the arm around the other shoulder and I had two brothers and my two brothers had never got on together ever, that I could think of. They were totally different people,

19:30 different characters, different everything about them and I think they both hated each other. They were always quarrelling and fighting and squabbling and someone said, 'Those are the Holmes brothers, those two'., 'Two brothers, two brothers that like each other', now that was my very first sight of them. I really became

20:00 quite interested in the younger brother who was Ray and for a couple of years Ray and I were more friendly with each other but then I began to think, ' Really like Tag better than Ray, I really do,' and I sort of tried to get out of this. There was nothing very heavy going on but Ray and I were just the two that people thought of, you'd

20:30 go out for walks with and whatever, so I was very thankful when he had an eye to some other girl at a different conference this time. And I even wrote in my diary, 'Thank goodness Ray seems to be taking an interest in J. Thank goodness because of you know who', which of course was Tag. I've still got that diary somewhere and then

21:00 I was able to concentrate that I decided I really did like best. So then we went from there and got very fond of each other.

Was he though taking an interest in you?

I suppose he was. He must have been,

21:30 he must have been taking some interest.

And what sort of things in respect to courtship would you do together?

Well one of the things we used together, oh yes, when he was going for his final exam, yes that's right. At that time he wrote me a most terrific letter that I nearly had a fit over about

22:00 telling me how he couldn't sleep and he couldn't work because he was all the time of thinking of me

kind of thing, which blew my mind of course. And after that confession actually he failed in his last year's exam. He'd had always done very well all the way through but this time he failed and I am sure it was because of this trauma going on and

22:30 he had to sit for a post then. The first time in his whole medical, six years it was then, the first time he had a post was that time when he went for the finals and he only had one post but he got through it of course. But you see while he was studying for his last year he and I used to be going out at night and walking for miles all round Newtown and right down Glebe

23:00 Point and to Annandale we walked and right down to White Bay, miles and miles we used to go walking, all evening sort of thing when he probably should have been studying that is mainly what we did our courting in I suppose, gradually got on a bit more.

And how did his brother respond to this?

That didn't matter

23:30 because he had got fond of somebody else, that didn't matter. I was a very great friend of his but he didn't mind Tag and me getting together. They were both residents in St Paul's College which was just next door to Women's.

So how long was the courtship to the point of

24:00 **him proposing to you?**

Oh really, do you want to know that? I don't know that I can even tell you. I know it took some, look I don't remember when he proposed to me. I know I just had to just more or less make him, I mean egg him on, say, 'Look here really, are we serious or aren't we?

24:30 And if we are why don't you propose to me?' and so on.

The reason I asked because his proposal did affect your future as far as your studying goes?

Of course it did, it meant I gave up medicine, yes. We got engaged, actually engaged, he gave me an engagement ring, which by the way he gave me by throwing it across

25:00 a dining table at my home where he had come, he was through by then and he was a resident at North Shore by that time and he had come up to Wahroonga to have dinner with us. We were having dinner and I was at one side of the table and he was at the other and he threw a box to me across the table and when I opened it up there was my engagement ring in it.

He was a bit of a romantic then?

25:30 Well of course he'd already asked Dad if he could have me and so on, that had already been done but the actual giving of the engagement ring that is how that took place.

Tell us about how he asked your father for your hand?

Oh yes, yes, when he came to ask Dad for my hand which they used to do in those days, he went into Dad's room which we always called the surgery, although Dad still

26:00 wasn't still using it as such and of course Dad knew perfectly well what he had come for but Dad wouldn't give him any leeway at all and he just said to him, 'Yes Tag, yes, yes what, you want to see me do you?' Poor Tag said, 'Yes I do.', 'What was it about? What was it about?'

26:30 Just teasing the poor wretch while Mum and I were waiting outside trembling and shaking.

Of course your dad was going to say yes I take it?

Of course.

And of course no matter how the ring was delivered you were going to say yes? So how did this therefore proposal affect your desire to become a doctor?

Of course, of course I knew that soon as I knew that

27:00 we were really in love with each other, I thought, 'I can't go on.' It means we couldn't have got married, you weren't allowed to. One man in Tag's year got married while he was in residence but he and his wife had to pretend they weren't married because if he'd been known to be married

27:30 he wouldn't have been able to continue as a resident. So you see they had these strict rules about nurses marrying and about doctors marrying and if they did they weren't there any more. So I knew, well I was only in third year and I would have had six years then medicine and then there was a year of residence, so it would have been four years before we could be married.

28:00 Well we both thought that was ridiculous. Anyhow I think I was jolly glad to be giving up. It was getting a bit hard so I transferred into Science then and did a year of comparative anatomy so I could get a degree because Tag was still a resident so we couldn't be married anyway, so I filled in that year by

doing this year of

28:30 comparative anatomy and getting a B.Sc. I didn't want to be at Uni all those years and not have some letters after my name.

In some sense because of the University rules you could not have continued on to become a doctor unless you waited four years?

No, wait a minute, that's not quite true, no, no, I could have continued on to be a doctor from the point of view of the

29:00 University but what I could not have done was to be a resident in a hospital being married. You had to be unmarried if you were a resident at that time that is how I understand it. Nobody could have stopped a married woman from doing a course at the University. In fact I'm sure they couldn't because there were other, there were

29:30 very few married women that I knew at Uni but nobody stopped them. There was no question of them being stopped by the University.

Now weddings these days are huge affairs particularly for the woman trying to get that perfect wedding, was that the case for you when you got married?

30:00 Well I got married in January. I suppose I had been working at my studies till must have been December or November and I wasn't a very social person.

30:30 We had a pretty big wedding actually but I wasn't involved, all that involved in it. I think Mum did most of the hard work. I had three bridesmaids and a proper bridal rig out and all that sort of thing and Tag had three groomsmen. It was a proper

31:00 white tie kind of affair and the person who married us was the one who became the Bishop of Canberra, Goulburn, Bishop Bergman. Have you ever heard the name Bergman? Look all this makes me feel so ancient.

Makes me think I need an education.

Bishop Bergman was at that time, he wasn't the Bishop,

31:30 he was the Warden of St Johns Theological College at Morpeth, an Anglican Theological College and he was a very, very prominent person in the Student Christian Movement. I should have said to you when I was talking about the Student Christian Movement how fortunate we were in having a tremendous number of these very high placed academic people

32:00 who supported us and who helped us and who led circles for us and gave talks for us and all that and Bishop Bergman was one of those. We had conferences up at St John's College and he would be one of the chief people talking and lecturing and leading study groups and all the rest of it so we knew him pretty well and we asked my local rector,

32:30 Mr Houston, if he would mind because I wanted to get married in my local church, if we were married by Mr. Bergman as he was then and Mr Houston would just sort of be the offsider and he was quite happy to do that and we were married by this man who became Bishop Bergman. His granddaughter

33:00 is now Dr Meredith Bergman and she is the leader of the Upper House here in NSW Parliament and I know that name, do you know that name? Good.

Can I ask you to see if you know a name, Doctor Paul White?

Oh Paul White was in my year. Yes, Paul White was in my year and I knew him quite well. Now he was one of the people who

33:30 were in the Evangelical Union. Now he and I had many an argument, I can tell you and I can remember him once talking to me and saying, 'I've have got to get through this exam, I've have absolutely got to get through, I can't repeat a year' and I'm saying, 'Oh well, of course none of us wants to repeat a year, do we?' or something silly like that and he said,

34:00 'But I am going to Africa when I am through, as soon as I'm through I'm going to Africa. And it is put off for one year because I've had to repeat, just think of how many souls there will be there, the people will have died without hearing about Our Lord'. Now you see that was their attitude if a person didn't accept Christ as they thought of it, of how they thought of it, they were damned.

34:30 It was one of the things that put me so off that kind of religion. The thought that a person could think that if they didn't get to Africa in time people would perish, their souls would be lost, that doesn't make sense to me.

So that was Dr Paul White?

Paul White, he did get through and he did go to Africa and of course he was called the 'jungle doctor' I think for a long time but I didn't,

35:00 I wasn't a friend of his or anything. I couldn't have been when he had this kind of attitude. He was a very fine man. I am sure he did some very fine work in Africa but I couldn't take that kind of evangelic attitude.

The war was coming or so we now know with history, what did you know around the time you were getting married about the war?

Oh about the Nazis?

35:30 Well I don't think we knew all that, or I didn't know all that much out here but when we went, see we went to England on our honeymoon and we stayed in England for a year, fifteen months nearly and our eldest daughter was born in England actually and while we were in England

36:00 the Jewish people were refugees from the Nazis were already arriving in England as early as 1933. And the other thing that was happening also was that the Depression was biting more and more and there was getting to be, I have seen people coming down from the north, some big hunger march,

36:30 hunger strike, kind of march that they had, can't remember now, but seeing these ragged, pathetic looking, shabby, disheartened men all hundreds of them coming down to London and marching through the streets there. The Depression was really definitely starting to bite by then

Particularly so in England from what you were saying?

Yes, more so than out here I think. Although I

37:00 don't know, even out here it was so too because I can remember thinking, oh no, that was after we came home and started building, yes, it must have been already starting out here. Yes, it must have been. It didn't affect me personally so I don't remember much about it.

Was your husband a fully fledged doctor at that point in time?

Oh yes, he was a fully fledged doctor before

37:30 we got married. He had already spent two years as resident before we got married. Oh I'm awful on dates.

But during the Depression time did people pay him in money or in kind?

You are talking now about when we came back home here and set up in practice in Mosman

38:00 are you? We were back here in 1934. Yes, 1934 we came home here. His father was a doctor in Mosman and his father very kindly took Tag into his practice. In those days, I don't know what happens now but in those days people used to buy into a practice. A young doctor coming along would ask of a senior doctor

38:30 'Do you want an assistant and if so what is your price for me to come in?' And the junior doctor would pay the senior doctor so much to get into the practice and would be taken in as a partner. But my husband had the good fortune of having his father wanting to have a younger man in the practice and took him in for nothing so that was a great help to us. Then my

39:00 father gave us enough money to build our house which we did the next year so we were very fortunate in that way. Now wait a minute, what were we just?

How did people pay him during the Depression?

Oh how did they pay, oh yes. In those days there were things called lodges. Have you ever heard of lodges? There were all sorts of friendly

39:30 societies, lodges, they were called, the Independent Order of Oddfellows or the Grand United of the Order of something-or-other and they all had long titles and names but poorer people or people without much money would join a lodge and then a doctor would take on lodge patients and they were patients, that

40:00 I think what happened was that the person in the lodge paid a certain sum to the lodge every year to cover medical expenses for them and their family. And then they went to the doctor, would say or some doctor or other or several doctors would agree to be that lodge's doctor so that any patients who came there, sick people who wanted a doctor would be

40:30 on the lodge. My husband had a kind of a list of his lodge patients, he knew who his lodge patients were and he used to see them. Look honestly I really don't know anything about the money side of that but they weren't treated like ordinary private patients.

We'll just stop there because we're at the end of the tape.

Tape 5

00:43 **Thank you again for your time, memories of World War II, what do you remember? Do you remember when the war was declared where you were?**

01:00 Well I suppose I was at home in Mosman. Of course by that time I had really, did I tell you before that I had really become a pacifist and therefore I had become convinced that the way to do away with evil things was not

01:30 by doing more evil things but by doing something good instead or having passive resistance. And I knew for instance about how the Danes when the Nazis, the German Nazis overran Denmark, they were already persecuting Jews of course and they had ordered that all Danes,

02:00 all Jewish people in Denmark should wear the Star of David on their sleeve or wherever so that the Nazis could pick them up and get rid of them. And the first thing that happened was that the King of Denmark said, 'I am wearing a Star of David on my sleeve from now on and I wish all my subjects in Denmark to do exactly the same.'

02:30 So everybody in Denmark had on a Star of David and the Nazis could not tell therefore who were Jews and who were not. You see that was a very small instance of the kind of ways I think it would have been preferable and I still think it would have been preferable to deal with the Nazi occupation of different countries. In Norway for instance

03:00 they had a man called Quisling there who collaborated with the Nazis but most of the Norwegians were against the Nazis. Now he order the teachers to teach the Nazi kind of doctrine about the Nordic race and all the rest of it,

03:30 racism and to give up the Jews and so on. Now the teachers of Norway refused to do that and all the schools were shut and the teachers started off having little classes in people's homes and that kind of thing but even that got stopped after awhile and a great many of those teachers were then sent away up

04:00 into the northern parts of Norway and incarcerated there and many of them died under those horrific kind of circumstances. They didn't give in, they didn't give in to what the Nazis, if the Quisling Government told them to do something that was quite sensible they would obey and do it but they would refuse to do anything that was contrary to goodness and proper duty and so on.

04:30 I believe that even if Britain had been run over by the Nazis and the British had all taken that kind of an attitude, a lot of them would have been killed no doubt, but then a lot of them were killed anyway with air raids and whatnot but it might have meant that all those Nazi storm troopers and invaders I doubt whether they could have kept on

05:00 for terribly long being in that kind of a situation. And they got further and further away from their home base and so on I really think that in the end they would have more or less given up trying to be like that and had to do something else. Now you see this was all due to my being influenced by Gandhi and his non-cooperation with the British in India and how he had all this non-violent approach

05:30 and refusing to do orders that were contrary to what you believed and I still think that is the proper way to deal with invaders.

Just to come back to how you became a pacifist, that was a result of university and Christian Group?

Oh yes, well it was a result of a lot of different factors I think. One very important factor was my

06:00 history to lectures which were all about the causes of the Great War [First World War]. Now I had been brought up thinking that the Great War was all because those horrible hateful Huns had run over poor little Belgium and tried to take poor little Belgium and so on and so forth. Well you see with this set of lectures

06:30 by this man, Jimmy Bruce, the whole year we had the lectures on the causes of the First World War, the Great War it was called then, and I found out that the whole lot of it was due to trying to pick up bits of Africa and own them and they would take them away from the people that owned them and that Germany was getting too many of them and Britain wasn't getting enough and the trade with the Far East,

07:00 and a whole multitude of other causes that really had never entered into my poor little head before. Now that completely kind of reversed my attitude towards to why we had gone to war, that was one very important aspect that went on all year long, that went on. Of course the other one was being in the Christian

07:30 Union and going to this conference where I met these people called Quakers. You've heard of Quakers I suppose? Now the Quakers that I met there had just returned from Russia. Well of course Russia was an anthema to my parents because they had the Bolshevik Revolution by now, so they were all terrible, awful

08:00 Communists, those people. Well one thing this Quaker couple convinced me of that the Russians were just human beings like us and they weren't some monster or other but the more important things was I learnt for the first time really I think that there were Christian people who believe that if you were a Christian you simply could not go

08:30 and kill other people. You weren't just supposed to do it and it was something you didn't do it if you were a real Christian. Mind you, I don't feel quite so ruthless about it now but at that time it latched on to me somehow and I thought, 'yes they are quite right, if we really believe what we say about loving your enemies. He said, 'Love your enemies', does that mean you go and kill them?'

09:00 The whole thing just fell apart for me so that was when I first started to think that really if you were going to try to be a Christian you really more or less ought try to be a pacifist. So from then on I started getting into various pacifist organisations I suppose that were about. I didn't become a Quaker

09:30 mainly because there wasn't any meeting, what they call Quaker meeting anywhere near me up at Wahroonga or anywhere else that I knew of except in Devonshire Street and I felt, 'well I like to go to church' and I didn't want to not have anywhere to go so I didn't join. I never have joined the Quakers.

Can I ask you what were

10:00 **some of the other organisations do you remember?**

Well the one that I can think of was the Federal Pacifists Council. Now really I am not sure what that consisted of but it had members everywhere all over Australia who were pacifists for whatever reason. I mean quite a few of these people were not pacifists

10:30 on any religious ground but on rational ground or communists even would be that. They though well the workers of the world are going to fight each other. It had branches everywhere but it didn't do anything very active I don't think. But by the time of the Second World War

11:00 they had a monthly paper coming out called the Peacemaker. Unfortunately I have given all my files of that to the Peace and Conflict Centre Studies at Sydney Uni so they have my full file of that because all during the Second World War that kept on coming out. I don't know how Frank Coldrake managed

11:30 to keep getting paper for it all during the war but somehow he did and it was a totally committed pacifist's paper. It was against.

12:00 Well I wish I had it but I haven't.

Can I ask given Australia's support during that time, World War II, going to war were people aggressive towards Frank and the paper?

12:30 I don't know. It was only Melbourne. I was up here. I think the pacifists, the peace movement if you call it that, that was so up front say during the Vietnam War was not up front like that in

13:00 First World War. I think that even the people who were in it thought, 'well if there is a war that is justified this probably is', sort of feeling about it. The Second World War, we've got to do something about Hitler and we don't seem to be able to do anything so maybe this is the only thing to do but they weren't convinced it was the right thing to do,

13:30 I think I could say that. There wasn't enough opposition to the war to make it worthwhile for anybody to take much notice of it I think.

Because after World War II you were still heavily involved in the pacifist movement?

Oh yes, I have continued to be in the pacifist movement certainly.

14:00 You see, I'll tell you a funny thing that happened at the beginning of the Second World War. You know during the 1930's, that's right, there was all that stuff, the Spanish Civil War and do you know there was a Spanish Civil War? In fact that was where Hitler sent bombing planes to bomb that city called

14:30 Guernica, that Picasso did that very wonderful painting of, most horrific war painting. Hitler was supporting Franco who was the capitalist and royalist lot of people in Spain against the Spanish Republic who were of course

15:00 if not communist they were socialists anyway. Well a lot of my friends here were very left wing and in fact quite a few were actually members of the communist party and they of course were all in favour of the Republicans in Spain in the Spanish Civil War so

15:30 there was already a lot of anti war, anti that war feeling going here among that kind of person but not among the general public I don't think. But I can remember even right at the beginning of World War I, when did Russia come in? It didn't come in to begin with did it? World War II I'm talking about, sorry. Hitler didn't attack Russia

16:00 to begin with. He only went westward and then the silly fool went and attacked Russia and that is something I can't think of the date of but it was after the beginning of the war. Now it just happened I was at Dee Why or somewhere, Mona Vale at some kind of a very left wing weekend get together down there about the war

16:30 and we were against the war. We didn't think it was the right thing to do. Now down there were several friends of mine who were actually members of the Communist Party and it was really almost ludicrous the way overnight they turned from being totally opposed to the war, 'This is a capitalist war, let the capitalists fight it among themselves and it will ruin capitalism and it will be the end of capitalism

17:00 and then socialism will come along.' Then overnight we had heard this news about Hitler having invaded Russia and then just like that, these people all turned around and now it was, 'Workers of the world unite against this terrible invasion of the USSR'

17:30 I was just sort of sitting back there chortling to myself thinking, 'They're a fine lot of pacifists if it is just this and then that can move them'. So I actually experienced that and then of course people like Jessie Street started up sheepskins for Russia and all these people flocking to send in sheep skins to make nice woolly garments for the Russian soldiers to wear and so on.

18:00 Well it didn't seem to me to be any more a righteous a war now then that it had been before. It still wasn't the right way to tackle Nazism. Now where do I go from there?

Did the dynamics of the group change, it was still a pacifist group after?

Oh yes, of course it was, it was still a pacifist group that believed no matter what your cause you weren't supposed to go to war to win your cause, oh yes, it was always that.

18:30 But a great many of the people who had been in this so-called peace movement, entourage as it were, they all dropped out because they were now quite keen on having the war.

And you yourself were never at any time a communist?

Oh no, I never joined the communist party. In the mid 1930s, sometime or other I was a member

19:00 of the Labor Party and I resigned from that when someone came and said to us that the reason they brought in compulsory unionism, they hadn't had compulsory unionism until then, and the Labor Party brought it in. The reason that they had done that was so that the Labor party should have more money available to it from union fees

19:30 and that absolutely sickened me. I thought, 'What a way to think to get some money you will make the, it is not that you think compulsory unionism is a good thing you just went to get more money,' so I chucked it all in then. So I've never been a member of any, oh yes, I became a member of the Democrats much later.

20:00 **You mentioned a name earlier, Jessie Street?**

Oh Jessie Street, yes well, what?

She started a One Australia Party or group during the war that was an anti-war group?

Did she?

Sorry, let me start again. Was she involved? She was a pacifist wasn't she?

20:30 No, I don't think Jessie Street was a pacifist. She was never in the pacifist movement, not to my knowledge. No, I'm pretty sure she wasn't. She was a very left wing radical kind of woman but she wasn't a pacifist.

Right, okay, she was against the war thought wasn't she?

She was against the war, yeah, she was against the war. Now I am not too sure about this but I would imagine she was against the war

21:00 as long as it was not against Russia. I think after Russia came in she like these other people would have thought, 'We have just got to go ahead and smash these Germans. We can't let them kill the Soviet Union'. I think I didn't know Jessie Street personally really but she definitely wasn't a pacifist

21:30 I am sure of that. She definitely wasn't in what I think of as the peace movement.

What was your husband's view on your pacifist views?

Well I am really not quite sure. I think he thought, 'Well if that is what I want to do, that is all right'. He wasn't a joiner my husband, he never joined things. He went to the war but he was,

22:00 he didn't volunteer to go I should tell you. He was called up. Now if he had been a real, being a doctor made a difference too because he didn't have to fight. I don't know, in fact I have often wondered really what he would have done if he hadn't been a doctor, whether he would have been a conscientious objector.

22:30 But of course in the Second World War people were conscripted weren't they? He was conscripted to go into the war, he didn't volunteer. Yes it must have been, of course after Pearl Harbour when the Japs were coming down here

23:00 when things started to get really worked up. You see that was the time when I had to be thinking to myself, 'Am I prepared really to have these Japs come and run all over us or do I think we should be out there fighting them?' So I was a bit ambivalent about all that then, wondering, 'Well really, is this crunch time?' I don't know what I would have done if we had actually been invaded by the Japs.

23:30 Whether I would have been able to carry out my strange little pacifist ideas or not I don't know but as I say he didn't volunteer, he was called up and he went into the Army. It must have been in 1942.

So the Japanese entering into the war really tested your convictions?

Yes I think it did really, it really did.

24:00 I didn't fortunately for me I suppose I didn't have to really put it to the test. I kept on saying, 'Well why don't we go back and find out why are they doing this, why are they doing this? Isn't there something we can do to stop them other than this kind of thing?' And of course I still think the final episode of dropping the two atomic bombs on Japan I think was absolutely

24:30 inexcusable and unpardonable thing to do. Of course it saved the lives of more soldiers I suppose. My husband by that time was up there in Morotai in the Celebes, or whatever you call it, so he could have been endangered I suppose.

25:00 I had to keep telling myself, 'Well if it was a choice between my husband or 200,000 Japanese, what would I choose?' That sort of feeling and being very, well I suppose uncertain, I didn't have to make that kind of choice. But I still think it is the wrong way to settle things, that sort of way.

25:30 **Well after World War II we've had Korea, we had the Malaysian conflict, Vietnam, were you involved in your pacifist thinking and movement in those?**

Yes, I think all of those. At one time there was the paper called the Anglican it was a Sydney paper

26:00 which was edited by a man called Francis James. He was very anti-war altogether and he used to publish lots and lots of information in this paper. It wasn't a religious kind of paper, it was a newspaper really but it tried to have a kind of religious slant or to look at things from a religious

26:30 person angle, if you understand what I mean but it wasn't concerned just with spiritual matters, it was concerned with day-to-day down-to-earth practical positive things. So one of the things was the war of course and I can't remember very much about the Korean War but certainly with the Vietnam

27:00 War the Anglican was totally against it and used to publish letters, any letter you could write against war would get into the Anglican and they would also have a great deal of information about the war that we weren't getting through the ordinary press. A lot of it came from papers like Le Monde, I think it's called, that French newspaper,

27:30 and it was part of the old French East Asian empire, those As Ham, Vietnam and there were three there, I can't remember now. Well you know what I'm talking about on the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsular?

28:00 That would be the French East Indian Empire so Le Monde was a wonderful source of true information of about what was going on there and about what was going on the civil war in Vietnam where the Communist led Ho Chi Minh, lot were fighting against the other lot from the South,

28:30 coming down, and first of all where they were driving out the French. They got freedom from France by fighting France and then there were these two lots, the north were the Communist lot and the south were the anti-communist lot, and they were supposed to have a referendum sort of thing and an election for the whole country but instead of that America came in

29:00 and started stopping them doing that, and bolstering up this southern lot against the top because they were frightened of the Communist influence. And then of course down here we were terrified of these not only red but these yellow was the great cry there, 'we will have the yellow red people coming and taking us over!' and that sort of thing and

29:30 that is why we started to come into Vietnam. Of course all the pacifists were totally against that needless to say. What stupid kind of thing could you try and do than stop that happening? A properly elected regime would have been the answer.

So what movement were you involved in?

Oh well I suppose the

30:00 Fellowship of Reconciliation was another one. It was one of these pacifist kind of things that was really based in America but it had a paper that used to come out here. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, I can't

think what they were, various small little groups that used to meet and talk about these things.

30:30 Are you talking about the Vietnam War?

Yes, Save Our Sons, were you involved?

Oh well, no, wait a minute, of course I'm mad. The main thing I was involved with was the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. That has been my main outlet since I joined them. In 1959 I joined that. We didn't have a branch in Sydney

31:00 but I went to a conference in Stockholm that year and I never looked back as it were, I just stuck with them all the time because I thought they were so marvellous and just what I had been wanting, a women's group that was totally pacifist and it had all these women in it who had taken part in the non violent resistance to Hitler and so on in the

31:30 Second World War. It just took my life over really and they were the people that I started a branch in Sydney, we didn't have a branch in Sydney, we had other branches but that was the one that I did most of my work with, the anti Vietnam cause through them. The Save our Sons was another lot.

32:00 Now the Save our Sons people were a number of them, or some of them I should say, got into that not because they were anti-war so much as they were anti this call-up, the thing called the call-up, which meant that if you were a man, a boy when you turned 18,

32:30 your marble was put into a big bowl thing once every few months and that was turned around and around, it was a real lottery of a thing and round and round and round like this and then when it stopped the numbers that came out, whatever they were, you number, you were then called up, that was compulsory you see. Well the Save our Sons people

33:00 started off being women who didn't want their sons to be called up in this manner. Some of those women I know of dropped out when their sons' number didn't come up, if their sons' lottery birthday came round and luckily his number hadn't been one of the ones then they

33:30 just quietly withdrew from the Save our Sons movement but there were plenty of other women in it who had no sons themselves or whose sons were too old to be in it or whatever, very, very sincere and honest and good people. And then there was another little group called Christian Women for Peace that was an off-shoot from our lot really.

34:00 You see a lot of the women who were in the Women's International League were not at all religious people, they weren't in any church or anything like that, they were peace-loving people who just didn't like war, but some of us were in different churches and we had this thing called the Christian Women for Peace in which we had women from different denominations who

34:30 managed to go around to their different churches if possible, to talk about the iniquity of this war, to try and put it to church people that they should not be supporting it. There may have been, we had the various, do you want me to go on telling you about those things?

35:00 Like this vigil for peace that we had in Wynyard Park once a week, a group of women used to gather there. Now first of all we started wearing black hoods over our faces and over our heads and then we found that was very off-putting and people didn't want,

35:30 didn't like it so we stopped that, I didn't go very often but plenty of the others went every week. We gave out leaflets to people telling them information about the war, what was happening and why it was happening and try and alert people as what we thought was the truth.

36:00 And then of course we had, oh I have relics from that time. You don't want to see any of these relics I suppose, like the police would not let you have banners, we had a lot of street protests and if you had a banner, holding up a banner saying, 'get out of Vietnam' or whatever we were saying the police would come and take your banner and trample on it and break it up.

36:30 So what we did we had these little pieces of calico, about this size, edged with black all round and in the middle, 'we want peace' or, 'no war' or something like that so we would carry them round in our handbags and then when you came to the demonstration we would all take these out of the handbags and hold them up so the police couldn't break your banners down. And then of course we had, do you want me to go on telling you about these things

37:00 we did?

Excellent.

Well one of the very I think effective things we did, the Women's International League that is, was to take advertisements in the newspaper, whatever, the Daily Telegraph I think it was. I don't think it was The Herald. We took a large advertisement about that long

37:30 in which we had an open letter to Mr Hasluck who was the Foreign Minister, saying, 'That force has failed in Vietnam'. This was early in the piece when it looked as though the top was going to, oh I can't

remember it all. I could show it to you but I haven't got it here and we got people to sign it, a lot of very important and influential people

38:00 to sign it. We had about twenty or thirty really quite well known people in different spheres of life that would sign this and say they agreed and then we had a little bit at the bottom saying that if you were interested in this, or you thought this worthwhile, could you send a donation to help with payment. We had to raise the money to have this ad in. We must have had two or three such advertisements and the idea was you were to cut the advertisement

38:30 out and send it to the Prime Minister to show him how many people were against the war. Well that was one of the sort of things we were doing.

I'll just hold you there because we're about to change tapes.

Tape 6

00:43 **You were going to share with me the church and its views on the war?**

Yes, well this is quite apart from my work with any other peace organisation or other and I was an Anglican and I felt it was upon me to

01:00 try the Anglican side of things and so I actually wrote a letter which I sent to every Anglican clergyman in the whole diocese of Sydney. Because three, yes I should have said three bishops had come out in favour of the war and one of them was the Chief Padre,

01:30 or Padre-in-Chief, or whatever he was called of all the Padres that went to the war. He was a man called Hugh Moyer. He was actually the Rector of St Clements at the time. Oh no, he'd become a bishop by then, that's right but he had been the rector then. We knew him personally. Well this letter

02:00 was a very carefully worded, a long letter and telling what we thought of the truth about what had happened with Vietnam and with Ho Chi Min and with the Americans coming in from below and stopping all that unification and everything else. I thought it was a pretty impeccable record of deceit and so on, that had been done, a record of that deceit

02:30 and I sent that to every single clergyman in this diocese. Well, you would have been quite amazed at some of the reactions I got. I got some letters that were so abusive that you could hardly believe that a Christian person could have written them, a few were that bad. Some were just so negative

03:00 and so dismissive it was obvious they didn't want to think anything about this silly matter anyway and very, very, very few agreed with me that this was not a thing that Christians should be supporting, very few, hardly anybody really. And then the Archbishop of Sydney at that time was a man called

03:30 Archbishop Gough. Do you remember that name? Yes? Now Archbishop Gough was going off to Vietnam to encourage the troops and I thought this would be a wonderful opportunity for us to do something, so I got my friends to make a great big, long, long banner, on which was written, 'In as much as

04:00 you do it as much to one of these my children, you do it unto me,' which is a quote out of the Gospel. This was I think probably after some of these terrible napalm bombings and things that were going on. Well we had this long thing, we had it all rolled up and we went to the airport and I had written a letter to the Archbishop in which I had quoted something or other about

04:30 what was he going to ask the troops to do, was he going to quote to them out of some bit of the Bible where it says putting on the whole armour of God and the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit and so. I quoted all that to the Archbishop. I said, 'Is that what you are going to ask the troops to do?' And I hope he will and so on.

05:00 Anyhow we went out there to the airport and then we stood carefully on one side and then when the Archbishop was just about to come in we unrolled this great long thing and about five or six of us stood behind it and me in the front with this letter and I rushed up to the Archbishop. He didn't take the letter but someone beside him took the letter and I said, 'This is for His Grace, if you would give it to him on the plane please?' And it was taken out of my hands. Well we got

05:30 in the paper for that of course. This was the photo in the Herald the next day, the encountering with the Archbishop, but I never heard any more from the Archbishop of course. It just made me so mad to have these Christian people going there and I thought to myself, 'What do padres do, what do they do, how do they preach to these soldiers who are just going to go out and set a village on fire?'

06:00 I mean it was so much worse. In the other wars mostly they were fighting against, but in the Second World War we were doing a terrible lot of dropping bombs on people too but it wasn't that sort of intimacy, you go out there and you set a torch to all these houses, to all these poor wretched people. It was so much more personal somehow.

I understand that when some of the boys left on the ships you had banners?

Oh yes, yes, oh yes

06:30 that was when the first conscripts went, the first batch of conscripts went. Well first of all the Women's International League that I was in, we got up a kind of little group of us, got all dressed up like suffragettes in suffragette kind of costumes that they wore in the First World War or thereabouts,

07:00 and one of the unions lent us a lorry and we stood in the back of this lorry and then we were driven all around the streets of Sydney singing a song we made up, 'We will bring the boys back, we will bring the boys back from Vietnam today,' and so we went on singing this all over the streets of Sydney and then we went right down to the Cove there

07:30 where they were going to be put on the ship. And another woman went and chained herself onto the gate where these conscripts were going to come in. She actually had a padlock, two of them had padlocks and chains and chained themselves onto this gate and of course the police came along and sawed them all and they were carried away.

08:00 But we were giving out leaflets all the time to people telling them why we were doing this and how these young men were being conscripted to go to this thing. And then this next day we took this banner we had made, another banner, we were always making banners, this banner was a long thing we made out of some long sheets and we had, 'You go to an unjust war,' and it came down like that,

08:30 in huge letters and we rolled it all up and we took it out to North Head. We had recognised it beforehand. We knew where we were going and there were hundreds and hundreds of people on North Head, all to wave goodbye to the ship as it was coming out. Some of them would say to us, 'Oh can we help you carry that? What have you got there?' And we'd say, 'We have a banner for the troops,' and they'd say, 'Can we help you?', 'Oh no we can manage thanks.'

09:00 And of course when we got to the edge Ruth was with us and we flung this over the edge for the troops there and you know what North Head is like, it was really quite frightening and we flung it over and the darn thing caught in a little bush a little way down so I had to kind of hang onto Ruth, she hung onto me with

09:30 one hand and with the other foot I was sticking on like this and kicking at this thing trying to loosen it off this bush. It was mad, it was quite mad, if she had let go of me I could have dropped to the rocks below. But anyhow we put it there and then the boat came out through the heads and went away. Now whether anybody ever even saw that I don't know. Michelle Cavanagh's

10:00 present husband actually he was actually a conscript on that boat, he was a Vietnam conscript, she told me all this and she said he's never mentioned to her about that banner. I said, 'I bet they never saw it,' but the next day we went back and we rolled it up and took it away again and this time we altered it a bit. We put

10:30 'They went to an unjust war', instead of saying, 'You go to an unjust war,' and this time we hung it again over the at The Spit there, you know Parawee Park, you know the cliffs that come down onto the road well we went out along Parrawee Park and we tied it onto a tree at the top there and we let it fall down there so that everybody coming up the Spit Hill would see, 'They went to a

11:00 unjust war'. And then the next day we though we had better get that back again so we went out on Spit Road and we saw some people up at the top there looking down very angrily, and we said, 'Oh it's a bit further along there, why don't you just cut the rope and drop the thing down,' pretending we were anxious about it too. They said to us, 'Oh we are going to take that awful banner

11:30 away,' so we said, 'Why don't you just cut it off and drop it down?' So they did that, and lo and behold the thing fell down to the bottom and we then we just said, 'Thanks very much, that is great,' and we went across the road and picked it up and took the thing home with us. Mind you the Spit Road isn't anything like it is now. You could actually walk across it. Oh you probably want to stop there?

Oh no, keep going. What were you hoping to achieve

12:00 **by having the banners out?**

We were hoping to draw attention to the fact that people were being conscripted to go to a war that we shouldn't be waging anyway, because it was so wrong. We wanted to stop the conscription issue altogether so that if people were silly enough to want to go and volunteer and go let them, you couldn't help that, but we wanted to stop them but we wanted to get Australia out of the war.

12:30 We wanted them to stop supporting America in the war there, which we were doing. Lyndon Johnson came here and we had that huge big rally and you know so many people were against that war and yet it went on. There were really hundreds of thousands of protestors in the streets, those big mass protests went on and on.

Did you

13:00 **do anything when Lyndon Johnson arrived?**

Oh yes of course, that was when we were called, 'Women in Black' then. We were all supposed to wear something black which we mostly did and we all went and stood, hundreds of people. We all lined up where I was in the Domain there, not the Domain, Hyde Park along

13:30 Liverpool Street isn't it, runs along the southern boundary of Hyde Park, is that Liverpool Street? It goes up to Oxford Street, yes, it's Liverpool Street and that's where we were and he was going to come down with that horrible Askin, the Premier, they were going to drive down there. Well we were about half way down, we women were about half way down Hyde Park and

14:00 there was one lot up at the top that went on the road and laid down. That was when Askin made his famous remark about, 'drive over the bastards', have you ever heard that? He said to the chauffeur, 'drive over the bastards', but they didn't, they stopped and the police dragged them away. Meredith Bergman was one of the people that laid down there that day. Then they came on down driving past where

14:30 we were and they were coming very fast by this time because they had been held up there. Well we didn't dare to run out and throw ourselves on the road, we just held up our banners, or these little things, 'Women for peace', that I told you about, that is what we did that day, that was when Lyndon Johnson, the President of the US came here.

15:00 And then another thing we would do was go to rallies where somebody was going to be speaking about the war and we would make interjections. I remember Harold Holt, he was the Prime Minister I should say and he was going to be speaking at Rockdale and some of us went down there and at that time we were supporting conscientious

15:30 objectors. See there were a lot of young men who were what you call conscientious objectors and we were trying to be very supportive of them. There was one young man called Bill White and he was a school teacher who objected to being conscripted and so when Harold Holt was finished his talk and asking for questions,

16:00 I went up to, I nerved myself to go up to the front of the thing and talk to him and there he was on the stage up there and here was I down here and I said, 'I want to ask you when are you going to release Bill White?' And of course was a bit taken aback, he didn't know what to say. He said, 'Well the proper authorities will deal with that,' or some such thing and then a whole lot of other people started yelling out, 'Release Bill White,

16:30 release Bill White!' This was just one particular episode but there were lots of similar kinds of things going on all the time really. Now what else can I tell you about that?

Could you just share with me so I understand, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Save Our Sons, was there a connection between those two groups?

17:00 Well what do you mean by connection? They weren't connected in any way by office bearers or meetings or anything like that. There was co-operation rather than connection. I mean they would let us know when they were going to be doing something and we would go along and be there too and we would let them know and they would send a contingent along to help us,

17:30 that sort of thing and some of our members were also members, in WILPF were also members of Save our Sons. There weren't any official kind of thing. People in Melbourne, some people in Melbourne were actually in the Save our Sons movement, it was all over Australia, and they were actually imprisoned for their activities down there, they were actually served in prison.

18:00 I have forgotten what the charge was, obstructing the police or something like that. I don't think anybody up here, any of our lot or their lot were ever, not that I know of, I'm sure they weren't ever actually imprisoned.

So you were mainly a part of Women's International League not Save our Sons group? You were actually the foreman of the Women's League?

The which?

You were actually a part of the Women's International League, not the Save Our Sons?

Yes, I never joined the Save our Sons group.

18:30 There wasn't any point in me joining it. I had my own work to do.

You mentioned I think the year was 1959 when you joined?

Yes.

What sort of led you to join the group?

Oh well now it is very hard to say exactly how I came, I am not too sure about how I came to join it. They didn't have

19:00 any branch in NSW and I hadn't heard anything about it, although I was in these other peace kind of

groups. Somehow I was getting some paper from London I think. I can't think what it was now, some peace kind of paper from some peace group over there, in which I read that they were going to have an international conference

19:30 in Stockholm in 1959. I should tell you that in 1959 I turned fifty and my kind, good, generous father had taken out insurance policies for me when I was just in my teenage, about fifteen or so and

20:00 one was to come good when I was forty five and one when I was fifty. Now when I got the one that came good when I was forty five I had used it to build a tennis court for my husband and children on a bit of land we had beside our garden. It was just a waste kind of land and it made a nice tennis court. And so when it came to the next lot was due

20:30 in 1950, I mean when I was fifty in 1959 my whole family said to me, 'Now look Mum you have got use it for yourself, you have given us the first,' whatever it was, 'thousand dollars' or something, nothing enormous, 'why don't you use this for something you want to do?' And I then I happened to find out about this congress that was going to be on in Stockholm and, 'Why shouldn't I go there, I would like to go to something like that.

21:00 That would be good. I would have an air ticket around the world and I will go to that congress and I will meet up with people of like mind in England and America and so on, fellowship of reconciliation in America, that I already belonged to,' and so I did that and that was the greatest turning pointing because I just got so hooked on this whole peace

21:30 body and this worldwide Women's International League for Peace and Freedom that I have sort of been on that ever since. When we came back here I thought, 'Well we have to have a branch here in Sydney, its so silly not to have one in NSW', so I started it the next year in 1960 or perhaps '61, I've forgotten which. After I came back from that world trip I went to Russia too, that is another thing,

22:00 because I was so interested in Russia. But when I came back from there I had a tremendous number of speaking engagements, all sorts of people started asking me to come and talk about my trip. For one thing I had met up with Christians in Russia. I had been to a Christian church in Moscow, whereas here they kept saying Christianity has been absolutely killed in Russia, well

22:30 I was sort of able to say, 'Well there is a flourishing Christian church there right in the middle of Moscow', that I had been to on a Sunday. But it wasn't only that, I mean it was just the general feeling about Russia which I wanted to tell them about, which I found pretty frightful really, I didn't like it. I thought it was very run-down kind of place, naturally enough.

23:00 I even went down to Victoria and talked to some church in Gippsland, in Bairnsdale, not Bairnsdale, well somewhere there. I went all over the place. I must have given dozens and dozens of talks about my trip and the peace movement everywhere.

Was it hard to recruit or to get

23:30 **women to come and join the Women's International League?**

Well we started off quite small I suppose and a lot of them were people that I already knew, friends of mine or friends of friends of mine and that sort of thing that came in who were very, very anti-war people and had been wanting something. There had been a kind of crying need for some kind of organisation that these people could

24:00 belong to and to find one that was not only based here, this particular branch, but had all these connections with countries all over the world and people who had been so anti-war for so long. You see in England there for instance one of their main people was a Professor Kathleen Lonsdale. Now this

24:30 woman had actually been so much as a pacifist that she had refused to take part in air raid drill and what not during the Second World War and she had been imprisoned, actually put into prison for refusing to do this. Another one in America, Dorothy Day

25:00 she too had been imprisoned by the people there for refusing to take part in air raid things, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. I think I'd better stop talking.

Just on this subject if I could ask, you'd said earlier that you had been a part of other pacifist groups, why

25:30 **was there a need to start a new one being this particular one, the Women's International League?**

I find it very hard to answer that. I suppose one thing I thought was that the others didn't seem to have so much oomph about them.

26:00 They didn't seem to carry the same weight, they didn't have overseas, the types of people that I met there at that Stockholm conference, were to me just sort of mind-boggling women. They were of such calibre you can't imagine it. One of them, I was talking to you before about the Norwegian women, the Norwegian teachers refusal to do what the Quisling Government told them,

26:30 one of these women that I met there at Stockholm, she had been one of the leaders of that group of teachers who had refused to do what the Quisling's had told them. She had spent quite some years in the Arctic I think and those terrible conditions. You see you met that kind of person there and this Kathleen Lonsdale

27:00 that had been imprisoned and so on, you met people that had really put their lives on the line for their pacifist convictions. The people out here that belonged to this little pacifist groups, you didn't feel anything like that about those people. I think it was just this feeling of, 'Well I have met these marvellous women and they are all committed to this thing'. You see we had,

27:30 another thing was that WILF had, and I think it still probably has, what is called consultative status with the United Nation. That means to say that they have an official person, one of their office bearers who works in New York. Yes, that's right, when did it go to New York? Yes it went to New York after the Second World War, didn't it? It used to be in Geneva didn't it, the UN?

28:00 The League of Nations, was in Geneva, and it was the UN in New York but WILF had all these connections with all these different, UNESCO and the Children's, I'm forgetting the names of them now, the one that looks after children, the UN Commission for, what's it called, UNICEF, is it UNICEF?

28:30 UNESCO and something else, I've forgotten what, conditions of labour or something like that, or anything to do that women were sort of into, they would be part of. These other little things were so small and ingrown somehow and this thing was a great big worldwide thing that people could belong to in every country.

29:00 **Obviously 1959 was a big year for you, did the Billy Graham Crusade influence your thinking at all?**

Oh no, no, not in any way, except to be very negative about it. I am not into that kind of thing at all, not at all. I don't like that kind of hyped-up emotional

29:30 appeal to religious feelings in people. I am sure he probably did a lot of good to a good many people. I don't want you to think I'm saying he was wrong or evil or something, it just doesn't appeal to me, I can't stand that kind of emotional, 'come-to-the-

30:00 foot-of-the-stage-and-be-saved' sort of thing.

Excellent.

No, I really can't.

One more question just around this time of 1959, Australia wasn't really in any major engagement as far as war was concerned, was there a need for a constant pacifist movement at this time?

30:30 Well maybe that is one reason why I wanted to get into something more worldwide, when I start to think about it, maybe that I realised that these small local things didn't have any particular razzle dazzle or whatever you call it. Maybe I don't know that I very much thought it out.

31:00 I was just so rolled over by this experience of going to this congress and having this personal contact with so many quite incredibly marvellous people. There was only one other Australian at that, and she was Nancy Wilkinson from Western Australia whose husband was a Senator, a Labor Senator,

31:30 Senator Laurie Wilkinson. I got to know her there which was very good.

Just going back now to World War II, when your husband was called up and when he went to New Guinea, how did that actually affect, what were you thinking at the time being since you were a pacifist and all that?

Well I just had to think,

32:00 'Oh well, thank heaven he isn't a soldier. He doesn't have to go and kill people and so on, and he is there to mend people that have been hurt in the war and he will mend them whoever they are'. In fact at the end of the war he actually was attending Japanese prisoners who had been taken who were wounded or sick. If he was going to be a

32:30 fighting man, I suppose I would have, I don't know what would have happened really. I don't know how I would have coped with that, but I suppose you tend to turn things the way you want them, don't you? I could think to myself, 'Oh well, he has to go, I suppose you've have got to go'. I mean he wasn't prepared to be a conscientious objector and I didn't want him to be one, I wouldn't have liked him to say

33:00 'nNo, I won't go,' and have to go off to prison and shut away for the rest of the war because he wasn't prepared to go and look after sick and wounded people. It would have been different if he had of been, I don't know to this day what he would have done if he had been a young man who'd been called up but he wasn't.

He went away for a period

33:30 **of time to New Guinea, were you in constant correspondence with letters?**

Oh yes, yes he was in, when did he go? His unit, his hospital was first of all around training or something

34:00 I suppose around NSW. I think it was up near Boggabri for a while and then they finally were sent off to New Guinea. I'm trying to think when it was. I'm bad on dates, I'll have to think back. We had twin sons born in 1943.

34:30 Now they were born while he was away, so I know that he went there long before August 1943. I really can't remember just when he went but he left me pregnant with these twins, with whom I had a terrible time. I nearly died. He didn't see them until he was given leave,

35:00 and they were about three months old, that was the end of 1943, that's right I think. Oh dear, I'm sorry I'm so bad on dates.

You said you had a terrible time with the twins, what was the terrible time?

Oh well because they are twins I suppose, yes, because they were twins I had a condition which is called

35:30 hydramnios. Now you won't know about that I'm sure but it is a condition women with twins suffer from sometimes, when there is more fluid secreted in order that the twins will be kept separate from one another. Apparently they need to have more fluid between them so the poor old women keeps on pouring in more and more of this fluid

36:00 till I got to the stage really where I thought I was going to burst. I had this enormous huge stomach out here and I really, I couldn't get into bed or out of bed without help I was so huge, and I don't know what would have happened to me really but one day my father came to see me and now he was a doctor too.

36:30 And when he saw me he called to my father-in-law who was a doctor also. My father-in-law was doing the work at our surgery as well as the work at his own surgery because my husband was away. He said, 'Come and look at this girl, Harry,' and the two of them came in and looked at me and my father said, 'That has to be stopped or she will burst'.

37:00 So my father-in-law agreed that something should be done and they immediately got onto my obstetrician and he immediately said, 'Send her over to the Women's Hospital,' where I was to have them. So an ambulance came a few hours later and I was carried out to the ambulance and carried over there and that night this kind doctor there performed an operation

37:30 to start the thing going and quarts and quarts of fluid flowed out, I'm sorry to be so disgusting, but they did and then came out one twin and then came out the other twin. But if my father hadn't have intervened then heaven knows what would have happened. I think I would have died and they probably would have died too. So they were premature, they

38:00 were about eight, six, seven weeks premature I think.

I mean these days when you have kids you can have epidurals and things, were you given anything for pain?

Well when I had this, oh no, no, oh suppose there was, I don't remember. I didn't have epidurals. But of course I had had other children and it wasn't my first confinement. I'd had the three other children already.

38:30 **So the twins were the?**

The twins were the fourth and the fifth. Well then they were very premature and they had to stay in the Women's Hospital being fed by artificial means and I came home. I couldn't feed them and they had to stay in humidicrib for about six weeks and after that I had a

39:00 mothercraft nurse come and live with us to help me.

We'll just pause there.

INTERVIEW ENDS