# Australians at War Film Archive

## Mario Hardie (Mickie) - Transcript of interview

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## Tape 1

00:30 **So we'll start off. Usually what we do at the beginning is to get a brief two to three minute history of your life to date ...**

I'd be very happy to cooperate. You'd like me to tell you about my life history?

**That's correct.**

01:00 **Well, I was the third daughter born to my parents, Jim and Maria Broun, spelt B-R-O-U-N, but pronounced 'Broon', as distinct from 'Brown'. My family had a very a large country property - what we called Stations in those days.**

01:30 **It was called Bassendean Station, and the postal address was Tingha, a little, tiny town in northern New South Wales between Armidale and Inverell. I grew up there and had an idyllic childhood. It was absolutely wonderful. In my day, there were so many people working around. Today you will find that a property has one or two people only, but since mechanisation came in ... but we had ... it was like**

02:00 **a small community. There was one hundred and sixty Aboriginals on the place, because there was an Aboriginal reserve of three hundred and twenty acres attached to the property owned by my parents. But it was right in the centre of the property, you see, so my father built ... but as they worked in the house, and as our stockmen, and generally assisted around the place - those that were able to - my father built them eight little huts**

02:30 **down on the paddock below the homestead. Therefore, I grew up with Aboriginals surrounding me, and they were educated there. We had a little church and a little mission there, and we had two missionaries brought in from the inland mission. As a child, I went to Sunday School there, with the Aboriginal children. We learnt all the hymns that we never hear any more today, and every time I think about that little school and mission**

03:00 **house I think how wonderful it was to have those two lovely old missionaries there with their organs, and teaching us hymns, and giving us religious instruction. Apart from that, it was a very busy station run along the lines - well, they're still busy on a country station - but everything in those days ... there was no mechanisation, you see. Everything was done**

03:30 **by horse or buggy. I grew up seeing buggies coming up the hill bringing visitors, or my grandparents from the property next door. They lived on Raino Station, which was next door. The cars only came in, you know, very late in the piece - although cars actually did come in earlier. When my father fell in love with my mother - by the way, my father was thirteen years older than my mother - but he**

04:00 **worshipped the ground she trod on. She was a beautiful, young, exciting, dark-haired - she was so beautiful, and she was only tiny. He just loved her with all his heart and soul. When he first met her, he gave her a Singer motor car, which he had brought out. It had just been imported into Australia, and that was in 1913 that he gave her that car. You couldn't believe they were coming into Australia at that stage.**

04:30 **He didn't know how drive, but still in all, she taught herself how to drive, along with her brother. That was the first motor car that ever went on to Bassendean Station. My mother married my father on the fourteenth of December, 1914 - just before the outbreak of the First World War. They had planned a world honeymoon, but they only went to Tasmania in the end. So she came as a bride**

05:00 **to Bassendean. She was only nineteen years of age, and he was thirty two. She came up to Bassendean - this great, old fashioned homestead. If you've been onto old country homes you'll know that they're great, big, old wooden homesteads, with masses of rooms and verandas all around with grapevines growing on the. They're just lovely, those old homesteads.**

05:30 **So she came there as a bride, and lived there for twenty seven years, and raised her six children there. There were six of us there.**

**Sorry Mickie, hold that thought ... [technical interruption]. So you were telling us that your mother stayed on the property for twenty-seven years ...**

Yes, twenty-seven years, and raised her six children. The interesting was that we grew up with Aboriginals all around us.

06:00 The Aboriginals were there when our great grandfather - Martin Kelly - came to Monara in 1847. There was a mob of Aboriginals there and my family sort of adopted them, and they became the maids and the stockmen, and were there with my great grandparents on Stony Creek Station. They belonged to the Kamilaroi Tribe. There's another name for the actual

06:30 group that were there, though. They lived with my people, and they sort of attached themselves to my family. So when my grandmother married David Broun - who came out from Scotland in 1875 to settle in Australia - they moved next door to a little property called Bushfield, and that's where my father and his four sisters were born.

07:00 And the Aboriginals then moved up to the same property with them. They were called Munros - the progenitor of the family was an old lady called Mary-Anne Munro, who then married later on and became Mary-Anne Sullivan, and she lived on the property at Stony Creek Station, and then she came up to Burendi; so my father and his sisters, when they were about ... there was a special act passed.

07:30 It was called the Robertson's Land Act, and it was passed about 1864, I think. I'm not quite certain about that date - we'd have to check that. The Robertson's Land Act decreed that any Australian over the age of sixteen had the right to claim three hundred and twenty acres of land, you see. So my father and his sisters ... when he was sixteen, my father - he was born

08:00 in 1882 - so therefore he was sixteen in 1898, and he therefore claimed his portion of land, and so did his sisters. So all of that was part of the original Stony Creek Station. It was a very large area of approximately fifty or sixty thousand acres. So the five of them with their little portions of land, they jointly called it Bassendean,

08:30 because that was the name of one of the old family properties the family owned in Scotland. Over there you will see an old brass plate with the name Bassendean on it, which we used as a stencil on the wool bales. At any rate they settled there, and my father at the age of sixteen - with the help of an Aboriginal man by the name of George Brummy and a few other men - they jointly built the homestead,

09:00 which is still there today. It was finished in 1903. Then my grandparents came up and my father's sisters, and they all moved in there, and that was their home. So they were living there when my father and Mother married. Then my grandparents and his sisters moved to the property next door, called Raino. So that became our family home - Bassendean.

09:30 It was a big, old rambling homestead with twenty two rooms. Now I think you'd find that hard to believe today - but that's how the old properties were. They had a verandah all around; and the kitchen was always separated from the house because in those days you'd find that because of the problem of fire - and also because the servants' areas were always separated from the main home - the kitchen was always separated from

10:00 the home, with just a walkway joining the two. So there were bedrooms galore, and more bedrooms were put out on the verandas when we had visitors. And there was another cottage built to house a teacher from the Aboriginal Protection Board. My father had also built a little school on the property, so the Aboriginal Protection Board sent this teacher/manager of the Aboriginals

10:30 and they went to this school that was built on the flat, down below the homestead. The Aboriginal children went to this school, and the first teacher there was a man named Mr Howard. For a little while we - the Broun children - went down there and had a little bit of education with the Aboriginals; but it didn't work, because we respected their culture and they respected our culture, but we never really mixed, as you would say.

11:00 At any rate, for health reasons - mainly because of lice in the hair and other health reasons - we went back to the homestead. So my mother and father brought in tutors and governesses. So we had governesses until I was about nine or ten, and then we had tutors. The tutors were men who were on sabbatical leave from Great Britain. They were educated men with degrees who came to Australia on sabbatical leave, to have the

11:30 experience of going into the outback. They wanted to live on an Australian sheep or cattle station and have that experience. Sabbatical leave usually lasted about six months to a year, so we had the advantages of very cultured English tutors, which has benefited us throughout the rest of our lives. It must have been very good teaching I think, because three members of our family gained university degrees. That speaks for

12:00 itself, doesn't it. At any rate, we grew up with our tutors and governesses, and in the big sitting room there, there was a piano up one end and a pianola in the other, so we were all taught to play the piano;

which we've all forgotten now. But we had a wonderful time on the pianola. Every Saturday night we had … oh, I forget to tell you - on these big properties in those days there were always jackaroos.

12:30 Now, do you know what a jackeroo is? It's a young man fresh from school, of means, from a private school. Their parents had means, and they would send them away to the big private stations, and they would pay the station owners for their board, to teacher them and train them on the principles of running a property and land. They were always told to bring their dinner jackets

13:00 because in the country in those days there were picnic races and hospital balls and things like that which brought the community together in the towns. Everybody dressed in their finery for those. So they all had to come with their dinner jackets. We often had a dance on a Saturday night in the main living room on the homestead. And that's when the pianola came into great use. The entertainment was entirely of our own making.

13:30 So in those days - it doesn't happen any more - but in those days I remember at six or seven years of age, dancing with my grandfather or my uncles or my father. So as we grew older we were dancing, dancing as little children. My father felt that he had to do that because we lived out in the country, miles from anywhere. So he taught us the refinements of living. We were

14:00 taught by our governesses to play the piano. And my father - when we were shearing - he'd always ask one of the big shearing companies to send an expert or a wool classer up to do the wool classing. And he would always make it a proviso that the wool classer could dance. We were very fortunate in that for two years - when I was twelve or thirteen - to have a wool classer called Woolridge, and he

14:30 was the New South Wales Dancing Champion. So we had that great advantage, and we were taught all the dances of those days - the Short Ease, and the Lancers, and the Merry Widow … no, not the Merry Widow… but there was the Foxtrot, the Gypsy Tap, the Tango, and the Charleston … so we were very fortunate as young girls, and it was great for the rest of my life, as if ever

15:00 I went to a ball, I could dance. And in those days, if you went to a ball you had to dance with every man in the party. So they'd come back and back and ask me to dance; and they asked me where I learned, and I'd be able to say, "In a wool shed with a wool classer. He was the champion of New South Wales." So we had all those advantages, you see. We were not neglected. We were not little hicks, because we had the advantage of having a father and a mother from a cultured background,

15:30 who were able to prepare us for our future life. It was such a busy, busy station. Every morning we'd have to have our lessons, but after that we couldn't wait to get on our horses; and as we grew older our father treated us more or less like stockmen. We loved riding, and often, in the mornings, you'd see tied up outside the wool shed on the hitching rail, up to ten horses.

16:00 And we would join the stockmen and do the mustering for the days - Saturdays and Sundays, or if it was a big day then we'd be excused from school to do it. We were riding horses from a very young age, and we became quite champion riders really. I'd just add something to that: I'm eighty-five years old now and three weeks ago I went out riding for three hours, just to show that I could still do it.

16:30 So that was great, and I didn't even feel a twinge of stiffness after it. So that's from having been in the saddle most of my life. That was great; and as I said, we had an idyllic childhood. We all owned our own horses and we all played a part in the station life. We'd often go out for the day with a saddle bag on the side of the horses containing sandwiches; and a teapot, and we'd make a little fire

17:00 and have our picnic out in the open, because sometimes we'd be ten or fifteen miles away from home if we were bringing in a mob of sheep or cattle home. So it was just an absolutely marvellous time. We had a huge river running through our property - twelve miles of river frontage, and we used to swim there. The jackaroos and the stockmen Aboriginals, they always used to swim in a different part of the river

17:30 because we never mixed together socially. As I said before, we respected their culture and they respected ours. We tried never to interfere in their lives. And my father never allowed alcohol on the station. He was a teetotaller, and he obeyed his own rules. He would say that if he forbade alcohol for the Aboriginals, then he couldn't have it in his own home. The first time in my life I had an alcoholic drink I was twenty one, and my fiancé took me for a drink to Usher's Hotel in

18:00 Sydney, and I was violently ill because it was an unusual experience for me. But still, you can live a perfectly happy life without smoking and drinking, as we did. We were never introduced to it. Now, I wandering terribly aren't I … let me get back on track …

18:30 there were six houses on Bassendean - proper houses, homesteads. The manager's cottage, and the missionary homestead and church, and three other houses down on the flats for the stockmen, who were Aboriginals, with Aboriginal wives and families. That's where they lived.

19:00 They were all separate, properly constructed homes made of wood, and with iron rooves. They were painted too. One was red and one was pink, and one was a darker colour. As well, there were eight huts down on the flats where the other Aboriginals lived and raised their children. These people … there was one family called the Livermores, and Annie used to come and work in

19:30 the kitchen; and Walter and Claris also worked in the kitchen. She was with us for about ten years. Claris worked with us for about ten years, and she was my sister's best friend really - my sister, Dot, and Claris used to go out rabbiting together. But then the Munro family was the main family that followed my people through from 1847 right through. My family, see, they were in the New England area for one hundred and fifty years - well, that's quite a long time, isn't it.

20:00 So we were well known and entrenched in the area, and as you can imagine, well respected - we were known as what was the called the old, funny word: 'squattocracy'. Have you ever heard of that word? So, all the old, large land-owning families were known as that - the squattocracy, which is a word that nowadays no-one would appreciate hearing. Times have changed now with the social structure and the acknowledging of the social structure,

20:30 but back in those days there was a definite social structure. I remember my great grandmother being referred to as the 'Great Lady', and if someone would be seen coming up the paddock on a horse, she would be heard to say, "Find out if he is a man or a gentleman." And the staff would then know that if he was a man then he was to go into the kitchen to be given tea and hospitality,

21:00 and if he was a gentleman then he would be taken to the front door. How then did they know the difference? Well, apparently it would be known by the way he was dressed and how his horse was equipped, and what type of horse he rode, and whether he lifted his hat off his head when approached, which was what a gentleman did in those days. So, there was one story about my great grandmother that goes like this. The little maid came in and says, "Mrs Broun, there's someone coming up the road," and she said, "Find out if he's a man or a gentleman,"

21:30 and the maid came back and said, "He must be a man, because he's riding a very old and bad horse, and he's very ill-kept and so-forth." So he was taken to the kitchen and offered a cup of tea. But she then said, "Mrs Broun, I think he must be a gentleman, so I think I'd better bring him in to you." And she said, "Well, how do you know?" And the maid said, "Well, when I offered him a cup of tea, he didn't sit down; and I couldn't understand

22:00 that until he said to me, "Well, are you going to sit down?" See, he wouldn't sit down until the maid sat down; and only a gentleman would do that. So great grandmother said, "Well, bring him in." And he turned out to be Cameron Price, an Oxford scholar and a very brilliant man, who had been sent out to Australia as a 'Remittance Man'. There were people all over Australia back then who were called Remittance Men. Have you ever heard

22:30 that word? They were the younger or middle sons of very well-known families, who had got into some sort of trouble through drinking or gambling or some sort of thing, and had offended their family to such an extent that they wanted to get rid of them. So they used to send them to the colonies in those days - to Australia, or Canada, or one of the colonies - and he stayed there for many, many years

23:00 and he had a remittance sent from his home - regularly or once a month or every couple of months - so he was never without funds. He always had money, and he could always go to the bank and draw money sent to him from England. They were usually gentlemen of good standing and consequence, and often with a title. But they were sent away because they had offended or disgraced the family in some way. Well, he was a Remittance Man, and was highly educated, and an Oxonian scholar.

23:30 So my great grandmother said, "Will you stay on the property and teach my grandchildren?" So my father and his four sisters were all educated by this man - Cameron Price - and they were all highly educated women and had beautiful accents. They were gentle people and there wasn't anything that this man failed to teach them.

24:00 He brought them up to almost the standard of university. So, he wouldn't sit down until an Aboriginal maid had sat down first. That shows you what I am talking about concerning a gentleman, you see. So they had that advantage of it, and we had that advantage too. They weren't Remittance Men that came out to us in those days though, they were teachers who answered advertisements, and they came on their sabbatical leave.

24:30 So now we're finished with education. What else can I tell you?

**Well, maybe just a brief word on the rest of your history up to now? Maybe two or three minutes, just a leap frog through from being on the homestead, up to now ...**

Well, being on the homestead - these were the 'Glory Years' in the '20s and the '30s. In 1929 I was

25:00 nine years old ... no ... well, on the 29th of June ... no, in 1929 the Wall Street collapsed, and terrible things happened all over the world. The whole world went into the Great Depression, which lasted until the end of the '30s.

25:30 Well, we were rich people and people of great consequence, and we had absolutely everything on our property, but then suddenly things began to change. The Depression hit. And my father, who lived like a Lord and who spent money like it was going out of fashion - he was a great philanthropist too - he didn't draw in his horns, you see. He didn't try to accommodate his living standards to the fact that we were in the Great Depression.

26:00 So by 1932, things were in a terrible state on Bassendean. So we went into growing tobacco then. Wool

prices dropped to nothing, to a penny halfpenny a pound. And cattle could be sold for two pounds ten. Stock was worth nothing and there were droughts and all sorts of problems, so slowly Bassendean's finances diminished to such an extent that by 1936 he was bankrupt.

26:30 It was a terrible thing. After all those years of the Burns and the Kelly's being on that land, we had to come to Sydney. At that time we had a Model-T Ford. The Model-T Ford was the first Ford that we had. It was the very old 'Tin Lizzy' one. And then there was the Model-A Ford that came later. It had windows. So Mother brought the six of us to Sydney.

27:00 That was the most terrible time of my life. I was eighteen years old, and I had to leave my beloved home and everything that meant something to me - my horses, my dogs, my cats, and the beautiful surroundings and everything that I loved with all my heart. I had the most wonderful childhood, and I loved it so much, and it broke our hearts that we had to leave and go to Sydney. But what else could Mother do? We had gone broke, and we couldn't

27:30 go to the dances and the picnic races and the balls and all the social life of the country. They had suddenly ceased overnight because of this terrible Depression. There we were at an age when … if Mother had left four girls there in the country, what would have happened to us? We would probably have had to marry rabbiters or, you know, men of lower social standing; and we would have had to do things that … you know, in desperation to take jobs that we would have never have taken - not ever.

28:00 So she brought us to Sydney. I was eighteen, Wilga was nineteen, Dot was seventeen, June sixteen; we were all about eighteen months apart, at any rate, except for my brother Jimmy who was only twelve, and my baby brother Malcolm was only nine months old. So there were six of us, and Mother hired a house in Mosman, and my beloved Aunt Nellie Macintyre paid for my elder sister and I to go to Miss Hale's Business College

28:30 to learn shorthand and typing. Now, in 1936 there was very little a woman could do to prepare herself - you know, to get a job. She had to be a nurse, or a shorthand typist. But there was nothing else really. A university education was … although, you know, my mother had a university education, but she had won all sorts of scholarships and prizes and she was a brilliant … and my two brothers won

29:00 scholarships, which took them to the university, but that was many years later. So, Wilga and I had to go and learn to be shorthand typists. I hated it. I didn't want to become a shorthand typist, but I wasn't equipped for anything else. But what else could I do? I didn't want to be a nurse, so I went to Miss Hale's Business College. You've heard of that, have you? It's one of the famous business colleges in New South Wales that only took in gentlewomen - you know, 'Ladies'.

29:30 It was Ladies Only, you know - selective. So we were fortunate to be accepted there. I was there for the regulation six or seven months, and that was in 1936. But when we first went to Mosman - Mother's family had been in Mosman in Sydney since Mother was a girl of about seventeen, so they were well known people there - so Mother said … well, we didn't know anybody.

30:00 So Mother organised us to join the local church there - St. Clement's Church. And in those days it was a very social sort of life because you joined the young peoples' Fellowship, and there were so many young people in that Fellowship - all the young Mosman people. It opened up a completely new social life and it changed our lives altogether. There was boating, picnics, debating, dances, Fellowship teas - there was so much we could do as members of that church. It was a total entrée into what

30:30 you would call 'Mosman Society'. So that was wonderful. And we were old enough to attract men in those days, too. The boyfriends began to come, along with dances and picnics and parties. So I really had a wonderful time. But Wilga was committed to one of the Jackaroos from Bassendean, and they married shortly after. She was married in 1937. That left Dot and June and me to have the fun.

31:00 So I then went and joined an organization … being a trained shorthand typist … Miss Hale's Business college found me a job at Philips Lamps. It was a very well known Dutch company whose headquarters were in Eindhoven, Holland, near the border of Germany. So it was a Dutch firm.

31:30 So I was then sent to Philips Lamps and put into the typing pool. Well that didn't last very long, because I was new in the typing pool and there were about eight girls there. I had a desk facing the passageway where everyone walked past. I was naive, young, and inexperienced and had no knowledge of the ways of men at all,

32:00 because of growing up quietly on the property and not going anywhere, and staying put. I didn't have any boyfriends or anything like that, and so I didn't have any knowledge of the ways of men. And these men were always going past and staring at me, and they'd go past and principally stare at my legs, and I didn't like it. And several of them made some remarks to me, and I was so naive that I didn't understand what they

32:30 were saying; but I imagined that it was, you know … not very nice. They were things that were …you know … suggestive. At any rate, I couldn't stand this constant attention from men, so I went up to the secretary of the company and I said I'd have to resign. Well he said, "Miss Broun, what is wrong?" So I told him. I said, "These men are coming up and talking to me all the time

33:00 and making these funny remarks." So he said, "You silly little girl, you'll have to grow up. It's all very

well coming fresh from the country, but you'll have to grow up. But I'll solve the problem for you." So, as I was a competent shorthand typist he put me in his office, and I became his private secretary - I became the secretary to the secretary of Philips Lamps

33:30 you see, which put me in a definite position in the hierarchy on the ... on the Presidential Floor, you might say. Now, do you want me to go on with the story from there?

**Absolutely. But keep in mind that we want to keep it the summarised version for now.**

Well, there I was as confidential secretary to the secretary of Philips Lamps on the managerial floor,

34:00 which was the second floor of the building. There was the Managing Director, and the other senior management staff, who were all Dutchmen. The Managing Director of Philips Lamps in those days was a man called Ben Hertog, and the General Manager was Jan Overdije, a big, florid, rotund Dutchman. And every time they walked past I would get this heavy aroma - they were always heavily perfumed, and they used to smoke

34:30 cheroots. So there was this aroma - this mixed aroma of perfume and cheroots. I didn't ... I never met men before who wore perfume, or an eau de cologne, I suppose. I went there in the latter part of 1936, and I was very happy there. In 1938 the management changed. Suddenly the Dutchman had gone, and in came the new

35:00 Managing Director, and he was a German. Now, as Eindhoven was on the border of Germany, a great majority of the workers would have been German. The staff were German and Dutch, so it was understandable that a German would work for Philips Lamps ...

**Sorry Mickie, you were working in Sydney, not Holland?**

Yes, in Sydney, in Clarence Street.

35:30 The place where I worked was in Sydney - in Clarence Street in Sydney. That was the Australian branch, and the new Managing Director's name was Armand Giberius. So he was then the new Managing Director, and he brought with him his own private secretary. So I was not involved in his work at all, because he had his own private secretary.

36:00 But I was very, very lonely in those years because having not gone to school in Sydney I had no girlfriends. The only friends I had were my own sisters and brothers and some cousins who happened to be in Sydney. I had nothing to do in the lunch hour; no-one to meet, and I was very, very poor because of the Depression. So I used to go out and sit in the park and eat my sandwiches, which I'd bring in every day in a little paper bag. I'd feed the pigeons, and it was so boring; and when it was raining there

36:30 was nowhere to go. But on this managerial floor there was the Managing Director's office, and his secretary, and there were only four offices. So I was in the secretary's office, and outside in a little corner there was the telephonist for the company. And she was working on a switchboard with twenty lines. So I used to go and chat with her, and I asked her if she could teach me to run a switchboard.

37:00 I thought that would be another thing I could learn how to do, so she taught me how to run a switchboard. And she suggested that I could run the switchboard sometimes when she was out to lunch. So I got into the habit of taking over the switchboard and run it during the lunch hour. And it became a habit. She'd go out to lunch and I'd sit there and eat my sandwiches and run the switchboard - because I otherwise had nowhere else

37:30 to go. So towards the end of 1938 ... oh, I must explain something first - in Clarence Street where I was, it was down near Darling Harbour. As the winter months came, the sun dropped down lower, and because my office was on the right-hand side with these big windows, the sun would shine right into the office, from about noon onwards.

38:00 And there were these big plate glass windows opening onto the offices, and I could see from my cubicle, across to the big plate glass windows of the Managing Director's office. They were right in front me, see. So I was quite happily sitting there one day, and, if you've worked a switchboard before, you know how, as the phone rings, you plug

38:30 the plug in and open the line and find out who's calling, then pick up another plug for the office being called and plug it in. So I was a bit careless one day, and I'd left one line open, and I said, "Mr Giberius, there's a call for you." And I'd plugged it in and left the line open. And what I heard then were the words, "Heil Hitler." And I thought that was funny thing to hear, and it surprised me,

39:00 you see. But I didn't give it much more thought and went on working. Then a couple of days later I was there again and the line was open again, and I not only heard the words "Heil Hitler" again, but also what I supposed was the German language. So I began to think, "What are these people doing," and what are they saying "Heil Hitler" for. And then to my horror one day - I was only nineteen you see, and I wasn't tuned in to

39:30 many things - but I saw one day when I was sitting at the switchboard, two men dressed in black came in. And they went across the hall and knocked on the door and opened the big plate glass doors and went into the Managing Director's office. And what I saw then was these two men give the Nazi salute

and click their heels together sharply. And I thought, "Now that's a very strange thing."

40:00 And when the switchboard operator came back, I told her about this, and I said, "I saw a very strange thing. I saw these men giving the Nazi salute." And she said, "Oh Miss Broun, don't worry about that. It's nothing to do with us." So I ... then ... a few days later I listened in a bit more, and I heard this German and a few words like "Sieg Heil" and a few other words I could identify as German. So I told the Company Secretary, my boss. And I said,

40:30 "There's something funny happening, Mr Tapp. These men are giving the Nazi salute and saying "Heil Hitler." And he said, "Dear girl, why worry; Chamberlain's just come back from Germany," and he went on about Peace In Our Time and so forth. So he said, "Don't worry, it's all over, and we're not concerned now with what's happening Germany." And of course Hitler was coming up at that time, and by 1938 the pogroms had started in Austria,

41:00 and floods of refugees were coming into Australia. So it was pretty bad, and the newspapers were playing it up, and I was pretty concerned. But nobody took any notice, and these two people at Philips Lamps, they just said to me, "Mind your own business. Forget about it." But I wasn't prepared to ...

**Sorry Mickie, we're just at the end of this tape and we'll have to start a new one.**

# Tape 2

00:30 Young as I was, I still listened to the radio. In the old days we had those old fashioned radios with the little bit of cloth at the front of it. At any rate, there was always something on the news about what was going on overseas, and particularly about Germany with Hitler;

01:00 so because I had this on my mind, I told my mother about it. And when you're really in doubt and you're desperate, who do you always go to? You go to your mother. Well, my mother then was very friendly with the Premier of New South Wales, and she was having dinner with him one night, and she happened to mention it to him. She told him I was working at Philips Lamps and that I had mentioned this to her - that the

01:30 Managing Director was a German. And I must come back and make this point: that I discovered very early in the piece, that internationally, it didn't matter how many times a German changed his nationality or became a citizen elsewhere, he always remained a German - once a German, always a German. It didn't matter what sort of passport he carried, he would always remain a permanent citizen of Germany.

02:00 So Giberius had a dual passport - he had a Dutch one and a German one. This would be discovered later. But at any rate, I told my mother. Then two or three days later, there I was sitting in my little cubicle, listening in and watching, and a man came along and said, "Are you Miss Broun?" And I said, "Yes," and he said, "Well, I want to ask you something; I would like to get your agreement to the fact that I'm going to ask you some questions, and I'm going to ask you

02:30 to take this in confidence and not tell anybody." And I said, "Yes, I would," because I always did what I was told in those days. So he said that he was from the Department of Intelligence at Victoria Barracks, and he showed me an identification. And he said that they would like me to help them. I asked him in what way, and he said that the Premier had asked them to investigate the story that they'd heard about what was happening in this place. He asked me to work

03:00 with them, and he explained to me the situation, and that the war was on, and that any information I could give them about anything that could affect our country would be of great value, and would I be prepared to do it, and would I give my solemn promise that any conversation that took place between us, I would not breath a word of it to another soul. Well, I gave that guarantee, and he said, "Now this is what I want you to do." He asked me if I was a shorthand typist and I said yes, and he asked me if I

03:30 spoke German. I said I didn't, but he said, "Well, you do shorthand, and as it's sort-of phonetic, if you hear a German word, would you try to put it down in the way you think it's spelt - with the symbols that go with the word." So I said yes and that I would try to do that; and he said he'd come in once a week for me to report whatever I might see or hear - how many men come in, and what they say and do, and how they behave, and how long they stay. And he asked

04:00 me to get any names I could through leaving the switch open. So I promised to do that, which I did; and that meant that I was spying, because every time the phone rang and I had to connect Giberius to someone, I would leave the switch open. And while the switch was open, I would endeavour to take down - as quickly as I could - whatever they were saying. Of course, it was only in shorthand symbols. And then I

04:30 would tell him all about it. So once a week he came in and took my shorthand notes. I don't know how they ever read them, but I suppose they got some information from them. So this went on for six months. And I got quite used to it after a while, because no-one knew I was doing it, and there was no-

one there in the lunch hour except for me, and there was no other noises around, so with the switch open he wouldn't have known

05:00 if anyone else was there, because there was just nothing else happening. It was quite fun in a way, and it was something to do; and I didn't really know what they were saying, and I just interpreted it as best as I could. So this went on for six or seven months, until one day he came in and said that they were bringing a car in, and they'd like me

05:30 to say that I was going to lunch, and I should meet them on the corner of Clarence Street and some other little street. So I did that, and they took me out to Victoria Barracks. They took me into the Department of Intelligence there, and I was thoroughly interrogated. It was quite a grinding I had there. But my truthfulness and integrity as a human being must have ... I was

06:00 Twenty-one, you see, as it was 1939, I was in my twentieth year - and I just answered, and they thanked me for what I was doing, and asked me would I continue. They gave me a few more instructions, and then I went on quite happily. Then in September 1939, I was out one night in the Glacierium with my sisters, and suddenly they called everyone's attention; and the Prime Minister's voice - Menzies' - came over the radio, that ... he said,

06:30 "Ladies and gentlemen, Britain has declared war on Germany, and as a consequence, Australia is now at war." So that was a terrible night for us all. So next morning I went into Philips Lamps and my normal job, and there was chaos. There were people in every direction, and there were policemen and army officers, and there were people everywhere. And I thought, "Whatever has happened?" And then

07:00 they told me that Armand Giberius had been arrested at midnight that night and been charged with espionage, and that he was in Long Bay Jail. It transpired that he and his con ... I mean, his co-conspirators - all these men and women that he was associated with, they had set up a telecommunications system linking Sydney, New Zealand and Tahiti, and right around the Pacific and back to Malaysia.

07:30 This telecommunications system had been set up for use in the war. It was a terrible thing that this had happened right under our noses, and none of us knew anything about it. And if it hadn't been for this little stickybeak opening the switch and doing this, they'd never had known. So I was virtually responsible for the arrest of the managing director of Philips Lamps. So he was stuck in Long Bay Jail, and I continued working

08:00 at Philips Lamps, and feeling terribly guilty all the time. Then about three weeks later, the Department of Intelligence contacted me again, and I was seconded - you know what 'seconded' means: taken from one job to another - and I was taken to the Department of Intelligence, and put into the Censorship Branch. I was the third appointee there. in New South Wales. There was the District Censor, the Military Liaison Officer, and me. There was actually

08:30 a telephonist there too, so there was four of us. We were stationed in Challis House, and that's where the Censorship Branch for New South Wales was set up. We didn't actually get established as a Censorship Department until December. That's why, when I show you my discharge papers, you'll see it says from December 1939 to August 1944.

09:00 But that was when we actually set up the Censorship. But the nucleus of us were there setting up the staff earlier. But the actual Department of Censorship was set up in the Army House in Riley Street, Surrey Hills, and that's where I worked for over four years. Eventually we all moved up to Army House - or the administration moved up - and from there, that's where we

09:30 appointed all the Censors. Now, that was a tremendously difficult job, because we had to find people that we could absolutely trust. We had to be assured of their probity and integrity. Each one had to therefore be subject to twenty four hour surveillance. Now, for four years, I had a twenty-four hour surveillance on me, every month. My phone was tapped,

10:00 and they would know all my movements for the whole time. Even my letters written at that time were censored. I didn't know I was being ... I didn't know I was under surveillance, like the other appointees were, but one day I was 'mattered'. The District Censor called me in and said, "Miss Broun, I'm sorry to tell you that you've been seen going out with a man

10:30 who's an Austrian who came to Australia as a refugee; now I must tell you that you must have no more to do with him. You must not see him any more, because he is a foreigner, and he is an alien and a German national." So I'd only been to a couple of dances with this fellow, but I was forbidden to ever see him anymore. So that was how they found out - through the surveillance.

11:00 Now, to go back to the District Censor. Now, I was appointed as private and confidential secretary to the District Censor for New South Wales. That placed me in a top job in there. Now, the District Censors ... there were five District Censors in that period - in that five years - and I remained as private and confidential secretary to each one. They never moved me from that job. I stayed there for all that time.

11:30 The first one was Colonel Edgecombe. The second one H.R. Forbes-Mackay, who was Electricity Commissioner. The next one was John Garlick, who was twice Commissioner for the City of Sydney, and an expert on Pitman Shorthand. He didn't dictate to me, he always sent me shorthand that he had

written himself - all the letters. Instead of dictating, it would be, "Miss Broun," and so-forth,

12:00 all written in shorthand. So it improved my shorthand greatly. So that was John Garlick. The next one after that was A.E. Barton, who was Chairman of the Canteens Trust. During the war, all the canteens - they were under the control the Canteens Trust. And the next one after that was Professor Arthur Lang-Campbell, who was the Bonython Professor of Law at Adelaide University. And then, towards the end of the war, the last one

12:30 was Beaufort Burdekin, a barrister, who had been Deputy District Censor for three to four years before that. So there were five of them, and me only once. Now, my duties were really quite extraordinary when I look back on it … but, before … now before I went into the Department, I had to pledge that I would never reveal to anybody the work that I was doing or who I was working with, for the Department,

13:00 and that if I did reveal it, then I would be prosecuted under the Crimes Act. So that put the fear of God into me as you would imagine. After what I had already been doing in my time at Philips Lamps I was aware how important it was that I didn't reveal what I was doing. I signed this document and it said that I mustn't reveal anything for a minimum of twenty-five years. So, having kept quiet for twenty-five years, it became automatic,

13:30 and I've never told anybody about it. So, my work … I had a private line coming to me from the GPO, and every morning, General Blamey's headquarters in Melbourne used to send through a communiqué about what was happening, like for example if a ship like the Queen Elizabeth was coming in, or the Queen Mary, or if troops were being moved - say from Atherton

14:00 to New Guinea, or if a ship had been sunk off the Australian coast, or something like that. So, I got this on a private line to me, and it was nearly always in code. So I had to decode the communiqué and then take it through to the District Censor after typing it out. The code at that time was the ABC code, the ACME code, and the

14:30 Peterson code. There were different codes, which as you probably know, all codes had different books, and because I didn't know the codes off by heart, I had the code translator beside me. So I had to do this every day with the communiqués coming direct to me; and I always had to type on them: "Secret", or "Most Secret", or … it was always headed like that. So I had the

15:00 stamps and a little ink pad beside me, and I'd stamp it Secret or Most Secret; and then I'd take it in to the DC. Then from that communiqué we'd have to issue a direction to the censors down below - not saying what was happening, but saying something like, "Please be alert and watch for shipping movements." So they wouldn't know what the actual movements

15:30 were, like if the Queen Mary was coming in through the Heads at eleven o'clock; or if the troops were leaving for overseas at such and such a time. But we would just say, "The alert for the day is shipping movements." And another time it would be "The alert for the day is troop movements." And also there would be bombing alerts and attacks, like the day that Darwin was bombed.

16:00 The newspapers weren't allowed to mention it, you see. There was a ban on radio and the newspapers, as much as there was on the people, because censorship covered everything - and especially the important things like the bombing of Darwin or the sinking of a ship off the Australian coast, or a hospital ship, then that was a total ban, and the newspapers couldn't put it in. So that's why the people knew very little about the Darwin bombing - they didn't know how many casualties

16:30 there were or what had happened. A certain amount was released to the newspapers, but it was only a limited amount, you see. And if a ship was sunk - like the hospital ship that was sunk off the Queensland coast - then you'd just say, "Unfortunately we lost one of our ships today," or something like that. But no details were given. So that was the job I had all the time. I was not only taking the messages, but decoding them into the District Censor, and relaying

17:00 the Instructions to the censors. It ended up in the end with two thousand people in the Censorship Department, because you had to had a censor to work on all different languages. The mail would come in, in the great big bags from the Post Office, and there were emptied onto a great huge table and it was sorted like that onto the different censor's tables. If it was France then it went to the French table … and often you'd

17:30 couldn't. You'd have to open every letter. I don't supposed you've ever seen a censored letter? It's quite an extraordinary thing. You'd have a little bit of black ink beside you, and a pair of scissors. They'd blot them out or cut them out. But usually it was just blotting them out with thick black ink - the words that you don't want; and sometimes you'd pick up a letter and there'd be so many pieces of black ink across it, you'd hardly know what they were talking about. People were very foolish sometimes,

18:00 saying things like, "Oh, I was talking to my Aunt Elizabeth and she's leaving tomorrow. She thinks she's leaving tomorrow and going out of the country." Well, that's trying to tell someone about the Queen Elizabeth came in and was leaving tomorrow. You see, it doesn't matter whether it was war or not. People can be terribly indiscreet. They don't realise the harm they can do by giving that information away. One of the saddest things was the beheading … if they found anything of great interest on

18:30 the censor's tables - they were down below and I was upstairs - then they'd send it up to us, you see. And so I got one letter one day - it was terribly sad - and it was a translation of a Japanese diary, and it was about the beheading of Bill … of Newton, the great flyer in New Guinea. It was Killer Caldwell and … was it Peter Newton? At any rate, it was Newton.

19:00 I think it was Peter. And he was a great flyer, and he'd shot down so many Japanese planes, and … in the war they respect one another - these great warriors respect one another. So, like the Red Baron in Germany. He was respected by our men, and our men were respected by them. And the Japanese

19:30 respected this fellow Newton because he was a great fighter. But they shot him down eventually, and he was their prisoner. This was all in the Japanese diary you see, of how they … of what they did to him. They bound his hands behind him and they marched him out onto a parade ground, and they made him kneel; and then all the Japanese troops made a circle around him

20:00 and then came on the general with his samurai sword, and they gave him a samurai execution. And all the Japanese saluted him, and he had his head cut off with the samurai sword. Well now, all this was detailed in this Japanese diary. These were the sorts of things I had to do when I was twenty-one years old, and a young girl … and an emotional girl. And these things … you can imagine how you feel reading these sorts of things,

20:30 and knowing that this great hero had lost his life that way. Well, we couldn't do anything about it. The Newton family were just … they were just told he was killed in action, you see. They never knew; and I don't suppose they ever knew. Well, they may know now, or they're probably all dead now, at any rate. You see, people didn't know those things, and we had to keep them from them. So that was one thing. And another

21:00 thing … one morning was the burning of the English Channel - have you ever heard of that? You've never heard of that. Well, you know as I do - having read history - that Napoleon's greatest mistake was opening the front into Russia. He advanced on Russia … it finished Napoleon. It was the greatest mistake he ever made, because the army marches on its stomach, and the reinforcements couldn't get through. Well, Hitler did the same

21:30 thing. He decided, when he thought he'd completed the war and defeated Great Britain and was master of Europe, he decided now was the time to invade England. So he got his invasion force ready, but then he made the same mistake that Napoleon made. And this was the turning point of the war: he opened a front into Russia. And you know, as history will tell you, the Russians used the burnt … the burnt fields … the 'scorched earth'

22:00 policy. They burn everything. They kill the sheep and the cattle and everything, in advance of the enemy. As the German army advanced, they came onto barren land. They had no food and no accommodation, because as they advanced the Russians had destroyed everything ahead of the marching army. And also it was winter time, and they had great trouble

22:30 bring the foods and the reinforcements through. So, the Russian campaign was a fizzer, and it was Hitler's great mistake and probably the turning point of the war. I always used to look at it that way from the position I was in, anyway. So then he decided that … OK, he deployed an enormous army as an invasion force. And once again, history repeated itself. It's quite fascinating. We saw Hitler do what Napoleon did in Russia, and we saw how Hitler did what Philip of Spain did - he sent an armada.

23:00 You remember how Drake scuttled the Spanish Armada? Well, here was this great invasion fleet about to depart - I think one hundred thousand or more … it was a tremendous fleet, with all the barges and flat-bottomed boats filled with tractors and machine guns and tanks and everything that was needed for an invasion; and I suppose you know - as the rest of the world knows - that the greatest

23:30 intelligence section in the whole wide world … the greatest espionage … the greatest spies in the world have always been the British … there is something about British espionage that is so great. And history will tell you that. Well, Churchill had it at his fingertips you see, and his espionage knew that this fleet was assembling. So something had to be done. How were we going to save Great Britain?

24:00 Now, he was an unbelievable leader and one of the great men of our times. So he recalled all the submarines that were able to come; that were still in existence. You see, most of the submarines in the British Fleet had been sunk. So he called as many as were able to come into the English Channel, and he sent messages to all the air force bases all over England

24:30 and gathered all the old decrepit planes - all the ones that had just about finished their term of office … their term of operation. And he asked for volunteers. He said that only volunteers must be asked, and that no-one should be ordered to go, because it could be a total sacrifice of life. He said he wanted only volunteers only to man these planes. So he got hundreds and hundreds of volunteers - because that of course is the British way of life, at any rate.

25:00 And Britain was right on her knees. It was the end. There was nothing left of Britain at that time. Churchill was saying that they'd fight with sticks and stones, and that they'd never be defeated. But, they were almost defeated. But these submarines were recalled, and the planes were deployed. And then the submarines were sent right to the bottom of the English Channel and they were filled with a lot of oil. And then, when the invasion fleet was halfway over, he gave the order

25:30 to release the oil, and for the planes to take off. And then, when the invasion fleet was halfway over, the oil came to the surface, and the planes flew over as low as they could - of course, so many were shot down by the German fleet - but some got through and they dropped incendiary bombs on the oil. And the incendiary bombs lit the oil, and the whole of the British Channel went into flames.

26:00 Now, I know you've never heard of this, because it was top, top secret. And so the invasion fleet was totally frizzled, you might say. There was nothing they could do. There was no escape. The men couldn't jump into the water because they would have got burned. So the whole invasion fleet was halted in the middle of the channel, and all those Germans were killed. Now, we could never, never release that information, because we were condemning the Germans for what they were doing to our prisoners of war. How would the whole world

26:30 have reacted to the thought that we … that we destroyed hundreds of thousands of men by burning them that way. You see, people would say … well, I thought it was horrible myself, when I took the message. So there was a total ban on that throughout the whole of Britain and the whole of … you know, Australia and the whole of the allied forces. No-one must know about it. And of course, the English people were wonderful with censorship. They could keep their mouths shut.

27:00 All over England there were big signs: "Keep Your Mouth Shut", with pictures and big sort-of gags across their mouths. And everybody knew they mustn't say anything. And that I believe, I would consider that the turning point of the war - things changed as far as Great Britain was concerned. And I've met people since who said that up and down the coast of Britain they were burying Germans, and that German bodies were being washed up for months and months

27:30 and months. But the people in London knew nothing about it, and the people down the coastline of Britain all knew, but they kept their mouths quiet. They never told a soul, because they knew what censorship was all about. Now, that was a story that was never released, and I'd say, when I married Martin Hardie in 1970, I read it in the Readers Digest - this story about the burning of the English Channel - and that was forty or more.

28:00 years after the war. So, that was one of the stories that I had to suppress and take through. The censorship would have come from Great Britain about that, through the letters, but that was their responsibility to take it out of the letters, and not to let anybody here know. And so, there was nothing on the radio, and so that was one thing that no-one in Australia knew about.

28:30 It's extraordinary how information can be controlled. So that was one of the great stories. There were so many more like that. One day I was sitting there and I picked up the phone and it was a communiqué that the Perth had been sunk – HMAS Perth. And my junior, who was sitting next to me and helping me … you know what a 'junior' is when you're a

29:00 secretary - well, she was the sister of the engineer on the Perth. And I knew … and they said the Perth had been sunk, and all hands … and no survivors. There were no survivors, it said. But I think it ended up that there were two or three survivors. But her brother was in the engine room, and as you know, when the torpedoes come

29:30 they're the thing that hits the engine room. My brother was an engineer in a battleship, and the engine room is the most dangerous part to be in, because the torpedo comes in underwater and goes straight in there. So you never survived it - never. So I had to take that message and type it out - without her knowing - and take it into the office to the District Censor. And then we had to think about what we were going to do with this poor girl

30:00 and her family. Her father was a captain in the navy, so it was an awful experience to know that this girl was sitting there and I wasn't able to tell her. So these sorts of experiences I had right through, and as I told you, I was there for four and a half years. I'll show you the documentation to prove it, soon. And all I have to show for that after four and a half years

30:30 is … this … here is the tray here … I'll show you …

**No, that's all right. You can show us later.**

Alright, I'll show it to you later. I just wanted to show you to prove that I did do that. It's a silver tray, and on it is written. "To Mickie, from her friends - 1939-1944." Well, you know how many years that it. That's … well, it's four and a half years, but it could be five years. I had that silver tray, and I had what I considered to be

31:00 like a Discharge Paper from the Department of Army, releasing me from my position. So I left that position after having applied to Manpower to be released, because my husband - whom I'd married in 1943 on his return from El Alamein … he was in the 9th Division, and he came home with the 9th Division in 1943 from Alamein,

31:30 with his 8th Army Clasp on his ribbons. He was a captain, and I married him in 1943. I married him three weeks after he came home, and I had ten days with him before he was sent up to the Atherton Tablelands to train for jungle warfare. He was then sent to New Guinea, and he was away for another year. So he sailed in 1940,

32:00 I married him in 1943, and he was three and half weeks in Sydney before he went to Atherton, and then he was away for another year. So when he came back he was a man I hardly knew. You know, that's war. That's what we had to go through. And he was very, very ill. He had what was known in those days as 'Troppo' - he had war neurosis, and he suffered from that war neurosis for nearly ten years

32:30 at least. And he had to go psychiatry treatment and he had to have special pills. So it was not much of a life I had after his return. But that's what so many other wives had too. But he was so ill … and that's why they had to release me. And then five years after he came back - that was in 1944 - and I had Vicki in 1948, and Catherine was born in 1952.

33:00 So we had two children. And then my life changed completely. It's a completely new story of what happened after, and what I did because of Catherine's illness; and the jobs I had, and the roles I played in the community ever since. And I'll show you my Order of Australia, and the other Orders I have been given since.

33:30 But I've had a very full and a very rewarding life, and I've had an experience that not many other young women would have had. And, dear girl, is there very much more you want me to tell you?

**Maybe just if you could continue with a summary from 1948 until now?**

Oh no, I was married to Max for twenty-seven years. There was ten years

34:00 in which he had to have that psychiatric treatment because of the war neurosis. But he always suffered for the rest of his life. You see, he had malaria very badly - cerebral malaria, which gave him the war neurosis. But he came back from the war and established his dental practice in Macquarie Street,

34:30 where he practiced for twenty five years. And I had my two children. Then after that there was the Asthma Foundation. Did you know that I was the co-founder of the Asthma Foundation of New South Wales? I helped set it up all over Australia, and that's what I was interviewed for on the ABC last Monday. I can show you what they put on if you like - it's a very brief one. I've just been awarded my big award for establishing the Asthma Foundation.

35:00 You know it's the biggest in the world know. It's the biggest and most widely respected and largest Asthma Foundation in the whole wide world now. And that started with Leila Schmidt and me. Of course, we were mothers of two children with asthma, and they were threatened … daily, we thought they might die. And I was told about six times that Catherine wouldn't live. The only thing they could do

35:30 in those days was to give them adrenalin. So we were two desperate mothers, and we went out to see what we could do about it. But eventually we established the Asthma Foundation of New South Wales. But that's a very long story. We ended up raising the largest sum of money ever raised by a charity in New South Wales in those days. So we made history. That's another history-making thing, but it's another very big story in itself.

36:00 Then, from when the Asthma Foundation was over I formed the … oh, I was trained in public speaking and meeting procedures very early in the piece - in 1956 - and as a result of that I was able to do a lot of public speaking; and that helped me with meetings and procedures after that. I was Chairman of the Country Areas Committee, and Chairman of the Women's Committee and so forth. And all these different positions I've held were as a result of being trained

36:30 by the Penguin Club of Australia in the art of public speaking and meeting procedures. I'm forever grateful for that. So, I was with that for many years, and I was a Deputy Organizer for New South Wales, and I was Federal Secretary for that, and worked for that interstate as I did for the Asthma Foundation. Then, when the Asthma Foundation closed I became Secretary for a Finishing School

37:00 that I established. And I ran that Secretarial Finishing School as Secretary with great success for a number of years. It was a great success, with a number of big firms sending me girls to train to be efficient secretaries. And from then, I saw an advertisement in the paper that wanted a Director for the International Centre Foundation, and when I applied for it, my background

37:30 with all the history that I had behind me for the Asthma Foundation and my experiences … well, I applied for this position because I thought I could set up a foundation and direct it. The International Centre Foundation, the idea behind it was to handle all these overseas students coming into Australia from all these various countries, to be educated at universities and boarding schools - and school level, at any rate.

38:00 It was to teach English and you know, to finalise their education and help gain degrees with which they could help their own countries. They came in under the Government assisted policies, and under the Colombo Plan, which involved money made available to students from Third World countries.

38:30 So this foundation was to handle them, and this was through the Department of Immigration in Canberra. So they set it up with the help of Rotary, Lions, Apex, and Jaycees - those service organizations. So I applied for the position, and I was asked to come in; and when I came in I said I was Mickie … I was Mickie Halliday then. I married Max Halliday in 1943. And this was in the 1960s, after the Asthma Foundation ended,

39:00 which was in 1963. I was still with the Asthma Foundation then though - I was Honorary Secretary then, and stayed with them until 1970, and I was Federal Secretary too. And when I married Martin Hardy, who had been President of the Foundation, and who had helped me all the way through … he had been its first President. So I had to resign from the Asthma Foundation, because I

39:30 believed with all my heart that no husband and wife should ever serve on the same committee. I don't think it's a good policy, and there's too much pillow talk and so-forth. So, because I believed that, and because it was one of the rules of the Foundation, I therefore felt I should resign, even though it was after all, my baby. I was hoisted on my own petard, sort of. Anyway, I did resign because I thought that Martin Hardy

40:00 could serve the Foundation as its President more greatly than I could. I had done my part with the fundraising and the setting up and everything. But I still … I'm a Life Governor now, and I'm still helping all the time. So I went into W.D. Scott & Co, who are very big employment agents, and they said, "Well, Mrs Halliday, we've advertised for a man - it's a man's job." And I said, "I thought you advertised for a person with the

40:30 qualifications to do the job," and he said, "Of course we did." And I said, "Well, I have those qualifications," and he said, "Well, tell me what they are." So I told him, and he said, "Well, if and when we find a person for the job, we might consider you for Assistant Director." Well, to that I said, "Sir Walter, I think I'm wasting your time and you're wasting mine. I applied for the position of Director

41:00 and that's the only thing I'm interested in, so goodbye." And I got to the door and he called back, and he said, "Don't be so hasty; don't be so easily offended," and he said, "I've got all your particulars - tell me a bit more. You never know, we might find something else sometime that would suit you." And you wouldn't believe it, but two hundred men applied, and I got the job. So I set that up. It was a great … so we set up the International Centre Foundation - I had to get the staff

41:30 and everything to work for it, and then we started to run the Miss International Quest to fund it and keep it … to finance it. You see, we were getting a very small amount of money from Canberra - from the Department of Immigration. So we started this Miss International Quest to find a girl of a different nationality. And for the first one we had Japanese, we had Aboriginals, we had Spanish …

# Tape 3

00:30 **Mickie, I'm going to ask you a few questions about Bassendean. But before I do that, you mentioned that your name came from a specific area …**

01:00 I can easily explain where I got the name 'Mario' from. I was the third child born to my mother and father. It was towards the end of the Great War - 1918. Just before my birth, a telegram was received by my grandmother. It said that Mario Peryman - that was his name - was "Missing believed killed." So therefore she thought that her beloved brother

01:30 who was away at the war had been killed. So she said that whatever happened - whether her child was male or female - she would call that child Mario, for Mario, her brother. I was born a girl of course, and I was given the name Mario, because she thought she would never see him again. And his name – Mario - was given because our great grandmother - Catherine Toser - was an opera singer, and she had made her name from singing excerpts from Tosca.

02:00 And as you know, Tosca is the painter in the … I mean, Mario is the painter in Tosca. So her son - my grandfather - named his elder son Mario as a complement to her. She had no Italian in … well actually, there was a bit. It goes way back - so far back, that they claimed my great grandmother, whose name

02:30 was Toser, but she was born a Peryman, spelt P-E-R-Y-M-A-N. They claimed descent from the great Italian composer Scarlatti. So there is this slight Italian strain in the family, from Scarlatti's time in the 1700s. And of course the Peryman came from the name Pery, which is associated with one of Columbus' ships

03:00 which was captained by a man named Captain Peri, spelt P-E-R-I. And Queen Isabella wasn't very nice to Columbus and his crews, and he was so offended that he went off to Great Britain and settled in Wales. So the name Peri, the Welsh turned it into the name Peryman. See, they used to put the suffix 'son' on names, so that's how it became Peryman. So that was the beginning of the name Peryman in Wales. That goes right back to

03:30 the 1400s or something when Columbus found America. That's where the name Peryman came about, and Mario came about from Tosca. So my uncle was presumed killed and I was baptised Mario; and Rheta - that's R-H-E-T-A - was my mother's second name, so I got Mario Rheta. And I lived in a generation where nobody had the courage to go and change

04:00 their name by deed-poll. You had to do that in those days. Nowadays you just have to be known by a name for a year, and it becomes your name. So I was landed with that. But I've never been called Mario in my whole life. When the war ended there were lots of little songs like Tipperary and all those - and

there was one that went, "Mickie, pretty Mickie, with your hair a raven hue; with a smile that's so beguiling, can you blame anyone for falling in love with you."

04:30 It was a great dance tune, and a good two-step. It was played all over the dance halls, all over, wherever there was a dance, it was played - this "Mickie, pretty Mickie". And my mother had a record, you know, one of those old HMV gramophones, with the huge horn and the dog sitting ... you'd put a needle in the head and ... so she'd dance to this tune "Mickie pretty Mickie"; and my sister, who was eighteen months old than I and just beginning to talk,

05:00 she would call me Mickie because of that. So she christened me Mickie because of that old song. Then everybody else began to refer to me as Mickie, and so for the rest of my like I've been called Mickie. So now that your registration of your baptismal name goes on all the computers, I have to sign my name "Mario R", and I'm addressed as Mrs Mario R; and yet to everybody, I'm known as Mickie.

05:30 So that's how I got the name Mario. So if there is any Italian blood, it goes right back to the time of Columbus. But actually, I'm of pure Celtic blood - Celts are Scots, Irish, Welsh, Cornish, Manx, and Britains. See, English is not Celtic - they're Germanic. So all my ancestors are Welsh, Irish, or Scottish, mainly Scottish. There might be a touch

06:00 of Italian going back hundreds and hundreds of years. But that is the reason why I carry that name 'Mario'.

**Thank you Mickie. I wanted to talk about Bassendean. It sounds like it was a very remote station. I wanted to ask you if you had things like electricity or modern machinery at that point?**

06:30 Well, we were twenty-six miles from Inverell, sixteen miles from Tingha, and twelve miles from Bundarra - so we were totally isolated really. We were down in a valley with mountains all around us. Bulawandjan was the mountain on our property, which was the second highest mountain in the New England area.

07:00 Bulawandjan is an Aboriginal word than means 'Blackfella's Waterhole'; and at the very top of Bulawandjan is a waterhole, which can't really be explained - it's at the very top of the mountain. It's like a little well, right on the top of the mountain. At any rate, we never had any electricity. Electricity was eventually put onto Bassendean station in the forties, but it was too isolated

07:30 to put electricity on - too isolated and expensive to put the poles in, so it was never attached. So in those days, the only type of refrigeration we had was with what they called ... oh dear, it's such a well-known name, but I can't remember it ... it was a frame with bags hanging down either side of it, and a little galvanised ... oh dear, isn't that silly - I can't remember the name ...

08:00 At any rate, you'd put the water in the top of this galvanised iron, and it had little holes all the way around; so the bags were always wet with the dripping water, and inside you'd keep your butter and cheese and whatever. It was the only form of refrigeration ... Coolgardie Safe, I think that's what it was called. At any rate, it's very well known in the

08:30 old history books. It was the only type of refrigeration they had in those days, until the Silent Night refrigerator came in; and that worked by kerosene. You had to put the kerosene in some sort of burner underneath; and it did something ... made the water freeze. And that was the first refrigerator introduced - the Silent Night - and it was made by

09:00 Halstrom, who was very famous for it. So that was the only sort of refrigeration we knew. But we did have a form of lighting. I could find the name by looking up the record. It created a gas. It was a huge circle about the size of a motor tyre, and it was made of iron, and it went right up in the air on a huge pole, and came down slowly like that [gestures]. I don't know what it did

09:30 but it brought a type of gas into the house. We had these little gas fittings in the house, and we used to put little mantles on them. The mantles were made of a particular type of linen, I think. So you'd light those, and that was the only form of lighting we had. But it turned out to be very expensive, because we couldn't handle the moths and the bats and things like that. There were no screen doors and things like that - they only came in during the late thirties.

10:00 So you never heard of a screen door to stop the insects and things getting in, because they hadn't been invented. So therefore you had the moths and all sorts of things to contend with, and they'd knock against the mantles ... and we virtually had to give that up. So we hardly ever used those. The mantles were always being broken by the insects,

10:30 so what we used were the lamps - glass lamps with a wick, in which you put kerosene, and you'd turn the wick up as it burned. And I remember every morning as a child, the maid would go into every bedroom and get the lamps. They'd put them on the verandah, and take the glass off and fill the lamps with kerosene; and trim the wicks with a pair of scissors, and

11:00 wind the wick up to the proper spot. Then they'd get newspaper or anything at all, and clean all the glass globes, because they'd have sooty stuff on them. Then they'd put them back together, and then the lamps would be replaced in the bedrooms. And there was a box of matches always there. In those days

they were

11:30 little round matches - little blue wax matches. The wooden matches came in later, but we had little wax matches. So there was a box of matches in every room to light the lamps. So that was the only form of lighting, which meant that always in the country - even today - the midday meal is the big meal of the day. We had a roast dinner every single day of our lives. A sheep would be killed nearly every night,

12:00 because of the great number of people on the property who had to be fed. So there was the 'killer's paddock', and every night a wether was brought in and killed, and taken to the butcher's shop, which we had on the side of the house. So we had a roast dinner - a roast leg of lamb every day. And if you had a shoulder, then you had to put in two shoulders, because there wasn't enough meat on one shoulder. That was the big meal every day, and it was cooked in the lovely old iron stove

12:30 with dripping, and potato and pumpkin and onions; and it was the best roast dinner you could ever have, cooked in dripping. It was absolutely wonderful. We had that every day of our lives - a big roast dinner, with pudding afterwards. Then everybody had about a half hour camp, and then they got back to work. Then at night time, because of the limited lighting - the Hurricane Lamps that you carried around

13:00 or ... there were no torches. I don't remember seeing a torch until the end of the thirties. But the only type of lighting you had was the Hurricane Lamp that you carried around for outside. They weren't something you used inside, because we had the mantle lamps. Then we had what was called an Aladdin Lamp, which gave a very pretty, soft white glow. They were very fancy ones, and they were used on the dinner tables

13:30 for special occasions. But without electricity we were so limited. We couldn't have radio, and of course television was unheard of in those days. But radio was available in the thirties. The only way we could get radio was to go out into the paddock and cut a tree - a very big tree - to get a long pole. And you'd raise that with a wire attached; and it went down to the ground with a little battery that was buried in the ground.

14:00 And every day we had to water that, in order to be able to get any radio communication. I don't know how it worked, but it was extraordinary. The very first time my mother ever heard a radio - when this old fashioned system was established - she heard someone singing the Pipes Of Pan. That was the very first time a radio was ever heard on Bassendean, and my mother's sister was a very well-known singer; and my mother heard her. She said, "That's Maisy! That's Maisy!" She used to sing at places

14:30 like David Jones and Farmers. They had entertainment during the lunch hours, when people would come in to the restaurants for lunch. They always had a piano, and Aunty Maisy used to earn a little bit of money by singing there. And so she was singing the “Pipes of Pan”, and that was the very first time I ever heard radio, and it was her own sister singing the “Pipes of Pan”. So that's all I can say about electricity - we had none. I understand that it was installed

15:00 on Bassendean during the forties though.

**Did you only eat roast lamb ... usually?**

Well, all through the summer we had roast lamb, but during winter we had beef. There was no refrigeration you see, the lamb would be killed and hung up in the meat house to be cooked the next day. You couldn't leave it twenty four hours like you do now.

15:30 Not in the summer time. It wouldn't have lasted. So it was killed and eaten, because of the lack of refrigeration. But every winter my father shot a steer - or one or two steers. And then they were cut up. But of course, you couldn't eat a steer in one day, and again, there was no refrigeration. So you'd hang it up overnight, and in the middle of winter it might last one or two days hanging up in the butcher's shop. It wouldn't last any longer.

16:00 So we'd eat all we could, and then the rest would have to be salted. It was a big wooden barrel with iron bands all around it, filled with rock salt. And into that you'd put these cuts of beef - the rump, the silverside - all the bits you know today. They'd have the fat on it, and you'd roll that up and put string around it, and put that in too. So as much as could be salted would be put away

16:30 and used throughout the winter. But you see, to kill a beast was not economical unless you could eat it straight away or salt it. It was a complete waste otherwise, and had to be given to the dogs to eat, because it would go bad. That is why we had lamb every day, except for beef in the winter. And of course, you never bought any beef and brought it onto the property because of course, that would be absurd, You had all your own. So no, we ate lamb in the summer,

17:00 and in the middle of winter we had beef.

**Thank you Mickie. You mentioned that you had various governesses. What kind of things did you learn?**

Well, the governesses used to teach us various things. First of all ... you've heard of Correspondence School, haven't you? Well, Mother gave us Correspondence School at first; and then the governesses used to take over that. They'd teach us to write, and maths tables from first-times-table

17:30 up. We'd learn all our tables off by heart ... they were trained teachers, you see. They were educated ladies who'd been to private schools and been educated to a certain standard. Well, they came to us and educated us to that standard. All the elementary school work that any child would learn was dealt with. But we had it individually - starting with Wilga, me, Dot, June, and Jimmy. A couple of the white children of the workers on the property, sometimes they'd come and join us too.

18:00 They had no other way of getting an education, and rather than sending them down to school with the black kids, they sometimes joined us. So we had a proper elementary training from these girls, to the extent of their own education, you see. And then later on we were able to get what were called 'subsidized teachers' from the Government. They were fully qualified teachers who

18:30 would now and again go out to the stations, and we would ... they would come in and we would provide them with accommodation and so-forth, and pay them. But they would be supplied through the Government system. Well, they were called 'subsidised teachers', and we had a few of those. They were more educated. But still, we had to go up to Inverell to sit for our Intermediate Certificates. Then later on, I had to come to Sydney for six weeks to sit for my Leaving Certificate.

19:00 But we passed them though. And of course, we had a highly educated mother. She was a trained teacher and had been through Blackfriars at Sydney University. So that's how ... those were the teachers we had. And then the men came after. They were quite fascinating, because being Englishmen, they taught us so much that we still know today. They taught us how to pronounce words

19:30 like 'Cholmondeley' [pronounced ‘Chumley’] and 'Maudlin' instead of 'Magdelen', and all those different words that others mispronounce because they don't know the actual pronunciation. So we learnt to say 'eat' instead of 'et', and all that. If you look up a dictionary, you'll see. It was very interesting learning the proper pronunciations for all those very strange English words, the ones

20:00 that were oddly written, yet pronounced in a particular way. So, we did enjoy the English master. Our knowledge of poetry, it was just incredible too. At nights my mother could entertain us endlessly, and even to day there's hardly one Shakespearian play that I can't quote you, because she not only read it to us, but she'd stand up and recite it to us.

20:30 So we went through all the Shakespearian plays, as well as Tennyson, and Byron, and all of them. I can still sit here and quote them to you because it was part of our lives. The repetition was enjoyable - we learned them by rote, after a fashion, otherwise we wouldn't be able to recite them so admirably. Our education was very interesting because our mother used to read to us every night. The jackaroos would say,

21:00 "Mrs Broun, Mrs Broun, don't start reading until we've finished. We've got to tie up the dogs and let the horses out. Please don't start till we come back." So everyone would sit around and listen to my mother reciting poetry, or reading to us.

**What was your favourite poem?**

My favourite was Tennyson. Probably ... I think I always liked, as a child, things like 'Hiawatha' and 'Lady of Shalott',

21:30 and things like that. And of course, 'How They Brought The News from Ghent'. And I liked 'The Man From Snowy River' and all the Australian poets. But the one I like best of all now is Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur'. I love that.

**Can you recite it?**

Yes ...

\n[Verse follows]\n The old order changes, yielding place to new,\n And God fulfils himself in many ways\n There's one good custom should corrupt the world\n Comfort thyself; what comfort is in me,\n I have lived my life, and that which I have lived\n May he within himself make pure ...\n

... so, that's enough.

22:00 **Thank you Mickie. You had a lot of brothers and sisters ...**

Yes, I had two brothers, both younger than me. There were four girls born, and then Jimmy, and then seventeen years later Malcolm was born. He's seventeen years younger than I. There was Wilga, Mickie, Dot, June, and Jimmy, and then Malcolm. So there's six of us.

22:30 **Would you all learn in the one spot?**

Yes. Wilga, Dot, June, and Jimmy - the five of us would all sit and learn in the one spot. So that's why, when we went broke and came to Sydney, Jimmy was only twelve. So Mother took him to Neutral Bay primary school, and they said that he had to go in the class for his age. But he was so ... he just knew everything,

23:00 and the headmaster said, "Mrs Broun, we can't leave him in primary school; we'll have to put him into high school." So he went into high school a year ahead. So he went into high school when he was really only just eleven. By the time he was fifteen, he was dux of the school and had won a scholarship to the

Sydney Technical College, and from there he won an exhibition scholarship to Sydney University. You see, learning with his sisters like that, he was sitting there

23:30 and learning what he had to for his age, but he also picked up what we were being taught. He did extremely well, and he had to wait until he was sixteen to go to the university. You couldn't go to the university until you were sixteen. And then of course, that was unfortunate for him, because you couldn't drink until you were eighteen - I mean, nobody can drink until they're eighteen, even now - but he couldn't go with the fellows he was at the university with, over to the pub and so forth, because he was too young. And the same thing

24:00 happened to my husband - Martin Hardie. When he was a little kid, he had to go to school at three years of age, to make up the numbers, so that they could keep the school open. So he just won everything - and he won scholarships here, there, and everywhere. He won a scholarship to Waverley College, and he got a University Medal. But you see, it was picking up what other people were being taught. You were always hearing what was happening in the background, even though you were not supposed to. So it proved … so it helped Jimmy,

24:30 but Wilga and Dot and I were taught together, and June sort of followed on. But we all did well. The other two, when we came to Sydney, Dot went to North Sydney Girls High and won a scholarship to Sydney Tech for three years; and June passed hers, and then she had some wonderful jobs, and then at the age of sixty she went to New South Wales

25:00 University as a mature age student, and got distinctions and credits in galore. She came out with a BA [Bachelor of Arts degree]. So you do pick up a lot by listening, by being in the background.

**What about at Bassendean? Can you describe what it was like being with a governess, and how that worked?**

Well, it worked alright because you see, they were part and parcel of the household. They were there

25:30 all the time. They were at breakfast and they were at dinner, and of course, they were at the main meal. In the country these were known as breakfast, dinner, and tea, of course. The dinner was in the middle of the day. We call 'dinner' the evening meal, these days, of course. So they were with us all the time and they were part of our lives. They just went on with the routine things, and we just had to put up with it. We were looking out the window all the time, and thinking things like, "Who's that riding that horse? I wish I was with them." We wanted to be out on the

26:00 land all the time - to be part and parcel of the station life. But we didn't find it at all awkward, and they were very nice women; and they were always friendly with Mother and Daddy. They used to take them to the picnic races, and there'd be dancing at night. It was a strange situation. It was like having an aunt there, or a relative. They weren't strangers, and we managed all right with them.

26:30 But we had one called Ada King, and she couldn't control me apparently. I was very difficult. Mother said that I was a very wayward child, and very hard to handle - very strong-minded. Ada said, "I don't think I can cope with Mickie." And she was the only person in my whole life who ever caned me. I used to get the cane regularly. I don't know why I was so rebellious. I cannot understand it. But I was often caned. Part of the

27:00 supplies of the school was a cane - an actual piece of cane - and she'd wield it onto my palm. I'd often get six cuts of the cane. So did the others, occasionally. Dot got some, and so did Jimmy and June. But I got the most. But caning is quite out now, but it was used extensively in my day and in my growing up years; and I suppose we all deserved it.

27:30 **Did you do anything to retaliate?**

Oh heavens yes. Once I grabbed it out of her hand and hit her. It was absolutely monstrous. Daddy and Mother came into that, and I was scolded and scolded and scolded. That was the only time I've ever hit anybody. But I couldn't stand it any longer. I thought I was being caned unfairly, too.

**Did you do anything else? Any covert missions of revenge?**

28:00 No, I never went in for that. I didn't do it, but the jackaroos used to help us there. We did terrible things to Miss King. Once we got a porcupine and we put it in the bottom of her bed, and she nearly died with fright. And another day we found a dead snake, and we put that in the bottom of her bed. Oh yes, we'd retaliate; but it was more teasing. The jackaroos would help us with it - we weren't on our own - we had encouragement,

28:30 as kids do. I suppose you've had your time at doing those sorts of things.

**Did she last long?**

She lasted with us for two years. Ada King her name was, and we had her for two years. She came from Tasmania. We had such a lot of different ones. We had another one called Miss Trankner, who fell in love with …she was a single woman and quite a good teacher, but she just got a terrible crush on my father's cousin - Cecil Kelly - who was working on our property. She was so mad about him, and she used

29:00 to darn his socks and … in those days, everyone used to darn socks. No one does it any more. And one

of the things you could always do for someone you fancied was to darn their socks, and sew their buttons back on their shirts. They were always coming off. But she fell in love with him, and we were very interested in that. we used to listen at doors and things like that. Poor old thing. But he didn't respond. Well, I think he did for a while

29:30 but then he got sick of it. Anyway, she ended up going away, broken-hearted.

**You mentioned that the girls would go rabbiting ...**

Oh yes. My sister Dot and Jimmy ... Dot owned about twenty four rabbiting dogs. My father built a huge area about the size of a tennis court. It was galvanised netting fencing wire, right up high, and about the size of a tennis court. It had sort-of huts in the middle of it. And all the dogs on the property were put in there at night, except for the special working dogs - they had a kennel and a chain

30:00 of their own. They never mixed with the rabbiting dogs, who had this compound of their own. There were up to thirty dogs in there, and my sister dot managed them all. She was just a year and a fortnight younger than I. We were great pals always - and still are. She had these rabbiting dogs anyway, and my brother Jimmy - he was just a little kid of seven or eight - and they'd go out on their ponies with all these dogs

30:30 and chase the rabbits. So they'd come home with rabbits. But later on they thought they could make some money out of these rabbits, so they went rabbiting after that. They didn't take the dogs, they'd take this little black girl - Claris, who worked in the house as one of the maids. She was a dear little girl, and was a friend of Dot and Jimmy. And being an Aboriginal, she knew where to go and where the rabbits were.

31:00 So she'd walk along and say, "There's rabbit burrows here," and she was adept at setting rabbit traps. Setting rabbit traps is quite hard, you know. You've got to set ... they've got a little piece of ... a little square of metal, and on that is a little piece of paper, and then you put a little bit of dirt over the top of, and the rabbit walks over it and the jaws shut on it. So Dot and Jimmy used to go out with little Claris every day

31:30 and set the rabbit traps, and then they'd go in the morning and collect them. And then they'd skin them. Skinning a rabbit is very easy. You just make a slit down the legs, and cut it, and pull it off like you'd pull off a stocking. Then they'd make these frames to put the skins on, like an upside down U, with long legs. So you'd feed the rabbit skin onto these with the fur on the inside

32:00 and sit it out in the sun. They'd go stiff and hard, and then flatten them together and sell them by the pound. They'd have twenty, thirty or forty of them at a time, you see. So they'd weigh them, tie them up with string, and sell them by the pound. Sometimes they'd get about two shillings for a whole pile of rabbit skins. So that was a sort of hobby they had, and they

32:30 thoroughly enjoyed doing it. But I never liked rabbiting. But Daddy thought that every single thing that happened on a property, we should learn to do. We learned to milk cows, and I milked cows for six years with my sisters Wilga and Dot. I loved milking cows, and even when I bought a property later in life I used to get up in the morning and milk my own cow.

33:00 I had an affinity with cows, and I always liked to put my head against their flank while I was milking. It was part of the life I enjoyed - like riding horses.

**Why didn't you like rabbiting?**

I didn't like killing rabbits. See, you'd get them there in the traps with their broken legs, and you'd have to take them out and kill them. Claris was wonderful at it. She'd just ring their necks like that. I couldn't ring a rabbit's neck - I just wasn't able to.

33:30 I didn't like shooting either. But Daddy made us all learn to shoot, and I had my own rifle. It was a Winchester .22, and I hated it. I had to go out shooting rabbits, and if I didn't hit it in the head and kill it outright, then I couldn't have killed it. I'd have to bring it home for someone else to kill it. I've never liked killing things. Even if I catch a spider in the house, I have to put it in a tissue and take it outside. I couldn't step on an insect - it wasn't my nature.

34:00 I never learned to go rabbiting. I can set a trap, but I wouldn't enjoy doing it.

**How did your dad teach you to shoot?**

My father was an outstanding sportsman. He was chosen for Davis Cup in 1914, but he couldn't go overseas to play because of the war. He was also runner-up World Champion gun shot. It was in Melbourne, and Alec Campbell won it. He went to New Zealand

34:30 but he couldn't afford to go to Monte Carlo. He couldn't afford to leave the property to go to Monte Carlo to get into the World Championship. But it was held once in Australia - in Melbourne - and he was runner up. He was a wonderful shooter. He won the New England Championship for twenty seven years, and collected lots and lots of trophies. So he was a great sport. And we learned to play tennis. He used to drive us down

35:00 and make us play in the heat of summer. None of us really liked that, and that just turned me off tennis.

I didn't mind social tennis though. But we were made to play tennis, and we were made to play golf. We played 'rounders' - which is a sort of cricket that kids play. So shooting was part and parcel of our training. So, he taught us. He used to put tins on the fence, and we'd have to shoot each one in turn. Once we could shoot

35:30 every can off, then he'd send us out into the paddocks to shoot moving things. I was never any good at shooting moving things. But if I could see a rabbit standing up with his ears up, and I could get a sight on him, then I'd have a go. But I never enjoyed it. But I had a very interesting experience about ten or fifteen years ago when I had my property out here at Tamworth. My sister, who was then in her late sixties, came up to stay,

36:00 and my son-in-law ... we had some young children staying at the time, and they wanted to learn to shoot. So we put a lot of tins along the fence in the old fashioned, and we were showing the kids how to shoot; and my sister came out and said, "What are you doing." And they said, "We're learning to shoot these cans." And June said, "Give me your rifle." And the kids said, "Oh Aunty June, you can't do it." And she said, "Well, let me try," and she went one-two-three and she shot every can off.

36:30 Catherine's husband said she just could not believe it. After all those years she could do it. But you see, the telescopic sights - we just did not have that. Now you can pick up a rifle and you've got this wonderful telescopic sight. Well, we didn't have that. We just had a little bead up the front, and you had to have that set. Times have changed. I learned to shoot in the early thirties, and guns were quite different then. Things have improved.

37:00 But at any rate, I suppose I can still shoot without any trouble ... if I can still ride a horse, I suppose I could.

**Can you describe a Winchester .22?**

Well, it's a light rifle. A .22 is a light rifle with a small bullet, and it only has a short range. I couldn't use the heavier rifles because of the knock-back on the shoulder, so we always used these .22s. There were two types of .22s we had on Bassendean. Mine was a Winchester. It was just an ordinary

37:30 long ... a barrel about this long, with a wooden handle. Some of them you could put two bullets in, and some of them only one at a time. But I had a 'repeater', so ... my father, being a great gun shot, we had a gun room, you see. There were all these guns hanging on the wall. So we'd just go in and pick up the rifle we wanted. But I always used this little light Winchester, the .22. So that's the only

38:00 gun I've ever shot. The heavier calibre ones I didn't use, because of the knock-back on the shoulder.

**What do you mean by 'repeater'?**

It fires two bullets, you see. You pull the trigger once, and then you can pull it for a second time to get the second bullet. Some guns will hold four or five bullets. But the repeater would only have the two. See, a shotgun that uses the big cardboard cartridges, you put two in, because it

38:30 has two barrels. Others only have one barrel, and that's the type I used. My father used the big guns. He had them specially imported from Switzerland, with the beautiful tracings on the outside of the barrel. They were beautiful, beautiful guns.

**What were the tracings like?**

Absolutely beautiful. Like the tracings on old silverware. Exactly the

39:00 same sort of thing - flowers and beautiful scenes on the metal section of the barrel. That's a solid piece of metal there, where you put in the bullets. Well, that was all beautifully traced there. He had some beautiful guns. They were imported specially.

39:30 **Was it a girly gun? Was it a girl's gun?**

No. My mother couldn't have used it. It had two much of a kick. It had a big piece of rubber on the butt of the ... to protect the shoulder. But it wasn't a woman's rifle, no. No, I would never use a shotgun, never. We had revolvers too. But in those days there was never any problem with gun ownership. You could pick them up anywhere.

40:00 **What about safety?**

Well, we grew up ... my father would always say, "A gun is always loaded. Now remember that for the whole of your life: a gun is always loaded." And we remembered that. So if you think that a gun is always loaded, you always treat it with great respect. So I've never heard of an accident on a property with any guns, because a gun is always loaded. And every time you finish with a gun, you always break it - you immediately break it so that the barrel, you know ... I forget what it's called;

40:30 all these names are beginning to elude me; after all, I am eighty five. But you 'break your gun', which means that you open it. it means that you then have to put bullets in and close it, in order to operate it. So we never had any problems with them - when you finished with your gun, you broke it open.

# Tape 4

00:30 My grandfather went to school with a man who became the Dean of the School of Medicine at Sydney University, and his name was Dr Bickerton-Blackburn.

01:00 At any rate, he had twin sons - Bovery and another one. And he was a great friend of my great grandfather. They went to school in Scotland together, and then he came out here and became the Dean of the School of Medicine. And then … he had two sons, about seventeen or eighteen or nineteen, and because grandfather was on the land, he asked could he

01:30 take one of his sons as a jackeroo. So Bovery Bickerton-Blackburn came up to Bassendean as a jackeroo. Now, my father had certain rules, and every morning at breakfast - because … I didn't tell you this earlier, but there were about sixteen people there at the table. There'd be up to six jackaroos, and the teacher - whoever she happened to be - and Mother and Father, and the five of us, because Malcolm

02:00 was a baby; and the odd visitor or two. So there was a huge table with a damask tablecloth on it, and beautifully set - because we had plenty of maids. And Daddy would give us lectures every morning. he liked to remind us of things, like, "The gun is always loaded." Another one was, "Never, never, never try to cross your horse on still water. Always wait for the ripples, to show that there are stones underneath and it is shallow." You see, if it ripples, then you know

02:30 there are stones underneath making it ripple, and that it is shallow enough to cross. Don't go into still water. And another one was, "Never, as long as you live, dive into still water," like, when you go to a swimming hole, because there might be submerged logs there. This was a rule, and this boy took no notice of it. He went down to the creek, dived in, and scalped himself. He dived in and came out with his scalp hanging off the back of his head, like that [gestures, like a ponytail].

03:00 And my grandmother actually stitched that scalp back on. She pulled it back over his head and stitched it back on his head with a needle and cotton - ordinary sewing cotton - and she stitched his scalp back on, right around his head. then they took him by buggy into Inverell to a doctor. And you know, I went to have an X-Ray about twenty years ago,

03:30 and who should I go to but Dr Bickerton-Blackburn - the son of the man who … and I said, "Did you know that my grandmother sewed your scalp back on." And he said, "Good god. Fancy meeting up with you." He survived. There was no infection or anything set in. Nothing else was done. And that happened another time with my mother. We had a jackeroo, and Daddy … we had the lectures drummed into us … and he said,

04:00 "You're going out suckering today Keith," and that meant taking all the twigs off the sides of the trees so they'd grow straight. You'd get the axe and chop them off like that. And he said, "When you go suckering you never hit the sucker with the back of the axe, because the sucker might bend and throw the axe back at you." So you always used the axe with the

04:30 blade down. You never, ever hit with the back of the blade. So this fellow Keith, that morning the horse that we usually sent them out on for suckering - they always took one of the quietest horses on the place, and a saddle bag and a quart pot and everything - but this day, he had a horse that hadn't been broken in very long, and so Daddy didn't want him to take that horse, so he said, "Keith, can't you find another one," but he said, "No, I rather like this young horse."

05:00 And Daddy said, "Well, if you're going to take that one you'll have to take a pair of hobbles, because he won't stand all day under a tree like an old horse would." So he put the hobbles into his saddlebag and off he went with his axe about ten miles from home. It might have been eight, but in any case it was a long way, up on the mountain. It was a hundred thousand acre paddock, probably.

05:30 So he went right up on the mountain with this young horse. And he decided to have his lunch, and he put the hobbles on the horse, then after a little while he'd had his lunch and he took the hobbles off the horse, and he thought, "Oh well, I'll just do a little bit more, then I'll go home." Then he got his axe and went bang with the back of the axe - exactly what Daddy told him not to do - and the twig bent over, and it threw the axe back and cut him

06:00 right across the forehead. The blood began to squirt out from this horrible gash; and there he was all the way from home. The only thing he could think to do was to grab his hat and jam it on his head. But the blood was streaming down. So he got on his horse, and it started to snort and play up, and then, as if the horse knew … and he was bleeding so much and he was frightened, because he had to get through all this scrub to get home

06:30 and … and Daddy always told us another thing that he did remember, and that was, when taking a horse through scrub, you always put your head lower than the horse's ears, because a horse will always go in lower than something under his ears, but it doesn't protect the rider above it - so, never have your head higher than the horse's ears when there's scrub around. So he remembered that, and he began to get a bit weak, and he put his arms around the horse's neck,

07:00 and as if the horse understood, this horse started to gallop towards home. It was a terrible trip down the mountain - a bit like the man from Snowy River. And as he got closer to home, he was bleeding so

heavily that the blood was all over the horse's withers and all over its mane … and we were sitting out on the verandah and we could hear this thundering noise coming down the mountain; and someone said, "Listen, that's a horse coming." And then Daddy - who knew everything - he said, "Good god, it's

07:30 a man galloping down the mountain; dear god, I hope it's not Keith - Mickie, go and open the gate." So I did, and there I could see this horse and rider smothered in blood - absolutely white with foam and sweat; and this man leaning over the saddle with his hands down around the horse's neck. So the horse brought him home. God knows how he found his way. And he got up to the front fence, and that horse was so exhausted that it leant against the fence. And Mother and

08:00 daddy got Keith off, and there he was … but there was nothing they could do. So Mother got … she squeezed the two pieces of the gashed head together, and wrapped him up in towels. Then Daddy got the doctor to come, while Mother … I think she started to stitch him up … no, she did that with a horse … no, she was squeezing it together like that while they were mopping

08:30 him up. Anyway, I had my horse tied up there, and then Daddy said, "Gallop up the mountain and open all the gates for the doctor." So I galloped up the mountain and opened the five gates for the doctor, and he came rushing down the mountain. It was twelve miles that he had to come. Then Keith was taken to hospital. He was white. He was almost drained of blood. But he was saved by that wonderful horse, who instinctively knew what to do.

09:00 And the horse could hardly stand up. I went out and I had to wash down the horse. I threw cold water all over it and washed it down; but it was absolutely dead beat. I've never seen an animal so exhausted that it had to lean against something. He could hardly stand up. So that was one of the accidents … another one that happened on Bassendean was when one of the Aboriginals - we always called them 'blackfellas',

09:30 and they always called themselves that and they didn't mind that expression - but these do-gooders now, they always say that they've got to be called Aboriginals or Kooris. But they were always 'blackfellas.' So we had one of them named Arthur Cross, and he was very good in the sheep yards. Well, one day one of the sheep got out of the paddock when they were shearing, and Daddy said, "Peter, go for your life and get that sheep." So Peter ran out to get the sheep, and he trod on a piece of wire. It went right into his heel

10:00 and went right up his leg; and of course, being a blackfella and not being very hygienic, it could have been tetanus. But instead he got blood poisoning. So Daddy took him into the doctor in Tingha, and they put him into hospital there. Aboriginals could be put into hospital in those days - a pregnant woman couldn't, by the way. A woman couldn't go and have a baby. That's why Mother couldn't go into Tingha hospital,

10:30 because it was a public hospital. Child-bearing wasn't allowed in public hospitals in those days. But a drunken man in a gutter or a blackfella could be admitted. Maternity wards in public hospitals didn't begin until the CWA started campaigning for it in 1922. Now, isn't that terrible. And yet, you could take a drunk off the street or a blackfella into a hospital, but not a woman having a baby. That's why they were delivered in the homes.

11:00 And that's why I told you about Jarawa delivering my two sisters and my brother. At any rate, this old fella went to Tingha hospital; and he was pretty neglected in there, and in the end he very nearly died. So Daddy took him off to Inverell hospital, and in the end they had to amputate his leg. Eventually they sent him back to Tingha. And poor old Arthur lost his leg, because of sheer neglect in the Tingha hospital by the doctor.

11:30 So Daddy went in with a gun, and he said to the doctor, "You get out of this town by this evening or I'll shoot you." He said, "You're not wanted in this town. You nearly cost Peter Cross his life by your sheer neglect, and we've had to have his leg removed." Now … so he said, "You get out of this town by nightfall, or I'll shoot you." Fancy him saying that. He wouldn't have shot him of course. But he meant it. He was such a strong minded man,

12:00 and he was so upset that a blackfella could be treated like that - a human being. We treasured old Peter Cross. At any rate, the man left by nightfall - he was gone out of the town. So that was the story of Peter Cross. Eventually he got a wooden leg, and he was still there at Bassendean when we left in 1936. That was another story. So I've told you three stories of accidents that happened. But nobody lost their lives.

12:30 **Thank you for telling me those stories. Can you tell me a bit more about your father?**

Well, he was a general; he was a disciplinarian. Everything worked like clockwork with my father. He would sit at the dining, at breakfast, before everyone got up, and outline what would happen that day. Everyone knew the movements for that day. Someone would go up and muster cattle here or there

13:00 and take their lunch with them, and they'd be expected back at … and someone would be expected to bring three hundred sheep from there, and he'd say, "Now see that you bring that number back, and look out for stragglers." So they'd know their job. The carpenter would be told … he'd sit in the kitchen; he wouldn't eat with us. He had to take the dray and cut some wood to make a wooden gate for such and such a paddock. And he'd need to go out and take his lunch, so he'd have to take some sandwiches. So he'd know what he was doing.

13:30 And he'd say, "Wilga and Mickie, as soon as school's over this afternoon, I want you to go out to Cameron's Gap and bring home those young steers that are out there. There should be about fifty of them. Bring them home and count them through the gate and don't leave any behind." So we'd go out after school and do that, you see. So everybody knew they were going to do. Then he'd reiterate again, "Now Mickie and Wilga, you are not to get off your horses - you are never to get off your horses. You are to come straight home." No, he'd say,

14:00 "Nobody change horses; you are to go out on that horse. I don't want you riding any young, wild horses." I'll never forget one day I went out with one of the jackaroos, and I was on my well-trained trained horse, and he was on a recently broken in horse. And I was keen to ride that young horse, because I loved the challenge of riding a young horse. So we got to the gate closest to home, and I said, "Let me ride him to the next gate, please."

14:30 So we changed horses and I rode him in between the two gates - about a mile and a half or something like that. And then the next morning I got, "Mickie, you disobeyed me. You got off your horse yesterday and changed horses." And I said, "But how did you know?" He knew because a blackfella came to him and said, "I've just been up to the gate, boss, and I don't want to say, but I saw two lots of prints, and Miss Mickie changed horses up there." So he reported on me.

15:00 Every time any of the four girls went up to any paddock to work on any job, a blackfella followed us. They were just like paid ... what do you call them ... just like bodyguards. You never saw them, but they were always there hiding behind a tree or something, but a blackfella knew where one of us was at all times. And no matter what, they were always there to save us or to tell our father. So we always knew we were watched over.

15:30 And this was the wonderful thing about our association with the Aboriginals. They served us and they loved us and they looked after us. And when Daddy went to Sydney or was away on any of his shooting matches, one of them always came up and slept outside Mother's window. She'd say, "I can't bear it - he's always outside my window. I know he's there." But he'd stay there all night to protect her, you see. This was what was so wonderful about our relationship with them, and I can't bear the way people go on about Aboriginals today, or about the way their half casts are behaving,

16:00 because we had such an outstanding relationship with them. They were there with us at all times. And when my mother first went to Bassendean she was a bride of fourteen. There she was in this great lonely house, all on her own - because all the family had moved away except for the black women, she had a maid - a half-caste, Florrie Munro - who is now, well, she was so well known they even named a park after her

16:30 here in Tamworth. And Florrie Munro was the same age as my mother, and she became my mother's maid. I'm referring to the affection here. So she had her children at the same time as Mother had hers. And when we came to Sydney in 1936, she didn't see Florrie anymore. You see, Florrie had been with my mother for twenty seven years, and Florrie went down to the south coast and lived there for a number of years;

17:00 and then she moved to Tamworth for awhile; and when we came up to Tamworth in 1975, a telephone rang on the property that I had bought, and it said, "Is Mrs Broun there?" And I said, "Yes." And I thought, "Who'd be ringing Mother?" So Mother got onto the phone, and it was Florrie. And she said, "Oh, little missus, little missus you've come home." And Mother said, "Who is this?" And she said, "Don't you know me, it's Florrie." Now, how did she know Mother was there? And Mother said,

17:30 "How did you know?" And Florrie said, "I felt it. I knew you were there, little missus." She was the first person to welcome Mother and she knew she was there because she'd felt it. You see, the 'message' came through. And then when Mother died, Florrie was right down on the south coast at Nowra, and I came home from the hospital after Mother died, and the telephone rang at six o'clock in the morning, and there was crying on the other end, and there was this voice that said, "Oh, the little missus is gone; your little mother is dead." And I said, "Who is it?" And she said, "It's Florrie." She was crying and crying and crying. She knew.

18:00 She knew that Mother had died, and she was down at Nowra on the South Coast. I hadn't told my brothers and I hadn't told my sisters. Nobody knew that my mother had died except for Wilga and me. But Florrie knew that, and she was crying for my mother at six o'clock in the morning. She felt it. But people don't understand that human beings can have this relationship with another race and another breed altogether, without having to be related. It's the culture. But we respected one another.

18:30 And because we respected one another ... and, I've got so many stories I could tell you about their feelings, and the things that the Aboriginals have done that I know of, because of this instinct they've got inside them. But any rate, that's diverting, because you were asking me about something else.

**Tell me about the impact of walkabout ...**

Walkabout is very strange. If you haven't seen walkabout you don't understand it. It's a syndrome that's in

19:00 the Aboriginal makeup. I could take you back to a story about it, that's very interesting. I'm going back to my great grandfather's time, here. One day my great grandmother was sitting on the verandah of her house down at the old Stony Creek Station. She was looking out at the creek, and suddenly she saw a

mob of blackfellas coming through.

19:30 Well, the men always walked in front and the women and piccaninnies walked behind. The men were all carrying spears, and of course they were naked in those days - they just had a little bit of something around them. So she said to her Jacky-jacky - who had been with my great grandfather ever since they came down from Barraba - and she said, "Jacky-jacky, what is this tribe walking through?" And she said,

20:00 "Oh, we don't ever have them walking through. No, no, this is taboo country. This is very unusual to have a tribe coming through here." But then they came to the river and they stopped, and the men assumed the resting position. I don't know if you've ever … see, they're standing up, and they put their spear down like that [gestures/spear upright] and they put one leg up so the foot is resting against the knee of their other leg, and it's sort of like a bird. They stand there with one leg on the knee of the other, and balance against their spear. And they just stand there for a short time.

20:30 So the Jacky-jacky said, "Something's wrong because tribe's resting." They didn't sit down, they were just waiting. They were waiting for something. And after a little while they moved on. And the Jacky-jacky said, "They've left one behind." It was a woman having a baby. It was one of the Jens in the process of birthing. And when they're on walkabout they only gave a Jin an hour for this … see, they were on walkabout, and they were on their way to Walcha. They were the Yarrowyck tribe, and they were going north.

21:00 So Jacky-jacky went down and came back and told great grandmother that she was having a baby, and she was in trouble. They'd just left her. She would have died there all on her own, because they only give them a certain time to birth, and they were in taboo country, and they weren't going to camp, so they'd walked on and left her. So grandmother got a sled and a horse, and they went down and brought her back to the homestead, and grandmother delivered the baby. And that was a girl - a little baby girl. And so the Jin just stayed on the property

21:30 and became part and parcel of the … everybody loved her and played with her, and she was in and out of the kitchen all the time. But the Jin never became a friend. She never associated with anybody, and she remained entirely on her own. She was never absorbed into the station life. But the little baby girl was. And when she was about three years old, one day the tribe came through again. They knew the tribe was coming because Jacky-jacky told them. And then the Jin started to do all the things they did

22:00 to prepare for walkabout: they got a funny, glazed look in their eyes like as though they were looking into the distance; and they rocked back and forward on their legs. You know how people get themselves ready for skiing - they go from one leg to the other, rock, rock - well they do that to prepare for walkabout: rock, rock, back and forwards from one leg to other, to prepare and strengthen their legs for walkabout. Jacky-jacky said, "Jin getting ready for walkabout." But grandmother said, "How can she go walkabout on her own?" And Jin said, "Tribe must be coming."

22:30 And then when she saw the tribe coming, she rushed into the kitchen and picked up the little girl, who was about three years old at that time, and rushed down and joined her mob. Her mob just accepted her - didn't say hello or anything; she just joined them, and they just started to walk off. And grandmother came running down because she wanted to give some food or something to the little girl. And she was calling out, "Peggy, Peggy, Peggy." And the little girl ran back to great grandmother, because she was frightened of these naked blackfellas she'd never seen before.

23:00 On the station, everybody wore clothes, you see. And the Jin ran after her and grabbed … I'm sorry I'm calling her a Jin, but that's what they did in those days, and that was the word they used. It is not offensive. It is NOT offensive: they called one another that. Anyway, she took the child from great grandmother and took her back to the tribe, and the tribe was going on, and she was running after them. She put the kid down eventually, and the child ran off back to great grandmother. And this happened three times. And the third time, the Jin just turned and went on with the mob, and was never seen again. The mob never came through again.

23:30 And the little girl was called Peggy by the family, and she became part and parcel of the family. She was educated by my great uncles and Aunty Katie - I only had one great aunt - no, there were two great aunts. So, they were educated together. And anyway, when she was about fifteen or sixteen, grandmother noticed that she was obviously pregnant. She tried to ask her what had happened,

24:00 but she didn't … see, in those days, sex was never mentioned - nobody talked about sex or how babies came about - nobody talked about that, especially women. Men might have, because men might tell one another, but women didn't even talk about it. So this little girl didn't understand what grandmother meant when she said she was pregnant. She kept on asking, and she scraped the ground with her foot, and looked down, and wouldn't answer. So they had no idea who had got her pregnant or what had happened. But eventually, when she went into labour, she had a terribly bad time.

24:30 Grandmother delivered the baby, and it was another little girl. But Peggy just turned her head to the wall, as they do, because when they make up their mind to die, they just die. You can't do anything about it. So she died giving birth to this little girl. And she was called May Yarrowyck, because that was her tribe, and the priest came through to do the christenings - which they did every two or three years. The priest came through and christened every kid that had been born in the district, in one go,

25:00 in whatever religion the visiting priest adhered to. One day on Bassendean they christened thirty two -

thirty two on one day, all Roman Catholic. Then another time it was a Presbyterian priest that came through. Anyway, this time the priest came through and they said they didn't know what to do with this little girl, and the priest said that May was a nice time of year, so they christened her with the name of May.

25:30 And her tribe was Yarrowyck, so she was registered as May Yarrowyck. They weren't actually registered in those days - Aboriginals weren't registered till the mid 1800s. So there was no birth certificate for her, but she was called May Yarrowyck, anyway. And she was raised with my aunts. And as I said earlier, she was the one that became the midwife on Bassendean later on. So you see what happens? Grandmother saved the life of her mother, and she felt responsible

26:00 for this little girl, and she became a member of the family. So she became May Yarrowyck, and went off to be trained as a midwife, and came back and delivered my two sisters and my brothers. So that's a nice story isn't it.

**What do you think happened to her mother?**

Well, in those days it could have been a placenta problem, or it could have been bleeding, or it could have been anything. Of course, May Yarrowyck saved my mother's life, the same way. Mother had a placenta problem, and you know that they usually bled to death after that. So there

26:30 she was - when my mother had Jimmy - there she was, bleeding to death. So May Yarrowyck got up on the bed and put her hand inside her and the other hand on her, to staunch the bleeding that way. And she held those two fists together for over an hour to staunch the bleeding; and my father had to stand there with flannel and water and kept on wiping her forehead and wiping her arms with cold water because she was in such a cramped

27:00 position, kneeling on the bed there, with my mother in that position. But she saved my mother's life by staunching the bleeding. it eventually clotted after an hour, and she was able to remove her two fists and my mother lived. So we owed our mother's life to that Aboriginal woman, who owed her life to our great grandmother. You see how the swing of the pendulum - it came around.

27:30 So that's another story. I've got many stories like that I can tell you.

**So who do you think the father was?**

Oh, I know who the father was. I know, because great grandmother figured it out herself. When the child was delivered she said, "My god, it's a Kelly." She could see it straight away, even though it was a half-cast child, it had those features, and she recognized it must be one of her own sons. The little girl had grown up with these boys… they were nineteen, eighteen, seventeen, and sixteen, you see,

28:00 so one of those had to be the father. But they were away in Queensland at the time the baby was born. They went up with Cunningham and Landsborough in the 1860s exploring in Queensland. They were amongst the pioneers in Queensland, and they weren't there to be chastised or to ask questions and so-forth. But they worked out that the only time she could have become pregnant was on a certain date,

28:30 and the only one of the sons that was home at that date was seventeen at the time. The only one of the sons that was home at that particular time must have been the one, because it looked like a Kelly. But they never acknowledged that she was a member of the family - not throughout the whole time. So she was actually great-grandmother's own grandson. She was always treated with respect, and she was always treated as a member of the family in every other sense of the word. And when she died,

29:00 she had organised that her burial … my great grandfather had a huge tomb in Bundarra cemetery, and she had her little tiny grave right against his. So she has the plot right next to Martin Kelly, her own great grandfather. But it was never acknowledged, and the family knew it, but it was never publicly acknowledged. And it still isn't acknowledged. But it

29:30 never needed to be - there's so many half-casts all over. That was the only taint … the only tiny drop of Aboriginal blood that was ever in our family, because with so many of them all over the place, that was the only one. But see how she came back to service.

**Did the father admit to it?**

No, never. Not that I know of, no, never. No one admitted to it. But she called all my family by their Christian names - she always called Aunty Kate Katie, and my father, Jim, and so-forth,

30:00 and she was treated as a member of the family. She was the only Aboriginal I knew that ever sat at our dining room table. She was accepted but not acknowledged, if you understand that difference.

**What other impact did walkabout have on the family?**

I was telling you what walkabout was like. they suddenly … it's suddenly … it's just like when birds migrate, and they all prepare and gather together, and they don't eat a lot before, because birds don't fly with a full

30:30 crop because of the weight, you see. The bird will starve for a few days before it starts off. Animals always have a rest to feed, but they never migrate on a full stomach, because … and Aboriginals are the same. They'll cut down on their food, and they'll do this rocking on their feet, and they'll get this funny

faraway look in their eyes. And they don't seem to understand if you approach them or ask them something - they'll look as though they're in a daze. But Daddy would say … we'd be right

31:00 in the middle of the shearing, and we'd wake up one day, "Oh, something's wrong - the blackfellas aren't listening to my orders today - there's something wrong. Something's going to happen down in that camp." And we'd wake up next morning and all the camp would be empty. There'd be no fires, no dogs, and no people. They would probably have gone walkabout at four thirty in the morning. You'd never know they were going walkabout. They didn't say. They didn't know themselves. The instinct brings them all together, and they prepare

31:30 themselves. They didn't communicate with one another and say they were going walkabout. I'll tell you about Major soon. But we'd walk down and there he'd be without his helpers around. So he got into the habit of always having so many white men around at shearing time, in case the Aboriginals went walkabout, because then he'd have no helpers - no workmen. But they'd often stay away for three or four months,

32:00 and then you'd wake up one morning and see the campfires burning, and they'd turn up, "Boss, have you got any work for me?" This is the thing about them: they never knew how long they were going to stay away, and they don't know how far they're going - they just go. Then they'd come back the same way. They'd go silently, and then they'd return silently. So that interfered with his workers on the property. You couldn't just have full Aboriginal staff. You had to have so many white men, or white stockmen. Although Aboriginals

32:30 are the best of all stockmen. They know where the sheep are. They know where the cattle are. They instinctively know. They could muster a paddock clean, whereas a white man might leave stragglers. But walkabout, it's a menace in a way, because you can't rely on your work force. So that was one story. Now, another walkabout story I'll tell you - this one was in one newspaper, somewhere. It was about Major.

33:00 On Bassendean, we only had one full-blooded blackfella, and his name was Major Pendennis-Taylor. It's an extraordinary name, and you wonder why. There was a professor of English at Adelaide University called Professor Pendennis. He was teaching … an English teacher. And he was teaching the theory of which is stronger: heredity or environment. He believed that

33:30 environment could dominate hereditary characteristics, you see. So, to prove his point, he went up to the Northern Territory and … I know you'll find this horrifying, but it is true, and I have documentary proof in letters to prove it. But to keep the Aboriginal tribes in numbers that they wanted to keep them to, they'd take the newborn babies - where there were any - they'd take them down to waterholes at night

34:00 and let the dingos take them. And the missionaries were trying to stop that, and the Government, but that was their way of keeping the tribes down to the limit. And so Professor Pendennis went up there and got the biggest and fattest and healthiest boy he could find - a newborn baby - and took him back to Adelaide, where he raised him with his own children, to prove his point. He learnt to speak beautiful English

34:30 and he learned all the things that a cultured Englishman would learn. This man said that the heredity would be wiped out by the environment. And one morning Professor Pendennis got up and this boy had gone. This boy was about twelve or thirteen, and the professor had noticed that the boy had been rocking for a few days before. But he left. He hadn't taken any luggage or anything. He was just gone.

35:00 And do you know what that boy, that kid, did? He went right up to the Northern Territory and presented himself to his own tribe. That was from Adelaide. How he survived, how he managed that enormously long trip … but he presented himself to his own tribe. And they … you know that Aboriginals circumcise - most native races do, which is a strange thing. But they do. And he was accepted amongst his tribe

35:30 and he went out to the manhood business that they do in Aboriginal tribes. He joined their tribe, and went on corroborees, and did all the things that the male Aboriginals do. And he couldn't speak one word of their language, and nor could they communicate with him. It's a pretty strange story, but it's true. I know, because this man lived on our property, and Mother and Daddy have both told me this story; and I knew

36:00 Major as a child. When he grew up, he got jobs all over the Northern Territory, and was absolutely one of the best riders and horse-breakers they had. Now how he got down to what we called 'The Creek' - Stony Creek Station - but he got down there, and he began to train and break-in all the horses for everyone in the district. We had an Aboriginal camp there, and he came and lived at our camp,

36:30 to break-in all our horses. So Major was … when I was a child, Major was always there. So that's the story of Major. He came to Bassendean and lived only with the Aboriginals. He wouldn't come inside the house - he said he couldn't do that anymore. He said he had turned his back on that. So that's where the walkabout took him. It's something that you and I cannot understand. It's instinct, like the birds and animals that migrate and go to another camp.

37:00 Sometimes it could be forty miles away and sometimes it could be hundreds of miles away. So that's the story of walkabout as I know it.

**You mentioned the little girl who became a midwife ...**

Yes, she went walkabout at forty-five years of age. She'd been going around all over New England delivering babies, living in ordinary European homes as part and parcel

37:30 and then one day she went walkabout. She disappeared, and went away for eight years. She came back in her fifties. She went right up to the top of Queensland, and we don't understand why. No, not the top of Queensland - that's wrong, sorry. She went to ... oh dear ... that place ... where Bjelke-Peterson came from ... at any rate, it's in Queensland, over the border ... Kingaroy, that's it. She went to Kingaroy. Some of the original

38:00 Yarrowyck tribe from Walcha, they might have gone up there. But whatever happened, she went to where her own blood went. So she went to Kingaroy for all those years and stayed with those people. There's a big settlement of Aboriginals up there. She went away for eight years, then came back, and went back to her midwifery until she was in her seventies. You can't understand it.

38:30 And yet she was raised with white people, and she was treated as a member of our family. She did that when she was forty five. You can't understand it. She couldn't explain it herself.

**You mentioned that a lot of the Aboriginal staff would go walkabout on the station. How else would that affect the day to day running of everything?**

39:00 It would affect everything. You had no-one to bring in the cows in the morning. You had no-one to bring them in at night. You had no kitchen staff at all to do the washing and ironing. And that meant that Mother, who normally didn't do any of that at all, had to get up early in the morning and start cooking and setting the tables and get the washing underway. So you always had to have some white help around.

39:30 So in one of the cottages on the property there was always a white family. That white family would come and take over the jobs while the Aboriginals were away on walkabout. They'd just turn up in the morning ready to light the fires and get the breakfast, just as if they hadn't been away. But it left you totally handicapped, and our nurse girl - we always had a nurse girls until Jimmy was about six - Ruby Cox, and she was a white girl from Tingha.

40:00 Everyone had a nurse girl at the time, to keep their eye on the children ... we always had a white nurse girl. It interrupted the whole running of the property.

**You mentioned the little girl, Claris? Was she accepted as a normal friend?**

She worked in the kitchen, but still, she was my sister's best friend. See, we only had ourselves, and we never became friendly with any of the Aboriginals who worked in the house. We grew up with them and we knew them all well, and we went to church with them - but we were never

40:30 became their friends. But I never went into a black camp in the whole of my life, because Daddy said, "They don't come into our house, so we don't go into theirs. You must pay them the same respect that they are paying us. If we invite them in, then they're coming in to work for us, but you're just going down there to be inquisitive. So don't you ever do that. Don't you

41:00 ever go down there just to look around." So I never did. I never went down to their camp just to look around. It was considered not the thing. My father said that a gentleman doesn't do that, and his girls wouldn't do that either. It would be considered inquisitiveness, and it would be considered rude. But Claris was a different cup of tea. Claris was two years older than Dot. But somehow or other, because Dot was so mad on animals,

41:30 and she was an animal lover; and she always had pets, and went rabbiting, she became friendly with Claris. But Claris still did her work inside the house, and every afternoon after school, she and Claris would disappear and go rabbiting, or go fishing, or looking for platypus or porcupines or something or other - it was always outside and it was always to do with animals. So Claris was educated, she was ...

# Tape 5

00:30 **You were talking about being a girl in Bassendean ...**

Well, being a girl in Bassendean ... first of all I must tell you that my great grandparents were both Irish - typical Irish Catholics they were. They were brought up in a very strict regime in those days - very strict.

01:00 They belonged to the era where you couldn't say the word 'breast' - even if you were carving a chicken. You'd never say, "I'll have the breast or the leg," you had to say that you'd have the white or the dark meat, because it was forbidden to mention any part of the body. It was just not done. It was just not cheese, you see. So they were very, very strict - as I told you, in the difference between a man and a gentleman. They were very strict, old fashioned people. And my other grandparents

01:30 were Scottish, and they were Scottish Presbyterians. They were brought up in a very strict religious atmosphere too. There were no swear words ever used or heard. So I grew up in an era where women were very deeply respected. If anyone swore in my father's presence or anywhere near any of us then they would be sacked or dressed down to such an extent that they'd never swear again. And as for using words that are used today ... I was twenty one when someone asked me if

02:00 I had intercourse, and I said, "Well, doesn't everybody?" Because to me, in those days, that meant talking to one another. It meant communicating - getting together and talking. That was the only interpretation of the word 'intercourse' that I had. I grew up in an era where you never talked about sex, and I knew nothing, you see. It was a very strange thing to think that I was a virgin at twenty four. Now that would be impossible these days, because I'd had three proposals of marriage by the time I was twenty one.

02:30 But yet nothing was touched on a woman's body below the waist in our days. You did have your little bits of kissing and cuddling and so forth, but no open-mouth kissing. That was unheard of. You never had anything like that. You never talked about sex, nor about anything relating to sex. You see, even when my brother wrote ... you, see, when we came to Sydney we were saving money, and he made a little box for us to put our pennies in for when

03:00 we had a telephone call. And on this box was written, "Put your P-E-N-I-S in here," your pennies you see - he wasn't spelling very well. But everybody else laughed, but to us it was sad that that's all he knew. At his age, that was a word relating ... you see. You didn't talk about those sorts of things you see. You never did. And there was no sex at all amongst young people in my day. If a girl got in trouble, her life was ruined, because

03:30 she then ... once you had an illegitimate baby, well, then you were free for all. You'd done it once, you might as well do it again. You'd lost your reputation and status and your opportunity for marriage. This was an era that I know you young people today, with sex, with free sex, and free ... you couldn't understand that we could enjoy life with dances and picnics and parties and boyfriends and not indulge in sex and relationships.

04:00 It was something that was taboo and not heard of. So that was the atmosphere in which I grew up, and the words that are used today so freely - especially the f-word - if anyone had used that on our property, they'd have been sacked and put on the next mail car and been off the place. If any dirty words like that were used in front of women, well, it was a word we never heard; and if I did hear it then I wouldn't have understood it anyway. At any rate, as I said before, we could never go anywhere without

04:30 supervision. We always had an Aboriginal who watched us when we went riding. So we never went anywhere without a chaperon of some kind - our father, or an uncle, or our grandfather. Mostly it was our mother or our aunts, so we were restricted in everything, you see. So it was a totally different lifestyle. And as for wearing ... in those days, the bust wasn't ever displayed like it is in these days.

05:00 A bikini was unheard of. And for women to expose themselves ... and when the bikini came in, you were very daring if you got into a bikini, that two-piece costume. We all wore the old neck-to-knee ... well, not exactly neck-to-knee, but we all wore the full costume coming down to just above your knees. Life was quite, quite different. But we had a very enjoyable life. If a man asked us to a dance then he always called for us with a bouquet - a corsage - you were never taken anywhere without a corsage. You were brought home

05:30 and they never kissed you. They might have attempted to kiss you on the second or the third date, but never before the third date. You would never have allowed them. At any rate, it was only on the lips, and it was only the pressing kind. There was none of this open-mouth business. So it was a totally different life, and we got respect from men. Because a man instinctively knows ... and as all young men do, and as men today do, they know immediately how far they can get with a woman.

06:00 They recognise it immediately. So fancy that - three proposals of marriage, and I never had an open-mouth kiss or known what sex was about. So there you are. It was a different life. But it was a wonderful life, because we wore beautiful evening dresses, and gloves up to here, and we had lovely dances. In my day, when I came to Sydney, it was just heaven. There were dance floors all over Sydney - Grace Brothers, Farmers, David Jones, and all the hotels had

06:30 a ballroom and marvellous bands. And then the old Trocadero opened. During the war years when the ships came in, or the army ships arrived ... there were a lot of army men around, and there were organizations like the Victoria Club and all the different organizations that young girls joined. We were always taken to dances for these men -for all the officers off the ships -

07:00 and we were always taken with two or three chaperons, and we were watched all night. We'd go in with them, and we'd have to report and go back with them. So we were carefully chaperoned at all times, and there was no slap and tickle or any nonsense going on. And yet we had wonderful flirtations and terrific little love affairs and things. There were lots of love letters and telegrams. Women in my day were really treated

07:30 as the feminine ... as lovely, delicate creatures. That's if you weren't bold and brassy, and ... you set your own standards. And once those standards were accepted, then men treated you to those standards. It was a great life. And I remember in 1937 - I found an old diary from then - I would have been nineteen, and I went to seventy two dances that year, and there were only fifty two weeks in the year. And yet I

went to seventy two. I'd

08:00 go on Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday night. It would be three in one week, and they weren't dances, you know, they were balls - with the full kid gloves up beyond your elbows. And men in my day, when they took you out to a ball, they always wore white gloves, in case the perspiration from their hands soiled your evening dress. Did you know that? Always. The man wouldn't ask you to dance until he put on his white gloves. They were these white cotton gloves that they carried

08:30 and they always had them in the pocket of the evening suit. So that was … you know how their hands sweat? And if your hands sweated, then you'd ruin your beautiful white kid gloves. We had to clean those too with spirit. But we always had heaps of those. So that was something I could tell you about the girls in my day.

**Do you think that you were a bit different from most of the girls in your day?**

09:00 Well, I don't know, dear. You see, I only mixed with my sisters and my cousins when we came to Sydney. I did have a few girl friends but they weren't intimate girlfriends because I'd never gone to school with them, so they were only girls I met through the church or through girlfriends and boyfriends and so forth. I never got into an intimate conversation with. I never found out what they did. But I did know one girl who got married because she was pregnant

09:30 and that surprised me. I didn't have an intimate girlfriend. The first one I had - outside my family - was when I was first married in 1943. And she's still my friend now after fifty-six years. She's like a sister to me. But that was the first really good female friend relationship I'd ever had. That was the first one, other than my own family. It may seem strange …

10:00 **Growing up in the country and learning things like how to shoot, and rabbiting, and mustering, and those skills … would you say that you were a typical kind of a girl?**

Well, in my day I was. Nearly all country girls did what I did. But only if they were on a station, because so many of them were sent away to boarding schools - even before seven years of age.

10:30 You see, they spent most of their life at boarding school. And some of them, they were so isolated that they only came home once a year. You'll often read about this, unfortunately. Children didn't have weekends off. Even when I sent Catherine to MEGS - she was at boarding school for four and a half or five years - she only had the one home leave once a term. She didn't have weekends off. I couldn't go and get her and take her out for weekends, whereas you can now. Kids can go off for weekends with their parents. I wasn't even allowed to talk

11:00 to her on the telephone. See, Catherine is now fifty, and this was when she was a young girl. She went when she was twelve and she was there till she was seventeen or eighteen. So her life was different too. She was separated from her family because she was at boarding school. Well nearly every country girl of consequence - whose family had money - went like that. Our family could have sent us, but they never did, because the Depression, and we couldn't

11:30 send four girls away to boarding school all at once. But most country girls spent half their lives in boarding school. And of course, living so closely together, they chatted with one another, and shared far more intimate details about life than I would have ever had the opportunity to know. And then when I did get friends in the end, I was embarrassed if they started to talk about things like that, you see.

**What about things like sewing and the more gentile pursuits?**

12:00 Oh dear. Every single woman in my day had to learn to knit, to crochet, to tap, and to embroider, and each one of us had to … I can show you some of the work that I've done - beautiful embroidery, and some tapestries I've done around the place. We were all taught to do this handwork, and we were all taught to dress-make. We all had to make so much of our own clothing - that was part and parcel of life. And we all had to learn how to cook, after a fashion.

12:30 Not very much though. Most women in my day were married without knowing anything about cooking. But because I was so isolated and had nothing to do in the winter months, I did do a bit of cooking before I was married.

**Tell me about your impression of Sydney when you moved there …**

Well, Sydney in those days was quite different. See, I grew up without

13:00 any form of fear at all. All of us, we never thought that anything could happen to us. And my mother lived in Sydney until the seventies, and never locked a door. You'd never think of going and locking a door at night. The back door, there wasn't even a key to it, because nobody thought that anything could happen. We had total confidence in our own security and safety.

13:30 There was nothing happening like you hear of today. The word 'rape' you never heard of it. It wasn't in the newspapers and those things just didn't happen in the twenties and thirties. After the war they did.

**Was it that they didn't happen, or that they just weren't talked about?**

I suppose it did happen, and it must have gone before the police and courts, but it never hit the

newspapers. But I just don't think as much happened - there just wasn't as much crime.

14:00 There was crime of course, but drugs started to come in when the American fleet arrived. That was the first time we heard of the word 'Mickie Finn'. They came with the first lot of Americans who arrived here in the forties. But I grew up without … I had my first cigarette when I was twenty two, only because my boss didn't know what to give me for Christmas. So he gave me a carton of cigarettes. I was too mean to give them away, and it was 'my' Christmas present,

14:30 so I thought I'd learn to smoke. So I learned to smoke because of that. We grew up without alcohol, because our father wouldn't allow it. And we grew up without cigarettes. But we didn't miss them. There were other lovely things that we did; and there was beautiful food, and lovely soft drinks that you could make. But Sydney … see, during the war years we'd come home from a dance … nobody had cars, so we'd catch a train from Wynyard Station. The last train always left at eleven thirty

15:00 so we had to be there at eleven thirty, and we'd go right across to the terminal was at Neutral Bay Junction. And we lived right down at Kaban Street, down Holt Avenue at Mosman. Well we used to walk down from Neutral Bay Junction, right home, in the middle of the night, in our full evening dress, singing and dancing along the street. Never gave it a thought that someone might try to approach us or abduct us or do anything. That never entered our head.

15:30 We felt totally free. But nobody would do that today. You wouldn't have remembered that, would you Michael [interviewer] - the terminal being in Neutral Bay. So there was no form of transportation past Neutral Bay. But things were totally different. The traffic wasn't as heavy as it is today. You'd go into a shop, and the most beautiful thing about going into a shop was that there were always seats at the counters. You'd go up to a counter and you could sit down while you were making your purchases. There were chemist shops, and there were always

16:00 these high stools to sit on. I miss that so much today. It's been forty or fifty years since I've walked into a shop and been able to sit down to make my purchases. And also, there was always someone who'd come up to you immediately and say, "Can I help you?" And they'd stay with you until you did your purchases. And David Jones and all the big stores all did that. Such courtesy was shown to us.

16:30 All those things you miss as we grow … as we 'progress' with civilisation. It's only because the population has grown so much. Now, there's so many more people, and crime seems to have captured the imagination of so many people, and they write about it, and you see it on TV all the time, and you go and get videos and they're all about crime; and the games and things that are given to children, they're always shooting or stabbing one another. So everything so different now.

17:00 Sydney, when I first came, I was so overwhelmed by it. To go into town, you used to go across on the ferry - that beautiful ferry, every morning and every evening. Because the Depression was on and we had no money, we used to walk everywhere. We'd walk from Holt Avenue right down to Mosman Wharf - all the way down the hill to catch the ferry - and walk back every night. You could go down on the tram, but to do that would cost you two pence, you see. We just didn't have that to spare.

17:30 And my brother, when was going to university, he used to walk from Circular Quay every morning, right up to Sydney University, and the back again in the afternoon. We used to wear out our shoe leather, and we used to buy something called Chromite. It was something that you could buy, and you'd clean the bottom of your shoe sole and scrape it, and then you'd put a paste on it, and then you'd put this Chromite on it. It was like an inner sole on the bottom of your shoe; and then that would protect

18:00 the sole - otherwise you'd get a big hole in the middle, and you'd have to get it half-soled. Shoes used to wear out so much in those years because you'd have to walk everywhere. We were too poor to catch trams and public transport, even though it was cheap enough.

**So how did you get from Bassendean to Sydney?**

Well, my two sisters - Wilga and June - they were sent in a train, and they went down to Cronulla by train. They stayed with my Uncle Mario, and

18:30 the rest of us came down by car. Mother had then, a Model-A Ford. That was the new Ford that we had that time. Dot and Jimmy and I and Mother - along with Jimmy, who was a baby of nine months old - and we all fitted into this little Model A Ford, along with one dog, and our luggage, such as there was of it.

19:00 **Can you describe your last day at Bassendean?**

It was something we weren't totally aware of. We knew we were going, but we couldn't understand why. Being a child - we were only young - I was only eighteen, but even so was very childlike; and I thought we were coming back. I didn't think that it was over and done with. Mother sent a certain amount of furniture and our luggage to Sydney by

19:30 train. It had to go from Bassendean down to Uralla, then through to Sydney. She got us all up in the morning and we were all dressed for the trip. We were going to Sydney and that was an exciting thing. So she packed us all in the car, and we went down, and Daddy was standing there, and we all said goodbye to Daddy … and he started to cry. And that surprised us, because we had never seen our father crying.

20:00 And he was saying, "God almighty, I can't bear it, I can't bear it." And he started to hug and kiss us more and more and … and … it makes me a bit emotional to think of it now … thinking about it … and at any rate, as we drove away, he threw himself on the ground, and he was beating the ground with his hands, lying there… he was so unhappy, so broken-hearted. And then all our dogs, we had forgotten to tie them up, and all our dogs …

20:30 it was just like the blackfellas; it was as if they knew. They'd never followed the car before. We were always there, you see, always there on the property. So the dogs stayed on the property. But everybody was gone and there was only Daddy left standing there - or lying there. And Mother and all the rest of us were driving away in the car, and the dogs they followed us the whole eight miles right up to the … and every time we got out of the car to open a gate, we'd try to send them back. But they wouldn't go back. There were six or seven dogs that ended up right up at the mail box. That was eight miles from home.

21:00 And our great uncle Emdee was waiting there to say goodbye to us on the main road when we got there. So the dogs were absolutely exhausted by that time. But somehow they must have realised, when we turned to go to Sydney, and we were off Bassendean. And as soon as we turned towards Sydney, the dogs all stopped and stayed with great uncle Emdee. So, that was another strange thing,

21:30 that the animals knew they had lost us, because we had left the actual land that they knew and had worked on. So we went to Sydney with one dog in the car. It was one of Dot's pets. So, the leaving of Bassendean, I can still remember it as one of the most saddest and most harrowing and most emotional times of my life.

**What about your mum? How was she?**

My mother was an incredible woman. She had a backbone of steel. Mother could cope with

22:00 absolutely anything when it had to be coped with. She cried after. But she always had the strength when it was needed; and she never let us down. She'd stand up to anything, then an hour after it had happened you'd find her on her bed, sobbing her heart out. She always reacted after, but never during. So she didn't … her reaction … she had to drive the car and be responsible for her children. So she carried on.

22:30 But the roads in those days were absolutely terrible. The road from Tingha to Bundarra, it was all corrugated; and in those days the cars had very little, thin tyres. They'd bump about like that, and we had no seatbelts; and any time we did go into town we'd come home with split lips or bruises on our faces because we'd be thrown about in the back seat. And some kid would be sick …

23:00 It was a harrowing experience going out in the car when we were kids. It was something we tried to avoid. Car sickness was something that ran through our family, and that was horrible enough, but the bumping and jolting and biting our lips because of the horrible ruts and the hard tyres pounding away. And we had to cross a lot of creeks and rivers in those days, where there were no bridges. Country roads went over creeks, and that was not so easy.

23:30 And I remember my father used to … when we used to cross a creek and the water was as high as the radiator, he used to open the bonnet and take the fan belt off, and put a bag or piece of canvas right across the radiator. And then someone would come and take us across the river in a buggy or sulky - or we'd have to ride across - and we'd all be on the other side waiting, and then he'd rev up the engine as fast as he could,

24:00 and then he'd rush to the river as fast as he could with this bag across the radiator … I don't know why the fan belt had to come off, but it did. and he'd go like blazes toward the river, and the water would shoot off, and he'd just make the other side before it would fizzle out. That was how we got across the creeks. It was very primitive, but bushmen knew everything

24:30 in those days. They could handle any situation.

**You said that when your mother came to Sydney, she got a job …**

When we came to Sydney, grandmother had already hired us a house in Holt Avenue, Mosman. Malcolm was only nine months old, and she stayed at home for a months until we could arrange for someone to come in and look after Malcolm, and then Mother got a job. She got a job at the dental hospital in … it's the teaching

25:00 hospital in New South Wales, attached to the university. She was there about three years. My mother was such a clever woman, she could do anything. She was in charge of the buying and the stores there, until she got - in the middle of the war - she got meningitis, and very nearly died. We thought she was going to die, and the doctors everywhere … there was no hope for her. And just at the time that Mother got this terrible meningitis, all the troops

25:30 up in Darwin were getting this horrible disease, and the sulphur-amyl nide pill, which was about the size of a two shilling piece was introduced, and it was the only thing that could help. Fortunately, our doctor was able to get some, because they were using it in the hospitals up in Darwin, and it saved Mother's life. We were able to grind it up and give it to her, because she couldn't swallow. And in those days

26:00 the hospitals were so understaffed because all the nurses had volunteered to go into the armed forces, and they only had a lot of untrained BAs and so forth helping in the hospital; so that therefore, when someone had to go into hospital, their family members were expected to bring in food and help with their medication. So that would be unheard of today - the idea of anyone

26:30 coming from the outside and bringing in food to a hospital. I was only nineteen at the time. 1942, I would have been ... at any rate, I was old enough to be in charge of ... Wilga had married then and had gone away, and Dot was up helping aunty Nellie on her property. Dot was away there for two years, like a jillaroo. My aunt ran her own property, along with Dot and another cousin.

27:00 So Dot was a jillaroo/stockman on this property for the best part of the war. So she wasn't there, and that left June and Jimmy and Malcolm in my charge. But it was terribly primitive, because the private hospitals were crammed to the teeth, because those who could afford to go to a private hospital went to one; and you couldn't get in with an infectious disease at any rate. You just couldn't imagine what it was like at a State

27:30 hospital in those days. this was 1941. It was just absolutely frightful. But Mother did live, and thank god she did. But it was just so primitive in the hospital wards.

**Have you got any other recollections of what the hospital was like at that time?**

I can remember the ward Mother was put in. Because it was meningitis, she was in an infectious ward, and they didn't have an infectious ward at

28:00 Royal North Shore Hospital. You had to go out to La Perouse. She was put in with all the people who were dying. They were screaming with cancer and dying of cancer, and people on their last laps. It was absolutely terrible. there must have been twenty women in the ward, and they were all in their final ... you know, the final laps of their lives. They were screaming and moaning, and they had sores all over them, and no teeth. It was just ghastly, and our beautiful little mother

28:30 had to be there in this place. It was the only place they could put her. The ambulance took her to three or four places before we could get her into the Royal North Shore. It was absolutely ... the State hospitals in the war years were terrible. It was mainly because they were understaffed, and also because they were overcrowded. See, all the men and doctors were away. The medical profession was denuded during the war years.

29:00 The doctors - those that could go - were off at the war. And the nurses were off at the war. Therefore the practice of medicine suffered terribly for those that were at home.

**What were the conditions like in the dental hospital?**

Well, that was before the war. Mother was there from 1936 to 1939. She

29:30 was still there when the war broke out though. The universities were operating in the proper fashion when things got bad. After all, our first lot of troops didn't leave till the forties. They were in training, and the battalions were being formed. So everything was perfectly normal in Australia until the troops began to leave, until the country began to be denuded in all the professions. So that's when the women went into the workforce.

30:00 **So you're saying the conditions got really bad in the hospitals after war began, but prior to that ...**

Prior to the war they were as good as one would expect in those years. I had an operation before the war in St. Luke's Hospital. It was almost the same as it is today.

30:30 The hospitals were run very well before the war. But two years into the war, they were denuded and overcrowded with patients. That's all I could really say about what happened there. It was no fault of the administration. It was just that the workforce was denuded.

**OK. You mentioned that you started to go to Miss Hale's Business College. Can you describe what that was like in there?**

31:00 Well, I was with a whole bunch of girls, and I hadn't been to school with any of them. I hadn't known any of them. They were all from good private schools like Ascham and Frencham, because that's the only thing girls did in those days unless they became nurses or teachers. And to become a teacher you had to go to the university, to go to Blackfriars or one of the teacher colleges.

31:30 And so many of them didn't have the qualifications to get into the universities. Those of them who could go to the universities did, but you had to have a leaving certificate of a certain standard to qualify for a university. So therefore, if you weren't going to become a nurse or a teacher, then you became a secretary. It was a pretty ... there was no other opportunity. So all these girls from these beautiful schools, they all came to Miss Hale's Business College.

32:00 I had nothing in common with them. I hadn't been to their schools and I didn't know their families, but my sister was with me, so I at least had someone to talk to and someone to have my lunch with. There were quite a lot of women there - I suppose, about fifty or sixty, every term. there were two teachers

there. There was Miss Hale herself, who was quite famous herself. You'll meet so many women of my age who'll say they went to Miss Hale's Business College, and there were learnt

32:30 on very old fashioned Remington typewriters that we had to bang away at. they had a little bit of steel around the top of them. We had to bang away at them and get up to sixty words a minute. And we had to … at shorthand we had to get sixty … well, sixty words a minute, that qualified you to go out. But sixty words a minute was … good ones got up to eighty or ninety, and sometimes a hundred. That was really terribly fast shorthand.

33:00 But at any rate, we weren't released until we got to sixty, and some of us even got to forty or fifty on the typewriter. But they were terrible old instruments, and they made a lot of noise. With fifty or sixty girls sitting there typing, you can imagine what it was like - pecking away there at those machines.

**You mentioned that you didn't really like it. Was it that you didn't like the skills or were the girls …**

Well, I didn't like the discipline of being indoors

33:30 with a whole lot of people I had nothing in common with whatsoever. So I felt like a fish out of water. I wanted to be in the mountains, I wanted to be out in the paddocks, I wanted to see my dogs, I wanted to be around the homestead. I didn't want to be stuck in a great big room with fifty or sixty girls I didn't know, with nothing in common, learning something that I didn't want to learn. Until I

34:00 was in charge myself, and I was the one giving the orders and the dictation with my own secretary, I never wanted to be under the control of anybody giving me dictation. I didn't enjoy it. But I became good at it. I wouldn't have become a private secretary at Philips Lamps otherwise, if I hadn't been good at it. But I made a success of it.

34:30 But without thoroughly enjoying it. It was never my vocation, if you know what I mean.

**Can you describe what the other girls were like?**

Little snobs. They were impossible. We were country girls. And in those days, up in the land, the squattocracy was the squattocracy, and you were accepted and you were made a fuss of, and you were very important people. But the average girl in those days … Dad and Dave and all those silly stories, you know, they thought anyone who came from the country

35:00 was a hay seed, or a Dad and Dave type. They must have had a lot of country girls coming into their boarding schools, but they just mixed in with them; and probably only those that went and stayed on the properties had any idea of how country girls lived. So there was unbelievable snobbery. Of course, we had plenty to be snobbish about ourselves, because in our opinion we were landed gentry, but still, they didn't know that, and we were brought up not to say those sorts of things

35:30 about who you were or what the titles in your family were or anything like that. So you had to soft peddle all the time, we were. But these girls, they treated us as if we were just hay seeds. Well, it wasn't very nice. There was only one girl that I really became friendly with. The two of us were sent to Philips Lamps at the same time, so I continued knowing her for a number of years -

36:00 but never to the extent that I went into her … where I was invited into her home or she was invited into mine. So we didn't get to that level of friendship. So I didn't enjoy it and … I think something's happening with your equipment there …

**It's OK; it's just the five minute signal on the tape machine. Did the girls do anything else in particular that made you think you didn't fit in?**

Only by imitating our speaking voices sometimes. We did speak - because our mother and father had very cultured speaking voices - but we

36:30 spoke with a very different kind of accent to theirs. Mine has mellowed over the years, and I have a voice now that fits in with everything. But back then my voice was quite distinct. The girls would say, "Oh, la-di-da" and they'd imitate us, and make jokes about us, and say, "Who does she think she is speaking like that! Has she got a plum in her mouth!" Teasing, but it was not very nice. So I didn't like that. They thought we

37:00 were putting it on, you know. it wasn't very nice when you were speaking quite normally. But that has changed. It's still recognisable, but it was my everyday voice, but in those days it was a little more so.

**What kind of things did they do that made you think they were snobs?**

Well, they'd talk about all the parties they'd been to; and they'd invite each other to things in front of you, without asking us, you see. They'd

37:30 say, "Oh, are you coming to the boating picnic on Sunday," or "I'll see you at so-and-so's twenty first birthday party on Thursday." We were cut out, if you know what I mean. Of course, we didn't know any of the people they were talking about, and hadn't gone to school with all those people, we didn't get invitations. It was rather rude to know all these things were happening around us with being included. We were brought up not to do that. You didn't speak about things you're going to,

38:00 and you didn't say, "Are you going to so-and-so," in case the person you were speaking to hadn't been invited. It might hurt their feelings. We were told never to talk about the invitations you received, but they did it openly in front of us. So we always felt left out and not included. And that is hurtful, so I didn't like that.

**Did they ever invite you to anything?**

Never. No, it was most extraordinary. I was six or seven months at Miss Hale's and not one of those girls ever invited me or my sister to anything.

38:30 We were isolated. we were out in the cold. We were different people. They were a different group, and it was most extraordinary. Most of them had gone to school together, or knew one another. Not every one of them did. There were a few country girls like us. There were a few, and we had sympathy towards them, but they were suffering in the same way as we were suffering, if you know what I mean. No, we didn't …

39:00 When I got boyfriends it was completely different. We were at dances and picnics and parties and they had boyfriends who had girlfriends, and often I'd meet up with one of them who was at Miss Hale's with me, but two of three of them were in Mosman who were at Miss Hale's. But still, in all, they didn't become friends. The only ones who became friends and whose homes I went into, were the ones I met through church fellowship. We entertained socially there. We went into each other's homes, and you know, you'd ask someone home

39:30 for Sunday dinner or something like that. But I never did it with any of the girls from Miss Hale's. They were horrible little snobs in my opinion.

**OK. That's probably a good point to break for lunch. Thank you Mickie.**

# Tape 6

01:19 **Can you share the story behind Philips Lighting, how you joined and what happened from there?**

01:27 Well I joined because

01:30 it was one of these things the Marseilles Business College did, or guaranteed to do, was to find all their graduates a job. Well they just told me to go for a interview at Philips Lamps and I got that and was put in to the typing pool. From there I graduated upstairs to being private secretary to the Secretary of the Company on the administrative floor up above the typing pool was first delegated, at least sent to, which I was sent first.

02:00 **And what year was that?**

02:02 That was the very end of 1936 because I went to Marseilles Business College in February 1936 and you usually stay there for up to nine months, but I think I stayed about seven or eight months and they found me a job immediately so it would have been the latter part of 1936 because we came to Sydney on the 19th January 1936 when we left Bassendean.

02:25 **What was your role there?**

02:26 My role at Philips Lamps was as a stenographer

02:30 and of course as a stenographer you are either in the typing pool or you were just stenographer or you were a private secretary. Well my role there was as private secretary to the Secretary of the Company. I was only 19 but it was quite an honour.

02:51 **When did you begin to realise that there were funny things going on?**

02:54 Well I've told the story of how I got to work on the switchboard cubicle during the

03:00 lunch hour and it was some time after I joined that was pretty efficient plugging in and opening and shutting the switch that it was when I first heard the words 'Heil Hitler' that was when I first thought now why is that because all the newspapers, the world was agog with the thinking about the clouds of war and of course everyone thought it was over and done with because Chamberlain had come back with his piece of paper with 'peace in our time'. But the newspapers and the general world news gave us to understand that things weren't settling down in Europe.

03:30 So knowing what Hitler was doing and the number of people floating in to Australia to escape his tyranny the heil Hitler drew my attention to the fact that something might be wrong. So that encouraged me then to leave the key open a little longer than necessary when I was plugging in to the managing director. So of course they only saw a bit of kid outside, a country girl at that, and they

thought well, they just wouldn't have done it probably

04:00 if the telephonist had been there, but with me they didn't think there was any problem. So that's how I first came to hear German words and that alerted me to the fact that something must be wrong.

04:16 **So when this new boss came, Mr Armand Giberius?**

04:26 He was German. When he came that's when everything altered on, because the administration

04:30 up until then had been under the hands of the Dutchmen and they ran things quite differently to Giberius. He was a German of course a disciplinarian, and they want everything perfect and they want everything done tomorrow, at least, they want everything done the day before. So the regime and the discipline in the office started to change and none of us liked it very much because it wasn't what we were used to. And he had his own private secretary in an office down the, almost next door to him,

05:00 and she didn't mix with any of us, she was totally German she didn't communicate at all with us at all in English she didn't attempt to so she came and went and wasn't part of the scene at all. We didn't know her, we only knew her name and if I had to put a telephone call through to her phone she always answered in German. So we didn't know her at all and that too was odd, no communication between her, with her and any members of the staff.

05:30 So that was another strange thing, when things alter, when the whole pattern alters you do get, begin to wonder why, don't you?

05:45 **What did you notice from your office of people coming and going in to this office?**

05:50 It wasn't an office, because my office was a definite closed office, but when I was sitting in the little cubicle working the switchboard at lunchtime that was when I noticed the number of visitors, Armand Giberius

06:00 seem to have in the lunch hour when he didn't have, seem to have terribly many during the day time. Up to three or four men would come in, nearly every lunch hour and that seemed strange. What were they coming in for? Why did they come in the lunch hour? It was business office why weren't they coming in business hours, that intrigued me too. So when I saw them silhouetted against the plate glass, with the sun behind them, the plate glass window giving the Nazi salute, well then

06:30 that really did concern me.

06:34 **Did anyone else in the office start to pick things up besides yourself?**

06:38 No not at all. When I mentioned it to the telephonist what I'd been seeing and hearing she said 'look, it's none of your business, your supposed to sit and just plug the and shut the switch, and your not supposed to listen, it's none of your business what you hear and what you see, and if you make a fuss', you know, 'there's no point'. When she wouldn't listen to me and she just brushed

07:00 it off I went to the Secretary of the Company who was my boss, Charles Tapp, and I told him that I was concerned and he said 'c'mon little lady you just making a lot of fuss, you're just imagining a lot of things, you're listening to the wireless too much or reading too many things in the paper. Come off it this is a Dutch company and we're all no no no' he said 'forget about it. First of all remember it's not your business'. They shut me up so there was nobody in the firm in the slightest bit interested in what I had to say, so they did shut me up.

07:30 So I told my mother and she passed it on, and you hear how that came through, got to the Department of Intelligence and how they came to me.

07:41 **Did you ever notice or see any letters or papers in regards to the Nazi party?**

07:46 No of course not coming in to Philips Lamps because all mail came in to his secretary's office, all the mail was delivered straight in to her office every morning and

08:00 she would sort out what would belong to him and what belonged just ordinary business stuff would be shot up to the other woman upstairs who handled all the mail coming in. That was one of the things he changed, all incoming mail had to go through his secretary first before it went upstairs for normal treatment as business mail.

08:22 **You've shared with us the story of the intelligence guys speaking with you. What happened when you were interrogated? What happened on that day?**

08:30 Well he asked, he put me through the ropes first, telling me how much be fine or what terrible things would happen to me if I breathed a word, and he had to get my sworn oath that I wouldn't divulge anything and he began to ask me. Show me how you plug in, which is his line, how you open it and

09:00 how I can hear and also he warned me if anyone if any noise at all like a car any noise at all I had to shut it straight away, which I would have done at any rate, and he also said, he put me through the

business of taking these notes with shorthand, and if I could to handwrite any word that I actually knew. So if I recognised a German word or a name to try and put it in to English if I could, but if I couldn't put it do it in shorthand symbols.

09:30 Well that's what I did, exactly as he asked me, and it wasn't very easy because I had to have the notebook there on the switchboard without a tray or a desk in front of me, you see it's just a straight switchboard and I'm sitting there with these earphones on, so it wasn't easy I had to do it all on my knee. Therefore the shorthand wasn't as good as it might have been had I been able to rest it on a desk.

09:59 **What sort of words did you recognise?**

10:00 Words, names, towns particularly, like Berlin, and Heidelberg and any sort of name and every now and then the word, German people who were well-known like Goering, Hess and all those, every now and again, probably once in six to eight weeks, one of those names of a well-known Germans in the world news I would recognise one of those so I could put that

10:30 and that identified them with being Germans. Now and again one of the towns in Germany, which we all know and recognise, like Bonn Heidelberg or Cologne or something like that. We would recognise particularly in the place where Hitler, up in the, his nest, I forgot the name of it now, but it was so well known where Hitler lived and gave his instructions from. Those were the things that I put in to English and wrote in English for them to pick up. That was a great help,

11:00 because the words commonly used in all the newspapers and associated immediately with the war, with the possibility of war.

11:11 **When did you first find out about the telecommunications that they were setting-up?**

11:17 Only after her he was put in Long Bay Gaol and it was the morning after the, because the Secretary of the Company, to whom I was private secretary, because he was the Secretary of the Company he was advised as to why he was put in goal.

11:30 They had to tell him because you can't just arrest the managing director of a firm and put him goal without someone being informed why he's there. So they had to tell the person responsible for the management of the company and that was the Secretary, so he was told he was arrested because he was the ringleader with a mob of Germans who had set up this telecommunications system throughout the Pacific

12:00 stretching from Sydney, New Zealand, Fiji, Malaya and right as far as Tahiti, all over the Pacific. That was enough to have him arrested because why would he be setting that up, and of course it was the morning, it was the night of the war was declared here in Australia that he was arrested shortly after war was declared because they knew all about it from the work I'd been doing for them.

12:25 **Tell me about an occasion when you were nearly caught taking down the information?**

12:30 Well people would say, 'What are you doing?' and I'd say, 'I'm writing a letter'. You see that was very simple. If someone walked past, 'Hello Miss Broun and what are you doing? Taking notes or something?', 'Oh no I'm writing a letter home'. That was very simple no one would peer over and see that it was shorthand or read what I was writing that would be very unseemly. So that was very easy to handle.

12:58 **Did you feel like a spy?**

I felt terrible because it was contrary to my nature

13:00 to be sticky beaking and it was something my parents would never have approved of me listening in to someone else's conversation, that was taboo. I had to do it because I was ordered to do it, but I did feel guilty I assure you. Every time I saw Mr Giberius walk past I felt very guilty, and I couldn't tell a soul not a living soul could I tell. It was not easy, when you are young like that you want to share, you get used to talking to people and sharing

13:30 your experiences. But I did share it with my mother just that once to see where it lead.

13:41 **What was your mother's response when you told her?**

13:45 I never told her. No Mother never never knew that anyone had ever been to see me. She just mentioned casually as part of a conversation, you know when people are talking at dinner parties, "Oh my daughter is working at Philips Lamps and it seems a German in there and every now and again she hears

14:00 him saying, 'Heil Hitler', just shows you what the world's coming to". Just as you would say at a dinner party and the Premier picked it up hearing her say it and he later on said, 'That was interesting about your daughter. Where does she work?', 'She's in Philips Lamps' and Mother just passed it on. It was just a bit of conversation you use of interest at a dinner party. Mother never never knew that it was followed up, never, I was forbidden to tell her.

14:30 **What was her response when you first told her that there were things going on in the office?**

14:34 I think she took it as a piece of news that someone would bring home, like I could have come home and said, 'Mother I was working at David Jones and I saw someone stealing a particular pair of stockings', you see and nobody found and she'd repeat that at a dinner party. It was just a piece, an item of conversation just passed casually at a dinner party, but the Premier was astute enough to pick it up. Mother knew then that I was working at the

15:00 censorship she just knew that I'd changed jobs from one job to another. Philips Lamps I'd been with for three years so OK I needed a change and the war was on so I went over to work in something connected with the war, that was all.

15:17 **What was Mr Giberius like as a character?**

15:21 He was very withdrawn, none of us, once again he didn't mix with the men in the firm he didn't mix with, the Secretary of the Company hardly

15:30 knew him because he was totally aloof and withdrawn, he set himself apart from the other employees. He wasn't liked at all because he didn't become one of us. For over a year and he didn't once become a member of the staff, you might say, so the Secretary of the Company, had to work to go and see him about business things on occasions, but most of the time the Secretary just went away with the normal

16:00 business of running the place, and only consulted Giberius on points he thought he should be consulted on. He was an unfriendly man, very aloof, he was quite a nice looking man of average height and quite a darker complexion, you'd say, 'Well that's a nice looking man going past', but apart from that he never spoke to me that I really remember. Never came over and said, 'Good morning Miss Broun,' or anything to me personally, he didn't approach me. It was very unusual. Sometimes managing directors can be like that in firms,

16:30 but he, to me, it was most unusual to see a man so aloof. And yet having all those friends coming in from outside, that surprised me.

16:42 **These friends from the outside, were they Australian men?**

16:45 I wouldn't know if they were Australian or not, always every single one of them was always dressed in black suits with black shoes and they always wore a black, it wasn't exactly a Homburg, but very similar to

17:00 a Homburg hat because men always wore hats in those days. They'd walk straight past me at the switchboard, they never greeted me, never spoke, they never said, 'May I go in?', they'd walk straight across the hall past my cubicle and tapped on the door of Giberius. Giberius was always expecting them because he'd say something that I'd recognise which meant 'come in', but I can't remember the words now but it was German for come in and they'd go in and give the salute, shut the door and I'd see them silhouetted giving their salute.

17:30 Never once did they speak to me or make any nod towards me, they'd just walk past me. They were always black suited black hat, they always wore these hats very similar to a Homburg, they might have been a Homburg but it wasn't the very formal Homburg, it was something very similar to it like a Homburg with the turned up edges. Very nice hat.

17:57 **Were there occasions when these men and Mr Giberius would speak English?**

18:00 I wouldn't know because I never heard them address one another. When I was listening to them they always spoke in German. They would ask me in English for, I would say, 'Hello' and they'd say, 'Would you put me through to Mr Giberius?', but they never said who they were just would I put you through to Mr Giberius. I would just put, 'A call for you Mr Giberius'. So they never actually spoke to me as a person, as an individual,

18:30 just as a servant of the firm.

18:34 **What was the process of getting your notes to the contact?**

18:39 He came once a week, regularly once a week to me and he'd just put them in his satchel and took them away, and they did their best to interpret my shorthand at Victoria Barracks. But every now and again there was so much English amongst it and any comments, anything I'd seen in particular during the week, I had to count how many men came

19:00 and how many at a time and I'd give him all that too. He'd know exactly the day they came the time they were in there, I had to note all of this, and the days of the week when they did come. So that was all given verbally and he made a note of that or I'd make a note of it and it was amongst the material I gave him every week. Sometimes I had very little to tell him because sometimes there wouldn't be more than two or three call in the week that Giberius would get, and other times he might get two or three or four a day. It varied very

19:30 much indeed. Every now and again he would get international telegrams and that was something that

was delivered, they were always hand delivered, we had telegraph boys in those days and they'd always came direct. They'd come up and I'd be at the switch, there was no reception desk they'd just come straight to the switchboard girl would, they'd know when they were coming, the telegraph boy might, they were always there to intercept them, they never seemed to ever get the telegraph delivered in to my hands because

20:00 they always seem to know when to come and know where to take them. Unless someone was on the know down below and told them or maybe they walked in the door and said, 'Where's Mr Giberius?' and they said on the first floor opposite door, opposite. Very infrequently there were these overseas telegraphic communications that used to come.

20:20 **In respect to meeting your contact, did he come to your work or did you meet outside work?**

20:27 He'd always come straight up to the switchboard as if he was

20:30 going to sell me something. During the war years, during the Depression years, I mean, during the Depression years everybody did everything they could to try and get some money. The usual thing, most, so many men had little suitcases, little tiny, they were tiny small like a school bag and they were made of the old fashioned Globite suitcase and in it they'd all kind of things for sale. Needles, cottons, shoelaces and boot polish and boot brushes and all sorts of things, anything at all, handkerchiefs

21:00 or ties or little notepads, pencils or pens anything they could fit in and they would go around from house to house and try and sell them. It was done all over Australia during the Depression. Everyone was hawking something in an effort to get a little bit of money. It was so usual that these people would be in and out of office buildings with these little bags and they'd open them up and try and sell you something. So that was his gimmick, he'd always come to me with his little bag and open it up as though he was selling me something and I would be

21:30 able to put my notes straight in to his bag. If there was no one around and I thought it was safe, or he thought it was safe he would speak to me and ask me questions, but otherwise he would just open the bag and I'd shake my head like this, 'No business today,' and he'd go away. Except for the time that he told me that they were taking me out to Victoria Barracks and that was the time they had the car there and they took me out there in my lunch hour. That was the only time I was interrogated at

22:00 Victoria Barracks, only that one time.

22:06 **Can you talk me through what he actually said on that day and what happened when you got in to the car?**

22:11 There were two men in the car, there was the driver and the man who'd come to get me, and he was waiting downstairs for me and I had to go around the corner in to the street around the corner. I was in Clarence Street and I had to go 'round in to, I think it was, Kent Street, the one down below,

22:30 and there was the car on the corner and I got in to because he was beckoning me. They took me out to Victoria Barracks in to this room and I was put through exactly what I'd been put through by the man in the first place. Did I know how important it was? Did I know how important it was that I didn't communicate, didn't let anybody know what I was doing? I mustn't tell a living soul, and that 'my loyalty to my country' and all that sort of business. He really, only did exactly

23:00 the same to me to warn me once again, as if I wasn't already aware of it, and then he thanked me for what I was doing and said to me, 'There are occasions when we might ask a little more of you, but pleased be assured that we'll never put you at risk', because I could have been at risk if they'd discovered what I was, you never know what those Germans might have done to me. He assured me of protection, and also a little while later I would sometimes find a soldier waiting outside,

23:30 just happen to be walking down Clarence Street, and he'd always be just walking behind me, a uniformed soldier, so after all I realised that I was receiving a form of protection.

23:44 **What kind of things did they ask a little bit extra of you?**

23:47 He said, 'Sometimes we might ask you to knock on the door and go in with an urgent message or something in to his room while he's got men in there. We won't ask you to do

24:00 that unless we think it is absolutely necessary. If something happens in the building that you feel that the Managing Director ought to know then we want you to knock on his door and open the door and go in, try to give him a message while he's got someone in there. We won't us that of you yet', and he never did ask me to do that sort of thing because it was putting me at risk, as you would understand, but he said there might be a time when he would ask extra things of me like that.

24:28 **Any other extra things?**

24:30 Not that I can think of. Oh he asked me also to try and spy on the secretary if I could see her doing anything or if any of those men went in to her office. Well a matter of fact quite a few did go in to her office sometimes Giberius would walk out with the men and go in to the secretary's office, so they'd all

be in there together. She was right in it, and every now and again when the men were in there she would walk out of her office and walk in to Giberius' office. It all seemed so strange to me because it was always done in the lunch hour when all the staff were out of the building.

25:03 **This time that you were actually taken away to Victoria Barracks, you said, how long was that after you started?**

25:13 Oh about six months after because I'd been doing for quite a long time before they really, they were checking, things were getting a bit more closer to it by then and I suppose he wanted to make absolutely certain sure that I was right on the ball, because things were hotting up in Europe

25:30 and the war looked as if it were 'round the corner. I suppose he just wanted to be sure if anything urgent was needed that I was there on the spot and I would be able to do it. And I think he wanted to get a look at me because of my age and see I really could do the job, that was about all.

25:48 **What feedback did they give you of the material?**

25:50 Nothing. Not one single time did anyone say one single thing about what I was doing. That was the thing, that's the whole time I was in

26:00 that department not once did anyone give me feedback, you don't get feedback on anything. Everything is most, once I stamped something 'most secret' and took it in, and these communiqués coming through I never heard, they'd never say, never tell me what happened or any feedback from them at all. That's one thing about Intelligence work you never know the result of anything. So it was surprising that I eventually found out about him being in Long Bay Gaol, only because I was working in the office I wouldn't have know otherwise.

26:30 No feedback is ever given on the work you're doing, they just ask you to do a bit more if what you're doing is successful. I didn't know anything about whether what I was doing was successful, or were they achieving a single thing except that they kept on coming, that was the only knowledge, the way I had any knowledge of the value of the work I was doing.

26:54 **What key words did they give you to look out for?**

26:57 Anything that I thought, troop

27:00 movements, names of aeroplanes that was one thing I had, the Messerschmitts and all the different aeroplanes that I could possibly identify, if I caught the name of the generals, there were quite a number of well known Generals and also to do with the manufacturers like, Benz, Benz was a big factory in Germany and they were making, I think Messerschmitts, I'm not sure, but one of the great big …

27:30 So I had to look out for the name of factories, any form of armaments any type of armaments, tanks machine guns, any sort of armaments, any manufacturing places, those sort of things, anything to do with the involvement of war. You can understand, that was what they were interested in, where the machines, where the planes were being made, which they were being made in Germany, where the different troop movement,

28:00 if there was a extra call up of men and women in Germany and they were increasing their troops and any movements of camps and things like that. It was all to do with war, the war, or the possible beginning of a war. So they weren't interested in knowing any scenery or gossip or anything, they only wanted to know about armaments and troop movements and possible

28:30 increase in the army numbers and the names of the areas where activity was taking place. Well, of course, so many of Germany, because our knowledge of geography, a lot of the areas I'd know and I was able to identify them and write them down. Those were the things I had to look for.

28:54 **Did particular words come up over and over again in regards to armaments?**

28:58 Yes, yes they did, over and over again, yes.

29:00 That's why I think I remember the word 'Benz' I don't know why I've got that stuck in my mind, but I think there was a factory somewhere or other that was converted or switched over to armament making. I did hear some words and some place names over and over again. That was where a concentration of activity was either in the army or in manufacturing or something or other was happening there, so that name would come up and up.

29:30 At any rate, it was sufficient for them to get enough information about what I was taking down to charge him with espionage and put him in prison. But what they actually they got from the material I gave them. I will never know what benefit it was or what they actually got that lead them to be able to arrest him. All I know is that I was the only one giving them the information so something that I gave them must have been sufficient to arrest him on. That's all I know,

30:00 because as I said no feedback ever. Just thank you very much you've served your country and we're grateful. That's all.

30:08 **This is great detail, so thank you for that. Did they teach you or what German words did they teach you to listen for?**

30:16 It's over 60 years now, it's well over 60 years and German words, yes there were some probably that they would, any words they'd tell me certain words that they'd like me to

30:30 listen for but it was mostly to do with armaments and manufacturing. It was mostly in that, and the place names or the actual machines. For instance, all the tanks had different names. They were manufacturing tanks like mad, they gave me the names of the types of tanks and if I heard that word would I, if I heard the name of this particular plane that they knew I would have to register it immediately if I heard, that was all, they would tell me what to look for, but they were words that I didn't,

31:00 they were only those sort of things. We had the Vickers machine gun and so forth, but I had to find out what theirs were. Those sort of things, just the name, what I could, of the armaments they were using. The would say, tell me now machine gun, if you hear this word please write it down, if you hear this word to do with tanks, or if you hear that to do with an aeroplane, or any form of road transport, like a jeep, write those down.

31:30 That was all they told me to do, but they gave me the names I had to look for, which made it a little easier.

31:40 **Did the Intelligence, how did they pay you for …?**

31:47 Well I wasn't paid. When I went in to, when I first went in to the Department of Army, I was given, I had the pay rank of a Warrant Officer and I was paid the salary

32:00 of a Warrant Officer. I was never given the rank of a Warrant Officer, but that was my salary range and for the whole four years they didn't up my salary at all I was still paid as a Warrant Officer's salary.

32:13 **During the time that you were at Philips Lamps, were they paying you for that period of time?**

32:21 No they were giving me anything. I never got a penny piece for the work I did for them. I only got paid an ordinary salary when I went in to the Department of Army. No, only what I got from

32:30 Philips Lamps and when I left Philips Lamps I was getting 24 and sixpence a week. When I left the army in the long run, I was getting the basic wage which was four guineas a week. Twenty four and sixpence was the highest wage I got when I was at Philips Lamps and I started there at 21 and sixpence. Convert that to what we would be today and it's quite a good salary. Four guineas was the basic wage when the war ended.

33:00 **They were appealing to your national pride?**

33:03 That's all, yes. They just used me, just as they'd use any citizen. I was just used because I was useful there, and I was just, it was my national pride and the fact that they'd frightened me in to doing it almost. I couldn't get out of it. I must say it wasn't the most enjoyable way to spend my lunch hours just snooping on and wasting my time, I felt that I

33:30 was pinned down on my lunch hours at something that I didn't wish to be permanently on, and every now and again I would go out and the telephonist would take over and they missed out on what happened on those days. No, I got no remuneration, I have had nothing. Which brings me to one complaint I have and that is every Anzac Day, and when I see people marching they've all got a ribbon on their chest and they have the right to march. I served my country and

34:00 for nearly five years in a very very responsible position and I have nothing, literally nothing, except I'll show you the letter asking me to remind me that I can't say anything because of the type of work I did and reminding me that I must keep it confidential for as long as possible. So that's all I get and a silver tray from the people at the Censorship Department. I've got a silver tray and that one letter

34:30 to say I served them. Whereas other people who did lesser, women who've just sat in the clerks job, they can wear a ribbon because they were in uniform. I've never been given any form of recognition by my country for my service in the Department of Army.

35:00 **You used the word 'used'. Why do you feel used during that time?**

35:02 I wasn't really used, that's not the right thing to say. I served my country in a little more detail than many other women and men who wear ribbons and march on Anzac Day. I would like to have had a ribbon that I could wear like the other women who were just typist in an office or something or other, never left Australian shores, never even did probably a little bit of decoding, when I was decoding nearly every day, and they all have a proper

35:30 discharge from the army and they all have a ribbon to show they served their country. I've got this Order of Australia insignia and I've got my ribbon that I can wear on very special days like Anzac Day if

I want to, but it doesn't enable me to stand out there amongst my fellow service women and men and march as I would like to march. I've never been awarded a ribbon or any recognition from my government for the service I gave the Department of Army or I gave my, and what I got, the Order of Australia

36:00 was given to me for the formation of the Asthma Foundation, and the other awards I've got is all for the Asthma Foundation and what I gave to community after the war, not what I did during the war. That's one little bit of a grizzle I've got about it. I felt that I should have had some form of recognition after all it was pretty tough work. I worked three Christmas days, every single Saturday and every second Sunday all through the war. And then one night a week until 10 o'clock

36:30 when I had to go down and help with the censorship. I came down from the top floor to the second, down there. I had very little time off during the war and I didn't mind doing and I served as everyone else did, but I did feel that I should have had a form of recognition, some form. I feel they let me down on that point.

36:52 **What happened to your boss, Mr Giberius?**

36:56 Oh yes I knew about that. We hear d about that after the war. Something they

37:00 did tell me. He was in Long Bay Gaol, Mr Tapp my boss told me this, that his fellow people, apparently, who weren't put in goal contacted the Queen of Holland because, that's what I've got in this document I've got in all written out for you, I've got to give it to you and you can take it away and read these extra details. I told you once a German always a German, so he had a dual passport so he was

37:30 a Dutch National he'd been declared a Dutchmen, he'd taken on Dutch citizenship, yet he was a German. So when he was arrested and put in gaol the Queen of Holland was approached and Holland was a neutral country at that time she wasn't involved in the war, it was overrun later as we all know, but at time she appealed to the Prime Minister, who at that time was Mr Menzies, that we were holding a Dutch citizen and she demanded his release. There was

38:00 nothing, having come from the government, the Royal Command from Holland, to the Australian Prime Minister that he had to be released. He was released in custody and exiled to Mexico. So we actually got him out of the country but he wasn't in any way punished. So he was exiled, they transported him from Australia to Mexico, because we had to do, there was

38:30 nothing else we could do, because the Queen of Holland had intervened on his behalf. So when he got to Mexico, apparently, he was quite alright there amongst his own people and brought him back in to Germany. And this is what we heard later from the Department because there's spies all over, they shot him, he was eventually shot in Germany for failing in his duty in Australia, for failing in his duty. He'd been sent to up this great big, this telecommunication system, but apparently he hadn't been performed properly because he'd been caught

39:00 and gaoled which was a black mark against Germany so he was shot. I was very pleased to heat that. But we heard that later on, that came through our own system here. I did hear that through the Department of Intelligence. Our espionage, our spy system is very good. Everything comes through eventually. That's one thing they did tell and I was very happy to hear that, because he really was a spy and he could have done irreparable harm to our country.

# Tape 7

00:33 **Talk me through how you left Philips Lamps and where you wen to from then?**

00:42 After the arrest of Armand Giberius, and there was chaos throughout the whole firm, everything was unsettled, but I was still working as my job as private secretary, because whole firm had to be re-established and reorganised without the head, the head man in gaol.

01:00 I was there for about three weeks and I was once again approached and, more or less, seconded you would say that's the word in to the Department. The Department asked me to go in to, to join them, with the formation of the Censorship of New South Wales. That had to be set-up and it would take a few months to set-up, that's why that document that I'll show you says from December 1939, but

01:30 I was actually on board working for the Department of Army in late September early October 1939 and at that time it was set-up in Challis House in Martin Place. They had appointed the District Censor and they had a Military Liaison Officer, had a telephonist, called Miss Fletcher, and they had me and I was the private secretary to the District Censor and the Military Liaison Officer. I was the only one doing shorthand and typing, she was answering the phone and handling

02:00 that coming in. At that time we weren't receiving communiqués from General Blamey's office in Melbourne, we were just setting up censorship, the administration of the Censorship and getting the framework organised, getting the personnel set-up, the administration personnel set-up and bring in suitable people to be censors and to work in the actual censoring of letters. Eventually we were there

for about, I think,

02:30 about eight weeks before we got the framework established, and Mr, Colonel Edgeham was in charge then with the Military Liaison Officer helping with us what communications he was getting through Victoria Barracks. Then we moved to Army House a huge old wooden building in Riley Street, it was call Army House. We moved up there the whole Administration and at that stage there was Colonel Edgeham and

03:00 the Military Liaison Officer, there were two or three typists in the general office there and we had to our roneoing and everything with the old gestetner machine, oh dear we had primitive things in those days. Someone, every time we set out a memo you had to use either carbon, so may carbon copies, or you had to cut it on to a stencil and run it on the gestetner so you had enough copies to distribute to all the different

03:30 censors with their instructions. We therefore established in Army House and that's when we came officially under army administration and we were paid through the army and that's why it says, on my letter, from December because we settled in to Army House in December. We established in Challis House did all the set-up from Challis House and established ourselves permanently in Army House in December 1939.

04:00 That is where the Censorship began and continued for the whole extent of the war, and from there we sort out and found people who were able to act as censors in every foreign language. We had to find people who spoke, could censor letters in German, French, Italian, Greek every known language including very strange, sometimes even people tried Sanskrit to communicate with one another.

04:30 It was just unbelievable the different languages that do turn up in letters, Turkish, African all the different African nations. So we had to have people who were competent to translate all those different languages They all had to be checked thoroughly, they had to be put under surveillance for 24 hours to make sure that they would be faithful to the job that they would be given, they all had to sign secrecy documents, that they wouldn't

05:00 divulge anything at all. We had everything running quite smoothly until about January 1940 and suddenly we went in one morning and found Edgeham wasn't there, the Military Liaison Officer was in charge and because of the confidential work I was in charge of doing and because I was the Private & Confidential Secretary to the District Censor who happened to at that time, I found out why he wasn't there, he'd been removed from office for indiscretion. What had happened he had broken his own rule,

05:30 he was having a bit of a flutter with one of the women downstairs in the Censorship, a very pretty woman, Mrs at any rate I shouldn't tell you her name, he had invited to come down and have a drink with him at Usher's Hotel, which was a famous one of the famous hotels in Sydney was in Elizabeth Street opposite the Hotel Australia or Castlereagh Street. And he was having a drink with her and apparently he was asking her about something she saw in a letter and she told him

06:00 what she saw in the letter and they were both joking about it. So she broke the rule by telling something she'd seen in a letter and he broke the rule talking about it. He, being the District Censor, was still under surveillance like I was or anyone else might have been. So he was removed immediately out to barracks, removed from office and so he was no longer District Censor. That just shows you not only the highest but the lowest were

06:30 under surveillance. The next one, almost immediately HR Forbes-Mackay was appointed. He was the Commissioner for Electricity during the war, he was followed by Conde during the war, Conde was in charge of the Electricity Commission. HR Forbes-Mackay was a very well-known and respected citizen, well anyone of my age group would know who is. So, he became the District Censor overnight.

07:00 Later on he was followed by, he was there for about 18 months, but he wasn't removed from Office he retired because of his age, and other pressing details, and John Garlick who was twice Commissioner for the City of Sydney and he took over. John Garlick was an expert on Pitman's Shorthand and he used to communicate with me entirely by shorthand, he'd even ask me to make a telephone call he'd ask me and he has this little shorthand book and

07:30 he'd write all his own letter in shorthand and send them out to me to type. So I had to work on his shorthand all the time and I never took shorthand in the whole time I worked for Garlick because he, I remember I can still see him, 'Miss Broun,' you know the little, I was always, he never gave me a letter or anything without writing, 'Miss Broun please type this'. After Garlick left came AE Barton who was formerly

08:00 Chairman on the Canteen's Trust. Now the canteens were all over – Australian Army canteens. So he came then, he was a devil, I was frightened of him. He'd wait until everyone was gone and try and shut the door and chase me around the desk and try to grab me to give me a hug or a kiss. I hated him he was a dreadful man. But he didn't last long because I think he tried it on a few others and he was removed. So the next one came, isn't it funny how

08:30 men seem to want to chase young girls like that? It was the last thing in the world I wanted so I had my running shoes on when I went in there. He'd get up from his desk and I'd know. He was a good Administrator, but he wasn't the best person to work for as a female. The next one to come was Arthur

Lang-Campbell who was the Professor of Law, the Bonython Professor of Law Adelaide University so he was the very last one. After that when he left,

09:00 Beaufort Burdekin, a well-known Sydney man and barrister at law, who had been the Deputy District Censor for about four year he then took over just at the end of the war. It was the very last person I worked, when the Censorship closed down it was Beaufort Burdekin was the very last. There were five of them and I was there with whole lot of them.

09:30 **The man who initially approached you at Philips Lamps?**

09:30 I never knew his name incidentally. Isn't that extraordinary that I could work with him all that time and he always addressed me by my name but he thought it unwise for me to know his name as he was a member of the Intelligence. How could you work with a person all that time and not know his name? I could never tell you his name, I couldn't tell you the name of the Brigadier who interviewed me out at Victoria Barracks, and yet I knew so many others at Victoria Barracks because they were personal friends or acquaintances.

10:00 But I didn't know the names of any of those men I worked so intimately and closely with during the war. Now that's very strange isn't it? I do feel, in a way, that I resented that he wouldn't tell. He said it was for security, I might mention his name somehow or other and associate him with Intelligence and so he wouldn't put me in a position where I might make that mistake. I could understand that, but it wasn't easy to never be able to address a person by name.

10:30 **He was the one who offered you the job at the Censorship?**

10:34 No he didn't. The application came through the Department of Army. I forget how that happened. Someone was sent to approach me and ask me would I like to change jobs, it was an approach from outside. It was from a public servant from within the Department who came to me and said 'we're looking for staff for a new organization that we're setting-up, it's within the Department of Army would you like to

11:00 as there is a war on, would you like to serve. So it came through, they got someone else to come and get me, it's the same as being seconded. Within a day or two I was sitting at a desk at Challis House. It wasn't, I never knew it was direct from the army but how, otherwise, would someone have asked me. I had to go down and sit and type and do a few things and pass the public service test to be included, to go

11:30 in through the public service.

11:34 **The machine you used to use?**

11:39 The gestetner? That was a terrible machine. It's a very old type of duplication. You get a foolscap of wax paper with another sheet behind it and you put it in like a typewriter, like an ordinary thing, to type like an ordinary piece of paper

12:00 and this is all wax, and you have to hit very hard to cut the type through the wax. If you hold it up when you finished typing you could see all the words with the light behind them. There's a big round cylinder, it's about the size of a dinner plate and what you do is, it's a big cylinder attached to a wheel that you turn around. So what you do is you pour,

12:30 what they call ink, duplicating ink all over the cylinder so that it's saturated with ink. When it's saturated with ink you take this wax sheet and you fold it around the cylinder, like that you see, and then you've got a whole pile of paper underneath, say a ream of duplicating paper, and something that shoots it sideways. So you turn the handle like this and the paper goes underneath the cylinder

13:00 and as it goes past the cylinder, as the cylinder turns it moves the paper forward and the printing, the ink print goes through the wax paper and therefore a complete copy of what's on the wax paper. You can do about a hundred sheets with one lot of inking. When it gets faded out a bit you have take the waxing off and re-ink it. It's a tedious, horrible job when you get in all over and you've got to turn this

13:30 handle all the time to get each sheet at a time to come out and it's a very slow process, so it was almost a full-time job for one girl to be doing it. We all hated, everyone hated to have to work the gestetner. That was the only form of duplication in our day, that was the only way we could get a whole lot of copies of anything done because to do with carbon on a typewriter you were very lucky if you could do more than four or five copies, because the last copy is very pale. You have to feed this carbon paper in between the

14:00 papers and put it in to your typewriter and then you've got to hit very hard to make sure that you'd get all the copy. You could only get four or five at a time so a gestetner was needed for duplication for anything you wanted in quantity.

14:19 **What happened to personal notes that were passed 'round the office. What was done with them when you were finished?**

14:26 Personal notes?

14:28 **Messages from your boss to you?**

14:30 Oh, they were always destroyed. An army man used to come and get them and they were taken, two men would take them, and everything, all copies and all information, was destroyed once a day and they were done by soldiers. They were always armed, all the soldiers that came in were always armed, all the soldiers that came in and out of there. At all times we had two guards at our front door of Army House on duty, at attention with the rifles over their shoulders.

15:00 So they'd come in every afternoon or every evening and collect all the, every little bit of used material during the day, including the waxed gestetner sheets, everything and they were taken to be destroyed. Always two they wouldn't trust just one person to do it they always had to have someone supervising. They were properly destroyed every day. There was no possibility of anyone coming in, the cleaners at night coming and finding anything.

15:30 Everything was destroyed so there was nothing left at all. All your carbon papers had to be destroyed, nothing was left at all that any cleaner or anyone coming in at night, and the cleaners came in under military supervision too to clean. Nobody ever did anything within the Army House without military supervision. We always had army men, soldiers, on duty at Army House, always.

16:00 **Were there any other occasions, besides your first boss, who did speak out in the public and were taken away?**

16:09 Oh yes, quite a number of people over the years were removed immediately. The Censors who were indiscreet enough to laugh or to joke or to think that there was something that they'd like to tell, if they did it while they were under surveillance, next morning they weren't there. And we never got to hear what they said or did. I never knew what Edgeham did, but he listened and

16:30 they discussed something that was read in someone else's letter so that was indiscretion so those people were removed immediately. Suddenly we wouldn't have say an interpreter for France or we didn't have an interpreter for Greece. Only when we had to find a replacement did I know that they'd been dismissed under a cloud. Oh yes it was done. I would have been dismissed if they'd found any indiscretion on my part.

17:00 As I told Claire [interviewer] that I was matted once for going out to a dance with an Austrian, and I was told that I must never do that again. So that showed that I was under surveillance at the time otherwise they wouldn't have known who he was or where I'd been. Our phone was tapped once a month. It wasn't my personal phone it was the family phone leading in to our house with five people in it and yet it was tapped and listened to in case

17:30 I said or did anything. Oh no, it was very careful if you were working with the Intelligence you were under, you can't put a step out of place, you have to be very careful and discreet at all times.

17:44 **Working at the Censorship Department, what secret information did you discover over the years?**

17:50 Well I've told you a few of them that nobody else, well like the sinking of the Perth, the Coral Sea Battle,

18:00 that was absolutely magnificent, that was one of the turning points of the war, that saved Australia thank god. The Darwin episode. Milne Bay that was a terribly sad thing, that was awful, I feel now I shouldn't even tell you about it, it was so awful. We had what we called the conscripts right at the end of the war and they were conscripting 18 and 19 year old boys and sending them up to New Guinea and they were totally untrained, or they only had a little bit

18:30 of, we were so short of troops. You see they brought back the 6th and 7th and 9th and sent them up to New Guinea, but they were, there was so much malaria and so forth. So they sent these young boys, this one young troop, it's very sad and I don't think it ought ever be printed because people might've known. They sent this one battalion of young conscripts in to Milne Bay as the Japs were landing. And of course the Japs were landing in force on the beaches

19:00 with their machine guns and so forth and they sent this one battalion to defend the beach. Well, some of them panicked and ran and a terrible thing happened. They had the machine guns turned on them and several of them were killed because the only way they could stop the run. That was terrible. I had all that given to me over a communiqué and that made me feel ill to think that we had to turn our guns on our own men because they ran. It was only a handful of them.

19:30 Of course the families never knew, they were just killed in action. They get the killed in action pension and all things that go on. That was something that nauseated me that made me, I was dreadfully upset when I got that piece of news, but what else could the army do. If they'd let it continue they might have all run because the panic would've set in because they were only kids at any rate, and that happened in Milne Bay.

20:00 That was one thing that top top secret. I think that was the first time I might have told anybody that. Those sort of things were very upsetting. I did get things that I thought 'now I must never let anybody

hear that' and they were top secret and if it appeared in a letter it would have been a tragedy. If it appeared over the air or anybody had known about it. Can you imagine how people would have felt that had sons in the army up there

20:30 Conscripts who didn't want to go, they were conscripted, the law of the land conscripted them and made them go and serve. A lot of them may have been conscientious objectors and didn't want to go. They were only kids 18 and 19 and so it was a very sad occasion and it was a black mark, in a way, because they hadn't trained them properly otherwise they wouldn't have run would they? But who wants to walk straight in to a barrage of ammunition and guns? A great number were killed at Milne Bay and some by our own guns and that was a tragedy.

21:00 **Share with me some of the other stories that were top secret?**

21:03 I told you about the beheading of Bill Newton and that was top secret and that was something too. He died a heroes death, admired and revered by the Japanese and they gave him the greatest compliment of giving him the samurai execution and they all saluted him as he died. So that was another thing. The burning of the English Channel was another. The manacling of

21:30 the prisoners of war, as reprisals of the raids that was another thing that happened. They manacled all the prisoners of war in Germany on their ankles and hands and had them all tied up together on chains as a reprisal of the Dieppe raids. Those sort of things, they were coming through all the time things like that. For me to remember them after 60 years is not easy, I'm surprised that I can recall what I am recalling.

22:00 Whether I should or should not is another question because I was sworn to secrecy, but I'm released from it now aren't I. There are very few people who would be alive today whom that information would hurt, I don't think anybody would really be alive who would be hurt by it.

22:19 **This is, as Claire says, vital for future generations. So anything that you can remember in detail we'd greatly appreciate.**

22:30 Another thing that I do remember very clearly, and I think was an absolute disgrace, when the wharfies went on strike prevented the food supplies going through to New Guinea to our troops. Our troops were waiting on our food and ammunition and all things coming and the wharfies went on strike. So the 6th

23:00 Division arrived back in Australia fresh from Tobruk, fresh from Tobruk all weary, heroes, all waiting to get home, brought home they landed in Australia and on the wharf they had to go, they were taken off the troop ships straight on to the wharf to load ammunition and food for the soldiers in New Guinea, and the wharfies went on strike. That was the most terrible thing that could have happened. That was in the papers, it was in all the papers that these men, fresh from battle, had to load the ships

23:30 so that the troops in New Guinea were getting their supplies. That was as dreadful thing to happen. You could find that by looking up the old newspapers, because it did happen and I think it was recorded in the newspapers. Can you just imagine, fresh from battle and all weary just off the ship and having to load ships. They did that for about 10 days before the wharfies came back on. It was a terrible thing and it was a disgrace, they weren't real Australians those people.

24:00 **What did you know of the attack on Singapore and Pearl Harbor before they happened?**

24:08 Only that they'd crossed, that our troops had crossed over the causeway in to Johor and that they were ready to fight there. They knew the Japanese were coming down through Malaysia to Singapore so our troops went forward over the causeway in to Johore, which is the next one up, ready to fight. The

24:30 Japanese came and they came in such force that they retreated back in to Singapore, thinking that they could hold Singapore. And one of the great mistakes made in Singapore was that all the gun placements were faced out to sea because they always expected any invasion of Singapore to come from the sea and not from land. Nobody ever thought, they thought they could defend it, and they could've defended Singapore, we had the troops there and they could've, at the causeway they could've defended, but the Japanese cut off water supply to Singapore.

25:00 The water supply to Singapore was all coming from Malaysia and came across the causeway which linked Johor. So the water supply was cut off so that was one of the things that made them have to surrender. Also there was no way of turning the guns, all the emplacements were first faced out to sea and all the great guns were there ready to shoot down the battleships couldn't be reversed and swung over to face them coming in from Johor. We knew

25:30 all that was happening and I knew the water supply had been turned off. That all came through to us. And of course when Singapore fell we had no communication and then we had that awful Lord Haw Haw all the time telling us, you knew about Lord Haw Haw didn't you? Well he was one of the, like they used to do for Germany, on the radio every night they'd break in to our radio channels and they would put on someone from the German or someone who could

26:00 speak English and we call him Lord Haw Haw and he would say terrible things like 'the Australians have all thrown down their guns and the white flags has gone up', 'they're surrendering', 'they're all a lot of cowards' and they're doing this and they're doing that and terrible things about our army and how

weak it was and how we couldn't defend, which was demoralising. It was the most demoralising thing. So this went on night after night after night, Lord Haw Haw telling us that we had no hope that we were defeated that our army wasn't

26:30 worth a penny and so forth. It was total demoralisation. It went on all the time and it used to happen from Germany too. Every night it would come over the air in to England, I forget the name of the, I might remember it later, but it was a woman who used to do it from Germany and it came over every night saying that they'd defeated us at some particular war and they'd wiped out so many thousands of our troops and so forth. It was meant

27:00 to demoralise, to upset us and knew we couldn't believe them, but still it went through and it hurt and it do a lot to demoralise the spirit of the people. So we hear d all these things across from Lord Haw Haw constantly telling us what was happening in Malaysia and Singapore. That was one thing that was pretty awful.

27:27 **What top secret information was coming back about the Japanese prison camps.**

27:34 Very very little. We had a lot from the radio announcer, what was his name, who escaped he was very well known, isn't this terrible, he escaped from a little boat from Singapore and he was a well-known radio announcer here in Sydney. He was able to broadcast here in Australia a lot of information about what the Japanese were doing with the prisoners and how they were treating them.

28:00 So we got a lot of firsthand information from him because he escaped in a little boat. A number did manage to escape, I don't how they did incarcerated in Changi a few got out of there. Oh I wish I could remember the name of the man, he was so well known in those days. My memory's pretty good for my age but when your 60 years away from something it's hard to pick up the names. So we were getting a bit of information through, but very very

28:30 little. There was no radio communication except where they were coming through like Lord Haw Haw coming in to our wavelength, but it was very hard to get information from there, but a certain amount seeped out. Very badly treated, and I've met and spoken with prisoners of war after. The man I was going to marry at one stage of my life, before I at the very beginning of the war before I met Max, and he was a prisoner of war at Changi

29:00 and then one day the Japanese came and chose the most able bodied men and sent them up to the Burma Railway. Well you know what happened up there. What they did in the Burma Railroad was absolutely unbelievable and pretty nearly starved them to death too. He was a big man he was about six feet three and 13 stone. When the Americans eventually came in and found them, they came in in their huge army trucks, flat bottom army trucks

29:30 and the steel, what do you call that thing at the back the back of a utility or army truck where they load things on to the actual floor of it, the floor was made of iron and they found all these poor unfortunate skeletons and this man, my great friend Dick Cochran, he was taken with a whole lot of others and they lay them on the back of the trucks and straight on to the iron because they had no cushions, they had

30:00 no stretchers they had absolutely nothing. The only thing they could find were their own uniforms to take off, there coats to put underneath them but that didn't protect them. He was exactly five stone, a big man, and they put him there and driving them out on these flat bottom trucks there bones were rubbing and they all had skin rubbed off around the bones.

30:30 He said the agony of it, god knows they'd suffered enough. By the time they'd got him out to where they could give any form of comfort to them and give them a stretcher or somewhere in which to lie, he said carrying them out. But he said they had to get them out as quickly as possible because there was no food at all the Japanese had destroyed everything by the time they found these camps, the Japanese had absconded, the just ran out when they knew the Americans were coming in and just ran away from the prison camps and left the prisoners there without any form of sustenance.

31:00 So when the Americans arrived they were on the point of total starvation. So they brought them out like, and of course the only way they could carry them out, so you can imagine they' been through enough misery, by the time they got to any form of help they were rubbed raw on this horrible flat surface they had to lie on.

31:22 **Were you hearing this information through the Censorship Department?**

31:26 No I wasn't hearing that.

31:30 I heard that from a man who told me this after. No but we knew, we didn't get very much we hardly, we knew the Burma Railroad that it existed that these men had been taken to build a railroad, we had no idea where they were, that's why the American, it was very surprising that they actually found the prison camp. Espionage hadn't been able to let us know where it was. So right in the back hills of Burma, and of course there was no way of locating them

32:00 or knowing. We didn't know that. I did not know that. I just knew that a number of prisoners had been taken and removed from Changi and how we got that information, I don't know. I couldn't tell you how the information came through or where it came form all I knew, from the Melbourne office a

communiqué would come up from the Department of Army in Melbourne straight through and I'd pick it up and listen to it on my telephone and I had no idea where

32:30 they got their information. This is the thing, this is how Intelligence works, the left hand doesn't know what the right hand's doing because otherwise it wouldn't be secret, would it?

32:43 **Tell me what some of this incoming information was telling you, when you picked up the phone?**

32:51 It was direct phone to me it was direct and it was a protected line, it was a telecommunication arm and

33:00 we were controlled by the controller of telegraphic and, COPTC, Controller of Postal and Telegraphic Communication and he had control over all the communications all over Australia going through post office and telegraph and so forth. There was one straight line from

33:30 General Blamey's office to every major post office in Australia. It was a direct line a secret line and no one could use it other than General Blamey's Office, so the communiqués used to come through on this straight line to the post office and then there was one from the General Post Office in Sydney direct to my office. That would be relayed from the General Post Office on this particular secret line. So I would pick it up and they'd say

34:00 'communiqué number two or one or something or other' and I would have to take that down and then when the communiqué ended I would hang up. Then I'd have to pick out the code book and there was Acme, Petersens, ABC, quite a number of different codes and then I would have to work to do the decoding of it, was reasonably simple, but a lot ordinary people listening in wouldn't have a clue how to decode. Then, after I'd decoded it then I would take it in

34:30 and put it on the District Censor's desk and he would then formulate a memo to go down to the Censor to tell them how and it would be something like this, coming through to me would say, 'the Queen Elizabeth leaving with troops for the middle east at 10.30 in the morning' and that had, or something like 'troops will be arriving at 10.30' or 'the Aquitania was returning' or something

35:00 or other or 'battalion so and so is moving from Brisbane to the Atherton tablelands' all troop movements all naval ships taking, leaving or coming in, all this had to come through so the memo would read something like this 'Alert. Any ship movements mentioned please refer to your supervising officer'

35:30 we couldn't say it was navy, army, air force, or what was happening, it was just a ship movement. If it was a suspected ship movement, and people thought they were so clever, they'd say, 'Oh Aunt Elizabeth's leaving today, she's been staying with us for 10 days, but she's just moving overseas at the moment', that's a way of saying the Queen Elizabeth, tried to trick the censors all the time, so you had to be very alert. So these memos would go down 'any mention of troop movements refer to

36:00 supervisor' so that was the only way we were able to tell them to do it. We couldn't say that there is a troop movement or troops are moving overseas, couldn't say why we wanted it, we just had to send this one message down. Any aeroplane, sometimes a flight or aeroplanes would leave, say, one of the stations and fly to New Guinea, or something, or go to Darwin well all

36:30 that would be suppressed. Every day we had to suppress something, there was always something. That was my job to take these messages everyday. I had my little assistant sitting next to me the day the Perth, I've already told Claire most of this, the time the communiqué came through to say the Perth has been torpedoed all personnel lost. There was only ever two or three people ever

37:00 rescued from the Perth. One was a man Paulo Owens I remember his name very well, Paulo Owens he was one of the few survivors from the torpedoing of the Perth. My little girl, my assistant, her brother was one of the engineers and so of course the torpedo always hits the engine room so that was, I had to take this message with her sitting there beside me and not be able to tell her. Had I been a mature adult woman it would've wrecked me doing that sort of work, but I was young and naive and inexperienced and I wasn't aware of the tragedies of the world, I hadn't had enough experience to be harmed by it, if you understand, I didn't suffer as I would if I was 30 or 40 years of age I would have suffered greatly it would've torn me to pieces. But I was too young and too immature and too inexperienced to have affected me emotionally

37:30 as it might have had if I was a more mature woman. Maybe I was lucky that I didn't suffer so much. I had many times when I had to weep over it, but it wasn't as if I had been an older woman. It was an amazing life I've led. In those, nearly, five years it was five years because I was discharged in August and I went in to the Challis House in the end of September in 1939 and I was discharged in August 1944. So that is just on five years.

# Tape 8

01:25 **Mickie tell me about the staffing of the Censorship?**

Well it was the censors

01:30 themselves and they were down on the ground floor. And then the next floor up was the administration. And that was only a small number of people because that was the most secret part of the whole show. First of all we had the district censor himself and my office joined onto him. So there was me and my assistant. I had to have an assistant because there were so many formal letters, writing to people for references for people we were putting on as

02:00 censors that, that was detailed work. So I couldn't be doing all that. So there was myself and my assistant. And on the other side of the district censor there was another office in which the deputy district censor sat. and he was in charge of the general running of the office more than the intelligence work. He was doing that you know. And handling all those sort of things you know. And next door to him a records clerk. All the filing

02:30 that had to be done and there were so many things that had to be filed. And some most secret documents were kept except so much was destroyed. But there was a lot of stuff that was kept. And it was mostly not so much to do with the actual intelligence side of it but certain information that needed to be kept because it was of such value to the future and also for reference purposes. And that was a very secret office and the records clerk was in there.

03:00 And he had an assistant. So she had an assistant and I had an assistant. So that was just very few people. And apart from that we had the telephonist who was also sworn to secrecy and so forth. Every one of us was under special orders. And then there were two typists in the office. One, not typist particularly but the one that would run the gestetner most of all. And then there was the records clerk, I told you about her.

03:30 And there was one other general typist who did everything that nobody else had time to do. So it was a very small staffing of the actually administration of the whole thing. So we were all worked overtime. But we couldn't let too many people in there because it would have been too much distribution of knowledge and the likelihood of information being wrongly you know, information being given that shouldn't have been. So that's why the staffing

04:00 of the top brass was so limited. Oh I forgot to tell you one important, at all times the lights were out the whole of the war. We had a military liaison officer, that was someone who liaised, who was in touch with Victoria Barracks Intelligence the whole time. And therefore worked with us. So he was the liaison officer between the Victoria Barracks and the district censor. So he was called the Military Liaison Officer. And he was an officer

04:30 in the army. We did a little bit of his secretarial work but his was most communication by telephone back to or through his own barracks you see. So we didn't do very much work with him because he was merely a liaison officer but he was there at all times as part of the army. So that was the personnel for the top floor or the

05:00 administrative section. And down below we ended up in the end with 2,000 people working as censors because of the volume of mail that went. Everybody was writing to soldiers. You see the mail going through to the troops was unbelievable. Oh we had other things and this is important. I wan to tell you about the franking. You see Government House had diplomatic bags for the embassies. There were embassies of all the countries who had embassies in Australia.

05:30 There was the apostolic delegate over at North Sydney. The Archbishop Panico who was the apostolic delegate. There was Government House. So we had all these people who were entitled to a diplomatic bag. That meant that under the Geneva Convention all embassies had the right to a diplomatic bag and therefore we had to assume that they wouldn't send anything through that was contrary to our regulations or

06:00 reveal anything to endanger our country. Well that was all very well but every now and again a message would come through that a particular diplomatic bag had to be checked because of something that happened over there in the war zone that made it a bit suspicious of that Country's activities. And that was a very important thing. We only had special censors who were specially screened to

06:30 do the censoring of diplomatic bags because of the privilege they had. And once a month the Archbishop Panico used to send in his deputy, I forget his name but he came from the apostolic delegate that was in North Sydney. And this man used to come into my office once a month and bring a diplomatic bag going through to the Vatican you see. Well now that was

07:00 terribly difficult for a lot of Catholics. So we had to make sure that there were no Catholics who were on the censorship of the diplomatic bag because they wouldn't approve of that. They'd think it was the most terrible thing to be suspecting that the apostolic delegate in Australia would do anything army say anything. But none the less it had to be. So this man came to right to my desk every month and gave me personally the diplomatic bag from the apostolic delegate in

07:30 North Sydney. Then the censor had to find the suitable people to do the censoring. Because you could understand you couldn't have a Catholic to do it. It would be an offence to them so they had to be specially chosen to do that. So they were the ones that did that bag. This is another thing that you've probably not known. The Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales, most of the time

08:00 it was Phillip Street. He was married to a very well known Australian called Jessie Street. You must have heard of Jessie Street. Well she was a pacifist. An unbelievable pacifist and she formed the Australia First Movement. And the Australia First Movement was one of the great problems we had during the war and it was one thing we had to censor at all times. Jessie Street was under almost daily surveillance all through the war because of this Australia First. She didn't believe we should be fighting the Japanese. And the

08:30 Australia First Movement said if the Japanese invade we should go out and hold out our hands and say: "Hello brother." That we're all brothers under the skin. This is what the pacifists thought. And a very dangerous thing in any wartime is a pacifist. Well she was leading this. She was the head of this great movement, Australia First Movement. Which was detrimental to our war effort because it was trying to convince a whole lot of people that they shouldn't be serving in the army and they shouldn't be in the war effort at all. They should be loving their brothers.

09:00 As she was the wife of the Deputy Governor of New South Wales, the Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales we had to do something that would not normally be done. We had to have the bag from Government House censored. Only for the reason of picking up anything she might be doing. She started the Sheepskins for Russia too. Did you ever know about that? People were asked to give Sheepskins for Russia. As Churchill said:

09:30 "The Russians are our allies in so far as we fight a common war." And he made that very clear. So that was the only real relationship we had with Russia because suddenly Hitler invaded it and that made them an ally over night. And you see up until then they weren't. They were not our allies and they weren't our enemies. So therefore they were a threat.

10:00 Because we didn't know what they were. So Jessie Street started this Sheepskins for Russia business. So all these station owners and everyone were asked to send Sheepskins down and they were going to be shipped to Russia so they could have these warm garments made for them. So she was a menace. An absolute menace. But because she was the wife of the Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Justice of New South Wales therefore she was top secret all the way through the war. And she was one of our big troubles. Now my god daughter is Lady Street,

10:30 she's married to Sir Lawrence Street. So I knew all the Streets and so forth. But I'd hate for Penny to hear this, my goddaughter to hear it but this is true. And so therefore we had to have these Government House.. And unfortunately she was a pacifist and believed that nobody would hurt anybody her letters had to be censored and removed you see. And of course it had to go back to Government House for a reprimand. It was not easy to handle. It was a very difficult and

11:00 diplomatic and tactful situation we were put in. that was one of the most secret jobs I had to do during the war. Was watch for that's right problems coming from our own Government House. And it was only because she was a pacifist and pacifists can cause an enormous amount of trouble. They're a menace in the middle of a war. Because you can't go and shake hands with your enemy and say: "Enter our country brother, you're welcome." We're all supposed to lay down our arms and welcome

11:30 them. And that was the Australia First Movement. And that plagued us all through the war, that dreadful movement. Now that's enough about that. But you asked me for secret information.

**Just a little bit more on Jessie. What information crossed your desk that she'd written?**

Nothing ever crossed my desk because if a supervisor picked it up downstairs that came through almost straight to the district censor. It didn't come through me. What was picked up downstairs was always considered…

12:00 And only very special things. But you see it wouldn't come through me because he would choose special people to do the bag from the Government House and they were sworn to secrecy. So he had to choose them and their findings had come direct to him. This was another way of keeping a secret. So I never knew if she did send a letter and if she did what was in it. I never knew that because that was information that was kept most secret. It didn't come through my hands. And you can understand why.

12:30 The supervisor who was down there was especially appointed. All the supervisors were especially appointed. They were basically army officers if you understand. They were people from the intelligence who were in charge of each section of the Censorship. And they were the supervisors. So the instructions from us go down to the supervisor. Everyone who had to report something had to bring it to the supervisor. If the supervisor thought it was dangerous to our country or really subversive, he then would bring it to the attention of the

13:00 district censor himself. Which is how the intelligence system works. And you can understand that it must work that way. To put a third or a fourth person into the secret would be unwise. Doesn't matter if she is the confidential and private secretary.

**What information in regards to diplomatic bags was going to the Vatican?**

Well I wouldn't know that either. And I shouldn't think there would have been anyway. I think

13:30 all through the war we had enormous cooperation from the Vatican. I don't think the Vatican was one tiny bit of worry all through the war. They were totally neutral and they remained neutral. In fact the Vatican in a way helped a tremendous number of refugees. And people who did go through there they

were interested, they were involved in the war but they helped the oppressive. As every religious order did during the war. And so I don't think any secret information or any harm ever came through the

14:00 Archbishop Panico. I really don't think that.

**Was there an occasion where you actually met Jessie Street?**

Oh I knew Jessie Street. She was an old horror. She used to have meetings. I used to belong to an organisation called the Schools Club. The women's private schools' club. Of course I went to a little private school only once for about a year when I was about 9, here in Mosman.

14:30 Anyway it had a little brown uniform. That entitled me to join the Schools Club. And we were on the top floor of the Gowings Building. And we used to have our meetings there. And the Australia First Movement had their meetings two floors down in the Gowings Building. And they met every Thursday night and Jessie Street was the chairman see. So I often came up in the lift with her, going up to the club. I knew Jessie Street to

15:00 talk to. She did a lot of good there's no question about that. That she was a good citizen and an Australian in every other way but she was a pain in the neck during the war because of this Australia First Movement. And she was not exactly a practising Communist. Well she never admitted to being a Communist. But the Communist Party used to meet there too and she used to attend their meetings. And that's how she got involved in this Sheepskins for Russia. She was a rebel you know.

15:30 She just was a nuisance because anything that could have hurt the Government that we wanted to suppress. She was in it. I always saw her going up and down in the lift a lot because she'd go to her meetings while I went to my meetings. And she was very well known. And I met her socially too because she was the wife of the Lieutenant Governor and anything that happened at Government House that I happened to go to or do well there she'd be of course.

16:00 **What kind of things did you try to suppress that she let other people know about?**

Well the Australia First tried to take that out of all correspondence if we could. That had to be suppressed. Any encouragement to anybody to join in the Australia First Movement had to be suppressed. Because it was insidious in that it was people having those suggestions made to them that we must live in peace, that we must love our enemies and so forth.

16:30 Could get through to some people and they might want to go and join the party so we had to suppress any information that we could about the Australia First or any attempt to get anyone to involve themselves or to join it. So that was only one way that we were involved. And of course communism was totally out in those days as you probably remember. Anyone suspected of being a communist was definitely, well it was considered to be subversive to be a communist

17:00 in those days. Because they did do a lot of harm in some ways. So that was about the only things we tried to suppress that she was involved in. She started the Kindergarten Union and she did many other wonderful things as a prominent citizen. When she was at dinner parties and acting the role of the wife of the Lieutenant Governor she was very much a social figure and a real lady. But when she got away from Government House she was a

17:30 horror and a total worry to us. But while she was in Government House doing her jobs she was the lady, you know representing her country.

**Given that her husband is the Lieutenant Governor, was information suppressed from him?**

Oh yes of course it was. Oh no he was given information because as Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales he had the same position as the Governor.

18:00 He would have to know a great deal about what was happening on the wartime level. So he would know a lot of the things that we knew. Because of his position as the representative of Great Britain here in Australia. And so she had access, possible access to things at Government House, which disturbed us greatly. Because when he was acting as Lieutenant Governor -- and that wasn't always, only when the Governor wasn't in office or

18:30 away on official duties. The Lieutenant Governor didn't have to act very often. But when he did he was au fait or privy to things that if she knew about could be very harmful. So that was a worry at all times. So extra surveillance had to go on all things coming and emanating from Government House. Including the telephone. That had to be tapped, which was terrible to have to do that to them. Because of her influence and her infiltration into Government House.

19:00 She was a decent woman. An honourable woman. I don't think she would have gone in and used any of that information but she was only interested in peace in our time and everybody loving one another and throwing down her arms and letting the Japanese come in. but that was subversive enough wasn't it? That was a great worry. I wouldn't think she would but how could you be sure that she wouldn't go and make herself privy to some of this stuff coming through Government House. So you see there's always that

19:30 question mark.

**The Australia First. How popular was it in the community?**

It got very popular for quite a while and so did the Sheepskins to Russia. But the bad thing about the Sheepskins to Russia, after the war all these bales of Sheepskins were still sitting on the wharf. They hadn't been sent to Russia. So

20:00 it was a useless campaign because all these poor men in the war years when they were so valuable the Sheepskins, sending them down and Jessie Street collecting them. And all being baled to go to Russia. They never left Australian shores. They were still on the wharf sitting there after the war. So that was a complete fizzer that Sheepskins for Russia.

**Was there antagonism between general people in society and the Australia First Movement?**

Oh tremendous antagonism, yes.

20:30 I think all thinking people and loyal people and with men serving overseas. How would you feel with a son overseas if you were being told to join the Australia First Movement and had the Country over to the Japanese if they came? That we all should live as brothers together? Oh no, there was enormous resentment with all the people in the Armed Forces. Of course they resented it bitterly. So there was antagonism towards it. It was a most unpopular movement.

21:00 But it went on for many years.

**And how many people would be members of such…?**

I wouldn’t know the membership. I couldn’t possibly know that. I know that we had to watch out for it at all times and most Australians knew about it. Because there was pamphlets and things, leaflets left in letterboxes asking for you to join it. It was a threat to our security. It really, truly was.

**Share with me your feelings of meeting Jessie in the lift, knowing**

21:30 **what you knew about her and her movement.**

Well I used to think; there’s that old trouble maker. And I didn’t like her. I knew so much about her. I knew what a trouble maker she was so I didn’t like her at all. And I didn’t like her as a personality either. She was a very dominant character and a very aggressive sort of person. She was a forceful personality. She would browbeat people to try and make them join, you know. And whatever she believed in was important.

22:00 If you read her life history you’ll realise she was a domineering personality. And a very aggressive woman. So I didn’t like her very much. But she had a big following because she was so aggressive and domineered them so much, you know she had them all dominated. Not the personality I liked. I didn’t like her to be perfectly frank. But I do like her son. I know Laurence Street very well. He was Chief Justice of New South Wales and he’s married to my goddaughter.

22:30 Still, that’s another generation. And I think he didn’t know any of these things about his mother. He might have known but how would he unless someone was nasty enough to tell him about it? She is part of the history of the war though. Vital history.

**Just coming back to the telephone line from General Blamey’s office to yours. Can you tell me any more information about that?**

23:00 **Was it just troop movements they told you about?**

Oh no, world movements. What was happening overseas. It was through General Blamey’s office that we heard about the burning of the English Canal. It was through General Blamey’s office that we got all our communications about overseas activities. Everything came firstly to our lines of communication here in Australia. And his was the Australian line of communications. Ours was the land of communication as you’ll see on top of the letter I’ll give you. It was

23:30 New South Wales Line of Communication. So we had the communication for New South Wales. Every State had it but everything had to come directly to the Australian Line of Communication. And that was Army Headquarters in Australia under the control of General Blamey. And so Australia was informed through the Army Headquarters in Australia. Everything emanated from Blamey’s office in Melbourne. The War Office was in Mel… The War

24:00 Cabinet sat in Mel…

**Why was it important for his office to share with your office the information?**

Because how could we censor? How could we censor troop movements and war information coming in from overseas if we didn’t know about it? You can't operate censorship without knowledge of what you have to look for. So we had to be informed otherwise we couldn’t carry out our work and do the censorship.

24:30 If a troop movement has to be suppressed we have to know about it haven’t we? Otherwise how can we ask our censors to suppress it? So that’s why we had to be informed. So this communiqué had to go to all States, every day to their particular line of communication.

**You shared with me earlier that people would write that: Aunt Elizabeth's departing. Is that because**

25:00 **people were spying or…?**

No they just wanted to write a letter to tell them what was happening at home. It was only just giving the gossip and the news you know. It's most extraordinary why they felt that writing to a son overseas they felt they had to tell them that there was a big ship in the harbour. "I'm looking out of my window" for instance "and I see Aunt Elizabeth just going and catching a ferry" or something like that. And "Aunt Elizabeth herself will be leaving in the morning", you know. Just the news.

25:30 Just saying we've got a big crop of potatoes growing or Lizzie had a baby yesterday. They tried to fill up their letters with interesting things and they would do these stupid things to try and give information of what was happening. And say for instance Billy their son, is going over to join them overseas. Supposing you're in Libya and you get a letter to say your brothers coming.

26:00 How are you going to know that except by some sort of form of code? That he's left, he's joined such and such a regiment. He left on the Aquitania and he's going over to join the battalion overseas. And won't it be lovely because he's joining your battalion? How do they get that information except by trying to disguise it? So this is what people do. You see there are so many codes that just ordinary street people use. And they would say; "Well five days this week I've had a good time." Well you'd know

26:30 that they therefore are giving the code in five letters. So you'd take the fifth letter of the alphabet you see or the fifth letter. They might say "I hope": 'H' 'O' 'P' 'E'. Well then you take the beginning of it. So that's how they'd do it. Every fifth letter of the alphabet and it spells a word. That's how they used to give it. They'd say or start the letter off like that: "So-and-so had his sixth birthday yesterday" you see? Then you have to look to see

27:00 every sixth letter and you'll find that they've spelled out a complete sentence that way. So there was so much we had to look for. And you had to be trained in what to look for. It wasn't easy. You sit down yourself and write a letter so you can phrase a message with every sixth letter or they just give the sixth letter by giving a number but that's pretty easy to do. It's much harder

27:30 to write a sentence so that somebody gets a message just by picking up every fifth or sixth letter. But that was very common. So many people did that. They thought that they were the only people that knew how to do it. Or somebody would say: "That's how I get my messages through." So they'd start doing it. Until you have a wave of these all coming through with every fifth letter or every sixth letter. It was hard work.

28:00 **How was your department letting the general public know: don't send messages?**

We used the media. Thank God for the media. Every time you turned on the wireless you would hear a message: "That your duty to your country is to keep your mouths shut. Please don't at any time write letters saying that you've got anything about troop movements or shipping movements or anything like that. Be a loyal Australian.

28:30 Don't give away your country's secrets." It came over the air. It was in the media. They were hammered with it all the time. So there shouldn't have been an Australian anywhere who did not know that they were divulging secrets by trying to send these. If you wrote about a troopship and send that overseas you're virtually putting a torpedo into that ship. If it's your son in the engine room do you want your son torpedoed? Do you want the ship to go down? Have you got somebody ill on a

29:00 hospital ship there? They're bombing and torpedoing hospital ships. All the time we were fed this information that is you do this, all the time, that you're hurting your own. So the media was a great help and they did that wonderful work for us. And there were big posters you know every where with pieces of tape across the mouth. Trying to warn people that they threatening their country by

29:30 giving away information about troops or troop movements or shipping movements. It was banned. Oh yes, every effort was made to make the community conscious of it. And the loyal people obeyed those instructions but there were the ones that thought they were clever enough to avoid it. You find this in everything.

**So "Loose lips sink ships"?**

Yes. That's exactly what it used to be.

30:00 That was one of the things we saw all the time on the posters: "Loose lips sink ships." You're absolutely right. And slogans like that were every where. Even if you went into a public toilet they were on the wall. So every effort was made to alert the people to the danger s of divulging any information about shipping movements or troop movements. They did their best. Thank God for the media we used to say in those days. Although they were suppressed, they couldn't

30:30 say anything themselves but they helped us in that way.

**Did your department send reprimands to people who tried these sorts of tricks?**

It wasn't our job to do it. If we had anything that was really bad and found out that went straight back

to the military liaison officer who reported to intelligence and intelligence handled it. All the breeches were handled through the army, through intelligence. We didn't do it. It wasn't our job to reprimand. Our job was to caution.

31:00 To caution and to prevent. But not to reprimand. That was done by the army through intelligence. It was always someone from that department who did the reprimands or arrested or did you know.

**Imagine a letter came in which is conveying important information,**

31:30 **what would you actually do with that letter? How would you handle it?**

No they would get the blacking ink or they would get a pair of scissors and they'd cut out that entire section and let the letter go through. Sometimes it was like lace work you know. It was so cut about. But no, the offending section was always removed completely from the letter or blotted out so that it could never be read. And some people thought they were terribly clever using

32:00 invisible ink. They'd leave a big margin on the side and they'd use invisible ink. Sometimes they'd even use lemon juice instead and stuff like that. And gave a little indication in their letter that a little bit of warming wouldn't hurt you know. "Are you feeling the heat? Heat doesn't hurt." Or something like that. So they'd know to hold the letter over a flame so that secret writing would come up. Oh they got to every trick under the sun until we got to know just

32:30 about every trick. I don't think there was a trick they tried that we didn't find out about eventually. And this was a warning: watch out for secret writing. If you suspect by the context that there is secret writing refer it to the supervisor. And the supervisor would then apply the heat and find out what the message was. Because all you have to do with secret writing is apply heat and it comes up you see.

**Who would let your department know about the tricks that people**

33:00 **were using?**

Well we found them out ourselves. See it was just by the frequency of the patterning. If any special way of doing it came well it would come through say from Army Headquarters, it would come through from Army Intelligence. The military liaison officer would come in and say: "There's a new things they're trying now." so everyone would inform everyone else within the system. So as long as the system eventually knew all these tricks well

33:30 that was passed through to the censors themselves. "Watch out for this." And they would be advised on every possible way of sending a message by subterfuge you know.

**Was your department dealing at all with telephone calls or conversations?**

Not us, no. That was done through telegraphic communications. We had a special band of censors who worked entirely on the telegraphic, telephonic communications.

34:00 And all they did was just listen in all the time. That was a separate branch of the censorship and that worked almost entirely within the GPO [General Post Office]. We had a complete band of censors within the GPO and they did that work. We were mail only. Mail and media was ours. We had to prevent the media. The

34:30 others worked entirely from the GPO and that was a different group.

**So newspaper journalists who were overseas writing columns for their papers were you also dealing with that?**

Yeah we were if they came through us but mostly they came through the telegraphic you see. They'd send telegrams or telephone messages. That was the main way of communicating that the newspaper men do.

35:00 See there was no such thing like you've got today, communication through computers and e-mails and things like that. It either had to come by mail or telegraphic means or by the telephone. There was only the three ways it could come. So we therefore every now and again did pick up something from a correspondent overseas if he sent it by mail. Sometimes they'd give it to someone flying back to Australia that they knew.

35:30 See every now and again planes used to come over, fly from England to Australia. It was a pretty dangerous thing but they used to do it. New planes would be sent out you know, like Wirraways and Kittyhawks. They mostly came from America but sometimes they came from England. Say a group of Kittyhawks were being sent out from America, out to Australia. Well that was terribly, terribly closely guarded because the Japanese hearing about that they'd send out the MiGs to shoot them down.

36:00 That was one of the most difficult ways to suppress information. The armaments coming from America to us you know. Because we were buying them then. When America came into the war that was part of the thing. That most of the planes and things were built in America and sent over to us. And they'd come out in a squadron you know. You just imaging if the Japanese knew that say 20 Lancasters were coming.

36:30 Well what would they do? Send out a whole lot of Migs and they'd shoot them down. So censorship was so terribly, terribly important to protect not only our Country but the men in arms and our armaments. How can you fight a war without your armaments?

**So why was the information about these planes coming from America so hard to suppress?**

Because

37:00 they were at war and they had the same form of censorship that we had. So they were equally involved in the censorship of information as we were. Bear in mind they came in 1941. They became our allies and came into the war in December 1941. So therefore they were our allies and they operated as England did and we did under the same system of censorship. So they were as anxious to suppress

37:30 information as we were. So that was no problem at all. Our relationship with the US.

38:00 **So given you had a sweetheart at El Alamein. What did you know about that personally from the censorship?**

I knew nothing about it. We knew nothing about the fact that the Battle of El Alamein was beginning. My husband – ah but he was my fiancé, my loved one then I wasn't even engaged to him then --

38:30 he was at Alamein, as I said before. They knew nothing about it themselves. Troop movement took place and the troop movement onto Alamein. Now they weren't told: "Right, now you're going off to fight the Battle of Alamein." They just said: "We're moving forward into position. We're advancing. Troops are advancing." Now that's all they knew. So they just moved forward as an army and of course the Battle of Alamein, in which we won. Thank God.

39:00 Because the General Montgomery, he was a great general. But the one thing that came out of it all, I don't think there was an Australian soldier who fought at El Alamein or Tobruk who didn't admire Rommel. He was one of the greatest generals the world has ever produced. And he was admired on both sides. So when he was eventually disgraced and shot in Germany all his enemies were sad. We were all sad for him

39:30 because he was a great, great general. One of the greatest. And Montgomery was on a level with him. So the two great generals of the war, Rommel and Montgomery were side by side at Alamein. And Montgomery just happened to win the battle. He was a great leader. My husband Max Halliday was at Alamein but he knew nothing about the fact that the battle was on. They were just moving froward as an army. And they went into battle and they won it. And I've heard some of the things from him about the battle, any rate.

# Tape 9

00:45 **How did you know at the Censorship Department that the letters that you received weren't intercepted prior to you receiving them?**

Oh they all would have gone through the

01:00 department. And quite a lot of letters I received had been censored. And every now and again, once a month the district censor used to say to me would I bring my personal letters that I'd written to my husband or my boyfriend. And he would take them, before I posted them. I wasn't allowed to post my personal letters until they had been censored. Because I was there in a confidential position and anything I wrote or a letter going overseas, they knew that I was perfectly reliable and I wouldn't,

01:30 but still and all they would take my own personal letters. Take them into their office and personally read them. The district censor and the deputy district censor. They wouldn't send them down below but that was their way of checking on me. So my letters going from to my husband were read on a reasonably regular basis by my own boss. So I didn't like that I can tell you. But I had to do it because that was the rule. Otherwise I put them in a post box and they would go through the ordinary

02:00 channels.

**I'm talking about these letters that would arrive in Australia. How do you know they weren't read before they did arrive on Australia shores?**

Because every letter coming in from overseas always had the censorship mark. It always had this stamp 'opened by censor'. And just about fifty per cent of the letters you got during wartime had that stamp across it: 'opened by censor'. It was just normal practice.

02:30 You didn't know when you went to the post office how many were opened but always if they had been opened they acknowledged it. Of course the stamp had to be stamped on every letter that had been opened. I wish I had some here to show you.

**The letters that you were dealing with at the Censorship Department, were they letters that were leaving Australia or letters that had arrived in Australia?**

Both. Both coming and going. There were two different tables.

03:00 There was the incoming mail and the outgoing mail. And they were separated. There were the staff who did the incoming and staff who did the outgoing. And every now and again they'd change them around. You didn't always sit at the same table. The people on the administration floor as a gesture of could-operation we used to volunteer to go down into the censorship and do it once a week. I always chose

03:30 Thursday night. I always chose the night when the staff of the GPO, they used to send all the staff working on censorship in the GPO they came up to the letter censorship every Thursday night and so that's when I went down. And some other members of the staff might go down on another night. You just went over there the incoming or the outgoing table and you picked up whatever was there. But we all knew that once we'd opened a letter we had to put this 'opened by censor' on it. And if they came through with 'opened by censor' or

04:00 marked by a censor well they just went into one bag. Because once they'd been censored coming into the Country from overseas what would be the point of us re-censoring? So you just sorted them out, took the ones that hadn't been censored and put the others for distribution to the recipient.

**So there were Allied censorship departments in other places every where there were campaigns by Australian troops?**

Yes.

04:30 If a letter came from Western Australia that was reasonably pretty safe because it would have passed through the censorship there. Within Australia we weren't so terribly conscious of censorship you see. It was outgoing mail, anything going to New Zealand or Fiji or anywhere at all. Even going to Tasmania you know. As long as it left the shores of Australia it had that extra checking. Coming just from family to family say from Western Australia to Sydney on very

05:00 rare occasions they were. Because we just literally didn't have the time. The mountain of letters going out to overseas during the war and coming in from the soldiers and relatives during the war was unbelievable. It was a mountain of correspondence. So to worry too much about what was coming through from Sydney to Melbourne wasn't. but we had to censor everything that was coming through Darwin and the Atherton Tablelands because

05:30 Darwin had troop movements up there you see. So everything coming from Darwin had to be censored. And anything going to Darwin had to be censored. And also that applied to the Atherton Tablelands where they were training the soldiers and Brisbane. And whenever ships were leaving from. Those areas were especially, we had to watch, censorship was important from those areas but not just say from families writing from Dubbo to

06:00 Sydney you know. Or internal correspondence wasn't worried about to any extent. I don't think I ever had one coming from within Australia opened. But I realised that whenever there were troops that censorship was necessary.

**Mickey you mentioned that at the time you didn't know much about the Battle of El Alamein. What did you know during and after the battle?**

Well I knew that we won it. And everyone

06:30 that was at the battle, the 8th Army led by Montgomery won the battle. But the only things I knew about Alamein were after because my husband suffered very greatly from his experiences at Alamein. Because he was a dentist he was a machine gun officer during the war. When he went into the army he was automatically given a captaincy because he'd got his commission in the University Regiment. So he was automatically

07:00 as a dentist, made a captain and he was put into the dental corps. But as a machine gun officer trained in his university regiment he didn't wish to go into a non-combatant uniform so he and one other, there were three men in Australia who managed to persuade the Australian Army. If you have a commission it's very hard to resign form it. And it's particularly hard if you're a captain to go down to a lower rank as a lieutenant.

07:30 But any rate eventually he and his friend and one man in Western Australia did persuade the army to allow them to drop a 'pip' as they called it. So they were allowed to come down from the rank of captain to a lieutenant so that they could sail with the 2/2nd Machine Gun and go into action in the Middle East. So he didn't serve as a non-combatant officer he served as a combatant officer, a fighting officer because he didn't want to serve in a non-combatant unit. But when they got to Alamein because he was a trained

08:00 dentist and so forth they were so short of paramedics as they called them as so many of them were killed with bombings and so forth, that hew was taken out of his unit and put into 7th Field Ambulance. Which was the forward ambulance at Alamein. And so he therefore because of his knowledge of medicine being a dentist and so forth, he had to handle. And that had a terrible

08:30 effect on him because the stretcher-bearers were coming in with all these wounded. And he used to wake in the night and I'd hear him say: "I can't bear the screaming. I can't stand it, oh my God stop

them screaming. Stop them screaming." And he'd be dreaming and having these nightmares about them screaming. And he said it was terrible because he hadn't been trained in you know broken limbs. And all these blood soaked men with arms and legs missing. So he had to handle all the facial injuries. Immediately attend to the setting of the jaws and all that sort of thing. And he had to

09:00 also help giving anaesthetic. He wasn't a trained medico but because of his paramedical knowledge he had to do this. And it was the forward field ambulance so he suffered hell on earth because of all the wounded. Just imagine the battle was in full blast and the wounded were coming in by the cartload. And so that affected him for the whole of his life. He had those nightmares the whole of our marriage. Every now and again he'd wake up screaming in the night: "I can't stand it. Stop that screaming.

09:30 Stop the screaming." Because it just must have played on his mind and been a terrible problem for him to carry all his life. He never spoke about it but I heard him and then I used to interrogate him as to why. And he used to say: "Well it's because of my experience. I was hauled out and put into the ambulance at the last minute." So instead of on the machine guns, well he was for a certain time and then he was hauled out and put on the ambulance.

10:00 And that's the only knowledge that I have of Alamein. But the fighting was pretty close to hand and the casualties were great at the beginning of it. It was a full-on war, a full-on battle. It was really like one of the old fashioned battles. There were enormous numbers of wounded and killed. And so I know that.

**Why do you think he was very keen to be in a**

10:30 **combative role?**

Because every man who goes into the army wants to go there to fight. They don't want to go just to be non-company. Anyone can be a clerk, anybody can be behind scenes. Even the stretcher-bearers were out in the field. Even though they weren't armed men and they weren't fighting they were right out in the front lines and they were bringing in the wounded. They were right in the middle of the battle you see. If you go to war you want to be in the battle. You don't want to be sitting

11:00 at home behind a desk or just filling teeth in a rest camp or something or other. So he didn't want to do that. He had finished with dentistry and he wanted to go away as a fighting man and he did. And he moved mountains to be able to go. And I'm very proud of the fact that I can say, there were only three men in Australia who managed to drop a pip -- from being a non-company to a fighting man -- and sail away and serve their country as a fighting man.

11:30 He was the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion that served at El Alamein.

**How did he articulate that to you at the time?**

Oh well he dropped his pip before he left. So he sailed from Australia as a combatant, as a machine gun officer. He was a commander of B2 Company in the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion.

12:00 So he sailed as a company commander and as a machine gun officer and he had his own platoon of men. So I am very proud to be able to say that.

**You were not quite engaged before he went to El Alamein?**

No we were deeply involved with one another but we weren't engaged. No thought of marriage was in our minds. When he knew he was coming home he wrote to me when

12:30 Alamein was over. We used to dance to a tune called, what was it? The 'Begin the Beguine'. It was a very famous tune and everybody loved it during the war years. So I had this letter from the Middle East.

13:00 Anyway when the Battle of El Alamein was over I got this letter saying one of the passages from 'Begin the Beguine': "The fire that was once a flame remains an ember. May I wish for once more, darling I love you." So when he came home, when the 9th Division came back to Australia he came in on the Aquitania. And we all sat out on Bradley's Head

13:30 waiting for the ship to come in. of course we knew then that the war was over you see. Peace had been declared. So we knew the Aquitania was coming through the Heads bringing back our victorious troops. So we were able to go and sit there and watch the ship come in. so we were all there waving sheets and waving so forth, letting the troops know that we loved them. And we were waving flags and waving sheets. And then eventually next day

14:00 it was before he was able to telephone me. But I waited for 24 hours on tenterhooks and thought I'd been forgotten. But he did ring and then we got together and we married within three weeks after that. He was out of Australia, at the war for over 4 years. He had over 4 years service and that's too much for any man to handle. He sailed in 1940 and he returned in '44. And all that time we had three weeks

14:30 exactly. He was home on leave and we were married and so all together we had three weeks being together with one another in four years. So when he was returning in a hospital ship with this terrible war neurosis I hardly knew the man. Isn't that one of the sad things about war? You're in love, you marry and then they go away. And it might be three or four years before you see them again and they returned as wrecks. It was not an

15:00 easy thing for the wives in our day but we stuck to them. We knew that, that was our duty. And Max and I were together for 27 years.

**Did you know at the time when the Aquitania came in that Max was going to be on the ship?**

No not necessarily but I knew the 9th Division was bringing home. quite a lot of ships brought the 9th Division home you see it was an enormous number of soldiers to transport. I knew he was on one of the ships. It just happened that he sailed on the

15:30 Aquitania in 1940 and he came back on the same ship. But I didn't know he was on the Aquitania, no. He was on one of the troop ships that came through the Heads. It just so transpired that it was the Aquitania.

**At the censorship department were you privy to how many casualties there were?**

No I wasn't privy to it but every day it was printed in the newspapers. Every day you read the casualty list. The was one thing the newspapers

16:00 were allowed to print. Every day you'd pick up the newspaper with dread in your heart and read the casualties. They were printed every day. All the names in alphabetical order. They weren't printed until the telegrams were delivered to the families. 'Missing. Believed killed' or 'Killed in Action' they were the things that everyone dreaded seeing. But the casualty list gave us the names. So we knew if the families hadn't received the telegram giving them that information that

16:30 they wouldn't appear in the casualty list. They all appeared so everybody knew who had been killed or who was missing.

**Can you describe that experience of waiting for someone to come back that you really loved?**

Well I can describe the fact that my grandmother in 1918 she was a beautiful young woman with black hair. And I think she was about 45 or 50 at that time because she was married at

17:00 18. Uncle Mario was only 18 when he was commissioned in the field in France and that's another story. So she was 36 or 37 when he was born. And one day the doorbell rang and this was just a few weeks before the end of the war. 'Missing believed killed.' And do you know that she then went into an asthma attack and she had asthma for the rest of her life that

17:30 plagued her. With the terrible shock and her hair went white in a week. It was absolutely incredible. She went snow white. The shock of it was unbelievable. And that's how I came to be called Mario because it shocked the whole family to such an extent. It had a devastating effect on women. My brother and my husband and so many of my relatives. So many of my brothers. The whole of Halliday family. There were six members of the family. And every one of them

18:00 went to war. And every one of them served in a combatant unit. And every one of them returned unscathed. And Max returned except for being troppo. Every one close to me and even my brother survived. He was in the Pacific. He was in the Royal Navy the whole time. He was seconded to the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy was so desperately in need of engineers because of the numbers of ships that were sunk and all the engineers in the

18:30 engine rooms going down with the ships. So that they had to second their engineers from Canada, New Zealand and Australia. And as soon as my brother graduated as an engineer he was seconded into the Royal Navy. So he was taken straight away and put into the sister ship of the Prince Phillip. He and Prince Phillip were in sister ships. Prince Phillip was first lieutenant of the Whelp and he was on the Voyager.

19:00 He survived that so I never knew what it was like to receive a telegram or see a telegram of that kind so I can't answer you what it would be like. But I can understand how women would react and how I would have felt had it happened to me.

**You were married to Max in those three weeks that he**

19:30 **had returned. Can you tell me how he had changed?**

Well when he came back he was triumphant you see. He'd come back forma successful battle. He was very happy with what he had done in the war. He was pleased because they all came back victorious. And we had a wonderful march down Martin Place and they had all that paper strewn.

20:00 We were all excited, we were all in a wonderful, victorious mood you know. We were celebrating. So he was in that mood when we married. But when we were married it was very difficult. Everyone wanted to be married in 1943 with all the men coming back. And you couldn't get anyone in any church to marry you. There was no where at all you could have a wedding reception. It was absolutely impossible. I'm an Anglican and

20:30 Max was a Presbyterian. He was a Methodist I mean. My second husband was a Catholic. So we had no where to get married. The Rector of Saint Stephen's Church in Macquarie Street said he could squeeze us in if we could do it in 20 minutes you see. So it was about 4.30 in the afternoon and I was lent a wedding dress from one of Max's men, in his platoon, she was about the same size as me. So she lent

me her wedding dress and her wedding veil. So I was in borrowed clothes. And we went to Saint Stephen's Church and we were married. And we were only given that very brief time because there were a whole lot of others waiting outside to come and get married, if you wanted to get married in a church. But the registry office in those days weren't functioning like there are today and there was no such thing as a marriage celebrant. So if you couldn't get a church wedding you didn't get married. So we were lucky.

And there was no where to have a wedding reception. No where at all. And they couldn't come over to Mosman because of lack of transport. So we found a place called 'Via Matthews'. A little café, restaurant in King Street that we could have for half an hour. And it was unbelievable. That was the only wedding reception we could find and it was seven and six a head. And we only had about 30 people there because nobody could get in. and no wedding presents were ever given

in those days. You know, if you had money you used it for the war effort you didn't spend it on yourself. So we got no wedding presents at all. But we were married and we stayed the night at the old Metropole Hotel, which was the meeting place of all the country people. That was the only hotel. And then we went up to Craigieburn at Bowral for a three-day honeymoon. So that was my marriage and my honeymoon. And then he was off to Atherton Tablelands to train in

jungle warfare. So they took these people straight out of the desert and sent them straight into jungle warfare. Oh it was cruel because so many, their health couldn't take it. You see that's why he got malaria and got so terribly ill. He stood up for so long. He was at the battle of Sio in New Guinea and that's when he really collapsed with the cerebral malaria.

**Before we move onto New Guinea. Did**

**the marriage proceedings and the conditions of that live up to your expectations?**

Well the marriage service is the same in any church just about. The Anglican service doesn't vary at all from the Presbyterian service. And the whole routine is the same. You march down the aisle. You go through all your

responses. The marriage service is read. And you're treated in the proper and formal way that you expect to be treated in a church by the rector or the minister. It was along the same lines as it would be today. Formal and traditional.

**As a young woman of 22?**

I was 24 when I married.

**Did you have a wedding fantasy?**

Oh all women have a wedding fantasy. Of course you do. You always dream of all the things. My daughter planned her wedding dress about 6 months before we went to Hong Kong and had it made. Everybody dreams of what they will wear at their wedding. Everybody dreams of the man they're going to marry and so forth. But I married my dream boy but I didn't wear any of the things that I thought I would wear but I had a very pretty wedding dress and a

wedding veil. But it wasn't my fantasy. It wasn't something I would have dreamed of. It wasn't the sort of thing. But it was a proper wedding dress and a proper wedding veil and there was nothing I could complain about. But I don't think there's a girl living who doesn't dream of a magical wedding day.

**Was it what you wanted?**

Well yes it did live up to what I wanted. I was a bride. I had a traditional wedding and I had a

wedding reception of sorts. And my friends and relatives were there. And I went on a honeymoon even if it was only 3 days. I had all the things that a woman could expect but probably not to the standard that I would have liked it. But I didn't miss out on anything. I had what was expected. It didn't completely satisfy my dreams but I still had it.

**I'm interested in that tiny break of time when people were rushing to get married. What was that like? Did you feel that you couldn't do it when he came back? Or there was a fear that he wouldn't? What were the motivations for rushing it through?**

Well he didn't know when he came home from the Middle East. He thought he might have a good time of leave. He thought he might be stationed in Australia. One would expect that after being 3 years away overseas.

It never entered his head that he would be sent to another war zone. They all came back and they all thought: here's our chance. Let's get married and we'll stay in Australia. We've been returned to our homeland. We've been brought back as a victorious army. And we're back in Australia. Surely they'll leave us in Australia for a while. None of them in their wildest dreams visualised that they would be given leave and then suddenly called up again. So Max got a call to say: You will report to army barracks at such and such a place

26:30 at such and such a time. When he got there he was told: “You and your battalion will catch the train into Atherton Tablelands where you will trained in jungle warfare. You will be sent to New Guinea.” Of course it never entered any of their heads that they’d be sent off to another war zone and in New Guinea of all places. They thought that New Guinea was being held by the Australians who were here and already up in New Guinea. But the 6th Division was sent to New Guinea and then the 7th Division was sent to New Guinea.

27:00 The 8th Division was defeated in Singapore. And the 9th Division, after the 6th and 7th were gone, they didn’t expect to be sent to New Guinea. So that’s why everybody married. They thought, we’re home so we’re going to start a new life. And we’re still in the army but we’re in Australia. So that was totally unexpected. We wouldn’t have dreamt of getting married if we’d thought that’s all we were going to get: that short time together. We would have waited until the war was over.

27:30 That would be the logical and sensible thing to do. But we were given no choice.

**So in those three weeks was there any evidence of the trauma he had been in prior?**

None at all because he came back victorious you see. And he was living on a high you see. Every where he went somebody would say: “Good on you mate. Good on you.” Or pat

28:00 him on the shoulder. He was in uniform. They only had to see the Africa Star on his chest and they knew that he’d served at Alamein. So every where you went it was a pat on the back or a “Good on you mate” or “Can I do anything for you?” or “Can I shake your had?” so he was on a high the whole time. And I was on a high of course. Because it was time of celebration. A time of victory. And we as Australians were proud of our men and we were all just joyous and happy.

28:30 And the European war was over you see. So it was a time of celebration. So how did I know what was ahead of me? He had no feeling of distress. That all came later you see. When he went to New Guinea and went back into the war zone and saw what was happening and had to relive the whole thing under totally different conditions. All this came crowding back. So his experiences at Alamein, which might have gone out of his mind

29:00 all came tumbling back and haunted him for the rest of his life. But at that time no. No indication what so ever of any distress that he might have suffered.

**At that point what did he share with you about his experiences?**

None. If you ask any soldier coming from a war zone they will never talk. They will only talk amongst themselves. But so many wives and mothers will tell you that their soldiers never talk about their

29:30 experiences. That’s something they never will want to share with anybody except the men that they served with. So wives and sweethearts and mothers never hear about their war experience. They’re not prepared to share it. They don’t wan to talk about that, they’ll say. “Please I don’t want to talk about it.” So it’s very, very hard to sit with a soldier and ask him to relate his war experience. As you will find if you go and interview them. They’re very reluctant to speak of their experiences.

**Why do you think that, that’s the case?**

30:00 I don't know. They feel it’s something that other people wouldn’t understand. That just a normal citizen wouldn’t understand what it’s like to be in an army at war. And it’s the lack of understanding. And they feel that we might listen and we might only ask because we’re inquisitive. And I think they feel that we’re asking because inquisitive and because we have no emotional feeling about it. That we’re not

30:30 involved emotionally in it. And therefore they feel that we’re only asking out of a matter of inquisitiveness. And if you can't feel for another person when they speak to you well then what’s the point of telling them? I feel that we’re insensitive to what they’ve suffered. I think that’s how they feel so they don’t wish to share anything with us that we can't feel.

31:00 **How would you define a man back then?**

A man, yes.

**And his attitude to being a man?**

Well it was rather sad in a way because a war is on a man thought to be a man he had to enlist. Often men went and enlisted when they didn’t want to go to war at all. But they thought the only way they could show their manhood was to do what the other fellas are doing and enlist. And they really didn’t want to. They don’t want to go to war. They don’t want to

31:30 fight but they feel that if they don’t they might be given a white feather. And that was a most terrible thing to do. Why should a man be shamed because he didn’t have the guts to go and volunteer? Why do you have to have guts to do it? They’d say. Why do you have to feel that the only way to show your manhood is to go and volunteer? But then a lot of men did it out of sheer desire to go to war. My husband did it because he had spent all those years in the

32:00 University regiment and he was trained as a soldier and he wanted to behave as a soldier. So he went to war quite happily. You see, he felt he would be left out if he didn’t. but others went and volunteered

when they didn't want to because they were shamed into it by people saying: "When are you going to volunteer?" and to be shamed into going and volunteering because the only way to show your manhood, well that is a terrible thing. But I assure you in those days a man was only considered a man if he did volunteer and go to war. And the poor unfortunate

32:30 men who volunteered and weren't accepted had to wear on their lapels what they called a 'v'. it had a vee surrounded by laurel leaves and that was a volunteer's badge. So if you had volunteered for the army and you weren't fit for medical reasons or something else they had to wear this badge on their lapel. Otherwise they'd be given a white feather or someone would say: "When are you going to hear the bugle mate?"

33:00 So they were ashamed to have not volunteered. Some of them wore this volunteer's badge rather than put up all the time with these comments. "Didn't you hear the bugle mate?" so it was a horrible thing to have to pin on your lapel to show that you had volunteered to serve you Country but you were rejected for certain reasons. Health reasons mainly.

**If a man went**

33:30 **into a combative role was that considered better than other types of areas?**

Actually if you went in and they said: "What were you doing before the war?" And they said: "Well I was a chef." You were automatically put onto cooking duty you see. Immediately then they put 'cook' under your name. If they said: "What were you doing?" "I was a bank manager." You were put into the pay office you see. So they fed you out into whatever area they thought you were most suitable for.

34:00 If they said he was a truck driver well from then on he was in the motor you know, driving jeeps and other things. So each man was designated. As he enrolled his name and address and so forth, well he was given a number. My husband's number was NX12462. I'll remember that the whole of my life. New South Wales was 'NX'.

34:30 But each one was given a number and then they'd say: "What were you doing prior to your enlistment?" and according to what they did and what their specialty or their actually trade was they would be directed into that field. Where they could serve their country to the best of their abilities. So if you were driving a taxi all your life wouldn't you be put into a transport job?

35:00 So the people were directed. Telephonists were put into the communications section. Each one was directed into their field whether they like it or not. They were put into the field that they were suited for. So you couldn't volunteer to go in anywhere you were directed. And those who had had military training were automatically put straight into a fighting brigade.

35:30 **Did you feel the need to give anybody a white feather?**

I thought that was the most despicable thing that anybody could possibly do. To judge another and to give them a white feather. And they were often women who were just little social butterflies who did nothing in the war effort themselves. They hadn't volunteered, they hadn't joined the Land Army, they hadn't joined the VAD [Voluntary Aid Detachment], they hadn't joined anything.

36:00 And yet they would go around with a white feather and give it to a perfectly nice man who for some reason or other hadn't volunteered or who had been rejected. Often when they gave a white feather to a man who had volunteered, that's the most despicable, dreadful thing that any human being can do is hand a white feather to any man or any person. How can one judge another's desire to assist their Country? It's a terrible thing to do. No. I despised anybody who would do such a thing.

36:30 **Did you know anybody or stories of anybody?**

I knew two men given the white feather. Both of whom had volunteered and one of them had been in the army and had been discharged medically unfit. And he'd served his Country and been discharged and he was still given a feather by some unthinking young woman. It was women who did it unfortunately. I'm ashamed of my sex for doing such a thing.

**Did you speak to him about how he felt being given a white feather?**

How would you think he felt.

37:00 "I'm terrible sorry and behalf of my sex I'm terrible sorry." What else could I say?

**What would some of these women be saying about the men before they'd give them the white feathers?**

Oh there were a lot of women who did nothing in the war except criticise the fact that people weren't… they say: "Oh he's a choco [Chocolate Soldier, militiaman]," or there was a special word they used to use for the men who didn't volunteer.

37:30 Then when they were called up, when enlistment came in at the very end of the war and young men and boys were called up who hadn't volunteered for certain reasons and they were all called 'chocos'. I think because they used to wear a special uniform. It was a chocolate colour. So they were called 'chocos'. But they were enlisted men. Well they didn't want to be enlisted. They probably should have been left alone. They were only kids really, just out of school.

38:00 18 and 19. Or university. They were at the university studying something. They were treated very badly because they hadn't volunteered and they were enlisted men. Enlisted men were treated very badly, which was absolutely wrong. And I despised them for it. I don't think I ever used the word ‘choco’.

38:30 Enlisting is quite different because Australia is one of the few volunteer countries in the world, you know that don’t you. That every other country they were automatically called up according to age. So they automatically just answered their call-up. But Australia, we had a volunteer army until 1943. I think it was 1943 when enlistment came in. Alamein was over before conscription came in.

39:00 **Just quickly going back to Max and his experiences in New Guinea. What kind of man was he when he returned from New Guinea?**

He was a wreck. A complete and absolute wreck. He wasn’t the man I’d married. He was bordering on being a schizophrenic. He was really mentally… he’d had cerebral malaria.

39:30 Now malaria itself is bad but he had cerebral malaria. And it’s a miracle he didn’t die from it because it’s a terrible thing, which affected his mind so that his mind went and he became a sort of schizophrenic. And he’d think he was John the Baptist and he’d go around with a bible under his arm quoting. He knew the bible backwards and he’d quote. So that was very embarrassing. So they sent him back on a hospital ship and he was in hospital for quite a long time. And when he was back to normal and had got over

40:00 this fact that he was a different person he was returned. So I had a wreck delivered to my hands. And I was a young and inexperienced woman. I’d had no marriage at all really up to then; three weeks only with a man. And I was his wife and I had to look after him. So we had no home, we had nowhere to go to so we had to live with my mother in Bradley’s Head Road with the rest of my family. And that wasn’t very good because my sisters and my brothers were there.

40:30 My brother hadn't returned from the war, no he had by then, yes he’d returned because the war was over. So there he was a physical wreck and a tired soldier, returned to live with his wife’s family and a whole household of people wanting to live their own life. Celebrating and excited because the war was over and they were coming back to their own

41:00 way of life. And everything was back to normal in their eyes. But he wasn’t back to normal. He was a very, very sick man. It took him about a year before he was able to think about returning to his profession. So when he did eventually go back and buy a practice and settle in Macquarie Street as a dentist he had to very so often cancel his patients and come back home with these terrible migraines that almost blinded him. He suffered from

41:30 unbelievable migraines the whole of his professional life, which cost him a great deal from his practice. Because patients don’t like to be put off over and over again because the man is too sick to attend to them. But he did have a very good practice in Macquarie Street that he maintained for 25 years. All the Hallidays were in Macquarie Street. There were six of them practising there and Macquarie Street was where the specialists practised in those days.

# Tape 10

00:43 **Continuing on about your experiences of having a new husband return to you transformed. How were some of those things evident when he first arrived back from New Guinea?**

01:01 He didn’t want to join in anything we were doing. He didn’t want to go to any of the parties, He didn’t want all the people coming in and out of the house, He didn’t want us playing the piano or listening to music or anything like that. He just wanted solitude. He wanted me to be with him, and OK I probably should have just wanted to be with him, but I hardly knew him and he was a sick man and I didn’t know how, and we weren’t trained on how to handle a soldier just coming back from the war.

01:30 They were very hard times because I tried to the best of my ability to be a good wife and a caring wife, but I was a young woman and there were parties going on, celebrations everywhere, everybody were going off to parties, people were floating in and out, everyone was celebrating. There was so much activity, balls and picnics and things and I, a member of a big family, of course I wanted to be in it. He didn’t want to be because he couldn’t bear to be amongst

02:00 a whole lot of people enjoying themselves because he was too ill to enjoy it. Therefore I did resent a bit that I was isolated and torn away from all the things I would have liked to be party to. I loved dancing, I loved parties, I loved being with my family, but I felt my first duty was to stay with him and it was very difficult. Sometimes he would under pressure come to a party, but he’d have a couple of drinks and then he’d go to sleep. The

02:30 whole thing was very embarrassing he couldn’t hold his liquor because he was so ill. He’d sleep a lot and then we had to get separate beds because his problems was so great with all these nightmares he used to have and also the fact that, because he’d had malaria and all that, he’d every now and again

have these terrible shivers and shakes and I'd have to pile him with blankets. The worst feature was on a number of occasions he actually went to bed with not only his balaclava

03:00 and his scarf around his but he'd go to bed with his grate coat on and about three or four pairs of socks. The shivering and the cold, have you seen a person with an attack of malaria, well they feel the cold so much that their teeth chatter and they just shiver all over and it's a terrible thing to watch someone in a malaria attack. There's no way of controlling it except pile on as much warmth that you can, well you can't sleep in a bed with a man sleeping in a grate coat with about five blankets over him and a balaclava

03:30 and a scarf on. We had to very early in our marriage get single beds and sleep apart because he had to have extra tension when he was having a malaria attack and they came quite often. It's a terrible thing, malaria. It has been brought under control to a certain extent, but the ones coming back from New Guinea, so many of them came back with malaria. Even though it went out of his system to a certain

04:00 extent to the rest of his life he was always having these shivering attacks in the night. It wasn't easy for me any more than it was for him in those years.

04:12 **You mentioned in New Guinea that's where he contracted cerebral malaria?**

04:21 Yes it was up at Sio right up in the north of New Guinea. That's was where the Japanese last landing was at Sio.

04:29 **How did you hear about how that effected …?**

04:30 I didn't, I hadn't heard from him. He used to write regularly and I hadn't heard anything for about two or three weeks and at time there was no way of finding out, but Dr Bernard Riley who, actually one of the saviours of Katherine's life because he was one of the men who financed the Asthma Foundation in the beginning of the foundation. He was the Director of the Red Cross, so if you had to find anything about a

05:00 missing relative or anyone missing in the army you went to the Director of the Red Cross. I didn't know Bernard Riley very well at that time, but someone else with a lot of influence knew him personally and asked him as a special favour, no the District Censor did it for me that's right, he got on to the Director of the Red Cross who happened to be Bernard Riley and he said one of our members of staff is terribly concerned about her husband and could you investigate it. Gave the Red Cross

05:30 his army number and his rank and his unit and they traced it and it came back that he was suffering very badly, he was very ill and he was under medical care and that he was schizophrenic, that is he assumed another personality, and that he was suffering from terrible malaria as well. He was being returned on a hospital ship and that was just shortly before the hospital ship, Manunda

06:00 no what was the name of that hospital ship that was sunk off the Queensland coast, but that was sunk a little before. Knowing he was coming back on a hospital ship you can imagine the worry. And then when he arrived he was to be taken straight out to hospital and I had to go out and see him there, and because it was as an army hospital you're only allowed to go at certain times, you couldn't just go as you can today to see a patient you could only go at say two o'clock in the afternoon until three or 11 o'clock in the morning for one hour a day. So that's all I could see him and an enormous trip out

06:30 to Concord Hospital, which was inaccessible out at Concord, it was called the 6th Australian AGH in those day, 6th Australian Army General Hospital. That's where he was for quite a long time before eventually they decided he was better off at home in the care of his family, you see, so they discharged him

07:00 because they had so many others there they wanted to get rid of him so they sent him home. A terribly terribly sick man they sent home to me. So that's what happened when he came back.

07:11 **This is probably a difficult question to answer, but how much was his illness about cerebral malaria and how much was it effected by his trauma of his experiences in war?**

07:27 Well, I think that the experience at El Alamein contributed

07:30 largely to his distress, and to his mental state because when he got malaria and was so ill and was back up there in the battlefield he was able to recall Alamein all over again. And I think something that he had put to the back of his mind came forward because of his illness because it was duplicated again in what was happening up at Sio. I have no medical knowledge but I think it compounded the state he was in, the experiences at Alamein.

08:00 **You mentioned there were lots of balls and lots of social things that young people would do, can you describe the situation in the balls, how they'd work the programs and various things like that?**

08:19 Oh the balls in those days were absolutely incredible, they were so different from today you couldn't believe it it was so different. First of all you always had a party, you were asked to come to a ball by

08:30 someone you'd met somewhere, because men and women in those days just accepted invitations from one another, unless you were absolutely engaged and wearing a ring, you went out with anyone you wanted to go out with. If you didn't have a permanent boyfriend, like they do today, until someone had asked you to marry them and you became engaged to them, you went out if you wish to with anyone you wished to if you wanted to go to a social event. In those days you were always had

09:00 a party going to the balls and they're usually about 12 to 14 to a party, that'd be six couples or seven couples and we all arrived in our glad rags and all the fashion of the day and the men, even when it was the military balls we all did the same thing even if we went to Victoria Barracks and everyone was in uniform that didn't make any difference the women dressed up in their finery, and we'd all still sit at our tables with our partner and

09:30 so you'd dance the first dance always with your, the man who brought you to the dance and you danced the last dance with him. In between you danced with any other man at the table who asked you and it was considered good manners for every man at the party to ask every woman on the table to dance with them. So if there were six women he'd ask those six women, whether he liked them or not and if you ignored one woman and went home without having danced with one woman that woman was offended, or

10:00 often they'd say 'oh good god don't say I've got Lizzie again and she'd the worst dancer in the room' but they'd have to dance with her, but they'd often say 'we'll go back to our table' when they were half way through and they'd sit and talk. It was good manners to dance with every woman of the party and then your partner always took you, you didn't necessarily go in to supper with your partner, but sometimes you went in to supper with another man, but you always danced the last dance. The last dance was, they always dimmed the lights and they played the last,

10:30 what was it, it was played as the last dance everywhere we went. I wish I could remember everything just straight off, I'll probably recall it in a few minutes. 'Good night sweetheart' that was it. It was always 'Good night sweetheart' every ball was finished with 'Good night sweetheart, shall we meet tomorrow' and the lights would dim. Some of the dancers, some of the men could dance superbly of course I was well trained and I just loved to dance.

11:00 Of course in those days we didn't have those screeching men on the microphones, we didn't have singers who interfered with the music, we just had light dance music and at the Trockadero particularly, there were two bands and that was a circular, and when one band would finish there was great big turntable and you'd finish with the traditional band and with all the traditional dances and the turntable would swing and here was the jazz band

11:30 and so then we'd have all the jazz music the modern stuff. When the Americans came we went in to the jive and that was absolutely wonderful. Alexander's Ragtime Band and all those sort of things that we could jive to, and I don't know if you've ever seen jive but it's a wonderful dance, it's so hectic but it's wild, absolutely wonderful. We all loved it. So the Americans brought that to us. When the Americans were here we didn't have those set dances because we were entertaining the troops

12:00 and all our men were away at any rate so the balls as such didn't exist right in the middle of the war they were just the army the Trocadero, which was a public dance hall, we just went there in a group and danced.

12:16 **So you didn't go to any balls with Max?**

12:17 No. Not when he came, no. I went to balls with him before he went in 1940, heaps of balls with him. We'd only known one another for nine months before he sailed.

12:30 So we didn't know one another terribly well. We were in love with one another before he went. I went to plenty of balls later on in life with him, but I didn't know him until 1939 and he didn't graduate until 1939 and I met him at a cocktail party at his graduation. Therefore he'd graduated and war was on as he graduated. War was on then

13:00 so I didn't have any of that exciting times, I had '36, '37, '38 and '39 when all the balls and things were on and went to those where we danced with everybody, we had those different types of music. You had the drifty dreamy music like 'In the Mood' and all those kind of things, which we'd do the traditional dance to, and then they'd switch to the jazz. We loved the jazz because it was exciting sort of dancing, quite

13:30 different.

13:32 **Did Max ever recover to same point that he was before the war?**

13:34 No never. He never became exactly as he was before the war, but he was a partygoer he loved parties and when the kids were young he was good then because we used to have so many parties and dances in our own home, we had a great big home in Neutral Bay, it's on the wall there I think. We had dances after dances, private dances and he used to love dancing and he was mad on it

14:00 and we used to dance then and did a lot of, it wasn't jive what did we call it?, we went through the

Swing years, we went through the Jive years and we went through, isn't that ridiculous I know it so well, that was the favourite dance we had. We used to play all these records like 'In the Mood' and 'Begin the Beguine' we always had only records to dance to, but he was a party goer and he loved giving them. So we were at someone else's home at

14:30 a party nearly every Saturday night or we were giving one ourselves. He just loved parties, but he did tend to drink a little bit too much and sometimes he was not quiet sober by the time he staggered upstairs. But he did still enjoy parties and he was a great party goer and he was a great dancer. We had some wonderful wonderful parties and times we really did. And I had lots of very joyous and wonderful times with him and there were, most of our marriage we had a great time.

15:00 **Were there any other friends or women that you knew that had husbands that came back transformed in a similar way to Max?**

15:10 Just about everyone did, they all came back they were different men. They went away carefree untroubled men and they didn't have a settled job in life, not many of them did, and they came back to nothing. So many men came back to absolutely nothing. They had to find a job or they had to go back to the university or they had to be retrained so they were quite

15:30 different as what they went away as. They went away as playboys and came back as serious men wondering what they were going to do with the rest of their lives. So man came back from the war the man he was when he went away. Don't ever think they did. You never ever saw the same man again. You had memories of it, thank god the memories were good.

15:50 **What the expectations on wives to be helping their men?**

15:58 In those days you got married,

16:00 you had your children and you stayed at home. No women went to work after marriage in our day, it just wasn't done. They all stayed at home, the men went out and earned the money an the women cooked and did the entertaining and looked after the children, and that's all gone now it seems the partners have to earn. And we got, in the latter part of our marriage we got the things the girls go in and I got a washing machine after Katherine was 18 months old

16:30 because up until then I had to boil the copper and do the napkins that way. There was no such a thing as Nappy Wash or any help like that, everything had to boil your copper. There was only one way washing, you had to boil your copper put the washing in and rinse it out in the tubs and hang it on the line. Then we got the washing machine, it was an old Thor I got, and Katherine was 18 months old and I'd had two children and washed all the nappies and done everything

17:00 because it was very hard to get any domestic help too after the war because all the women go married. There were hardly any single women or anyone available anywhere. Every man that came home and got married immediately, that's caused the 'baby boom' which we'll all have to face when they all go on the pension. It was the biggest number of babies born in Australia just after the war, the 10 years after the war. So now's the baby boom. So domestic staff wasn't available and the money wasn't there to pay the domestic staff at any

17:30 rate. So women stayed at home and did the work and raised the children and cooked the meals, did the shopping, did all their husband's laundry and I did all the, because I could type and do accounts, I sent out all the accounts. Max used to bring home all his work home from the surgery and I'd send out all the accounts for him and that sort of thing. I did all his personal secretarial work and that's all I did, but I did it at home. Until I suddenly, when Katherine was so ill and I

18:00 but then the rest of my life is a very full life after that. There is so much to tell you of that, there's so many things I've been involved in, that would take another eight tapes.

18:08 **Were you satisfied with that kind of a role?**

18:12 Of course I was. That's all a woman expected in those days. She married, and she became the little wife and she handle things on the home front, as our mothers and grandmothers did before us. Very few women ever went out to work. I didn't know one woman of my acquaintances who went out to work after

18:30 marriage. Whether she was a practising doctor or she was a dentist or even these lawyers gave up their practices and most of the doctors and dentists gave up their practices until they'd raised their children. They went back after, so many doctors and nurses even, nurses gave up and they went back in to nursing after their children left school. So many women went back later, but not during the time of raising their children they were home bodies

19:00 then and stayed and raised their children as children should be raised. Nowadays, kids hardly see their mothers.

19:11 **I wanted to ask you Mickie if you remember any war songs that used to be sung at home in Australia?**

19:19 Oh yes we sang all the war songs. All those lovely ones like the ‘Bluebirds Over The White Cliffs Of Dover’ and ‘The Nightingale Sang In A

19:30 Nightingale Square’ and ‘Jimmy When The Lights Go On In London All Over The World’. And then we had, the dances we used to do, ‘The Lambeth Walk’, we loved the Lambeth Walk that was a well known dance, and the ‘Hokey Pokey’, I was singing that the other morning ‘you do the Hokey Pokey and you put left foot in you put your right foot out, you something or other and you swing it all about and you do the Hokey Pokey and your turnaround, and that’s what it’s all about’ and we used to dance to that. So those were the two dances we danced a lot, The Lambeth Walk and The Hokey Pokey.

20:00 You’ve probably never heard of either of them. Have you heard of them.?

20:02 **I have heard the Hokey Pokey.**

20:04 Well The Lambeth Walk was one of the favourites. We used to sing all the war songs. Vera Lynne was very very popular and Gracie Fields. Everybody had a record of Gracie Fields singing all the war songs and all the old ones like ‘A Long Way to Tipperary’ and ‘When Lights Go On All Over The World’ those war

20:30 songs. We knew them all every word of them and we’d hear them over the radio or singing them all the time. Television didn’t come in until a long time, my elder daughter was 11 when we got our first television set and that was on hire, so she was 11 years old she was born in ’48, so it was ’59 when we got our first television. We only heard it over the radio, all the songs.

21:00 **Can you give us a rendition of your favourite war song?**

21:03 Well I’m no singer, I’m no singer. Oh I don’t know, I like them all. I think that ‘There’ll Be Bluebird’s Over the White Cliffs Of Dover’ or ‘The Lights Go On All Over the World’ but as for singing them, don’t expect that of me. I used to sing once, I must say I was able to recite poetry for hours, but you’re expecting a lot of my age group to expect me to sing for you.

21:30 I knew them all and I used to sing them.

21:38 **Can you give it a shot?**

21:40 Ooh I don’t know if I can remember them. ‘A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square’ I don’t know that I can ‘There’ll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover’ and it ends with ‘when the world is free’. No I’m sorry if I heard the tune I’d remember all the words, but you can’t expect that of me

22:00 to be able to sing to you a song or remember all the words at this stage of my life, but I assure you I knew that all once and every word and every tune.

22:10 **OK, that’s fair enough. Mickey can you tell us how the war changed you?**

22:14 Changed me. I don’t think it changed me at all. I was a particular personality and I always believed that fairies danced at the bottom of my garden, I’m a super optimist and, my husband, when he wrote a

22:30 reference for me he said, ‘Mickie is one of the most intelligent women I’ve ever known,’ of course he was kind, this was just before he married me, and he said that ‘I looked at the world through well focused and rose coloured glasses’. So I’ve always looked at life through rose coloured glasses. I believe in that old adage ‘two men walked out through the same bars one saw the mud the other the stars’. I’ve only ever seen

23:00 the stars in my life and I believe in fairies dancing at the bottom of my garden. I’m a super optimist and I’ve lived that kind of life who look for the good so I never suffer from depression and I don’t have misery, I’m a happy person. I wake up in the morning thanking god for the day and I look forward to the day. No, I don’t think the war altered me, it might have matured me, it might have made me more thinking, more

23:30 adult and a more conscientious person, but I don’t think it altered my personality. I didn’t become a grouch or a critic or anything like that, I remained with my happy attitude towards life in general which I’ve still got. Don’t think it altered me at all.

23:53 **Would you be able to sum up the war for you in terms of the Censorship Department and all the information that you were privy to, everything, the accumulated experience of others, or how would you sum up the war?**

24:00 Well I’d say that I was fortunate that I was in a position during those war years to serve my country in a job I enjoyed and that during the war years I didn’t suffer at all. We were poor admittedly, but everyone else was on rations, we suffered no more deprivations than others weren’t suffering, so we were all on a level, the whole of Australia was on a level during that time, it was a great

24:30 levelling process. It was, I would say that the class structure almost began to slide out during the war years. It wasn’t who you were or what you had, or how much money you had, it was the person you

were that engendered friendship and regard for one another. So I think the old world changed completely during the war and we entered a new beginning, and probably that beginning was a good thing. Because so much of our old prejudices and things we left behind.

25:00 I say that the summing up of the war was a total life change, but it wasn't a bad thing because so much of the old disappeared and new came in and a freedom for women came, we had never known before. Of course, women for the first time took their place beside men in the war years and served their country in the same way the men did, in a different manner, but still they were serving. They felt a confidence and a security and a sense of equality.

25:30 Equality that they'd never known before. So out of the war that came. So I've always felt equal, I've never felt a lesser human being as a result, I've felt equal to all now and I know a freedom that I might have never of known if the war hadn't come and changed our lifestyle and our way of living. That's about the way I could sum it up.

25:57 **Are there any last words that you'd like to give to future last generations about war?**

26:00 Well, I would say take hate, don't let anything at all, the war games you play or anything you read or hear, don't join organizations that have a belligerent outlook, don't join anything that is going to cause trouble between man to man. Cut out of your mind forever all hatred all

26:30 jealousies and all desires to combat. Try and live as one of many. Try and live in friendship. I don't say go back to the Australia First movement, but I say try and live with your fellow man as a brother and try and think kind thoughts towards one another and for the best of your ability, while you're in this world, try to save humanity to serve your community and be a good citizen. That's about all. The people must get involved

27:00 in community and charitable work and they must do something for their fellow man. They must at all times be charitable.

27:10 **Thank you Mickie. Are there any last words you'd like to add?**

27:12 I'd just say thank you dear god up above for giving me 85 years of living and allow me to have lived the life I have lived and to have had the experiences I've had and put me in a position where I have, throughout my whole life, to serve my community and

27:30 my fellow man and to be at peace with my fellow man. That's all. Thank you dear God above for what you have allowed me to live and the life you have given me.

**INTERVIEW ENDS**