

Australians at War Film Archive

Yvonne Gibbons - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:41 **Can you start by giving us a brief summary of your life up until today?**

I was born in Croydon, actually in a private hospital in Haberfield going

01:00 back that far. Lived in Croydon till I was 4. I have a brother who was older than me. When I was 4, my parents had me taught dancing and when I was 9, my dancing teacher married my uncle, so I continued dancing forever more or less. Until the war years that is. I was chronic asthmatic as a child. When I was 12, my parents had me taught the bagpipes.

01:30 When I went, during the war years, I was in a pipe band and had two friends, one was a piper and the other was a drummer. We called ourselves the Highland Trio and in November 1939 the United Australia Party, which was the federal government

02:00 at the time, formed the first concert party. We went to that. It was at Ingleburn Army Camp. During this time all three of us were in the workforce doing things. I was secretary to the works manager at a chemical company called Timbrol Limited, which is out at Rhodes. Then became Monsanto

02:30 Chemicals later on. They were very good to me. The time I was allowed off to go to camp shows, did weekends too of course. The members of the NRMA [National Roads and Motorists Association] and the Automobile Club provided their members. Their members came to drive us to the camp concerts. All they got were petrol coupons

03:00 because you couldn't buy petrol unless you had a petrol coupon. Everything had to be blacked out more or less. All the headlight had what they called a brown out. If there was an air raid siren going it had to be a total blackout. That was the same with our homes during that time. In the early

03:30 Depression years, 1930s, I did a lot of charity concerts. A lot of people were distressed. They'd lost their jobs, they'd been subclosed on their homes and selling out as mortgagees. I used to go to different concerts and sing a song. The organiser would go on stage and mention that I was going to come on and appeal for money. I used to sing, "Please give me a penny,

04:00 sir". Do you want me to sing it?

When we go back into the detail, definitely.

Anyhow, during the war years after about 2 years with the UAP [United Australia Party] concert party we moved over to the Kookaburra concert party. We used to take the troops on route marches. We used to go to Ingleburn regularly, take them on a route march to the crossroads at Liverpool

04:30 and back. The PLC [Presbyterian Ladies' College] at Croydon was taken over by the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] radar. We used to go there every Friday morning and pipe them on their church parade up to the Methodist church it was in those days. It's now the Uniting Church up near Liverpool Road and back. They gave us khaki shirts and black ties to match

05:00 the troops. My brother was with the RAAF radar. When they brought it into Australia, Professor - it doesn't matter, I know his name - he was the professor of science at Sydney University. He was asked would he get his science students

05:30 to agree to go into radar. 28 of them did. They did several weeks at Sydney University, then they went down to Melbourne University for a couple of weeks. Then they came up and the main bulk of them were stationed at Richmond. The head officer was taken over at PLC of Croydon. That's where we used to go. When we'd go for the church parade, we'd all fall in and Beverly would beat the drum while they raised the flag. Then a male voice would call out, "All those not of the Protestant

06:00 faith fall out." We'd all fall out and go back in. Then we'd start off at the church parade up to the church for the service and then bring them back again. We did that every Friday morning, it was a regular

event. We did lots of camp shows. We went around the state on war bond selling concerts. We went down to Nowra fleet air and base.

- 06:30 We were wined and dined down there. We went to Wollongong and we were wined and dined at the fire station before the concert. This was what happened. My employers were very considerate. Didn't have any objections. When the war came to an end, the first thing I did was, it was called the Australian Films League. We
- 07:00 taught the members voice production. A lot of them were writers, they wrote scripts. Some of them were photographers. We used to go to all the Australian film crowd people in their crowd scenes and in, it must have been about 1950, I left the Australian Films League because I
- 07:30 got married. I don't quite know what happened to it, but it would eventually come to an end. NIDA [National Institute of the Dramatic Arts], that's going now is doing much the same thing. Ken Hall of New Sound was one of our patrons. Eve Dutton, she was editrix of the photo player. Murphy who was supreme sound system.
- 08:00 They were all patrons of the Australian Films League. I ended up having 4 children. Three girls and a boy. They've all been through university, doing very well. In 1972, my husband was a psychologist. He operated out of his own offices at North Sydney. I used to go over there. The trip of a morning dropping the children off
- 08:30 at school, then going through all that traffic to North Sydney and back 3 o'clock to pick up my son at primary school was getting a little bit much for me. When I was asked would I go down to Strathfield Council for 10 days because the town clerk secretary was sick, I did. Then I was asked would I stay another 10 days, which I did. During which time the town clerk secretary died. So I was there for another 17 years.
- 09:00 During which time I organised all the naturalisation ceremonies, all the mayor balls, all the other activities, like Strathfield was 100 years old in 1985, the bicentennial activities in 1988 and then in 1990 I had turned by 66, so I had to drop anchor and leave After that,
- 09:30 1991, I was called back as a matter of urgency. They hadn't been able to replace everybody that had taken my place. I was also the records manager as well as secretary to the town clerk and mayor and also used to organise all the elections and keep the electoral rolls up to date. They hadn't been able to get anybody to replace that section for me. So I went back for the 1991 September elections and arranged for the polling booths
- 10:00 and the staff and host election and everything connected with it. All the stationery, et cetera. Then in 1993 I was asked would I do the oral histories of former mayors, which I did. I did 7 of them. Took me a couple of years. They told me it would only take a couple of months.
- 10:30 I did 7 former mayors, one alderman, one town clerk and since then also I have done the research for the Strathfield heritage of three of the deceased mayors and one deceased town clerk. I have been a member of Friends of Strathfield Library,
- 11:00 Friends of Kokoda, Friends of Police and Community Youth Clubs. In 1982 I helped form the Zonta International Sydney Wisteria Club and obviously the charter secretary for a couple of years. I still support them. I still go to a lot of their activities. It just seems that things go on and on
- 11:30 and never ending. I'm still active in a lot of these activities. I don't intend giving them up, I intend being there forever. They probably get tired of me before I get tired of them. That's it for the whole span of the time.

Very busy life.

Yes, and very

- 12:00 enjoyable. I've enjoyed every minute of it. There were a few moments with a few nasty people, but I've been able to cope with them. You know, you just can't take any nonsense. There was one man used to come to the council, always making an appointment to see the mayor. I must tell you this one. He was always complaining about one of the building inspectors. I used to do all the mayor's appointments and write his letters
- 12:30 and accept when people wanted him for their whatever. He came up to the counter one day and I called out the front to see him. We knew each other very well as you can imagine, wanting to make another appointment to see the mayor. Then he said to me, "I'll have you know that I became a naturalised Australian in 1965." I said, "Good for you. I'm a 5th
- 13:00 generation Australian." Every time he rang up after that to make an appointment to see the mayor he'd ask the girl on the switch to be put through to 'the mayor's 5th generation secretary'. A lot of funnies used to go on. One lady was always complaining of having her, Rochester Street she lived in, and the council had to do something because it rained and everything flooded and the sewers flooded back into
- 13:30 the homes. So they had to put main drainage pipes in. But to do it they had to dig up people's yards and fronts and that to put them in. She was always complaining that they'd planted her front with weeds

and all down her drive was weeds. I said, "You'll have to put it in writing. It gets registered, it's put on file and it's sent on to the person connected." She said, "I haven't got time to write." I said,

- 14:00 "There's nothing I can do to help you if you don't." She arrived up one day, apparently it was her of course, she tipped up a whole black bag of weeds onto the receptionist desk on the counter. Then she came up to complain again the next day and I was called out to her. I said, "Was that you who brought all those weeds and tipped them?" She said, "Yes, that was to teach them what I've had to put up with." I said,
- 14:30 "I've been telling you, 'please put it in writing', we can get something done about it." She said, "I haven't got time to write." I said, "But you had the time to come up here. You could easily have done it." She said, "I'll have you know I've complained to the ombudsman." I said, "What did he say?" "He said 'put it in writing'." I don't know how I kept a straight face. You go through all those funny things that happen. It's really amusing.

15:00 **Tell us about your parents, their backgrounds and personalities.**

My mother used to be a school teacher. But up till 1943, I think it was, or '42, the war years were bad and all the men were being conscripted.

- 15:30 No married woman was allowed to work. She was married in 1921 and she had to resign. She used to teach English and French at Canterbury Girls' High School. In 1943 I remember she got a letter from the education department asking her to return to the class room, which she never did because she had her mother living with her who needed her attention.

- 16:00 My father was a painting contractor. He'd spent a lot of his time up till just after the First World War managing a rubber plantation in Java. He was a painting contractor for all his working life back here. I remember he had the contract to

- 16:30 paint Grace Brothers, that was down there. I was 11 at the time. I remember his going down there to see how the men were getting on, the things he had to do. I've still got a mental image of all these painters on all these things across all the buildings. When we were coming home he said to me, "I've decided I'll never take on another job like that again ever." It was apparently so big.

Was that Grace Brothers in the city?

- 17:00 Grace Brothers on Broadway. I was 11, it was 1935. Mum didn't ever go back to teaching. My grandmother, her mother, was a school teacher also. That's how she met my grandfather. He was a pioneer of the Albury district. She was headmistress of Albury Girls' Primary School. She came from Mudgee.
- 17:30 Quite a big family background. Her father died in 1871, of a fall off a horse. He came out here in 1848 to raise horses for the Indian army. He set up his own property, Burra Della it was called, outside Mudgee. The Burrendong Dam covers it all now.
- 18:00 You know Thunderbolt, the bush ranger? When they arrested Thunderbolt they sold his horse and my great grandfather bought his horse and he fell off a horse in 1871 and that's what killed him, Thunderbolt's horse we assume. I've got no proof of it. There was another man wrote a poem about that. My mother's cousin, she was very well known and
- 18:30 editor of the children's section of The Sydney Mail during the 1930s. She used to work for Banjo Patterson and he couldn't believe that she'd written all these books and things because she looked so young. She wrote three books called The Pig Men, and they were serialised on 2GB in the 1950s. What was I talking about? I got sidetracked.
- 19:00 About my grandmother and grandfather. He was a pioneer of the Albury district and he was an alderman over a period of 30 years on Albury Council. He was a farmer, had his own property and that. My father's parents, they came out here in a boat
- 19:30 called the Himalaya in 1865. I've got the boat thing with all the family. His mother was only 15 at the time. He was only 9 months old when his father died in 1886. You can imagine, in 1886, there was no doles, no pensions
- 20:00 or anything in those days. The family helped a lot, but I remember being told that my grandmother literally got on her hands and knees and scrubbed the floor of Newtown Police Station to make ends meet. To feed and bring up 9 children. One of Mum's aunts married into a big family
- 20:30 at Orange. They had a lot of properties. She had a daughter Mary. Mary later became Dame Mary Hughes, wife of William Morris Hughes. They were married I think in 1912. I remember they had one daughter Helen. I think Billy [Hughes] was married before then, he had a couple of sons. Aunt Mary and Billy had just the one daughter
- 21:00 Helen. In 1936 Helen was turning 21 and she was going to England to celebrate her 21st birthday. She went on the boat. She had all beautiful gear. She had all these social activities planned. When she got over there, she was enjoying it immensely, but she got appendicitis and she was put in hospital and the

appendix was removed. The biggest social event for the occasion was coming on.

21:30 She had a beautiful gown for it and everything and she wasn't going to miss this. So she took herself out of hospital and enjoyed herself immensely, but ended up back in hospital with septicaemia and died. I remember how devastated the family were. An only daughter, and to lose her like that. But that's what happens. In those days there were no antibiotics or anything and you just finished your life period and that was it.

22:00 My children have all done well for themselves. I mentioned that my eldest daughter work under contract to the Hong Kong Government Department of Education teaching English at a Buddhist co-educational school there. My son is the technical and sales manager for South East Asia through his Sydney company here. He did science at university

22:30 and became a food technologist. He lives in Bangkok with his wife and little son. My youngest daughter became a practising psychologist and operates out of the St Ives Medical Centre. My other daughter, she was in the IT [information technology] business for a long time. Modern day technology has passed me by, so don't ask me what she did. She now is working full time at Trinity Prep School.

23:00 I've got 7 grandchildren. They're all doing well. The eldest one -

We'll talk about them at the end of the story. [...] Can you give me an idea of what your mum was like as a person?

She was a very caring mother. Very loving. A great

23:30 helper of everybody. During the 1930s, Depression years, everybody was in grave circumstances. They'd lost their jobs, they had mortgages to pay, they had no money because the banks closed on them. That's why the banks were selling their house and that's why in 1932

24:00 Jack Lang, who was the premier, brought in the Moratorium Act so that the banks could no longer close on people's properties. When they got work and started earning money again they could pay them off. During those years, it regularly happened, somebody's daughter or son would arrive at the front door with a cup saying, "Mum said could you let her have a

24:30 cup of sugar," or a cup of flour. Everybody did this. We were all like extended families. We were a bit luckier than most of them because my grandparents had a property in Albury and they used to send boxes of fruit and stuff for us. I remember I used to go to the parcels office at Burwood Station while

25:00 Dad picked them up. Grandma would get her dressmaker to make clothes for us and we coped. My mother's eldest sister had a daughter too. This was the only way people coped, they helped each other during those years. Mum still continued with charity work and being available

25:30 to do things for people. She's a great loss. She was a lovely person.

There was a strong sense of community where you were living as well as your family being close and connected?

Yes. In those days, all to of our neighbours, we used to go on picnics out to

26:00 Liverpool and the kids could play ball and we picked mushrooms and we'd all have lunch together. They were family affairs, so it didn't matter what your religion was or what your colour was. We were all like an extended family. Everybody in Australia was like this. No longer. You'd leave your doors and windows open and go for walks of a night. It's very sad what's become of the community since then.

26:30 Now we've just got to live with it. Nothing you can do about it.

You were in Croydon until you were 4?

Yes.

Then you moved to

Actually, the Croydon we lived in was in the Ashfield municipality. Then we moved to another home in Croydon, which was in the Burwood municipality. It was a new street of homes. They're still there in Rothstone Avenue, and they're heritage because they were built all the same.

27:00 I lived there till I got married and moved out. Mum died in 1981, the house was still there. We didn't sell it until 1983, something like that. It was sad. No member of the family needed it or wanted it.

27:30 I still am in touch with the neighbours there. The lass that lived next-door, she still lives there alone. Christmas cards go through and little stories of what we've been doing over the road. There were 4 children in that family, and Bert, who was the only son, he got married, he's still living there. His eldest sister, Elaine, I went to school with her, I was only talking to her on the phone the other day, she lives up Castle Hill way.

28:00 We still keep in touch. They were all like this, brothers and sister. It was really a nice time.

Can you describe dad's personality?

He was a very quiet person, very intelligent. Very loving. In fact, he was with the Masonic Club,

28:30 very involved in things. Dad wrote a lot of letters to newspapers about politics and things like that, which were all printed. I've got a whole file of his stuff there. He wrote a book called The Fallacy Of Bigness. They were going to amalgamate some of the northern NSW places, which I think they still did. The 'fallacy of bigness' is still with these politicians today, wanting to amalgamate

29:00 Strathfield in 1985. I went through 4 areas of amalgamation, threat to Strathfield. It was 1948. We weren't amalgamated, but Enfield came in part, Burwood Park came to Strathfield and Homebush came to Strathfield. In 1968, 1974,

29:30 1984 and 1999 it's still under all that threat and in 1984 the boundaries commission were calling us Area 5, and that was to amalgamate Drummoyne, Ashfield, Burwood, Concord and Strathfield, 5 municipalities. But we held lots of community things. There was a huge turn up

30:00 in Strathfield Park. Several thousand people turned up with speakers. The only speaker that didn't turn up was the local member, they called it the seat of Burwood in those days, it's called Strathfield now, Phil O'Neil, he didn't come. He lost his seat at the next election because of this. We weren't amalgamated. In 1999/2000 one, they did

30:30 a survey of the municipality and 73% of the residents said no, they did not want amalgamation. Laurel Eart, who was the mayor at the time, wrote a letter to the then local government minister and said, "We've done a survey, 73% of the residents do not want to be amalgamated." He jumped up and down with anger and he was shouting and yelling, "How dare she!" He got the letter from her to that effect, the day before he was going

31:00 to announce the amalgamation. Of course, we weren't amalgamated, but now, first of all they said, "There's not going to be an amalgamation," but they didn't say, "There's not going to be any boundary changes." What they're planning on doing now is putting a boundary down the middle of Homebush Road. All this part of Strathfield will go to Auburn, all the other part of Strathfield go to Burwood. How dare they? This is not a

31:30 financial department area. We beat all the others because they were swamped in department and we were virtually department free. That's how we won all these other events. Now they want to just chop us up. Part of this municipality is in the other side where Concord is, part of it's in Bankstown, part of it's in Auburn and part of it's in Canterbury

32:00 and part in Burwood. If they ever chopped us up like that, to give all these different pieces to these other municipalities, all that'd be left of Strathfield would be 2135 the postcode. There'd be nothing else left of us. Can you imagine us being taken over by Auburn? It's an absolute disaster the thought of it. The council down there at the moment is a Labor council. Virginia Judge was the mayor for many years.

32:30 She became the state member for Strathfield at the last elections last March. Although, in 1999/2000 on, when we were saying, "No, we don't want amalgamation," she was running round knocking on everybody's door saying, "I'm against amalgamation. I'm against amalgamation." All the streets, you could see her doing it. Everybody was talking about it. She still came to that meeting down at

33:00 the town hall when we all went down there. There were hundreds of us. She was against amalgamation, but nothing about boundary changes. She was the one that mentioned down the middle of Homebush Road. We live of this side, for Auburn, but she lives in Redmyre Road on the other side for Burwood, so she doesn't get caught up in it. There's not been a word from her since. She's even taken down the 'no amalgamation' sign from the front of her house and all these flags that you see,

33:30 these red and white streamers outside, that's to indicate the municipality does not want to be amalgamated. She hasn't got anything like that hanging outside her front in Redmyre Road. So we know where her. Let's face reality. Politicians are there to fill their pocket and look after themselves for the rest of their life.

34:00 When you were still a young girl, can you tell us about the school that you first went to?

Yes. I went to Croydon Infant School when I was 5. Prior to that my mother had me for several months at a Montessori school. When I went to

34:30 Croydon Infant School. My first day there my mother gave me all my Montessori stuff to take. She thought the teacher would be interested, which she was. When I got home she said, "How did you go at school today?" I said, "I got slapped." I've never found anybody else who got slapped on their first day of school. She said, "You got slapped? What did you get slapped for?" I said, "The teacher was saying 'what's this for?' 'What's that for?' and 'What's

35:00 this for?' and 'what's that for?'. So I said 'flypaper for sticky beaks'." And I got slapped on my first day of school, which was quite an event.

You were a little bit precocious even then.

Yes. You reckon still now? Then I went to Croydon Primary School and then after that I went to Burwood Girls' High School, which was Burwood Domestic Science School in those days. It only went to the Intermediate Certificate. After I finished there

- 35:30 I had the option to go to PLC and do my leaving high school certificate, they were called in those days. Leaving Certificate. Or I could go to business college and I opted for business college. So I ended up going to Miss Hale's Business College for Young Ladies.

When did you

- 36:00 **first recognise your interest in music and passion for dancing?**

My mother had me taught dancing when I was four. Up till then there was nothing.

Once you started at four, was it something you took to naturally?

Yes. I enjoyed it. I went to another lady as well as my aunt to learn strict national dancing

- 36:30 because she was the one who had formed the Sydney Caledonian Pipe Band, which I'd come to join and that's where I got all my medals for dancing. Champion dancer 1934. Mum had me also taught the piano, which didn't interest me at all. I haven't played it in years, but I became an associate of the London College Of Music and that's what that photo on my cabinet up there is all about. It was the

- 37:00 bagpipes that I liked best of all. I loved them.

When did you first take fancy to the bagpipes?

I was 12 when my father bought me a set of bagpipes and I started learning.

Was that seen as a therapeutic instrument for you considering your asthma?

Yes. My local doctor has said to me that my mother was ahead of her time. I think

- 37:30 I haven't had an attack of asthma in decades, but I was a chronic asthmatic as a child. I can remember even coming out of a coma that I was in, lying on Mum's bed, because a neighbour came over and she was talking to Mum and that's what brought me out of the coma. I was thinking, "I wish she'd go home and shut up." Just annoying me. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I think what I enjoyed too were people's

- 38:00 reactions to it. I remember going to play one night at a senior citizens get together in a hall and they're all sitting round like zombies. They didn't live in a home, they were local ones. They'd had music playing and they were just sitting there staring into space. So from outside I blew up and I started and I walked in and the look on their faces, the beam on their

- 38:30 faces as I got down the end of the hall I turned around and faced them and played. Eventually they're all getting up and they're all jiving. Loving it immensely. That's why I like it, because the reaction is great. There's nothing like, when we used to go to Ingleburn and take the troops on their route marches one of them said to me afterwards, "It's wonderful having you do this. It's such a bore having to walk." You know, to the beat of the drum and that and the pipes to go with it.

- 39:00 So that's what, I had such many good times.

How old were you when you performed for the senior citizens?

I suppose I would have been about 15.

Did you have an awareness of the bagpipes before they were given to you?

Yes, because I was learning the national dancing and

- 39:30 I was doing the Highland fling and the chartreuse and all those dances to the bagpipes. Then when my dancing teacher formed the Sydney Caledonian Pipe Band, which later became Lakemba Caledonian Pipe Band, that's when my father bought me the set of pipes and I started learning. She was the drum major. It was quite good. You went into all the marches,

- 40:00 the Anzac Day marches and 1936 I think it was, when we were 150 years old. They had a big procession then. They had a concert in the town hall of a night and we played there. Walked up the line, the platform. I remember at that one they had some New Zealanders doing a

- 40:30 Haka. I remember they taught me part of it and I can remember, "Taringa-ringā pakeha, way-way taki ha, kumati, kumati, fiti tei ra," but I can't remember anything else. They were really entertaining and interesting times. Had a wonderful time.

Is there any Scottish heritage in your family?

Yes. My great grandfather, the one that was killed

- 41:00 from a fall off Thunderbolt's horse, he came from Montrose, Scotland. My great, great grandparents, one was from England and one was from Ireland. My great grandmother was from Ireland. My great grandfather I've been told was in the British army, he was the British officer in occupation during the British Irish wars.
- 41:30 I remember being told that the family were all living in Clare Castle in County Clare, Ireland, and that was for their security. My husband was with the corrective services programs. He was director of programs department of corrective services for several years. He had visitors from Ireland and he was telling them about my grandparents. They came from County
- 42:00 Clare and he said, "My wife's great grandparents - "

Tape 2

00:33 Can you talk about the Scottish influence in your early life?

- My great grandfather came from Montrose Scotland. That was very early in the 1848
- 01:00 I think. I don't know of any other Scottish backgrounds from members of the family. I know there was Irish and there was British and there was, I know my father's mother and her family came from Schleswig-Holstein, which was in Denmark. They came out here on a motor vessel called
- 01:30 the Himalaya in 1865 and I have the boat, all the passengers on the boat, their names identified. She was 15 at the time, his mother. His father was born I think in Poland, but he went to America, was working there. He married in America, he divorced his wife and he came to Australia and that's when he met my
- 02:00 father's mother, my grandmother and got married. I think he had two sons in America. My grandmother had 9 children out here, so my father was only about 18 months old I think, when he died. I remember in Dad's family, the eldest of the 9 children was
- 02:30 a male and Dad and in between there were the 7 girls. My father's brother, he was import export manager. He had his own company operated out of Brisbane. I remember when I was only a young girl, that he went overseas on business and he met up with his two half brothers over there. I'm not sure if it was in Chicago
- 03:00 or somewhere, but I've never been able to isolate or itemise where it was. I was only a child at the time, so far back. I remember he went to New Guinea too, and he sent me a photo of a New Guinea baby in sort of a funny looking little container. One of my friends,
- 03:30 Beverly, the one that was the drummer in the Highland Trio, when they were in America, she sent me a \$10 note and on it, the treasure of America had the same name as my maiden name. So that's why she sent it to me, and I've still got it. Never cashed it in because of the family name on it. I love everything Scottish.
- 04:00 It's my number one love. I suppose it's because of my activities and that of the pipes and the dancing and having gone to so many dances where they've done the Highland reels and all that sort of thing and the dancing. Lakemba Caledonia Pipe Band used to play every Saturday
- 04:30 evening, used to pipe from Lakemba station up to the - it was a hall of the Boulevard somewhere there. They used to have this Scottish dance every Saturday night and the band used to play there.

How old were you when you went there?

- I think I would have been about 15, 16, something like that.
- 05:00 I think I left the band in 1942 because we got too involved with camp shows. Every weekend we were going somewhere, Balmoral Naval Depot or down to the British Centre, which was in Hyde Park, or onto American boats all round the state on war bond selling concerts. We just didn't have time, so all three of us had to withdraw from the band.
- 05:30 We didn't have to, but there was no point staying there, because we just couldn't be there to play or be part of it.

Why did your mother decide to take you to dance classes so early on?

- We lived at Croydon and this dancing teacher taught
- 06:00 in a MUIFF [?] hall that was only a walkable distance from where we lived. It's not there any longer, there's a service station there now. Because it was so close, and I suppose neighbours were talking their children were going, maybe that's why Mum took me. Mum was an educated woman. She'd been to Sydney University and I think she was keen on having us educated in all different

- 06:30 avenues and spheres. This is why she took me round there to learn dancing. When I was 9, that same dancing teacher married my uncle. Became part of the family then. I just continued dancing. From my aunt I went to Mabel Hughes. My aunt moved from the Croydon to the Ashfield premises, opposite the town hall upstairs
- 07:00 there was a hall. My aunt lived up there with the dancing classes. A couple of blocks around the corner from that, Mabel Hughes lived. She used to teach strict national. I used to learn toe tap and ballet from my aunt.

When you went to the first classes, what dance were you taught then?

When I was 4? Toe tap and ballet.

What's toe tap?

- 07:30 Toe dancing, tap dancing, ballet dancing. I remember you'd hang onto the side and it'd be a case of, "pliér [bend] et dégager [release], arms, bras [French for arms] and out," and down you go and pliér and up and down. You do hanging on the side. That was what all ballerinas have to learn, hanging on and doing all the things. Everything was in French of course. 'Pliér et dégager' and all that.
- 08:00 Don't ask me what it means now, but I know how you do it. Then I did a lot of tap dancing and toe dancing as you can see, toe shoes. Mabel Hughes used to teach the strict national. It was the Scottish, Irish and the hornpipe. Mabel could teach the hornpipe too. She taught it and her pupils went in the
- 08:30 eisteddfods, like I did up there. Winning medals and cups and things. I had a cup too, but it fell apart.

When did you graduate to the strict national dancing?

I think I was about 10 I think, when I went round to Mabel Hughes. I still learned from my aunt, but I'd go round there for lessons at her place. She taught from her home.

Take us through your

- 09:00 **whole dancing journey while you were a child. Did you go home and practice?**

No, never ever did that, but we were doing so many concerts and that, that you were doing it all the time. My aunt had lots of concerts and during the Depression years we did lots of charity

- 09:30 concerts and pantomimes and things like that. That's why I mentioned at one of the charity concerts how I used to go on stage and appeal for money.

How come they chose you to do that?

Those concerts were run by my aunt, so maybe it was a family thing. Even though I'd still go on afterwards and do the dancing

- 10:00 with the other students. When the organiser of the charity concert would go on stage to say that I was going to come on and appeal for funds and, "Get your cash ready and throw it up," I used to go on and sing. "Please give me a penny sir, my mother dear is dead. Oh, I am so hungry sir, a penny please for bread. All
- 10:30 day I have been asking, but no one heeds my cry. A penny please for bread, sir, or surely I must die." And I'd walk all up and down the stage singing this and appealing and they'd be throwing all their coins up on the stage. All the other kids would be running on and picking them all up. I did that many times. It was charity concerts. That was during the Depression years, mainly the 30s.

It's amazing people would give

- 11:00 **you so much money when people had so little.**

Yes. I think everybody was like extended families. They were trying to help everybody else. Even, "Can you give us a cup of sugar," or a cup of flour or something. We all went on picnics together. It didn't matter if they were in a different suburb or a different street or anything like that, everybody was the same. We were

- 11:30 all like extended families. I remember when war broke out, up till 1942 I think it was, when conscription came in, married women were never allowed work after they were married. I remember when conscription came in, I mentioned my mother got a letter from the education department asking to return to the class room. I remember when I'd go shopping up in Burwood shopping centre, I'd
- 12:00 be amazed when I'd walk into a shop and see one of my neighbours there, or one of my friends' mothers in a shop selling. The women had to move in on everything and do it because the men just weren't around anymore.

The women you knew, how did they find that transition? Was it difficult for them?

No, I don't think so. Everybody was in the same boat, and everybody helped everybody else.

12:30 **Your mother stayed at home?**

She had to. She had her father and mother there that had to sell their property down at Albury. Grandpa, I think he must have had cancer, they never ever told me. I remember he had a tube in his bladder, so I suppose he must have had prostate cancer. Grandma had become an epileptic.

13:00 Grandpa died in 1943 and Grandma was still with us till 1953, but they couldn't be left. They had to be looked after. Mum had to do it. So this is just what happened.

What was your mother's attitude towards women being asked to go back into the workforce? Did she think that was a good idea?

I would think they all

13:30 did, because I think it was rather a male sexist sort of thing that wouldn't let them work because they got married. Who was it who arranged for women to have their first vote in England? What was her name now? Up till that time women weren't even allowed to vote. I think it was round about 1906 or '12 or something. They put her in jail at one time, in England, because she was having these

14:00 protest marches about women not being able to vote. I meant to say it was long overdue. They didn't ever rescind it. Women were in the workforce and married. How would they do without them for heaven's sakes? We're a very important part of life. Men must not ever forget that.

You got your progressive attitude do you think from your mother?

14:30 **She went to Sydney University?**

She did her time at university, but in 1915 when war broke out, she was in the 2nd year economics. She only had one year to go after that year and once again it was compulsory for women to go to work. So that's why

15:00 Mum didn't ever get her Bachelor of Economics degree. She became a school teacher.

Did she talk about not finishing that degree? Did she have regrets about that?

No. She taught right up to the time she was married and she couldn't go back anyhow then because they wouldn't have had her. She was a married woman.

15:30 It's awfully, 'I'm God and you're just peasants,' sort of thing. Male and female. Sorry, Sean [interviewer]. But it was. It was in those days. They wouldn't even let women have a vote. I mean to say God gave everybody a brain, what makes men think that theirs is better than anyone else's? It's not. We know a lot of them aren't.

16:00 **When you were growing up, tell us about the different dance routines you were being taught as a child that were favourites.**

I always enjoyed the sailor's hornpipe because a lot of the steps of that had a name.

16:30 Like there'd be, or was that the Irish jig had the Donnybrook? Yes, the Irish jig had the Donnybrook. The sailor's hornpipe tell a tale and you turn around pulling up the anchor and then sort of hood, looking in the distance. I liked those. They told a story of what the dance was. It was the Irish jig that had the Donnybrook.

17:00 We're shaking the fist. Toe dancing, ballet dancing, didn't interest me. I liked the more solid down to earth rowdy sort of dancing. I suppose that was just bully me. Loudmouth and aggressive and arrogant and noisy etc.

It sounds like

17:30 **you were a confident child. Would that be right to say?**

Yes.

did the confidence grow?

I sort of felt very secure, security really. Security in what I thought, what I did, family, everything. I couldn't think of anything, even the cheek of me telling the teacher to mind her own business, 'flypaper sticky beaks'.

18:00 I just think I must have got fed up. I've still got a mental image of sitting at that desk you know. She was saying, "What's this for?" and "What's that for?" and I still do what she was doing. So in the end I said, "Flypaper for sticky beaks."

That's when you got a smack?

I got slapped on my first day of school. Mum was shocked. She couldn't believe it.

Are there other incidents when you were growing up and you stood up for yourself?

- 18:30 I suppose there were. After a while you become used to sort of standing up and laying down the law. Even in the workforce, or when I was at the council there, I was a bit of God Almighty even in that job, telling residents are they looking after them or
- 19:00 different things that I said. I was 'the mayor's 5th generation secretary'. And the woman who wouldn't write a letter and the ombudsman said, "Put it in writing." There were a lot of funny things. I remember too Billy McMahon and Sonia McMahon were guests at one of our mayoral ball. We had an alderman who
- 19:30 was young and he used to come to council all scruffy and with thongs on and that. He used to sit in the council chamber during the meeting, at the table, he put his feet up on the table and cut his toenails. This was this particular alderman. He never ever turned up to any council function. You had to pay to go, like the mayoral ball.
- 20:00 He'd turn up at midnight, actually he was singer on the RSL [Returned and Services League] circuit. He'd turn up at midnight so that he didn't have to pay or anything. Sir William and Sonia of course were guests of honour. I think they'd gone, maybe he arrived just before they left. Anyhow, when I got all the photos, the photographer left a 10 o'clock, when I got all the photos from the photographer, while I was
- 20:30 setting up at the council table for the Tuesday night council meeting, I put the photographs on the table with a note saying '\$2.50 each', the address of the photographer and so and so. When I got into work on the Wednesday morning, went into my office, on my desk is a letter from Alderman Peter so and so saying "Dear Yvonne, please order me
- 21:00 photo number so and so." Sitting up in the middle of it were \$2.50 worth of 10 cent coins. He's a singer on the RSL circuit, so they must have been pokie machine coins he had. I phoned him up and I said - no that's right. What photo was it he was wanting? I went upstairs and I took them down, got the number and it was a photo of Sir William and Sonia jiving.
- 21:30 Sir William was about 2 foot taller than, Sonia was about 2 foot taller than Sir William. Sir William's back was to the camera and he was very bandy legged and it looked for all the world as if he was sexually assaulting her. He was Liberal and Peter was secretary of the Australian Labor Party, Enfield branch. I mentioned to the town clerk that he wanted this
- 22:00 photo. The town clerk said, "No, he can't have it. You tell him he can't have it." I left my office for a few minutes and when I came back, no, that's right. I rang him up and said, "Peter. I'm sorry, I can't let you have this photo, would you come and pick up your \$2.50?" So he was up in no time at all. He said, "All right, Yvonne, give it to me. These pervs, these - " this and that and the other.
- 22:30 I said, "Sssh, the town clerk will hear you." He said, "I don't care. I'll go in and I'll tell him myself." There was a shouting match. I think the whole of Strathfield must have been able to hear it. Suddenly there was dead silence and I heard the town clerk say, "I'll say one thing for you, Peter, you've got a big mouth. It's a pity you haven't got a brain to match it." With that Peter took off and down to the mayor's office. The mayor was the newsagent at Homebush. Apparently the shouting match was on
- 23:00 there again. The funny part of the whole end of the story is that he damaged his vocal chords, and because he was a singer on the RSL circuit, the doctor's orders were that he was not to use his voice for 6 months and he had to go on the dole. I've still got those. I was told to take those photos home in case there was a break in to get them. I've still got them upstairs.

23:30 **During the Depression years, can you tell us about some of your performances that really stick out?**

It's only with the other pupils.

From the dance school?

Yes.

24:00 We'd go on, a group, either doing ballet dancing or singing a song and tap dancing and all that sort of thing. I was just one of the mob, really. We all had individual little things to do. Sometimes it'd be my turn to be out front. If it was a play we all had a part in the play.

Do you remember the plays you used to perform?

I can't remember them.

24:30 I can't remember them. No.

You mentioned the sailor dance that you did.

Yes, sailor's hornpipe.

Tell us about the other dances you remember.

Sailors hornpipe, Irish jig, Irish reel, Highland fling, John's Trews, sword dance. Then I remember Lorraine Hawkins, who still lives here in

25:00 Strathfield, she was a dancing teacher at Five Dock. Lorraine lived in Strathfield for many years. She lived with her parents in Garfield Street, Five Dock, and I went along there. She used to teach the strict national, not the Scottish or anything like that necessarily, but the Italian and Spanish with the castanets and I was interested in learning a Spanish dance with castanets and I've still got my

25:30 castanets. When Lorraine had a concert, she was teaching the Highland fling and that too, her students, because they had to do examinations and I suppose, I forget where, they had to learn to dance to the bagpipes. So I used to go along to her concerts and I used to pipe

26:00 the accompaniment for her students to do the Scottish dances. Lorraine and I still see each other a lot, on the phone often, a lot. Lorraine got, what's that fever that damages the heart?

Scarlet fever?

No. I had it on the tip of my tongue. Never

26:30 mind. Her heart was affected by it. She had to give up teaching. When she recovered sufficiently from that, she used to go round the state and adjudicated all the eisteddfods and the concerts and that. She got married. She had one daughter. Now she's got, I think, 3 grandchildren, they're all grown up of course. She lives down there with

27:00 her sister. They moved into the house in the Boulevard down here. Her sister Shirley - live together. Shirley never married. She still does a lot of work. They've got a fancy costume business and she often has costumes available for council functions and any other functions. Very good

27:30 different types of costumes.

You aunt organised the concerts in the Depression year, was she asked to do that by the government?

She was the dancing teacher at Ashfield, and I suppose she was approached by people locally. This one that was on at Botany Town Hall by the Australian Labor Party

28:00 in aid of the distressed wives and families of the northern coalminers, I suppose somebody did approach her, because she used to hold pantomimes and concerts in Ashfield Town Hall. She was well known in the area. I suppose that's how they approached her to do this. That's how I came to walk on stage. It was done by

28:30 so many people everywhere, and that song was well known. They had all these charity concerts everywhere and that's what the different concerts, different people, different areas, used to go on and that would be the song that would be sung.

Who would make your costumes?

My mother. Except my kilts and that. They came readymade sort of thing. I don't think they have a place

29:00 in town that even sells these things anymore, kilts and that. The women in those days, Mum was a great dressmaker, she made those frocks I had on and all my other clothes. She made some lovely clothes. My full failures at school were cooking, laundry management and dressmaking. So I can't do any of it. I hate it.

Why did you not enjoy

29:30 **those subjects?**

They were my three failures. Maybe because I was able to put my feet under the table all the time. Mum had somebody used to come in and help with the housework. The only thing I enjoy doing is the washing, because I can be outdoors hanging the washing on the line. I hate being indoors.

You don't like cooking?

No, I leave that to my husband, that's why I'll keep him a while longer. Everybody says I'm a great

30:00 cook. I still bake Mum's Christmas cakes every Christmas because everybody demands them. It's all right, because they are rather special. Different things, you know, casseroles are easy to cook. Just put the meat and all the veggies in all together. They all enjoy my roast dinners too. Everything I've done they have enjoyed, but I'm the one that doesn't

30:30 enjoy doing it.

Was there any subjects you enjoyed doing at school?

Yes, I did shorthand and typing at school, I enjoyed that. I hated physical culture, even though I was doing a lot of dancing. I can still remember to this day when I was at Burwood Central Domestic Science School it was called, having to go out, stand with dozens of others and the teacher would say, "Girls, ready.

31:00 To the right two, three, to the left two, three and turn, and turn. To the right two, three.” Boring, boring, boring! I’ve never forgotten it.

Must have been boring after all the beautiful dances.

Yes, I didn’t need to have to do that sort of thing.

When you were growing up did the dancing help you stay slim?

I’ve got a photo here and you’ll be able to see me. [...]

31:30 **Did learning to dance as a child give you confidence?**

I suppose so. I think when you’re young and you’re doing something, and you’re doing it and being appreciated, you’re on automatic pilot with it. Just automatic.

32:00 Sure, no problem, it’s great. I enjoyed every minute of it.

Was there anything about dancing that you enjoyed apart from how you made people feel?

I liked people’s reactions. If anybody growled and, “oh, yuck,” you know, sort of thing, and didn’t clap and

32:30 smile and that, that would have been shocking, but I don’t ever remember anything like that. Point of view of costumes, it was just part of the act, like I was. It meant nothing to me. It’s a long way back now, unfortunately. I wish I was back there.

Can you sing some of the other songs that you used to sing as a child?

33:00 No, not those songs. I did learn singing and I did sing at a couple of weddings, but I haven’t sung in ages. I think I used to sing These Are My Wishes For You and Love Everlasting. They were the two songs that I used to sing,

33:30 mainly at a wedding. I remember at the camp shows, one of the singers used to go on. Have you heard the song – “Row, row, row, way up the river he would row, row, row. A little hug he’d give her, she would tell him when, he would kiss her then, they’d fool around and fool around and then they’d kiss again.” One of these students, they’re on the stage for camp shows singing this,

34:00 but they altered the last line – “and then he’d row, row, row, a little further he would go, oh, oh, oh, oh. And if she wouldn’t give in he’d say ‘well get out and swim’ and then he’d row, row, row.” And the boys loved it. They were yelling and they’d stand up clapping. “More, more, more!” They loved those songs.

This is when you were singing to the army?

Yes, that was in the army days.

34:30 **When you were 10 you went to a much stricter dance school. Can you tell us about that?**

To Mabel Hughes? The strict national dancing?

Yes.

That was the strict Highland dancing. Highland and Irish dancing, specialised in it.

35:00 They were the dances that you did at the local eisteddfods. That’s when I got my medals. Most of those medals have got on the back what they were, first Highland fling, first chanteuse, first shore dance. They had these every year.

The eisteddfods?

Yes, maybe even more than that. Yes, would have been more than that.

35:30 I’ve got so many medals there I think I used to pick up several medals at a time. They were the eisteddfods that I used to go to. They weren’t general eisteddfods, they were strict national dancing eisteddfods.

How did you train for this strict national dancing?

It was just a matter of learning to dance and how to do it properly.

36:00 You’ve seen the Irish dances. Even when they’re doing the standing jig, that’s all a particular type of dance. The Highland fling for instance is a lot of shuffling. When you end a step it can be double cut behind each leg. The sword dance, of course you had to go over the swords and there’s be the

36:30 slow part of it and then you’d clap for the last a little bit quick and you’d go and you’d bow. Each one was significant – they’re current, they came from Scotland. I did what they do in Scotland, wasn’t just made up out here.

Did you have Scottish teachers?

- This Mabel Hughes was a Scottish teacher. She was the one that formed the Sydney Caledonian pipe band also. She became, her married name was McGuinness.
- How did they teach you the Highland fling?**
- How? Quite easily. You've got to have your heels together and your toes out. Up on your toes, and you've got to use your arms too and that helps you. Right foot out and your army up. I suppose that helps you keep your balance.
- 37:30 It's just a matter of learning a step at a time. It's distinct from doing ballet and you've got to have on the rails and learn all your motions and that by the railings. You always had tap shoes on to do the Irish dancing. It's so far back, I never ever thought anybody would be asking me these questions. To
- 38:00 even have to think about them.
- Did you take to the Scottish dancing quickly, because of the earlier training you had?**
- Yes. I had been dancing for about 6 years before I went and specialised in that. I was well in my teens when I went to Lorraine to learn the Spanish dancing of castanets and then
- 38:30 Lorraine used to ask me to go to her concerts and accompany her students while they did the Highland dancing. So it was all good.
- Do you remember the events around you that led you to want to try the Highland fling?**
- No, everything was just automatic. Everybody did it on those days. Everybody went to a good teacher. All
- 39:00 teachers were good. If there was an eisteddfod, they all went. It wasn't just you against the mob, you were just one of the mob. In those days we were all like extended families, which was something you did. All the families were together and the parents all went to the concerts and enjoyed it as much as everybody else. No, it was,
- 39:30 the actual scene was totally different to what it is today because today, once you play tennis, the boys would play football or something and have a team, but today even when our son was playing football, it was unbelievable the abuse that used to come from the parents
- 40:00 to somebody who was adjudicating or telling somebody that they'd done something wrong and they lost a goal or something like that. We know from what we read in the papers too, that they even become physically abusive.
- What were your parents like? Did they come and see your performances?**
- All the time.
- They both came?**
- Yes. Dad used to take me to have private
- 40:30 pipe lessons. I used to go over to my pipe tutor who lived at Rozelle. No, it was over near Mascot somewhere. Dad used to drive me there to have my private tutored lesson with the chanter.
- 41:00 I've still got my chanters.
- What's a chanter?**
- Shall I bring my chanter out and show you and play a tune on it for you?
- Yes, in the next tape that would be lovely.**
- I'll bring my practice chanter out.
- How did your mum react to your dancing?**
- She loved it. She made all the costumes for me and she
- 41:30 was always there. She was a wonderful Mum. And a wonderful Dad.
- What were their ambitions for you?**
- I think they would have liked me to have gone to university. But no way. I was at Burwood Central Domestic Science School and you left there with your Intermediate Certificate, which was the equivalent of 3rd year. That's as far as it went then. It doesn't now. It's Burwood Girls' High School now. I remember in those days...

- 00:33 **You moved into Scottish dancing around the age of 9 and 10. How old were you when you moved onto the bagpipes?**
- I was 12.
- Were you already involved in the Sydney Caledonian Pipe Band?**
- No, it hadn't been formed. Mabel Hughes, who
- 01:00 I went to learn dancing from, she was the one who formed it. When I was 12 I started to learn the pipes, and that's when my father bought my set of pipes for me.
- Did she suggest you join the band?**
- No, everybody was doing it. All the young ones that were dancing and everything, they all joined.
- So it was the thing to do?**
- Yes, pipe bands were very popular in those days. Not only that, but a couple of her pupils, who were also
- 01:30 members of the pipe band, they formed, in later years, the Sydney Ladies' Caledonian Pipe Band, which was the first and there's not been one since, because it doesn't exist anymore.
- What year did they establish that?**
- I think it must have been, it would have been early post war I think.
- 02:00 **At the time you started in the Sydney Caledonian Pipe Band it was common for young people, male and female, of your age, to get involved in that sort of activity?**
- Yes. As you saw from those photos, there were a lot of us women, young girls in it.
- What year did you join the band?**
- 1936.
- 02:30 Maybe it was 1935 when I started to learn and 1936 when Dad bought my pipes for me. I started to learn on this thing.
- Was there an option whether you wanted to drum or the pipes?**
- I never had any thought other than the pipes.
- You had your heart set on it?**
- Yes, well I used to dance to the pipes.
- 03:00 So consequently that was the way my mind was going. Never even occurred to me to become a drummer, although I can play the drums. I've got my drumsticks in here too. No, it's the pipes number 1. You can't have music with drums, you can only have dead beats all the time.
- When you were dancing to this music, were you starting to think, "I wonder if I can play the pipes"?**
- No, it was just an
- 03:30 automatic progress with it. I think it might have been automatic progress with others, unless they hadn't ever been involved before and they'd heard the bands and thought, "I'd love to be able to play the bagpipes." With me, just at the back of my mind, I think it was just an automatic progress to do that.
- Were you still playing piano around this time?**
- Yes. I got my
- 04:00 ALCM [Associateship of the London College of Music], it was round about 1940.
- You were already quite a musical girl?**
- Well, I suppose you could say that. But piano never interested me. Doesn't now, and I haven't touched it in years. Whereas anybody who haven't even learned the piano can sit down and play a piece just by hearing it, I just didn't have that ability.
- Were you interested in popular music?**
- 04:30 Not playing the piano with it. But singing it. I loved it. I loved the music that they had in those days. I used to do a lot of Gracie Fields' songs. There was one song in particular I liked. It was in my little bottom drawer. Shall I sing it? "For years and years I've been a lonely
- 05:00 spinster on the shelf. I'm right fed up with spending all my wages on myself. I'm all prepared for married life, with secrets I've been taught, and here's some little odds and ends I've been and gone and

bought. One bridal gown, one eiderdown, I've been saving them up since 1894. Got me ribbons and me bows and me these and them and those all packed up in

05:30 me little bottom drawer. Got a piano under the staircase, and I'm teaching myself to play the maiden's prayer. Horse shoe for luck, pale for the much and the President Hoover cleaner for the floor. If my plans go all to pot, I can sell the blooming lot, or pack it up in my little bottom drawer." Her songs were real good, you know. There were stories to her

06:00 songs in those days. Today all you get is 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!' And all this shouting and no music to it. I never even know what they're saying. You can't understand them. In those days, when you think of the singers and the music they sang, even Elvis Presley, you have to love listening to him. He's got a beautiful voice, and the songs he sings, you can understand them. Bing Crosby, all through

06:30 that era.

The song you just sang, when was that around?

I don't know when it originated, but it would have been about -

When were you first exposed to it?

In the 1990s. Round about the late 1930s. There was another one, Uncle Ebenezer's Whiskers. Want me to sing that? "Uncle Ebenezer's

07:00 whiskers were a wild and woolly mess, but those whiskers were the pride of Auntie Lou. When he courted her and whispered 'do you love me little girl?' she would stroke them and caress them and say 'I do, I do.' 'Whiskers and all?' 'Yes, whiskers and all.' Difference of being a wicked sinner, he would ball in beer and rum. I used to wallow, dirty shirt and dirty collar, now I'm clean and they all holler

07:30 'whiskers and all'." There's a story to the songs.

Your progress with the pipes, can you explain the progress they take you though when you're first beginning [to learn]?

Yes. You get your chanter. The chanter's got a reed in it, which

08:00 you make sure it's firm and [plays the bagpipe] it blows, it works. Then you're taught how to hold your chanter. Your thumb at the back here, three fingers there and four fingers there. Then you learn the music and you go up and down the scales like you would [plays the bagpipe]. It's not quite in tune, but that's how it goes. Then eventually

08:30 you can learn to read the music and play. [Plays the bagpipe]. So it goes on and on and on. There are a lot of types. There's the march, somebody's doing the Highland fling, it's that sort of music.

09:00 If you're at a funeral you play a lament. They've got wonderful tunes. It's like these with singing in those times. Everything was so that the people who heard could understand. Nothing like all the shouting and yelling and brass instruments and all that. I like jazz bands, but some people who play things. Those days too, you

09:30 used to get, which I remember was my grandfather's favourite and I enjoyed them too, yodellers. You hear them today. They were on the children's school special there. They had it on the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation]. There was one lass, beautiful little girl, and she was singing and all the students out the front were dancing to what she was singing. In the song, towards the end of it, she did a couple of yodels, magnificent. Spot on, perfect.

10:00 It was really lovely. You just never hear yodellers. Another thing you never hear are the mouth organs. Some people play that, they play so beautifully. Nobody ever plays them anymore. Past history.

Was it difficult to learn the bagpipes?

No. Not to learn. Sometimes to blow you might have to close a couple

10:30 of your drones because too much air escapes for you. Generally speaking, no.

How hard is it on the lungs? Is it part of your training to work at that capacity to keep the air going?

I can't remember that I ever, ever felt anything. Providing your reads work and your pipes are in good condition, there's no reason why you can't. When you blow, the bag, the

11:00 kangaroo skin used to be sealed so the air would stay there except what would go through the drones. You had your elbow to control the air that was going through. Then as it'd get lower you'd blow again. You take a breath and blow again. Take a breath. But with this new blooming plastic bag they've got, the air's escaping all the time.

How many drones do you have?

Three. Triple drone and then two double ones.

11:30 **Explain they way they worked together to create a chord.**

In the drones themselves, where one is joined onto the base, it's got this thing like here with the hemp. If one of the drones sound not even, you can press it down or press it up. This is how you tune your pipes. All to your main chanter here. The same with your main drone and

12:00 so that they all tune in. It's the same when a pianist is playing for a violinist. The violinist and the pianist, the violin has to be tuned to fit in with the toning of the piano. It's exactly the same with the pipes. You have to move the drone sections up and down to get an even sound.

Do you get sets of pipes that

12:30 **have different keys?**

No, all the same. There's no flats or sharps or anything like that in them.

Musically, what's the different between the tone each drone is producing?

The idea is, to tune them, sometimes the read might be a little bit sharper than the others, so you have to tone that one down to match the others by moving the

13:00 volume thing, the hemp, it was humped on. It'd only the pitch that's distinct from anything else. Might have a higher pitch or a lower pitch.

Do you ever tune to a tuning fork or anything like that?

No.

It's all done by ear?

Yeah. It's got to match the read here.

You always start by making sure you're happy with the sound of your read and making sure that's in tune.

If the reeds work, you just pick up your

13:30 pipes if you know they're all working and you just pick them up, put the main drone on and then blow them up and off you go. Period.

If the chanter is not sounding right, it's because the reeds are too old?

Could be.

Do you finetune the same way you do your drones?

This? No, you don't have to tune this. There's nothing there.

So either your reeds are sounding right or they're not.

Yes. The

14:00 chanter reeds, it's the drone reads that are tuned from the chanter ones. Yes, when the reeds get old, as mine have, you might think you've got them going and they stop, or you can't get them going and you can't understand why. You tighten them or you split them open a little bit or something. Mine aren't working.

The principle of the three drones,

14:30 **is it the case that each drone is the same note, only in a different register?**

No. That's why you keep them all the same. There's no notes, just a read in the drone. When you blow them up they all sound

So they're making identical drones?

Mm. One might be louder than the other, that's all. The main drone takes more air than the two smaller ones.

15:00 **Is that meant to be a certain note?**

No.

There's no official 'these pipes are in C' or D or anything like that?

No. It's all just the one note, the one thing the whole way through.

How long did it take you to play well and you could pick up a new tune quickly?

A month. That depends.

15:30 It's just a matter of practice. You get to know the tune and it comes automatically then. There are a lot of tunes to learn because you might notice when the bands are marching they all start off with one tune and then later on they all start up and do another tune. When you're marching you always have the march tunes, you don't have the Strathspey or real tunes, which was the ones that you

16:00 play when you're stationary and playing for a group or somebody's dancing.

How many march tunes did you need to know?

I don't remember. That one I started off was 42nd Farewell. There's another one I can still remember, 79th Farewell to Gibraltar I think it was. I can probably remember that one too. [Plays the bagpipes]

16:30 [Plays the bagpipes] When you're learning, you've got fingers pressing little notes so that you've got sort of a little jiggle with the note. They're not a hard instrument

17:00 to learn. Just to learn the chanter, it's the pipes when you get them going, they're not hard to play once you can play the chanter and the pipes work. You can see when they're marching down the street for hours, playing the pipes, it's not a problem. You just do it automatically.

Did you notice quickly that you had improvement with your lungs and asthma?

I don't know. I don't remember.

17:30 I either did have an attack of asthma or I didn't. I think the first attack of asthma I had when I was starting to learn the bagpipes when I was 12. The first attack of asthma I had was when I was 25, and that's when John went to Korea. I think it was because of the stress of him going and that might have settled me down. I haven't had so much as an asthmatic wheeze. I get a big of bronchial problems as everybody else. You pick up germs.

18:00 Bit of a respiratory tract infection, but there's definitely not like the asthma I remember as a child.

Your involvement with the band started around [12] as well?

Mm.

How many times a week would you get together with the band? What activities was the band involved in?

Only once the band used to

18:30 have a lesson and sort of a practise down opposite the railway station at Redfern. What's that main church there? I think it's a Greek church now, it used to be Church of England. Behind that they have a sort of building where you can have dances and that. We used to go there every Saturday afternoon and have band practice, it was called. We used to have our lesson and then we'd have the band practice. Every

19:00 Saturday night after we became Sydney Caledonian Pipe Band, we'd play at Lakemba. I think it was every Saturday night. I forget now. Was it once a month? I can't remember. It was regularly for years. Then there was always Anzac Day and other processions and that. It was the special occasions when the band would have to be playing somewhere for something. It was all

19:30 part and parcel of the times. We weren't any different to any other pipe band.

Were there competitions between bands?

On New Year's Eve, there was. There was always down at the Showground was always the New Year's Eve band competition. There was also dancing competition. They still have it I think.

Did you ever participate in that?

Mm.

20:00 **While you were piping, were you still involved in dancing side of things in competitions and the eisteddfods?**

I did once go into competition getting down there and dancing. I didn't win, which was neither here nor there. Our pipe band used to win regularly. We often use to win. There were pipe bands, there was Lakemba, there was Dulwich Hill, there was

20:30 Marrickville, there were lots of pipe bands. I even forget the names of them now. I remember Dulwich Hill well, because one of the pipe major of the Dulwich Hill Pipe Band became the Sydney Commissioner of Police. He was Donald Graham.

21:00 His younger brother, Angus Graham, when the police formed the police pipe band, all those that were in a pipe band wanted to join the police, they could. Dough Wrightson was their drum major. He was also a piper, but he was the drum major at the time. He joined the police, so we had to get a new drum major at Lakemba. Donald Graham and Angus Graham both joined the police pipe

21:30 band down there. They became policemen. There were others. The police pipe band ceased, it doesn't go anymore which is a shame. They were a good band. They've still got their orchestra. So many of the bands have gone. There's no Dulwich Hill, no Lakemba.

Sad.

Yes, it is.

When you started with your band, was there a standard number of members to

22:00 **a band?**

No. Not really. Normally there would have been 8 or 12 pipers, 4 side drummers, there was one base drummer and there'd be two of these others. What was it they were called? I forget what they were called.

22:30 That would be 4, 5, 6, including the 7 in the drumming and 8 or 12 in the piping.

In the early days, what would be the breakdown between male and female in the band?

It varied. Some would come and some would go. We had a lot of women, we had a lot of young men.

23:00 There was no cut down. I think there were always more women pipers than were women drummers.

Why do you think that was?

Maybe just because they might have preferred the drums to the pipes. Mainly they were the men that went for the drums. Although Beverly here, she was the one that went for the drums. That could be because she was very friendly with Gloria and Gloria played

23:30 the pipes and she might have joined to be able to accompany Gloria playing. They went to school together. This is how they came to know each other. Beverly lived with her grandfather. He was the superintendent of the CML [Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society] building. When the Second World War was over and everybody was celebrating,

24:00 we went down there and we played on the balcony of the CML building overlooking the Cenotaph.

If you can hold on to that until a little later.

OK. As regards Gloria, she and her sister Nancy was also a piper in the band. They lived at the quarantine station at North Head and their father was the engineer of the quarantine boat. They actually lived in a cottage

24:30 there with their mother. When they went to school at the front entrance they'd have to take all their quarantine clothes off and leave them there and go into another room, get all their school clothes and they used to go to school. When they'd come back from school they'd have to get all their school clothes and get all their quarantine section clothing on. They couldn't take any germs to the school. That's what it amounted to. I'll always remember Mr Kelly, Gloria's father,

25:00 in 1932 I think it was, the first man to jump off Sydney Harbour Bridge. It was Mr Kelly whose boat picked him up. He killed himself. That was the first man to fall off the harbour, jump off the Harbour Bridge. He must have committed suicide. Just a memory.

Did the girls join your band around the same time?

I was there a year before Gloria. She came a year after me.

25:30 She and Nancy, her sister. I think Nancy was a drummer too. Yeah, Gloria played the pipes and Nancy played the drums. Beverly came several years later after that to learn the drums.

Was there an immediate affinity between you three? Is that how

26:00 **you ended up having your own trio?**

If it hadn't been for the war I don't think that association would have developed like that. During the war in the actual first years when we went for first concert, I don't think Beverly and Gloria were with me. I had a couple of the other members of the band coming to these. Then I got Beverly and Gloria,

26:30 yes, Beverly and Gloria, and that's when we formed the Highland Trio. Then a friend of Beverly's formed the Kookaburra concert party and that's what we moved over to the Kookaburra concert party. But the initial very first ones, they weren't with me. I think I had two of the other male members of the band came with me on the first one to Ingleburn.

27:00 **As you developed in your teen years, you were aware of the inner quality as far as women's rights were concerned. Did you start express that?**

27:30 **Did you try and push women's right and make things a little more fair and equal?**

Do you have – by having the Highland Trio all women?

No, in general. Dealing with the world, did you try and make a point that things weren't as equal as they should be, and did you demand more rights?

Yes.

- 28:00 I'll tell you one of them when I was working in my first job, which made me very angry. Until after the war, the female basic wage could never be higher than 3/4 or the male basic wage, which made me very angry. I was secretary to the works manager of this large chemical factory.
- 28:30 I was reading in the papers they were looking for people with my qualifications, offering them 2 and 3 pounds a week more than what I was being paid. So I objected and they gave me an extra, I think, 10 shillings a week, something like that. To make it more obvious, when I started there, I started there on 1 pound 2 and sixpence a week. I was only 15.
- 29:00 After some months had gone by, the company secretary waylaid me in the corridor of the office one day and he said, "You will find in your pay package this week an extra 2 and sixpence. Not for what you have done, but for what we hope you will do." I've never forgotten that.
- 29:30 I thought, "Darn cheek of him!" I think I was getting something. I think young chemists who started for the first time had just been through TAFE [tertiary and further education institutions] and get their degrees, they started on £7 a week. When I'd complained from £4.15, they gave me 5 pence 5 or something like that. I was still angry because I was seeing all these increased amounts. So I decided
- 30:00 I was going to leave and teach dancing because I knew I'd make a lot more money as a dancing teacher than I would ever being secretary to a works manager. When I left, I thought, "I'll teach in Mum's big back room," which didn't please Mum any. She didn't say a word. I don't think she was very pleased. That was on the Friday I left. In the Saturday's paper, Mum turned up an advertisement for a position for private secretary to the managing director of another large
- 30:30 chemical factory. She said, "You've got to apply for this. This is a big one, you must apply for this." So just to please Mum I rang up and made an appointment and went to see them. When I had an interview, actually they used to purchase a lot of the chemicals from Timbrol where I worked. Beetle Elliott was the name of the company. Beetle was one of the parent companies who produce industrial plastics in England, and the Elliott was
- 31:00 Elliott's Australian Drug, which was an Australian company. They used to take a lot of Timbrol's chemicals to make whatever it was they made at Rozelle where they were. There was the general manager, the company secretary and the works manager. Three people interviewed me for that position. The managing director was overseas, he was an Englishman. His father was the managing director of the head company over
- 31:30 there. He had been a colonel in the Warwickshire Yeomanry, but he came out here as managing director, and they were looking for a secretary for him. He lived in Melbourne. The factory had a factory down there. The head office and factory was up here. They said, "And what would you expect to be paid?" I thought, "If a junior came straight from
- 32:00 university can get £7 a week, so can I." I said, "I wouldn't consider starting under £7 a week. They just looked at each other and, "Yes, that would be all right." So there I was within a week of having left my position, I started this other as the secretary to this managing director, which was a wonderful position, because he used to travel by plane from Melbourne to Sydney and I used to travel with him. He lived in
- 32:30 Five Way Hill was the name of this home with his wife and a nanny for their three young children. I used to stay at his home while I was down there. Then I often flew back on my own. I did what we had to do down there. That Five Way Hill was on 5 acres of ground. It was like a castle in the middle of this 5 acres and right up the top was sort of a castle like structure and
- 33:00 when you went over to it and looked over, it looked over the finishing line of the Caulfield Racecourse. I've always got these wonderful memories of it. It was a wonderful position, flying backwards and forwards, Melbourne to Sydney and that.

Was that pre war?

That was post war. That was 1948, I started there. I had to leave there in 1952 because I was expecting

- 33:30 my first baby. I was sorry that it had to end, because I'd had a really good time. I liked everybody, I enjoyed the work. On one occasion the company secretary, we were having a big annual general meeting. The company secretary also lived in Melbourne. He went missing. Came to Sydney for the annual general meeting, booked in at a hotel in King's Cross and disappeared. Everything was there. His clothing, his case, everything was
- 34:00 there, but no sign of him. I had to phone up all the doctors, had anybody reported, because we only just found out for the first time that during the war years he was in Egypt. He'd been hit over the head and he had brain damage, and he had a regular loss of memory and the doctors in England had suggested that if he comes to Australia it might overcome the problem. Obviously it didn't.

- 34:30 I ended up having to rush to Melbourne and rush back and get papers. I organised the annual general meeting, a public company mind you, which was quite a big job. At the board meeting after that they gave me a bonus of £25, which was a heck of a lot of money in those days, for having sat in for him. John Smith his name was. He was missing for about – it was
- 35:00 advertised on the air and in the newspapers. Then somebody up at the mountains, at the lookout up there, sort of a little restaurant thing near the lookout, notified the police that somebody resembling that name had been there buying chips or something. When the police went up they waylaid him in a street in Katoomba, and surely he had no memory of who he was up till that point
- 35:30 or where he was or how he got there. They brought him back to Sydney and took him back home to his Melbourne place and he flew back home to England after that. There was no hope for him, for recovery, it was sad in a sense for the family.
- In your teenage years,**
- 36:00 **were you starting to think about what you wanted to do with your life and were you thinking of a career in show business?**
- I wasn't thinking about anything. I knew in my teen years that I was going to go to business college, I was going to get a job. Everybody did. I was a woman. Women couldn't go upstream in those days. You went down there.
- 36:30 **What was the best highest position that you could hope to get?**
- That one that I had. Secretary to the managing director.
- Which meant that you needed to go to business college?**
- Oh yes.
- How old were you when you started business college?**
- 15.
- How long did you study there?**
- About
- 37:00 7-8 months.
- How did you find it?**
- I'd done shorthand typing at school. When I left business college I was doing 110 words a minute shorthand and 77 words a minute typing. In those days they were manual typewriters. I had trouble with the computer style electric typewriter now because I've been –
- 37:30 **Hammering away?**
- When I hit something, 'dddddd' comes up several times, because I didn't – I tipped it in the manual fashion. I find that the electrical ones are a little bit difficult. It's better for the computers if I keep clear of them. I cause a lot of damage. I don't want to do that. That's why I say modern day technology has passed me by, because it starts with what I do this what rather than what I
- 38:00 do up here about how to work it.
- You did well at business college?**
- Yes. Very well.
- Did you look for work immediately after finishing?**
- No. They actually got me the job at Timbrol. People that go through. It was a very upmarket business college, Miss Hale's Model Business College for Young Ladies. There were the daughters of magistrates
- 38:30 and judges used to go there. This is why people used to contact them if they needed somebody for top positions.
- Was it hard to get in to?**
- No. No, it wasn't.
- Where was it based?**
- It was in, what's that street between George Street and up towards Wynyard? Gloucester Street or something?
- 39:00 Opposite Wynyard Station, in York Street. This street went up to York Street from, but it was the other side of Wynyard Station and George Street. I'm not sure.

Is it Barrack?

No.

39:30 They had a lot of office premises all the way up the street there.

The job was offered to you?

I was sent along. Yes, I got the job.

Did you know about the company before you started there?

No.

How did you take to the job?

Initially I started, I was only 15. I started in the general

40:00 officer, doing work for the company secretary and accountant. Then I moved down to become secretary to the works manager. A little bit of history, at the end of the war, this is one thing I remember, when the Allies moved into Germany and those places, they went into all the factories and all the research

40:30 buildings and they took all the papers that had been researched and everything. They distributed it amongst the Allies and we got quite a few. They landed on my desk, which I had to sort through, find out what was what. A lot of the papers that were there were about DDT. I did so much work on that, today I still remember that DDT stands for dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane.

41:00 They started manufacturing it. Monsanto Chemical took over afterwards, or some years later, after I'd gone. Down there at Rhodes where they wanted to convert it into industrial units, the soil is so contaminated they've got to get rid of all the soil. It's because of the DDT that they used to manufacture down there. It's contaminated it all. I always remember about

41:30 DDT. Another thing I also remember about the war years too, when the -

Tape 4

00:44 **You mentioned in the Depression years there was a lot of sadness. Why would you say that?**

It wasn't so much

01:00 sadness, grief or anything like that, it was just that people lost their jobs, the banks closed on their money, they had no spare cash, all their savings were in the banks, the Commonwealth Bank closed on them. This is why Lang, who was the Premier of NSW at the time brought in the Moratorium Act to stop the banks closing on these. You could walk around the streets, street

01:30 after street after street and see on houses, 'Moratorium - For Sale'. and so forth. All these houses were up for sale because people can no longer pay their mortgages. Everybody was like an extended family and helped as much as they could. Up till the time the Moratorium Act came in 1932, a lot of people just

02:00 lost their homes. They were out without anywhere to go, no money to buy food. Unless you had grandparents or something like that who was in a position to take you in or look after you, it was really bad. Often in the schools, because there was shortage of soap even, they couldn't get soap, a lot of children had lice in their hair.

02:30 It was really a very sad time for a lot of people. You can imagine what it was like. In the war years, everybody was given clothing coupons and food coupons and that. I don't recollect anything like that, anybody ever being given anything during the Depression years.

03:00 That 1930 one is about the distressed wives and families of the northern coalminers, that had nothing to do with the era of the Depression. What I checked out when I was doing a little bit of history on myself, I rang the department, it turns out that at that particular time all the miners had gone on strike. There was no money, no work

03:30 and that's why the wives and families were suffering. Then they had a bit of a riot and the police were brought in. Shots were fired and one of them was killed. Things were just unheard of, that sort of thing. From point of view of sadness, it wasn't a grief sort of sadness, it was just the fact

04:00 they were losing their homes and their livelihoods and their savings. They lost everything virtually, because of the Depression, which was what was so bad. [...]

As a girl, what can you say a girl may have suffered during this time that

04:30 **a little boy wouldn't have had to go through?**

Boys went through it too. Whole families did because families were very close in those days. Most people bought their own homes and this is where the problem arose. They'd probably end up, if their house was sold before the Moratorium Act came, they just had to get out of the house. We don't know where they went or

05:00 how they lived or where they went to. They were all in the same boat. In those days too, there were very few cars. People didn't go in cars. The kids were usually very friendly, we played in the streets. We played hopscotch and skipping rope games and I remember all these stories of the skipping ropes we used to play. On of them was Old Mother Moore. "Old Mother Moore, she lives by the shore, she had

05:30 children three and four. The oldest one was 24 and she was married to a - " and then it'd come through who she was married to and there'd be Peppers - "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar, thief." When she got caught up in the skipping rope, whichever was the last one she said that was the one she was going to marry. "Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor." We all used to play together.

06:00 We used to do these games and Simon Says. Simon Says was one where one person was out the front and we all got together and we decided what we'd mimic. Then when it was on he had to look around and he'd watch us and "Simon says so and so." "No." "Simon says so and so". The games were good and there were boys and girls on the street. They were there and they helped each other and played.

06:30 It was so pleasant in comparison to what it is today. Even though we had those bad times I think that from point of view of the community, we were all psychologically better off than we are today with all the horrors. You don't trust anyone, keep your place closed and locked up, can't go for a walk in the night and all this sort of thing. Everybody's got cars.

07:00 You get broken into or you get bashed up in the street, have your handbag stolen off you. Never, nothing like that ever happened in those days. We all were there to help everybody, which we did. They were all like extended families as I say. It's quite a different story today.

07:30 **You showed us a photo of you as a little girl doing contortions. Tell us why you came to do that.**

My aunt was teaching dancing and we were taught those things. A day came every year I think, when we all had to go to the photographer's. He had all these photos taken. It wasn't

08:00 just done, Mum taking me along to get it done, it was everybody was there. I've got photos of whole groups of us that were in pantomimes, of all the different ones and I remember these and these and these. They look very different today than we did then.

Was contortion work popular in the 1930s?

Yes, I think so. I recollect too that there was somebody downtown

08:30 that used to teach that only. There was one lass called Betty McNealy, I don't know where she is or anything about her now, she used to go down there and do it with that person who specialised in it. That sort of thing doesn't happen today so much. I think you limber

09:00 up and teach you if you're learning ballet to do the splits and things like that. I don't think people put their legs behind their heads anymore at ballet classes.

You used to do that at your ballet classes?

Yes. It was all part of the toe, tap and ballet.

09:30 **Tell me what kind of dances you would do for the eisteddfod?**

Yeah, but they weren't like the official annual eisteddfods like you have today.

How were they different?

These ones are a one year only that's going on today. National Council of,

10:00 I forget. What goes on today is really an annual event.

What were they like back when you went?

Everybody you knew was there to sort of compete. Then at the end of it all you were called out, who won this, who won that and who won the other. Then

10:30 you were given a voucher or something to go, you were given the medal to take to a jeweller to have your name put on it and on the back what you'd won. Or you had to come and get it after. I don't quite remember anymore. I know all the medals I got have my name on the back and what I won it for.

What performances would you do at the eisteddfod?

What I did was,

- 11:00 I think I did one of own choice on one occasion. It was a song and dance and I won that. All the others were Highland fling and Irish jig and swan pipe and sword dance and all those. Mainly the Scottish national. Except for my own choice.
- What was your own choice?**
- I think it was a song and dance.
- Do you remember the song?**
- No. Too far back.
- 11:30 **You must have been better than the other girls to have won all these medals.**
- I don't know. I think everybody won lots of medals. I don't know. It was exciting to win them just the same. It's only more or less recently in recent years that they've been framed. They've just been sitting in a pile on the wardrobe sort of thing. I know when people won medals in those days, particularly if they were
- 12:00 in kilt or something, they used to have them on their jackets. I never, ever wore mine on the jacket. Like the army medals and that.
- When you were going to the eisteddfods you were 12, 13?**
- No, I think probably up till the age of about 12. Maybe 13. I don't know.
- 12:30 I was in high school by 14.
- Did you dream of being on stage or being a ballerina at that age?**
- No, I never wanted to be a ballerina. I would have liked to have been in plays or comedy acts, that would
- 13:00 have interested me. No, I don't think I would have wanted to have been in an orchestra of young girls dancing, you know what I mean? I had too many other things on my plate anyhow, to even be interested in thinking that. There was one occasion when we played on 2GB.
- 13:30 **How old were you then?**
- It was Bev, Gloria and myself. During the war years I think. I used to go down to my grandparents' property in Albury for my 6 week school holidays in December January. I remember they had a children's session on 2AY I think it was, Albury
- 14:00 Radio, and going on there and I think I played the pipes on one occasion. I danced on one occasion. They were just events like I've been doing all along, nothing exceptional in that, but I enjoyed doing it just the same. Everybody enjoyed hearing me, although I think the sound system was getting a bit crackly
- 14:30 there, with my pipes playing. So I couldn't go back for an encore.
- When you were younger did you offer to sing and dance for people? Was that a spontaneous thing for you?**
- No.
- You waited to be asked?**
- They would have asked me to come and play the pipes. I don't think anybody would have asked me to come and sing and dance for them.
- 15:00 **What about on social occasions?**
- I'd take my pipes with me.
- You'd always take your pipes with you?**
- Well, there weren't so many of those in those days. Nothing like that. It was an era that's so different to today. Everybody knew, everybody could hear. I'll tell you, when I used to practise the pipes at the back of Mum's place, we lived on a corner, I used
- 15:30 to see all the neighbourhood kids with their eyes in the cracks of the palings as I was playing. The street would be queued up there, watching. I could never ever identify the people by the sight of one eye. It's different today. I go out and annoy my neighbour with the main beep, but there's nowhere anybody could put their eye on the
- 16:00 palings and look at me. They can open their windows and look down and send a complaint about noise and dogs howling. All the dogs used to wail like made when I started the pipes. Didn't blame them. They have much more sensitive hearing than ours. It must have been deafening for them.

You were living with your mother and father during this period?

Yes.

How

16:30 **did they cope with the noise?**

No problem. I used to go down the backyard and do it. No problem at all.

Leading up to the war years, did you listen to the radio much? Did you expect there was going to be a war?

We did. Up till the end of the Depression not many people even had a wireless. Very few people had a car.

17:00 Before the war years, yes there were a couple of years when wirelesses were plentiful. We used to listen to the news on that. Yes, we knew what was going on overseas. We heard - it was Menzies wasn't it? War was declared. It was shocking. Horrified.

17:30 **You were horrified?**

Mm. It was awful because we were all involved too. Our troops had to go. We lost 60,000 of our troops in the First World War. They volunteered to go to that. That's when they lost 60,000 of our men. You can imagine

18:00 if those 60,000 had still been here with their wives and families. My singing teacher lost her fiancé, my music teacher lost her fiancé and my dress maker lost her fiancé. You can imagine if these men had never gone and they had married and had children and their children would have had children. Who would have needed immigration now? I think it just helped spoil Australia. It's

18:30 one thing for people to migrate from parent companies, but not from, they come out here, they can't speak our language, they don't want to learn. They are very demanding. I remember down at Strathfield Girls' High, this Arab Muslim fellow wanted his daughter to come here and got to the school,

19:00 but she had to wear all everything. The council said, "No, sorry. She comes here, she's got to wear a uniform. She can wear long pants, but she must have a shirt and top similar to the school uniform. She can wear her head veil, but she must not be covered head to toe different to all the others." He had to agree to that. He wasn't

19:30 pleased, he was very abusive. We have down there 76% of children from ethnic backgrounds and they all get on wonderfully well together. So do the parents.

Just before the war starting, can you describe

20:00 **how you remember the mood of Sydney at the time? Was there a change?**

Yes, because suddenly all the young lads that we knew, they were going to the war. My father joined the national service, but only as a resident locally because they wouldn't have him. He had malaria from his years in

20:30 Java. He never got over that. I still remember him having fits, terrible. Then we'd start getting words that somebody had been shot down, killed. All those wanted to go into the air force, they all had to go to Canada to train and

21:00 the army ones I think went straight over to England. During the war years too, we were virtually devoid of our armed services. When the Japanese came into the war it was a great threat because they were coming down and they bombed Darwin. Lots of people were killed. Lots of places were

21:30 absolutely destroyed. If it hadn't been for the Americans coming in and protecting us, we might not have been here today as part of Australia. We might not ever be alive.

When war broke out, were you at the business college?

I started at Timbrol 2 weeks after war broke out.

22:00 **At that time did you hope to continue dancing as well as work?**

No, and I didn't. I hadn't been for some time.

Hadn't been dancing and singing?

When I went to business college it was all day and I didn't knock off dancing because of going to work, I think I might have

22:30 eased it out gradually over a period of time. At Timbrol, the chemical factory, they built underground trenches on a vacant block of land next to it and we had to have sort of prepared for air raids.

- 23:00 We had to practise. They'd ring a siren thing and we'd all go to the paddock and there'd be somebody there with a pad with everybody who was due in that one. They'd cross off your names on the list to make sure everybody was there that was going to be the case. They had during the night
- 23:30 brownouts, if there was any threat total blackout including car headlamps. We all were on food coupons, petrol coupons, clothing coupons. You couldn't ever go into a shop and get a pound of butter if you didn't have a butter coupon. Everybody was just given what was. I've still got
- 24:00 the cover, I think, of my brother's coupon book. Mum kept it and I've got it now. We survived, but overseas that was a different matter. I remember when we had the Japanese midget submarines coming into Sydney Harbour, and they
- 24:30 sank that big navy ship with all those navy boys onboard. I have got, that my mother had bought to raise monies for the army then, they'd taken some of the brass piping off this submarine and they'd cut it up and
- 25:00 they were selling them as souvenirs with a tag on it that said what it was and part of that and it gave the name of, what was his name? He was the commander in chief of the navy or something. It was to raise funds. This is why we went around the state on war bonds, selling concerts, so that people could buy bonds.

Can you explain that?

So that the government would get money to be able to send food to our troops

- 25:30 and clothing and equipment and so that we could held defend ourselves a little bit. I remember, when I was working at Timbrol during this time, we used to all put in, buy bonds out of our weekly pay.

What were bonds exactly?

It was like a loan. When you bought something for it, of course, it wasn't a loan. You had

- 26:00 that for it. When you were at work, after the war you could take that to the bank and get all your money back.

What did a bond look like?

I don't know. I don't remember. I must have had some paper that I had to take and hand over to the bank to get them back.

You stopped your dancing, was that difficult for you?

I was too involved in every other thing.

- 26:30 The war years, November 1939, which was just 2 months after the outbreak of war, I started the camp shows and route marches and all the other things. There was no time left. We even had to leave the pipe band after about 2 years, because we couldn't even attend the Saturday night dances and play.

Because you were so busy doing the shows?

Yes.

You were still performing?

Yes. The three of us, the Highland Trio. We were going

- 27:00 everywhere. We were going to all the navy stations, we were doing charity concerts for Legacy, Australian Red Cross, American Red Cross, we were going regularly to the Hyde Park British Centre there, we'd go up to, what's that? It was a navy depot, we'd go down to Nowra fleet air arm base

- 27:30 and we went to lots of places. Masses of places. Did lots of things.

Your first concert was a big concert for the United Australia Party?

Yes.

Tell us how you got involved in that.

My mother was very friendly with the man and his wife who were organising this. He even came and picked me up to take me, with his wife

- 28:00 and two of the others that were coming with me to Ingleburn. He came regularly, send somebody. It was like when the NRMA members came and the RAC, Royal Automobile Club. They all came in and all their members. They all got petrol coupons so they could fill up their cars to take us. They never got another cent and they

- 28:30 gave their time to do it. While we were heading in all these directions, they had to keep their headlights hooded. It was all, we were really under threat when you think we were actually bombed in Darwin and submarines came in Sydney Harbour. I remember that air raid very clearly. All the lights went off

everywhere. When I think

29:00 of all those poor fellows in the navy who had gone to bed on that boat, none of them are with us. All those people that I used to go and get things from, my music teacher and singing teacher and my dress maker, they lost their fiancés. They spent the rest of their life just working, doing this. Whole lives ruined.

29:30 You had to experience it to really appreciate just how bad it all was. Neighbours who lost their sons. I remember one lad, Tony Bloomer, he was shot down over Italy. He had a brother also, Alex, but Alex survived. I felt terribly sorry for his Mum and Dad, Alex and. This is it, you knew so many people who were being lost.

30:00 I was lucky I suppose with my brother, because he was going round all the islands and coasts of Australia setting up radar. He was one of our, was it bailey men? He was a second year scientist in the university, and the RAAF radar people asked for the students there, 28 of them went along.

30:30 My brother was one of them. He was only 19. After that finished, a couple of weeks at uni, about a couple of weeks down at Melbourne University and then came back here. They all came back as pilot officers I think. They were only kids and they're commissions. Then the lot of them were stationed over at Croydon PLC too.

31:00 That's how Bev, Gloria and I got involved with RAAF radar at Croydon, because my brother introduced us to Wing Commander Preston who was the CO. That photo over there that they took for Christmas 1943, inside it had a 1944 calendar and that's Wing Commander Preston, his deputy and the RAAF,

31:30 you know who I mean. The minister, of course the three of us with out khaki jackets and black ties that they gave us. When we stopped doing it a couple of years later we had to give all those back because they didn't belong to us, it belonged to them.

Describe the first concert you did for the UAP, United Australian Party, could you describe what you did?

32:00 I think I played the pipes and one of the other lads that came with me, he accompanied me while I did fling or the sword dance. There were some concerts where I actually, no that's right.

32:30 At Croydon Masonic Hall, they had a big bond selling concert there. Peter Dawson, who was a very well known singer at the time, beautiful voice, he was the guest artist. I remember I did a song and dance there at that concert too and it was I think we played the pipes also there. Every time I pass by

33:00 that place, memories. It's lovely.

What do you remember about that night?

Just memories of Peter Dawson, all the crowds of people, the appreciation of the artists, it was a good concert. Went very well.

Do you remember any of the songs sung that night?

No. I probably do, but I can't remember which they might have been or what they might have been. I can't even remember what Peter Dawson sang.

33:30 They were well known songs and if I heard them today I'd know what they were.

Did you play a special tune on the pipes?

No. Just the ordinary pipe numbers.

You weren't actually playing for troops at that time?

Yes.

So the war had already started?

Ingleburn had opened for the troops. It was the first camp show at Ingleburn military camp.

Can you describe some of the other acts

34:00 **playing that night? Was it evening or day time?**

Had to be evening. I can't remember anything specially there. Sometimes with the concert party we had jugglers and singers and that song I sang to you - Row, Row, Row - one of the good singers we had, she sang that regularly and the

34:30 boys loved it. What else? Dancers of course. The juggler was quite good. It'd be too rude to put down the things he used to say, but

You can say anything you like.

Can I? He'd be juggling there and he'd say "I have a

35:00 friend. His name was Apoo. He has a brother who lives in Pootoo. They had a cousin. He was one big pong." You know. Not very politically correct today. But in those days it was all right.

And the troops laughed?

Oh yes. Much laughter.

35:30 **What are some other acts where they really received you warmly?**

I'll probably wake up at 2 o'clock in the morning and remember them all. No, I can't remember. I can remember how appreciative of course they were when we took them on their route marches.

Would they come up and say anything to you?

Yes.

36:00 **What would they say?**

You mean at the supper and the office? They'd just say how great it was and how much they enjoyed going with us and to come more often. Of course there was that joke they'd tell us about the AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] and that. Some other funnies too, which I can't remember. No, they were all very nice. Very friendly. Suppers were all very nice too.

Tell us

36:30 **about the suppers.**

Well,

This is in the officers' mess?

Oh yes. It was quite nice. We didn't have to have a coupon to eat it. It's a long time ago now. Hope you realise that it's 60 years. God, how awful. I hate it.

37:00 I mean, you're 50 going on, you appreciate that, don't you?

You're still holding your age very well.

Thank you, that's nice of you.

Do you remember the nights in the officers' mess? You were mixing with the hoi polloi [ordinary people] then.

We always did. All the concert parties always went to the officers' mess after the, it was the done thing.

37:30 It was just the norm. It wasn't anything exceptional.

You must have got a lot of attention being three young pretty girls?

Yes, we always did. And lots of letters and things from them. Different ones in different places. When the Americans were in, I can remember,

38:00 they used to wonder why when they came in the Harbour, there weren't Aborigines rowing out to meet them. Also they remembered that there was somebody trying to sell the shares in the Harbour Bridge. Always these Aussie crooks, they were going around.

38:30 It's closing down. It's terrible.

Did you ever have an American boyfriend?

Me? No. Too busy to have boyfriends. But we had a lot of friends. I remember one lad I did become friendly with, not as a boyfriend though, but I invited him home to my place. He had a meal.

39:00 Because he came from up past Dubbo somewhere, Broken Hill or somewhere. His father had a 40 mile property farm. He was quite a nice lad, but I only saw him once or twice. Even once he was there I had to say goodbye because I had to race off. This was it. There was no

39:30 time for any socialising or anything like that.

Why was that?

I was going to work every day, doing camp shows every night, we were doing route marches in the day of weekends and all this sort of thing. You didn't get much time to do anything else. You'd be too exhausted anyhow. Often if we went to camp shows in the night I'd have to be up at 8 o'clock in the morning to get the bus to go to work.

40:00 I'd come back and I'd think, "I'd love to go to bed, but they're picking me up at 7 o'clock. I've got to get dressed." And this was the way it was. There wasn't time for any personal socialising or anything.

Despite that, probably that's why I've kept going for so long because like the old saying, 'if you don't use it you lose it'. So I've sort of kept

40:30 it going.

You must have broken a few hearts along the way?

I don't know about that. Nobody ever told me that. One that I used to work with at Timbrol. I go to the Timbrol reunion every year, the third Friday of every November they had a reunion. I go along there and he works a lot. He never even, did he marry? No, I think he was engaged

41:00 once, but it broke off. He lives at Concord and he still maintains how much in love he was with me even though John's there. That's Gordon Rowe, quite a nice lad. He works hard for a lot of other things. Then, most people of that era did. Unless you had a heart conditions or something and you

41:30 just couldn't. Everybody still involved themselves in everybody and help. Today you're too frightened to do that. I used to deliver Meals on Wheels, but John always insisted on coming with me. I always delivered frozen food, I wouldn't carry hot stuff. A lot of those dear old souls that I used to deliver to, they've gone. When we turn into a street

42:00 where their house was, I think, "Oh, poor Miss Kim." Then I think, "I wonder what happened - "

Tape 5

NB. FOOTAGE IN TAPE 05 IS OUT OF FOCUS

01:00 **With the UAP, was that an ongoing group of performers who would go to performances together? Did you stick with their show for quite a while?**

Yes, I did. I think eventually, because the war kept going and getting bigger and there were more concert parties forming that they backed out and let the other ones take over. I think that's what happened. We didn't hear from them again.

01:30 **How long did your stint with them last?**

I'd say about 18 months.

During that time, were you always performing with two other people?

Yes, two other members of the band.

What would a typical performance involve for your group?

Just playing.

02:00 Doing route marches.

How many pieces would you do per performance?

Perhaps three or four. We'd probably play a march and go onto a Strathspey and then if we were clapped to do an encore we'd probably do another march and Strathspey.

Did you get up, have your spot and it would be over and that was it?

02:30 **or would you reappear later in the show and do another piece?**

No, no. We were only an act in the show. If we were wanted later on then yes, we'd come on again.

There might be an encore?

Yes, if there was an encore we'd play again, but then the other artist had would come on and they would take up the rest of the time.

How long would a concert party

03:00 **run?**

The whole show, I'd say about an hour. I don't think it'd be longer because to take us, depending upon how far we had to travel to get there and then there was the show had to start and then we were always taken to supper. Then we had to get in the cars and go back home.

03:30 **Your spot, typically how long would you be on stage?**

Well, probably 15 minutes.

Would the show be coordinated by a compère?

- Yes, there was always a compère for the concert parties. If there was a
- 04:00 dance as well as playing the pipes, we'd probably go a bit longer than the 15 minutes. But the concert party always had its own compère.
- As far as the order of acts, would that mix around?**
- I think that was just organised by the organiser and the compère, how it would go.
- 04:30 **On a typical UAP concert party you'd have how many acts?**
- 3 or 4, not very many I don't think. Can't recollect very many.
- What other acts would you work with in that**
- 05:00 **situation?**
- There were always singers and perhaps dancers and perhaps the juggler.
- What dancing would they be doing?**
- Probably a ballet dance, or a tap dance of some sort.
- While you were doing the UAP circuit,**
- 05:30 **how frequently would you do shows and what places would you get around to?**
- I think we were probably going about once a week or two. We went to different camps. We went to Ingleburn mainly, that was the first one. There was also Liverpool, there
- 06:00 was Richmond Air Force Base, there was Concord Repat Hospital, there was one out near Liverpool there. I think it's a housing commission estate now. I think it was when the British came in, or was it the New Zealanders, I'm not sure, but
- 06:30 I think it was the British, that's where they stayed. That was converted into a, it wasn't a housing commission estate at that time. It was an army camp. After the war, that's when the housing commission moved in and turned it into a department of housing estate.
- You'd work exclusively within NSW?**
- Yes.
- Would you go to**
- 07:00 **somewhere like Ingleburn on a regular basis? Would they get to know you?**
- Yes. Also, we went to a lot of RAAF bases and navy bases, Balmoral naval depot. Richmond aerodrome. Also Liverpool, where the
- 07:30 New Zealanders were encamped. The Hyde Park British Centre. We did lots of shows for the American Red Cross as well as for the Australian Red Cross.
- Are you talking about the Highland Trio now?**
- The Highland Trio. Yes, you were talking about the UAP. It just doesn't seem to me in my mind
- They blend together.**
- Yes.
- 08:00 UAP wasn't much in comparison to what the other was.
- We'll move onto the Trio. You finished your run with the UAP. How did the Trio come together?**
- By this time I knew Beverly and Gloria fairly well. Beverly had a
- 08:30 friend, Sylvia Hawkins, who organised the Kookaburra concert party. Beverly and Gloria were coming to me rather than asking some of the boys that were in the band to come. Thought it was better to have all girls. We called ourselves the Highland Trio. Then we moved over to the Kookaburra concert party. Sylvia Hawkins organised all that. It was new and she was running it.
- 09:00 **A concert party like that, is it initiated privately or is it coordinated through government?**
- That was initiated privately by people.
- Was it given the Kookaburra name for a reason?**
- I don't really know, because I didn't have any input into
- 09:30 that one. It was already named the Kookaburra concert party before we went along and became part of

it. There were some very, very well known radio singers in that. They also came to a lot of the Kookaburra concerts. I can't remember their names now, but some of them became quite well known afterwards.

The Kookaburra concert party was a few rungs up a ladder from the UAP.

10:00 **Was it a bigger show? Were the quality of acts a little better?**

I don't think the quality was better, but the variety. The quality was very good too. I think it was a matter of variety and length of time in a concert and that sort of thing. Specifically for that purpose too.

10:30 My memory is that it was very much better organised than the UAP one because that was rather a rush one, the UAP.

It was a busier one by the sounds of things? You were getting more engagements through this one?

Yes. We were.

In a week, how many different engagements would you have?

The concert party itself, we wouldn't have

11:00 that many. There'd at least once a week, but at the same time we were also going and doing route marches, had nothing to do with the concert party. And church parades had nothing to do with the concert party. The British Centre had nothing to do with the concert party. The American Red Cross and the Australian Red Cross and these other functions, it was strictly concert part camp show

11:30 concert party concerts that we went with the Kookaburras, but we were doing all these others just like that.

Who was coordinating the other work for you?

I think that we were contacted, we must have left our telephone numbers or names and addresses there.

12:00 Beverly worked with her grandfather in the CML building, Gloria worked at Farmers as it was then, and I worked at Timbrol. So it was probably Beverly's phone number that they contacted because she not only worked there with her grandfather, but she lived there and she was easy to contact. Quite often we'd go there, we'd be told when they were having their next route march and "Can you come?" and approached us at the same time.

You girls were really

12:30 **coordinating the whole business yourselves?**

Yes.

You didn't have a manager or anyone helping you?

No.

You must have been very busy.

We were. We were very lucky that our company appreciated what we were doing and gave us the time off.

That was the same for the other girls as well?

It didn't matter for Beverly, because she worked for her grandfather.

13:00 But I don't think Gloria had similar problems wither with Farmer, she worked in the office there.

What feedback did your company give you when you explained that you wanted to do as much of this work as you could?

They understood, because initially they knew I'd gone off for that first one in November and I'd talk about it. They thought it was great.

13:30 I usually go along in the daytime through the week. I would leave sometimes a bit earlier in the afternoon so that I could get ready to be picked up for the concert party. I didn't work weekends either, which enabled me to be free to do all these other things. As far as Gloria was concerned, she had moved in and was living with Beverly too. Farmers was only a block down the street from

14:00 the CML building so she only had to walk back there and up onto the 13th floor, get changed and be ready. Everybody was very cooperative and very helpful. Can't remember ever striking one bad blow anywhere. It was all very well organised, so we felt quite relaxed in doing it.

Was it hard for you to keep up with

14:30 **your tasks at work?**

No, it wasn't because I was there every day even though sometimes I had to leave a bit earlier. No, I could manage that all right. If ever there was a problem, well, it was no different to if I was away sick. I used to

15:00 do things like if they were advertising for a laboratory assistant an ad would be put in the paper and it'd be my job to go through those ads, pick out those that got letters to say 'sorry', and those that were asked to come for interviews. I organised all that. That could be done in the day time, in the hours I was there, no problem. So I kept rather well. We all sort of coped.

15:30 If one wasn't available, somebody else came and looked after your phone or something, took the messages from the switch and all that. So it was all well maintained in a sense. Didn't have a problem at all.

When you started talking about forming the Trio, did you design your performance to be anything different to the

16:00 **sort of thing you'd already been doing through the UAP? Did it have a different angle to it?**

No, none at all. Identical. We still had all our band uniforms and that. We were allowed to keep them because of what we were doing. No, everything was the same except when I had anybody else with me, like some of the pipers and a drummer from the band and I was dancing, I was the only one. When there were three of us,

16:30 Beverly, who played the drums, and myself were able to do the Highland fling while Gloria accompanied us. So we were all three involved. It was a close trio. We never looked elsewhere.

Once you were working together you felt it was a good combination?

We were very close, yes. We were right up to the last days. They're no longer with us. Even though they were overseas we were constantly in touch and sent birthday presents and Christmas presents and

17:00 had phone calls to each other. When you get a message that somebody's just passed away, it hurts that you're not there, but lucky, because Gloria was the import manager for Woolworths in North America. She travelled the world and Beverly left Canada Airlines to travel the

17:30 world with her. They often came home to Australia, part of their chores, and we met them at the airport and went out many times together and talked a lot and had a lot of nights together and all that. That went on year after year after year and it was nice to see them each time. It was sad to lose them like that though. So close in a sense. I was the youngest

18:00 of the three. Gloria was a year older than me and Beverly was three years older than me. Beverly didn't have good health towards the end. Apparently Nancy had - not Nancy, Gloria had a stroke. They had to take the

18:30 things from her.

Life support?

Life support. So both of them were all very sudden in a way, but they had good times because they used to go everywhere, South America, Japan, China and all round importing things. When they'd come out here they'd bring a lot of the stuff, samples, and I'd

19:00 get the freebies, some of which I enjoyed, I've still got a lot of them. We were very close all the time.

Was it 1941 when you formed the Trio?

Yes.

How old were you in 1941?

17.

Did you girls do any rehearsing of the show, or you were ready to go?

We were ready to go, we didn't need it.

19:30 **You were wearing the uniforms you all had from the Sydney Caledonia Pipe Band?**

It was Lakemba by then.

Take us through your uniform, what you'd wear from head to toe.

We had the kilt. We had a sporran.

What was the tartan?

McDuff. We had a sporran, a lambs' wool sporran each. We had green heavyweight jackets with

20:00 lapels on both sides.

Were they woollen?

Yes. Gloria and I had one of the big plaids wrapped right around our body and hung down, and Beverly had what we called a dance plaid, you know, that the drummers wore, tied around the waist and came over the shoulder with the big brooch on the side. We had the glengarry hat with the feathers in them.

20:30 We had the woollen socks and the white spats with black shoes of course. That was the uniform.

Were you associated with the Kookaburra concert party through to the end of the war?

Yes. Sylvia Hawkins, who had built it up and was the compare, I still saw her regularly and

21:00 was in touch with her regularly after that. Sylvia passed away about 18 months ago, so she's no longer with us either. Life's sad, isn't it? I don't know. I know it's got to happen to us all at some time, but it's try not to think about it. It's the only way. Think all positive, no negatives.

What were

21:30 **some of your favourite performances with the Trio?**

Where we went you mean?

Yeah, some of the more memorable places and nights.

I remember when Sir Robert Menzies came back from overseas. I think it was about 1948. I remember the three of us went down to Rose Bay air force flying boat to greet him when he came and

22:00 play for him to come onshore. I remember when we went down to Nowra Fleet Air Arm Base. We were winded and dined down there. We were taken down there in a navy jeep. There's a photo of us on that. That photo of me in the plane there, that was taken at Nowra Fleet Air Arm Base.

When were you in Nowra?

We went down there when we were doing the tour around the state on

22:30 war bond selling tours, war bond selling concert tours.

Was that part of the Kookaburra situation or a separate one?

That was separate.

How long did you spend in Nowra?

Overnight. Went down there in the daytime, got wine and dined in the Nowra Fleet Air Arm Base.

Did they show you around the base and the various

Not very much. It wasn't the time. By the time,

23:00 the concert party came down there, they came with us, but by the time we'd been wine and dined, taken to the hotel to change to get ready for the 8 o'clock concert, we didn't get to stay there very much. Then we stayed at the hotel overnight. Then we were taken back to the station at Nowra to get a train back to Sydney. The same when we went to

23:30 Wollongong. That was just the two of us, I don't think the concert party came with us on that one. It was earlier in the piece. We went there to play at a concert, forgot what it was. We also went up to the Central Coast and they had a big Masonic hall I think it was,

24:00 full of people that we played to. That was a war bond selling concert also. I don't know what other artists were with us, but we just sort of went individually for the concert that were asked to.

Sometimes you were performing for boys in the services and sometimes you were doing civilian crowds?

Yes,

Was there a difference in the response you'd get from those two?

No, none at all. Everything was just so

24:30 appreciated and enjoyed, because when you think of the pipes and Highland fling and things like that, it's not as monotonous as somebody time and time again singing or playing a violin or something, you know what I mean? Not that there's anything against the value of that, but this is just a different one. We often went onto the American boats when they came into the harbour

25:00 and played for the boys there.

Who would coordinate those?

The American Red Cross. There's a letter of appreciation from them. We did concerts for Legacy also, just the three of us. Nothing to do with the concert party. They were charity concerts.

The American Red Cross, you would receive a phone call from them and they'd say, "We have

25:30 **such and such a boat coming in, are you available?"**

Yes. I always got these letters of appreciation from them for the concerts we gave them.

Have you got one handy there?

Mm.

Would you like to read one of them out?

I have to put my glasses on. Is that all right?

Let us know what year it was and feel free to read one.

1943.

26:00 This one's the 11th January 1943. "We want to express our appreciation for your generosity in giving your services for the entertainment of our boys last evening. The show was a fine one -" This wasn't on the boat, this was a separate show they used to have for their boys. "- the show was a fine one and the men enjoyed it so much that we want to continue these Sunday evening programs and hope that you will find it possible to be with us again in the future.

26:30 Sincerely yours, Helen, Albrow Park, Club Director." This one is the 16th of March 1943. "I want to extend to you and your trio our sincere thanks and appreciation for your participation in the program at the club, Sunday night. The boys' applause was sure indication of their enjoyment. Sincerely yours, Helen, Albrow Park, Club Director."

27:00 Can't find any other. I've got more somewhere, but I don't know where. Oh yes, there's one. This is from RAAF radar base that one. "Austerity bars the way to the sending of formal Christmas and New Year greeting cards this year. The members of this unit, however, feel that the occasion should not be passed over without the time or

27:30 custom of sincere good wishes sent in special cases. Therefore, to your good self, and to your sister members of the pipers band, we extend hearty good wished and hope for a lasting peace in 1944. Your cooperation during 1943 has been much appreciated. Yours sincerely, Wing Commander, Commanding -" that's Preston, "-RAAF Croydon, NSW."

28:00 I've had some from, I don't know where they are at the moment, I'm in a bit of a mess I'm afraid.

Were you aware of other groups of three women roaming around performing the sort of material you were? Before, during or after?

No, never. One off.

28:30 There were no others. I suppose that's why we were so busy in a sense. We went to various airbases and I've got a whole list of a lot of the places we went to. I haven't shown them to you. I think, is there a list on that?

At the end of this tape we'll go and look at that.

I've got

29:00 another copy inside I can get you, so you can take that one off if you like.

When you were wined and dined at some of these bases, what did the chaps like to talk to you about?

Everything just general. Just like you get at any social gathering.

Was there talk of the actual war?

No. It was just how pleased they were and

29:30 'great, thanks for coming', and, 'how much we appreciate it', and talk about different social aspects and funnies and things like that. There was nothing dead serious like that ever went on.

You would have that before your performance?

Always, yes. Except when we took them on route marches and we'd always have supper afterwards.

30:00 Army camp shows, we'd go after the concert to have supper. These were where we had to have the evening there before we went, that's why we were wined and dined, at the fire station it was, at Wollongong and the other one at Nowra Fleet Air Arm Base.

30:30 When we were at Wollongong we were taken into private homes to sleep after the concert. It's the same

when we went up the Central Coast to one of the concerts, I remember the three of us were allocated to these people. They had a big farm there and we stayed at their place overnight before we went back the next day.

For those longer trips, would the people

31:00 **organising things help you with transport?**

The transport was always organised, yes. There wasn't a problem there. We didn't have to organise any of it, it was always organised for us.

On a typical night at Nowra, can you take us through a typical performance you would put on for them

31:30 **from getting on stage to getting off stage?**

I remember the one at Nowra. We started on the outside of the building. The whole crowd were there and I suppose they had other works. Then we'd start up and we'd march in, down the hall and up onto the stage and do our bit there. That was a bit different. I think we did the same up at - I'm trying to think of the place up on the Central Coast.

32:00 At Wollongong, I can remember -

After you made that entrance, what would you do once you were up on stage?

We'd play for them and then Beverly and I would do the Highland fling while Gloria played.

Before the fling, would you do a medley of different tunes?

32:30 Yes. We'd walk in, play a medley of tunes and then we'd still play. Then Beverly put down the drum and I put down my pipes and my keln [?] and we'd do the Highland fling. We set up again and we'd play going off. Went over very well. It was a change to everything else that they used to get down there. These days

33:00 you've got television and internet and all that, so if you want to hear bagpipes you've just got to key in, but in those days it had to be us. Wouldn't be anything like that. They only had wirelesses anyhow.

When you were piping at a route march, take us through the way that would take place?

33:30 Everybody would fall in and we'd fall in ahead of them and I think the CO [commanding officer], when we'd do the RAAF radar one at Croydon, I think commander Preston and his deputy used to walk ahead of us. We'd walk behind them and all the troops would go behind us. I think that happened on the route marches too. There'd be two senior

34:00 officers ahead, we'd just march behind them. We always played marches, of course, 70th Farewell To Gibraltar or 42nd, lots of marches, even the same ones over and over again till we got there and we'd have a bit of a break. [...] The Concord Repat Hospital too for the troops. We'd march in the same way from outside, we'd march down the aisle and up onto the stage and the boys loved it.

34:30 That was sad to see them in splints and all sorts of things. The other boys, there'd be nothing wrong with them, but these were back and recovering from war injuries.

Did you mingle with those boys?

Yes. We always did. Not closely. Particularly at Concord Repat

35:00 they had to wheel them back to their rooms and bed, but generally speaking, yes, we got to talk to a lot of them. That's why we got our plaque down on the Rose Garden War Memorial opposite because of the concerts we did there.

What would you chat to those boys about?

Just, "How

35:30 are you?" And talk about where they'd been injured and how and what events took place there and how glad we are that they're getting better. Just general chatter.

How would they respond?

Very happy to talk to us. Very happy.

Must have been quite a feeling walking away from one of those

36:00 **performances, having a sense of making a contribution to the state of mind of those boys.**

Always. We always felt very satisfied we'd achieved something. I think it was another hospital down near Reevesfield somewhere, down there. We went down there on a few occasions. I think it was a hospital. I'm not sure now, but it was an

- 36:30 army section. They had little army sections everywhere used to go. Schofields is it? They used to have an airbase up there. Schofields was it? We used to go up there and do concerts. They've closed that airfield down now, haven't they? Lots of navy bases, army bases, air force bases were everywhere.
- 37:00 We used to go round all of them. When we completed our 500th camp concert, Major General Lloyd, who was the CO of troops in Australia, or in New South Wales anyhow, he congratulated us at, I think it was government house in Parramatta, on our 500th camp show. That's where those photos are from.
- 37:30 **When did that come about?**
- That must have been round about 1944, something like that. That's his ADC [aide de camp], Captain Ivan Weighton. Ivan, later, became ADC to General Sir Thomas Blamey up at Morotai. We had word from Ivan that when Gracie Fields finished her trip round the Pacific, we'd be on our
- 38:00 way up there. But unfortunately the Japanese surrendered at Morotai before that happened. So we never ever got up there. We're stuck in New South Wales. Never mind, it was great that the war was over.
- Tell me what happened at a typical camp concert?**
- Just the same as any concert. It was always the
- 38:30 concert party who arranged it. They went there. They knew where they were going and the time they had to be there and the program. It was the same each time. Wasn't anybody else buying in and doing something and somebody else coming later and doing something, we all went together. The NRMA or RAC [Royal Automobile Club], they picked us up and took us where we were going. They waited there, went and sat in the audience
- 39:00 and then they came to supper in the officers' mess with us and then they were there with our cars waiting to take us back home after it was over. So it was all well organised.
- Did you start to get a feeling you were becoming a celebrity? Did it build to that point that the boys have a bit of a following for you?**
- No, just accepted it as the norm.
- 39:30 **Did you sign autographs?**
- No, there were no autographs in those days. Different to the Australian Idol today. It was just a normal concert. The boys enjoyed it, appreciated it, showed their appreciation very strong. We appreciated that too, it was great to see them standing up and cheering and yelling and clapping and demanding 'more, more, more'. Well, you knew
- 40:00 that they'd enjoyed it. That got away from the monotony of polishing their shoes and ironing their jackets and having to answer calls. I remember that, what was that army song about the bugle player?
- Bugle Boy From Company B?**
- No.
- 40:30 When the bugle played, it was a waking call and they had to get up. I remember some of the words to the song went -
- \n[Verse follows]\n "You've gotta get up,\n You've gotta get up,\n You've gotta get up this morning.\n Oh, how I hate to get up in the morning.\n Oh, how I'd love to remain in bed.\n For the hardest blow of all is to hear the bugle call.\n You've gotta get up,\n You've gotta get up,\n You've gotta get up this morning.\n Oh, how I'd love to murder the bugler.\n
- 41:00 Oh, how I'd love to see him dead.\n
- We'll amputate his revelries and\n Then we can spend the rest of our life in bed."n

Tape 6

- 00:46 **What do you think it was about the Highland Trio that made you so popular with the Australian troops?**
- We were an
- 01:00 original and there was no one ever there to compete. It was different to everything else, and we were young. It wasn't as if we were old fogies from decades ago there playing the pipes and drums. Just generally. We were good at what we did and they enjoyed it. So I think, really speaking fundamentally, that is it at a time when everybody was
- 01:30 away at the war that were in our age bracket and we were there entertaining them like that, it was

really a bit of a lift for them. I think that and the fact that we were, of course, good.

And pretty?

And we were charming. Very nice to them, pleased to see them and all the rest of it.

02:00 **You were young and gorgeous.**

Of course. Beautiful. Luscious old creatures. Young creatures!

Was it overwhelming to get so much attention and admiration from the troops?

I think I was used to it,

02:30 automatic. If you kept getting knocked down you get used to getting knocked down. But when what you do is appreciated all the time, it's part and parcel of what you're doing. Initially you know, and it was good, it was wonderful for the ego and morale, but also the fact that we were entertaining them because they were going

03:00 away to fight and perhaps give their life and we wanted to do something that they would appreciate and enjoy and remember. That was the important thing and that was good for our ego, we were able to do that.

You did risqué songs that made the troops laugh

I think most of them, that was the singers that sang those, like that Row, Row, Row one. There weren't

03:30 terribly many like that. That was just sort of a one off, but it was appreciated probably because it was a one off. The way they stood up shouting and yelling and clapping, 'more, more, more' was proof of that. It was very, very good.

You mentioned a funny saying, 'Hitler's braziers'. Can you tell us about

04:00 **some of those?**

There were only three. The names referred to the braziers. There was the type of the brazier. There was the Hitler type, that was suppression of the masses. There was a Goebbels type, he was the propaganda minister for Hitler, the Goebbels type was mountains out of mole hills. There was the Salvation Army type, uplift of the fallen.

04:30 **Would you use those in any of your songs?**

No.

Who would make up these sayings?

I don't even know where I got it from, but I remember during the war years everybody was referring to it. No, I can't really think of other song. I can just remember that one because of the emotion and the

05:00 reaction of the boys. If she wouldn't give in he'd say, "Well get out and swim and then he'd row, row, row," to leave her to it, which really amused them. I've no doubt there were other funny songs or people miming things. Magicians doing funny things. I can't pinpoint

05:30 any of them, not all of them stay with you. There's a limit what your upstairs computer can tolerate and store. No, but generally speaking everybody was very, very appreciative, by the troops, for their efforts and their giving their time. They enjoyed the songs or the dancing, instrument playing, whatever went on.

06:00 It was very good, very encouraging, sort of make you keep wanting to come back and back and back because they wanted you. That was great.

What were some of the songs that were inspiring you at that time?

The war years?

06:30 Yes, there were a lot sung about, they were just so popular too. About the war and beautiful singers singing them. Particularly from Britain. What was one of them in particular? I can't remember the name. They're still very well known now.

07:00 No, I can't remember the name of them.

Who was your favourite singer?

Well, I liked Bing Crosby. There was another one. What was his name? I've got it all written down in there because I wrote all the songs of the people that I liked. There was Bing

07:30 Crosby, who was that singer in the 1920s and '30s? American.

Not Mario -

Not Mario Lanza, no. He used to be in films too, but he sang some lovely songs. He had a beautiful voice. I can remember some of the songs, if I could

08:00 remember his name. Sorry.

What about great dancers? Were you inspired by Frank Sinatra?

Oh, yes. Not so much Frank Sinatra as who was the one that used to jump up, not O'Connor, he was good.

Fred Astaire?

Fred Astaire was good too. No, what was the one that sang that song, Singing in the Rain?

Gene Kelly

Gene Kelly. I liked him. Gene Kelly

08:30 and what was O'Connor? What was his name? [Donald O'Connor] I remember him dancing up the wall and coming back. Yes, no all those. I loved all those. Frank Sinatra. I could never understand people like Bing Crosby. They had such beautiful voices, they sang such gentle and loving songs and yet they were so violent in their own family life. I could never understand how that could be. You'd read about them having lots of wives, but having bashed them

09:00 all up and how their children wouldn't talk to them and left home and all this sort of thing. To me, doing all this beautiful thing, you'd think they had a feeling of love wouldn't you? And then to turn around and do all these violent, horrible things, I could never understand it.

Did you have that feeling of love when you were up performing?

No. I just enjoyed it.

How would you describe Beverly

09:30 **and Gloria's personalities?**

Beverly was a sweet girl. Gloria was a know it all. Didn't matter what a person's opinion was, she'd put you down. I used to feel very sorry for Beverly having to put up with her. Beverly broke two engagements because of Gloria. Beverly took to drink.

10:00 **While you were the Highland Trio or later on?**

Later on when they left Sydney together and went overseas and then to Canada. But main reason why Beverly was going over to Canada was she was engaged and was going to be married over there. Sure, Gloria turned her off. She was engaged apparently to someone else too. I can't remember, but that came to nothing. She was living all the time with Gloria and I think

10:30 Gloria was the type of person that didn't want to be alone, that Beverly was useful to her and came with her everywhere, kept her company. I shouldn't talk this way, they're both dead. Unfortunately, that was Gloria and not only, you know, to everyone, even her own sister, they had a terrible break-up. Nancy used to play the drums too, but she married and had children

11:00 long before anybody else. I remember going to her wedding. I think Beverly and I played at Nancy's wedding. When Gloria came out here on one occasion they had a great bust up. I don't know what it was about, but Nancy just packed and went back to Wollongong where she lived with her husband and family. Gloria didn't want to see her again and Nancy

11:30 didn't want to see Gloria again. After a while Nancy started to think, "She's my sister. She's my only relative here," because her Mum and Dad had come from Scotland and she and Gloria were the only two members of the family here. She felt, "she's my flesh and blood." So she contacted me and told me how she was feeling and what should she do. So I arranged for them

12:00 to get together again. I know Nancy was very grateful. Nancy, of course, isn't with us anymore either. Hasn't been for some years. Gloria was grateful too. But you would think of all the break-ups of Gloria's friendships with people, not because they were boyfriends or anything like that, but friendships of people that she'd known since school days.

12:30 The things she was doing and saying, everything she said was negative and put you down. I don't think in all her life she ever realised that.

When you were working with her in Highland Trio, how did you deal with her?

We were always too busy to have to deal with. I felt sorry for Beverly because Beverly had to live with her because Gloria had moved in with Beverly and Beverly's grandfather.

Out of the three of you, who got the most attention from the men?

From the mayor?

13:00 **From the men.**

From the men? I would say that Beverly did. She was a very attractive lass. I would say it was Beverly. Then me and Gloria would just be out there on her own. I've got my suspicions of Gloria, it's awful isn't it? She only died last October 12 months. Some of the things she said, like for instance, see this

13:30 appreciation certificate I got from the Canberra War Memorial Museum? When I got that one Paul Keating signed 50th anniversary, I filled in forms to get them one each and I sent them to them. Other odd things I'd sent, I'd put them in as part of it and got it. When I went down there I went on my own. It had nothing to do with Gloria, nothing to do with Beverly of course. I was

14:00 down there to help them move the men's things aside to make room for the women that had never been in the War Memorial Museum down there. I think I mentioned to you about Nancy Bird Walton being down there. She'd helped also. Out of the blue I got this certificate of appreciation in my letterbox, I wasn't expecting anything. So I thought, because I'd arranged for our photo, which was down in the Canberra War Memorial Museum, that I'd

14:30 send a copy of it to them. Course, Beverly had gone, only just. When Gloria got it she sent it back to me. She'd written all over it, she put, "Where's Beverly's? It was her big brass that arranged all this." This was Gloria. This was what she said to me. "Where's Beverly's?" because - "it was Beverly's big brass that arranged all." In other words it was all Beverly's

15:00 friends that arranged that, so "why did I get one and Beverly didn't?" Beverly was gone. Didn't matter what you did, what you said, that was Gloria. I don't know how Beverly put up with it, but I think she destroyed Beverly's life and I was lucky I didn't have to put up with her. Even her own sister. They had a bust up.

15:30 **Tell us about a little story where you ended up skinny dipping.**

Which?

The story where you ended up skinny dipping.

Yes. That was when we were at Ingleburn in the officers' mess having supper after the concert. One of the officers said to me, "Did you hear about the

16:00 AWAS?" Australian Women's Army Service. We said no. He said, "Oh, well, they went on this route march." Liverpool in those days was all paddock and farms and open spaces, "And it was a steaming hot day and they were sweating and felt terrible and they came upon this beautiful big pond. They looked at it and they thought, 'wouldn't it be wonderful to hop in there and cool off?' And they had a good look around.

16:30 There were only trees and shrubs, not a soul in sight. So they got undressed and they hopped in and they were starting to enjoy it when they heard a male voice call out, 'camouflage unit fall in'. All the shrubs got up and marched off."

Did you hear any others like that? [...]

Tell us about the raw carrot story?

17:00 Yes. When radar came in, the Germans couldn't understand how their enemies, which was us, Allied planes, could fly over important areas of Germany in the middle of the night and bomb so accurately. It was so dark, how could they see it? So

17:30 that no spies would get news of radar the intelligence put people into all the pubs and public places and told people, "Have you heard about the wonderful discovery? They have discovered that if you eat raw carrots you'll be able to see in the dark." Everybody started eating raw carrots and news got out here and everybody out here was eating raw carrots

18:00 hoping they could see in the dark I suppose, because there were so many brown outs and black outs. But everybody was eating raw carrots. The Germans never found out about it. When radar was formed, the PLC at Croydon was taken over and Professor Bailey's boys, 28 of them from Sydney University,

18:30 enrolled and did several weeks at Sydney University then down at Melbourne University. Then they came up to Richmond and to PLC premises at Croydon. They eventually got all their gear and equipment together. They went all round Australia, all the islands round Australia. I know my brother went down passed Adelaide. What's that island off Adelaide's coast?

19:00 And Adelaide and up to Darwin and Queensland and that. And set up the radar posts. He ended up in Papua New Guinea setting up the posts there. While he was up there he got malaria. He was brought back to Townsville. He was in hospital there for quite a few weeks before he came back to Sydney.

19:30 He was just finishing 2nd year science when this happened, at Sydney University. Like his mother, he went back to do third year. Of course, Mum didn't do that, but he sat for the exam twice and failed each time because on each occasion, I suppose with the stress of the exam coming up, he'd go down with a bout of malaria and end up in hospital again for a couple of weeks. So after the second bout he had to finish his university.

20:00 Couldn't get his degree. He's still with RAAF radar old people and they still have their annual meetings and Anzac Day marches and all that. He goes along to all of them. He still remember everything. So it was just bad luck that happened I suppose.

20:30 Now, if anybody goes up to these places, they've got medication they can take before they go so that they're immune from malaria.

Is your brother musical? Was he like you?

No. He didn't do anything like that. He was interested in the Boy Scouts, I remember that. Mainly his studies and science and that he was interested in that.

21:00 He went into work with my father. Whereas Dad worked out in the western suburbs,

What was he doing?

Painting contractor. Cec did all the work up on the northern suburbs. He had three men working for him and he specialised in heritage buildings and the treatment that had to go on and what had to go on them and what mustn't go near them and all that sort of thing. Even

21:30 when he retired he still had people phoning him to come and do something, which he would do providing it didn't entail too much work. He suffered a dislocated shoulder some time when he was in the air force somehow. Using your arm all the time the dislocated shoulder kept playing up and coming back. So he has retired now.

You used to perform at the Anzac Day marches during wartime?

Yes.

Tell us what that was like.

Much the same as it ever was. Initially up till 1943 I think it was, we

22:30 did, until we had to leave the band because we were no longer available to do things like this with the band.

Why was that?

Because we had other things on our plate to do. I think the last Anzac Day might have been 1942 we went to. I've got a photo of it. I think it might be over here the photo.

Tell us what you did that day, where you were in the march etc.

23:00 I don't know because we started off at the top of Martin Place and I know over the years every time you march down Martin Place, outside the building opposite Pitt Street, the GPO [General Post Office], there was always a seat for Billy Hughes, who had been the prime minister. Billy was married to a member of my family, I think I mentioned that to

23:30 you. Every time I'd come down there with the band I'd go, and he'd back. Eventually, a couple of times I'd go down there, the seat will still be there, but there'll be no Billy of course. He'd gone. I remember, I think it might have been the last occasion, after we finished the service in the Domain we were all

24:00 coming out. You start at the tops and the band starts to march to get off. Everybody would start at the same time, but pretty crowded, you couldn't get to the gate. So we're standing there waiting to move forward, band playing, up beside us pulls the Salvation Army band, also playing. I didn't realise how loud those instruments were, so loud that we couldn't hear ourselves playing. We ended up everybody was stopping playing, we didn't know where we were. The Salvation Armies are going full

24:30 tilt. It was unbelievable. I just had no idea. Their noise is a lot, lot louder than the bagpipes. So if it's a policeman says, "Your next-door neighbour is the culprit for pinching your pipes," I've no doubt they want to steal a couple of these brass instruments. So loud! I remember that well because we were stopping and listening. We couldn't even hear each other playing. We looked around and

25:00 just looked at them. They enjoyed sounding us out. Really enjoyed it. They knew what they'd done.

What was the tunes you played on Anzac Day?

Always the same, marches and that.

Can you play us one?

Yes. Well, it'd be just the couple that I played before. There were lots of others, but I'd have to renew what they're called

25:30 [Plays the bagpipes] You're letting go there. That was one of them.

26:00 You don't want another one?

Yeah for sure.

Hope I don't lose my fingers again. Right, can't even see them without my glasses. [Plays the bagpipes]

26:30 [Plays the bagpipes] This is what I mean by your reeds going flat on you. [Plays the bagpipes] That's enough.

You played quite a bit to

27:00 **different American troops. I believe you were given a gift at one particular performance.**

Yes.

Can you tell us about that?

We went onboard an American boat that came into the harbour. Three of us played and then Gloria played while Beverly and I did the Highland fling. Then we played again. In appreciation one of the Americans went below deck and came up with three gob's caps,

27:30 one for each of us, in appreciation for having played for them. I've still got mine. The name on mine was owned by J. H. Bennett.

This is it here?

That's it. So I wonder if J. H. Bennett is still in America and with us.

What do you call this hat?

A gob's cap, G-O-B. It's a sailor's hat. J. H. Bennett. On this side too.

28:00 No mistaking it. I hope they don't think I've pinched it. I don't know which ones Beverly and Gloria got, but I've kept mine. Don't know where theirs are now.

Did you find the American troops different to perform to than the Australian troops?

No, they enjoyed it just as much.

More?

Very outgoing and enjoyed it. All smiles all the

28:30 time you're playing. They loved it. Just felt the same reaction as we got from whether it was army, navy, air force, our boys or their boys. It was good. Very good. We were lucky.

Did you ever get asked out on a date by an American?

No. We were never around to have that happen. As soon as we finished and we got our gob's caps we went off board. I don't think we ever saw them again.

29:00 Until next time maybe or the boat came in or on a Sunday concert the American Red Cross used to have. No, I can't remember. We were never there for long enough, often enough to get in that social atmosphere of getting close for dates, you know what I mean? Even if we'd had the time for dates, never did. I can't

29:30 remember having dates with anybody, really. I just didn't have the time. None of us did. There was a war on. Everybody was busy, they were always doing something.

None of the Sydney girls were dating much at the time?

No. Well, I suppose there were some, yes, but they weren't doing camp concerts or anything like that, only had 9 to 5 jobs, you know what I mean? Yes, I think a lot of them were dating.

30:00 In fact, I know quite a lot of them also fell pregnant.

Really?

Mm. I remember an uncle and aunt of mine, the one that was the dancing teacher, they adopted a little boy. They had a daughter. They adopted a little boy. His mother was Australian, but his father apparently was an American serviceman.

Was he a black serviceman? Apparently there was quite a few black servicemen here.

No.

30:30 He was well loved by everybody. Nice lad, but everybody have their down sides don't they? I remember them complaining that the Abos [Aboriginal people] weren't rowing out to meet them when they were coming in the harbour to greet them.

31:00 All the other things, the crooked Aussies trying to sell shares in Sydney Harbour Bridge and all that sort

of thing. The Americans had a thing of waylaying women, selling them silk stockings that they used to get from their place in camp. Taking their money and say they'll go and get them and never coming back. Silk stockings were terribly

31:30 expensive. Terribly expensive. Pounds, several pounds a stocking. When you think about 2-3 pounds per pair of stockings and the male basic wage at the time was only about that.

Nothing nylon those days?

No.

What were your stockings made out of?

I suppose they were sort of a fine cotton or something,

32:00 I don't know. Nothing like what you get today. It was a silk one was top quality ones for our best, getting dressed up to go somewhere.

The Australian troops were quite jealous of the American troops out here. Do you think they had a reason to be jealous?

They used to say,

32:30 what was the saying? Something about, I've got it written down inside about the Americans are

Something about them being overfed and over here?

Overfed, overpaid and over

33:00 here. That's what it was. Overfed, overpaid and over here. Or the other way overpaid, overfed and over here. That's what it was the Australians used to say about the Americans. You're clever. Fancy remembering that!

Do you think they deserved that kind of reputation from your observation?

I think so. Because I don't think any of them had ever heard

33:30 of Australia till they came here. This is why they were surprised there were no aborigines coming out to meet them and all this sort of thing. There were no kangaroos hopping down George Street, I remember that one too. They couldn't believe it, no kangaroos hopping down George Street. Yes, they were very autocratic and rolling in money in comparison to us. So they sort of felt God Almighty. We were

34:00 just peasants. Personally, they were quite nice, but it was the attitude generally of so many of them. Their CO, I think he settled himself in Brisbane, or was it Melbourne? Nobody thought he should have been there, wherever it was.

34:30 Yes, it was Brisbane. Down here was the capital of Australia, not up there. Most of the boys were down here too. Everybody was complaining about that, taking over Brisbane.

The Americans taking over?

The Americans, mm. Yes, CO was up there.

There were a lot of American soldiers up there as well?

Mm.

35:00 But there were also a lot here. When you think that the boats were coming in from America here, not anywhere else, you would have thought that the senior people would have been here. When you think that they had quite a large American Red Cross here as well. This was sort of a capital of Australia, the others were just like country towns in those days. Transport and things like that.

35:30 Anyhow, they ended up all having to go home. I had a friend, I think I mentioned, that I phone regularly. Used to live opposite me when we were growing up. She married an American. She was in the Australian Army, I think. She married an American,

36:00 but he settled here. They had two children. He was cleaning out his swimming pool one day, he was 42, he had a heart attack and died. He came from an Indian family background in America. Very nice person. Awful shock to lose somebody at 42 like that, isn't it?

36:30 **Can you tell us about Manpower, an agency that recruited people, and you were involved in that?**

That was really government involved in that because anybody that was in a, they had positions that were, I forget what they call them, but if they were connected with wartime activities

37:00 or manufacturing things for the war effort, nobody was allowed to leave those positions without the government approval. Then only, if they were going to a similar factory to work there. The only people

that could leave any of the places was somebody, say, a shop assistant or something like that. They were very strict in that regard.

37:30 Everybody just had to mark time. There was nothing they, I would have had to get the government permission to leave to go somewhere else if I wanted to during the war years.

To leave your job at Timbrol?

Mm. I would have had to go to another one that was also involved in manufacturing things for the war period.

Your company was involved in manufacturing -

-yes, it was a chemical company.

- do you know what you were manufacturing? You mentioned

38:00 **DDT.**

That was afterwards. Creosotes and oh, there were a lot of things that were involved in manufacturing items for the war. It's a long time now, I've sort of forgotten.

What's a creosote?

It's

38:30 a sort of, don't ask me. My husband would be able to tell me. He's the only brain around here now, or my brother would be able to give me a definition of it.

You're saying Manpower was run by the government?

Yes. The government had control over everybody in Australia. They were the ones who gave you permission

39:00 to leave if you were in a job that was essential to the wartime, only on condition that you had another similar job to go to somewhere else. Otherwise you couldn't leave.

Did you find these restrictions an imposition on your

No, because I was quite happy with where I was. It wasn't till after the

39:30 war and I was a bit cranky at the pay that I decided. I saw all the ads in the papers and so many people wanting you, that I thought in any case that I'd go and become a dancing teacher because they made so much more money than sitting in an office all day. Mum was shocked when I did that and so when she picked this one out of the papers and I went to see it, just to please her, I couldn't

40:00 believe it. That's why I ran my pay up to \$7 from \$5.50 or \$4.50. \$5.05 I think I was, 50, \$7.

During the war period, what were some of the restrictions on you as a woman that made life difficult?

You just couldn't go into a shop and buy anything. You had to have coupons.

40:30 There was a limit to so many things.

What about things that women need in particular? What did you have to go without that you may have been used to?

Makeup was one of them. You couldn't get face powder that suited you, you had to be ghostly white, that would have been the only colour they would have had. It was just hard to get

41:00 cosmetics. You had to have money to buy anything anyhow. Everything was very expensive. A lot of things that were sold only with coupons, if you didn't have the coupons you couldn't have them anyhow. It was really, nobody cared about that sort of thing, it was only cosmetics.

Shampoo and conditioner?

I can't remember shampoo.

41:30 I think we used soap. I remember a lot of children during the Depression years when I was at school, families couldn't even afford soap. It's unbelievable isn't it? In Australia. In the war years you could. One thing that the Americans had made them so popular, they was always over here and well paid and all that sort of thing, they were too

42:00 a lot of the things that you couldn't get in a shop you could get in a PX [American military duty free canteen] I think they were called. American -

Tape 7

00:33 **You were telling us about the American PX stores. What things would the Americans be able to access from those stores?**

I can

01:00 remember silk stockings was one, as much cigarettes as they wanted that you just couldn't have here. There were heaps of things. They were never rejected for anything. Their stores were just full of everything that they would ever have wanted in their normal life over in America. I know there were times when they gave me

01:30 a couple of boxes of cigarettes, which I took and gave to my uncle, who was a smoker. He was ill in bed. Very pleased to have them, because he didn't appreciate how bad cigarettes were for people. Probably killed him in the end. That's why he was so sick. It was one of those things that if you had an addiction to it and somebody gave you a packet, how delighted you were. We couldn't get a lot of these things. You had to have coupons.

02:00 If you didn't have coupons I don't think they gave you coupons for cigarettes, I'm not sure. If they were put into the stores they were gone overnight. I never was in one of their stores, but I know the different things they were able to bring out and give people. Like stockings and cigarettes. I remember the cigarettes well. Can't think of anything else.

Were there some

02:30 **harder, darker days in your household during the war? Did people get depressed about the situation?**

No, I don't think so,

03:00 because our condition of our lifestyle had always been family. Everybody looked after everybody else. If the mother was sick, a member of the family would take the children and look after them till the mother got well. In the case of elderly parents there'd be members of the family that would take them in and look after them, or somebody who'd go to their place and look after them. There was no such thing as there is

03:30 today with homes for elderly people and anything like that, or putting people in nursing homes if they needed looking after. I know Mum did everything for her father. She had to clean out the tube he had in his bladder and she had to bathe him. With Grandma we all had to watch her to see she didn't have an epileptic fit. That

04:00 had affected her memory. I don't think she knew who she was. She couldn't talk to anybody. Her memory had gone totally because of these fits. Physically she was all right other than that. She was able to feed herself, get around and dress herself and all this sort of thing. She never had anybody to communicate with because she could not communicate. So there were all those sadnesses. But those are not as sad as

04:30 dumping them in a nursing home and leaving them there till their day came like happens today. There's none of that family togetherness anymore, that used to be when I was growing up, which is sad. Everybody has to lead their own life and in those days there was always the women in the house, they were married, they weren't able to work, so they were always there. Unlike today when they've got to go to work to

05:00 support the family. There's nobody to do anything and how difficult it is for them if they can't get them into childcare and all this sort of thing. I think in the long run, even though they were without a lot of things in those days, a lot of pharmaceutical cures and pills to make life easier and get rid of your headache and all that sort of thing,

05:30 life generally was very much more pleasant than it is today. Because nobody's around to want to care for anybody anymore. They want to be doing their own thing, earning money and going to work and getting other people to do the chores for them. I think that it was still a much nicer era that I grew up in than what they're growing up in today.

At that time, the stage in the war when the Japanese

06:00 **joined and they started to make their way closer to Australia, did you sense a change in atmosphere in Sydney? Were people getting panicky and concerned?**

I don't know about panicky, but they were very aware that it was coming awfully close to home. It had

06:30 arrived. I think they accepted it over the years that would be a possibility that they come and we've just got to make sure it doesn't happen again. They took steps to make sure that no more subs came in the harbour and if it hadn't been for the Americans coming I'm sure that the Japanese would have landed in Darwin.

Were there times

07:00 **you wondered if the war was ever going to end? Did you think it would go on and on?**

No, I don't think anybody ever thought that. We took it for granted that we were winning it and we wouldn't let it go on. It was going to come to an end. We just accepted that as norm. No, we didn't ever have that fear. It was pretty horrifying

07:30 to think they might be landing in Darwin and coming down. I think the government at the time were going to put all the troops up on the Queensland New South Wales border so that if the Japanese landed up there, we'd fight them on that Queensland New South Wales border against them coming any closer. So I think the acceptance was that the Japanese just were going to lang. But the

08:00 Americans came in and they bombed Japanese land, their town there. They dropped the atom bomb and that was the end of the war.

Do you think humour was an important element to keep spirits up in the community in Sydney?

08:30 We didn't think in that term, we did it automatically because it was part of life to think of the funny and the good side of things even though at the other part of our mind we were aware of what was happening up the northern, what could happen. No, we still had our moments and we'd

09:00 laugh at somebody's joke. But everybody was so busy in those days, there wasn't much socialising about it or to be in the situation of being entertained or anything like that. It was just getting very serious.

Can you remember a time near the end of the war when you started to feel

09:30 **there was an end in sight? When the news of the atomic bomb came, was that a surprise that the war had come to an end?**

It was a complete surprise, but a happy one. That everything was coming to an end and we weren't going to be landed on. It had very badly damaged the

10:00 Japanese nation, as it would, as it did. I feel very sorry for them. I wouldn't have had that land anywhere, unless they were threatening others. It's always the innocents that suffer, no the so and sort of stuff that you could call a be - that arrange for such terrible things to happen. This is forced on their nation as it was.

10:30 It was the only way of making them aware that they've got to stop. They got the message. They were threatened with more of it unless they stopped it and that's when they threw in the hat at Morotai.

In 1943

11:00 **the Trio were featured in a special Christmas card, a photograph.**

Yes, Every Friday morning, we piped the RAAF radar service on its church parade from its head premises at the PLC at Croydon. We did that every Friday morning.

11:30 The CO sent his car and picked us up and took us there and we had breakfast with them. Then we all fell in with the rest of the troops and I think I might have mentioned before how Beverly beat a drum when they raised the flag and then the male voice called out, "All those not of the Protestant faith fall out." Then they'd march back into the main premises. Then we all fell in and Wing Commander Preston, his deputy, would

12:00 march in front of us and we'd march behind them up to the church near Liverpool Road. We'd go in and have the church service. Then we'd all come in and fall in again and then we'd march all the way back. So that we would look part of the RAAF radar troops, they gave us short sleeved khaki shirts and a black tie. We still wore our kilts and our spats and our glengarries, but we had

12:30 the RAAF khaki shirts and black tie as the top to be part of the troop. We did this for the whole year and for Christmas 1943 they photographed wing commander Preston, who was the CP, his deputy and the RAAF

13:00 padre. In front of them was the Highland Trio. They photographed the six of us and they had a 1943 Christmas card and on the front of the Christmas card was the photograph of the wing commander Preston and Highland Trio and inside the Christmas card was a 1944 calendar. Above the 1944 calendar was 'Wishing everybody a happy Christmas, and may the

13:30 wishes of peace be with us in 1944', something like that. That went out to everybody I think. I was sent one and the girls got one. I suppose all the troops did too. So it was quite a nice photo. I appreciate it. Part of my

14:00 paraphernalia now. I wouldn't get rid of it. Still got the original. It's looking a little bit knocked about, but it's worth keeping.

I believe you still have possession of a poem of appreciation that a soldier wrote after seeing the Trio.

That's right. That was lieutenant colonel,

14:30 no lance corporal, sorry. Lance corporal, let me put my glasses on, I can't see. No, Signalman L.J.N. Delaney, East Sea Area Signals, Liverpool Camp. Delaney, like all the other troops in Liverpool camp were New Zealanders over here. The poem went like this: "The bagpipes were a-skirling in

15:00 Liverpool tonight. In fact I almost hear them as I sit here and write, for there's nothing more appealing than the music that is played, by pretty women pipers and a lovely drummer maid. My heart was set a-beating by the beating of that drum and I'm hoping that I hear it on many nights to come. For a drum, although rather noisome, can be quite thrilling too when a smiling Scots lassie is smiling down at you. So here's the best of all that's

15:30 good to those who played to me. And may they ever be remembered no matter where they be." Very nicely written, wasn't it? Very, very nice. I don't know who he was or if he's still around, but that was a long time ago. [...]

16:00 **What is it about the bagpipes that is so stirring?**

I think it's the beat. The drum's sort of beating. Fell like walking. It's like what the troops said out at Ingleburn when they were on route marches, "What a bore it is going on those route marches without them, but how wonderful and enjoyable it is to walk to the beat of the drums and the pipe's

16:30 music." That's what I think it all is. Just the beat and the, you know, you're sort of right there with it. I'm sure that's what it is, what gives you the lift. Particularly if you're on a route march or on a church parade or something.

How long did the route marches end up being?

We did a lot.

17:00 I don't know how many, or how often, but we went out to Ingleburn often and we walked from Ingleburn military camp to the cross roads Liverpool and back. I just couldn't say how many, because I just don't remember.

Must have kept you fit.

Oh yes. When we were taking the RAAF radar on their church parade, that was every Friday morning

17:30 for the whole year. They enjoyed going to church too. But all those not of the Protestant faith couldn't. They had to get out and go back in. Never mind, they heard us move off and I suppose that was, and they heard the drum being beaten while the flag was being raised and that was a plus. Beverly could do a good drum beat. Sounded great.

18:00 Here we are.

Tell us the story of the three of you getting together at the end of the war to celebrate.

It was so exciting for everybody. Beverly and Gloria lived in the CML building in Martin Place. Gloria had moved in there

18:30 with Beverly after her mother had died. She'd given up her unit that she had at McMahon's Point to her sister got it when she was married. So she went to live with Beverly. It was so exciting. Everybody knocked off work and everything. So I grabbed my pipes and got dressed and went over there. We all stood on the balcony overlooking the cenotaph. We started playing.

19:00 They were jumping around, they were doing crocodiles on the footpath and on the roadway all round the cenotaph and Martin Place. When that was all over and we started playing the next day again the assistant commissioner of police came into see papa, that's Beverly's grandfather, the superintendent, to ask him to please not let us play up there again, they were losing control of the crowds. So we had to stop. They were

19:30 spoil sports.

You were creating a riot.

Yeah. Of course, the spoil sport police had to come and stop us.

On the first day, were you wearing your full uniforms?

No, I think we were in kilts. Maybe not the full uniform, maybe we still had our khaki shirts and black ties on. I'm not sure.

20:00 We were out there playing.

How long do you think you played that day?

For quite a while because they were loving it. It was so obvious we couldn't stop. We were enjoying

watching them too. It was quite incredible. They went mad. Holding onto each other and racing round, arm in arm sort of thing. Crocodiles they called them, didn't they? All up the roadway and along the footpaths and.

- 20:30 So exciting moment. So exciting. Something to keep in your memory forever and you will be able to have a mental image of it all happening again. Very, very well done. It was great. The fact of what it was, was even greater. We were no longer at war. Peace had been declared.

Did you get down on the street and get involved?

No. We just

- 21:00 enjoyed doing what we'd done there.

How far above the crowd would you have been?

Well, there's the ground floor, then the mezzanine and the balcony was just overlooking the cenotaph was on the mezzanine just above the first floor. Between the first and second floor. Pretty close to them, yes, but not too far away. It was good.

- 21:30 It was almost as if we were right opposite them. We could see. We were right opposite the cenotaph too. So it was a great event. A wonderful time of the war, wonderful time of the year. Couldn't have been better. I loved it. I wish it would all start again at the end of this Iraqi business and all the other horrible things that are happening around us. I can't see anything being half as good. We've

- 22:00 destroyed our lifestyle I think, unfortunately.

Near the end of the war, had you girls spoken about how far you wanted to go with the Trio?

No, we were just going till the end of the war. Because

- 22:30 I got married and then Beverly's grandfather died and they had to leave Martin Place, the CML building. That's when Beverly got engaged and her fiancé had the stamp shop in the Strand Arcade. I think he sold that. He went back to Canada and that's where Beverly was going

- 23:00 to get married. Of course, Gloria was going with her, but for some reason or other it fell flat and I wouldn't mind betting Gloria had something to do with it, although I shouldn't say that. I might be wrong. She never had a boyfriend ever.

Did the Trio continue for a while after the war ended?

I don't think so, because there just

- 23:30 wasn't the time. I was involved in the Australian Films League and Beverly's grandfather wasn't well. She was spending a lot of time looking after him. Was Gloria's father still there? I can't remember now, those details, they're just so far

- 24:00 back. I just can't remember. No, we didn't have any intention of keeping it on unless anybody specifically asked us on the odd occasion. I know I went to a couple of odd things, but I was asked as a piper would I go, not as the Highland Trio. I think I went to a wedding and I played at the wedding. Things like this. And a senior citizens' home, I went there and played and they all got up jiving and dancing.

- 24:30 Just little items like that, I did. But no, Beverly and Gloria weren't involved in anything like that. I was still in touch with them all the time of course. They're not here to ask anymore either. [...]

When the war finished and the Trio stopped performing together, did you miss the

- 25:00 **Trio and the ongoing performing on a regular basis?**

No, not really, because I was involved in new work, which was very busy for me and I was going to Melbourne regularly and flying back and I was moved into a different sphere. Apart from the occasional

- 25:30 playing the pipes for somebody, no, I didn't miss that because the time was up. The war was no longer there, the troops were no longer there and I was involved in other things. I had the Australian Films League going.

Can you tell us about that?

Yes. Actually, a friend of mine and myself had formed that in 1939,

- 26:00 but when war got rather bad in 1940 we closed it off. When it came 1946 I think, 1948, anyhow, in the mid-1940s when the war was over, I reformed it. The lass that had been with me at the time before hadn't come with me. So I formed it.

- 26:30 We were well accepted by the Australian film industry. Our members were very talented. A lot of them could write wonderful plays. We put on concerts and a lot of them would act the parts of the plays that

the members had written. There were a lot with actual,

- 27:00 a lot of talent. We were involved in a lot of Australian films at the time and Ken Hall of Cinesound, Eve Clear of the Photo Player and Mervin Murphy of the Supreme Sound. There was somebody from British Empire Films too, they were patrons of the League.
- 27:30 When we'd put on concerts in the front of the programs would be their names accepting us. The members, when the Australian films were being films, our members would go along there and work on crowd scenes and all that sort of thing. It was going very well. There were several movies. Nobody under the age of 16 was allowed to join because
- 28:00 we were troubled with the talk of bobby socks and all this sort of thing. Everybody under 16 was out because we didn't want to be associated with bobbysoxers. We were senior adult people with talent that wanted to be involved in films and the making of films and the writing of film scripts and all this sort of thing, which was going very well. Then I eventually also
- 28:30 dropped out because I was married, had other things that I had to do and I just couldn't be involved anymore. I don't know how long the Australian Films League went on after that, but they did continue. I think it's been a long time now, it was a couple of years after that it came to a close. The only thing that resembles the Australian Films League now
- 29:00 is NIDA. I think they're doing exactly what we were doing in the Australian Films League. People were taught how to speak, how to act, to write plays, how to make movies. Some of them even went along to the studios to take part in these things. NIDA is doing all that now, so I suppose
- 29:30 that is very much the same as what we were doing with the Australian Films League and it was working very well.

What inspired you to start the whole thing off?

Australian films were just beginning. Like a lot of things Australian, they need a lot of support. So in 1939 we thought, "We've just got to support this and help build it up," which we

- 30:00 started doing, but the war got very serious by 1940-41 so everything had to come to a close. It was about 1946 I think, when I started it again to get it going. We had some wonderful concerts. I've got in here some of the programs that we had and the front sheet of the program with all the names of Ken Hall and the other movie people. And
- 30:30 when Ron Randall came back to Australia came back after filming in America, he came to our meeting and we gave him a great welcome and presented him with some gold cufflinks as appreciation for his efforts with Australian films and that. That's when the blooming newspaper cottoned on and said 'Bobbysoxers farewell to Randall' or something, before he went back. Bobbysoxers! We were all 16 and over.
- 31:00 The president at the time was a married man with two children. You know what I mean? There was nothing bobbysoxers. We just didn't allow that era into it. I was pretty cranky so we had quite a lot of write ups in the paper about it, that we didn't have bobbysoxers and photos printed in the paper and all about the Australian Films League. It was doing very well, we had some wonderful concerts.

How many people were involved?

- 31:30 We had quite a lot. In fact, so many people throughout Australia were interested that they actually joined and formed sort of bases if we ever wanted to go to those places. Various towns in Queensland and Victoria and northern New South Wales and that. I don't think it ever came to
- 32:00 anything in that regard. Particularly, even though those people were very keen. The people involved here couldn't get away to go to those smaller areas. And all the films were made in Sydney and the film studios were here for us to go to. All the film makers, they were patrons of the club. If we
- 32:30 had kept going, I suppose NIDA would not have needed to eventuate because we were doing everything there. They were being taught how to act, how to speak, how to write scripts, how to do photography, the whole works.

Did you meet your husband-to-be through that group?

Yes.

Can you explain how that came about?

Every Photo Player

- 33:00 that came out, I think it was a monthly magazine, they had a big ad in for the Australian Films League. Eve Claire, who was the editor of the Photo Player, she was one of our patrons also. Apparently John read this ad and he wrote a letter saying he'd like to join, gave it to his mother to post and she forgot to post it. When she realised she hadn't posted it, he couldn't understand why he hadn't heard from us. He asked her and she told him, "I

- 33:30 forgot to post it. I've still got it here." So he sent it off. Then he came to the next meeting and introduced himself and asked me for an application form to join, which I thought I handed him. He went away and he's looking at it and he's turning it over. He came back, it was a blank sheet of paper. That's how we came to know each other much more closely than we would have if I had just handed it to him and filled it in and
- 34:00 given it back. From then on in, he became a very valuable part of Australian Films League. He became the president at one stage. He was very good at acting and writing and got very involved. Then he, in 1948, 49 I think, he went to Japan, the British Occupation Forces up
- 34:30 there. He was in Japan for 12 months. Then British Commonwealth Occupation Forces, they were. Then he came back and joined the regular army and then he went off to Korea. So far as the Australian Films League went, he couldn't take part anymore. He was in a few plays and he was really good. Did a wonderful job. I'll keep him a while longer. He's been pretty good at everything.
- 35:00 **When did you get married to him?**
- In 1948 before he went to BCON, British Commonwealth Occupation, what does the N stand for? Was it BCOF or BCON? I somehow just said automatically BCON. Anyhow, that was when they went over there.
- What was your role in the League?**
- 35:30 I was the secretary for a long time. I was the founder and secretary and treasurer.
- You must have been proud to see how it developed.**
- Yes. The way the concerts, and the talent that was there was incredible.
- Did it draw you back to considering a career in show business?**
- No. I didn't, because I had other things on the horizon then.
- 36:00 That was when I started my new job too. I was secretary to the managing director of Beetle Elliot. Flying down to Melbourne and back regularly. There's a limit to how many things you can take on at once. You can't be everywhere doing what you're supposed to do. So I handed things over. I kept
- 36:30 a lot of the information and programs and all that sort of thing. I've got the photocopies of the heading of the program and even some of the things in the programs there, so it was a good experience. It helped a lot of people too. Maybe a lot of people were able to enter the business because of their experience with it. I was pleased. I think it was in 1960s,
- 37:00 wasn't it, NIDA formed? They're doing virtually what we were doing, Australian Films League. A lot of them are moving into movies and acting. Some very big names went to NIDA and they've gone over to America and have made millions and fortunes for themselves in the films over there. No, I don't
- 37:30 regret anything, because I had other important things on my plate and they took priority.
- Were you still doing a little bit of piping here and there?**
- Yes, occasionally. The last time I played my pipes was when my oldest daughter had her 21st birthday and I piped the cake in for her to cut. It's a long time ago. Won't tell you how long. Horrible long time ago.
- 38:00 She will be coming back in January for my birthday, so maybe I can see if she can blow my bagpipes and pipe my cake in. I don't think so. If I can't play them, she wouldn't be able to.
- Did you teach your kids how to play?**
- No, I wanted to. I've got grandsons now, I'd love them to be able to play. Particularly as they're Knox Grammar and they've got their own pipe band. But no. They've got
- 38:30 their trombones and all this, that's what they want. My grandson that's in England at the moment, just finished his HSC [Higher School Certificate], I even got him a second chanter so I could teach him the pipes and give them to him to learn to play. But it was a waste of time. He didn't even practise the chanter. So what was the point? They just don't want to learn. They're not interested. I thought that it would motivate them, particularly in their own
- 39:00 band at Knox Grammar. Sean that's in England now, that I wanted to teach, he went to Trinity Grammar. My other daughter's children that live at Pymble, they're at Knox. I don't know. I can't think why they would want something as mediocre as a trombone or something when they can have something as stirring as the bagpipes. Everybody stops to listen to them
- 39:30 and not that many people stop that same way to listen to a trombone or something like that. That's really stirring. It really gets under the skin in a way. That was my reaction the way everybody reacted when I played. A smile on their face and a relaxed look and oh, the thorough enjoyment of it all. It was

really good. You've given me motivation. I might get those pipes out and try and get the reeds

40:00 working. Do something with that blooming pipe bag even if I've got to wrap some plastic around it to stop the air escaping. I'll do something. I'll get there.

Tape 8

00:35 **Can you talk about some of the performances put on by the Australian Films League?**

Yes, we did variety shows and one of the variety shows was proceeds donated to Legacy.

01:00 All the artists appearing on the program were members of the Australian Films League. The Australian Films League was under the patronage of Ken Hall Cinesound, Eric Porter, Mr Arthur Crook, British Empire Films, Mervin Murphy Supreme Sound Systems and Eve Clare, the Photo Player. The particular concert was in Ashfield Town Hall and that was back in 1947.

01:30 We did our concerts, we had a song and play night at the Radio Theatre in George Street, Sydney. That was also in August 1947. One of our members was Leonard Meyers and he wrote two plays.

02:00 One was Life Begins at 16, which was a comedy in 3 acts. The other case was a Slight Case of Terror, that was a drama of one act. All the artist appearing on the program were members of the Australian Films League. Leonard Meyers, who wrote the play, he was also a member of the Australian Films League. We had a lot of

02:30 crowd scenes at Cinesound Theatre and Supreme Sound Systems and let's see what else we've got.

03:00 They did appear in Smithy, which was an Australian film. I can remember there were a couple of others. Smithy was Australian Films League one.

03:30 There was the Charles Chauvel, Sons of Matthew and Eric Porter's Storm Hill. They were all Australian movies. We took parts in all of them. We welcomed back to Australia for a short visit a well known Australian film actor Ron Randall.

04:00 **You were accused of being bobbysocks?**

Bobbysoxers, yes.

What do you mean by bobbysoxers?

Well, they were kids who, in Frank Sinatra's day, were bobbysoxers and they wore socks we called bobbysoxers. They used to scream and shout and yell with excitement when they'd see Frank Sinatra and all that sort of thing.

04:30 That's why people talked about bobbysoxers. They were young people.

Girls only?

No. I don't think so, there might have been, but there might have been, I don't know. It was annoying when Ron Randall comes out from America and we welcomed him at a big do and we presented him with a pair of gold cufflinks in appreciation of

05:00 what he's done for Australian movies. And the newspapers bring out headlines 'Bobbysoxers Farewell Randall'. It was very annoying.

You've got some information about the performances you did while you were part of the Highland Trio. Some of the piping tunes you would play. We might get you to read one

05:30 **of those programs out.**

I've got to find them. Yes here's one. This was Kookaburra concert party presenting a camp show in aid of the Food For Britain fund

06:00 and St James Rehabilitation Mission in New Guinea. That was in May 1946. We opened the concert with a pipe selection. First tune was Major Norman Noy Ewing, the second one was Blue Bonnets O'er the Border, the third one was Green Hills of Tyrol and then in part two we opened that also. Well,

06:30 Beverly and I did the Highland fling while Gloria played for us in the second half. But towards the end we did another pipe selection; Barren Rocks of Aden, The Brock of Donaldoo and The Sky Gathering. That all took part in aid of the Food For Britain fund and St James

07:00 Rehabilitation Mission at New Guinea.

You were performing that in New Guinea?

No. But it was for a rehabilitation fund in New Guinea.

Where did the performance take place?

St James Hall in Sydney on the 16th and 18th of May 1946. That was two days running.

07:30 **Can you clarify what war bonds were? I didn't quite get the whole picture.**

War bonds were sort of a loan

08:00 that was collected from people to help the government finance war efforts. People gave certain amounts each week out of their pay.

That was compulsory?

No, it wasn't compulsory, but everybody did it 'cos we were in the middle of a war that needed assistance. We had confirmation that we'd given

08:30 this and this and this. When it was all over, when we wanted to, we could still have left it in a bank of whatever to gain interest, but if we wanted to we could withdraw it all. That was referred to as war bonds. Very similar to when Telecom used to sell war bonds to raise money for things. This wasn't during the war, this has been more recent years.

09:00 They don't now, but they used to offer huge interest, 14-17%. I think it was in the Paul Keating time when interest rates were up high, when you could buy these, they weren't war bonds, they were just investment bonds they were called. You invested them for a certain period of time and then you could get them back with the interest attached. We could do the same

09:30 with war bonds. They were there to give ready cash to the government to fight the war for us, to help our troops and put clothes on them and give them food and ammunition and all that sort of thing. That's what war bonds were for. That's why we went round the state. Other concert parties often probably did the same thing in other states

10:00 to raise funds for war bonds. It was a regular thing. It wasn't a sort of somebody putting you on, if you know what I mean. It was a government sponsored thing. That's why we were going round to these war bond selling concerts.

Did you get paid as part of the Highland Trio?

No.

It was all voluntary work?

All voluntary. No, you wouldn't even think of pay.

10:30 See, all those drivers that gave their cars in NRMA and Royal Automobile Club gave their cars to pick up people and take them places and stay there and pick them up and bring them back. All they got were petrol coupons to replace their petrol. Unless they had a petrol coupon they couldn't get petrol to do it. There would have been nobody to have taken the concert party people to the different places to do the concerts.

11:00 That was just the way things were in those days. So we all gave our time. We were fighting the war. Our boys were over there and we were here helping them, doing the best we could under the circumstances.

When you met your husband, was it love at first sight?

11:30 I think it might have been a case of attraction rather than love. What is love at first sight anyhow? If somebody attracts you not only in appearance, but in intellect I think that's what gets people together because the person, you like them. That's what happened.

As soon as you met him, did you start dating

12:00 **immediately after that?**

We worked together a lot at the Australian Films League. Yes, we saw each other some time after that. Yes, we did date each other and go to the movies and things like that. Things weren't all that social, even then, as they are today. The war had just been over and

12:30 what brought things to a head was John was going to Japan for 12 months. Then after he came back, he was in the army and going to Korea.

Before he went to Japan, what was the status of your relationship? Had you got engaged?

We were sort of a 'yes' thing. Yes, I think so.

13:00 It was pretty close. There wasn't anybody else for either of us, I don't think. Not for me anyhow, I hope there wasn't for him.

Before he went to Japan, how long had you been dating?

It looks like he joined the Australian Films League in 1946 and he went to Japan, we got married in 1948.

After he came back from Japan?

No, I think before he went to Japan.

13:30 Was it hard for you to be without him that time?

No, because he was over there with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces. It wasn't an army venture like when he came back and he joined and was sent in the permanent army and went to Korea. That was frontline stuff.

14:00 The British Commonwealth Occupation Forces, wasn't.

When he went to Korea, you didn't have any children at that stage?

No. I swore I was so angry that if one bullet hit him I was going to kill every Asian I saw. I have to be careful what I say now, there are so many here, aren't they? I was determined I was going to do that if

14:30 any of them hurt him. Stupid me. As if I could get away with anything like that. I'd be the one that would end up 6 feet under.

You were really upset when he told you he was going to the Korean War?

Yes, I didn't want him to go.

Did you tell him not to?

I had to. He was in the army. He was posted to Korea, there was a war on. Had no option. He was

15:00 lucky. He had a few close escapes. Some of his friends were killed up there.

How long was he in Korea for?

I think he was up there for 12 months. It was a long time anyhow.

Were you able to write to each other?

Yes, we communicated. I used to send him some little presents of things I thought he might be able to make use

15:30 of that he probably wouldn't get up there.

What sorts of things would you send him?

Can't quite remember now. He wouldn't have needed clothing. I was thinking more along the lines of food, Christmas cakes, something like that. Might have been that. Sending up there. I remember there was an American chap here that I met.

16:00 He went up to Papua New Guinea and I remember sending a Christmas cake up to him.

Was this before you met your husband?

Mm. I don't ever remember this chap's name.

Was he your sweetheart?

No. I just met him at one of the show. He gave me his name and address and he rang me, told me he was going

16:30 up to Papua New Guinea. I had his army rank and the group he was in so I was able to, coming up Christmas I sent him a Christmas cake. I didn't think they'd get much love up there. With Americans I should have known better. They did not go without anything, They had everything provided.

17:00 Never mind. I just thought it might be nice for him.

What was it like to be the wife left behind, when your husband's at war?

Very lonely, very worrying, day by day you never stop thinking, "Is he all right?" It's a very traumatic and trying time.

17:30 I was one of the lucky ones. When I think of so many other that I know who weren't so lucky. I remember one lass that I knew. Her husband was in the army, in the navy. He came home on leave and somehow or other they had a row. He left to go back onboard and off to the war

18:00 and his ship was sunk and she never saw him again. She never got over it. It was on her mind all the time what she had been saying and had done and how, she was punished. Horrible event. I was lucky. I'm always 'thank you'.

When he came home, what was it like seeing him again?

Fantastic.

18:30 Before he was released, he was in camp at, they had a camp at Summer Hill I think it was. I was working at Rozelle at the time, this new job I had with the managing director. I had a little car. After work I drove straight round there and got to the gate and asked for him. Out he came and it

19:00 was so wonderful to see him. We weren't together very long before I suddenly found I was pregnant. Wonder how that happened.

You must have celebrated when he came home. Did you do anything special?

I can't remember. I think he was just so glad to be home he didn't want to go anywhere.

19:30 We had our own house at Panania and it was just wonderful that he was back. That's all we wanted.

Did you try and tell him to leave his army service?

No, because when he left there, when he came back,

20:00 he was in army intelligence at the thing up here. That was when the governor general of Australia appointed him a captain of the army. That's the certificate that they gave him for it. No, I just marked time. Let him do what he wanted to do.

20:30 I didn't interfere in any way at all. He wanted to go back to university and wanted to study this to go there and so on. I was all for it.

Was that because women at that time didn't have a say in how their men's careers should go?

No, I don't know. But in that day,

21:00 that would be the early 1950s, women sort of came good during the war years because all the married women were allowed to go to work and they were sort of getting on an even level with men. That didn't matter anymore. They have their opinion and was accepted.

21:30 Depends upon couples themselves how they take it. You can be a bully, you can be considerate, you can be frustrating, you can be demanding, you can be all those things and everything that isn't of those things. There are a lot of people in the world and everybody acts differently in these things. Women

22:00 came into their own. The Caucasian women came into their own, as distinct for the Middle Eastern ones. They never ever did. They were so, and still many of them you see down here at Chullora, covered in black. All you can see is two eyeballs. They do it. This is Australia. They've got their own schools too.

22:30 You can understand that in a sense, but it seems to me to be rigidity at the point of a gun. I just can't see that any woman could be so, I suppose there would be. They've been brought up this way. Brainwashed, conditioned, this is the right thing to do. So they do it.

You fell after the war that you had more personal

23:00 **power.**

I never ever thought of having power. I did what I wanted to do and I went where I wanted to go and even after that, when I was working down at the council, I had control of everything. I used to tell people what to do and where to go and all the things

23:30 about them. Maybe they thought I was a bully girl down there, I don't know. If anybody rang up and asked for the mayor's 5th generation secretary, I was quite happy to accept his call.

You were always a confident child and a confident teenager and you were used to performing in front of people

Yeah, I think I was very

24:00 relaxed. There was no rigidity about me. My attitude was, "Well, if that's what you want, go get it, but leave me out of it," attitude, "I'll do what I want." I know a lot of people are bullied, but I never ever was. I was always very lucky and doing what I thought I'd like to do.

Did anyone ever try to stop you from doing what you wanted to do?

No, never.

24:30 I was just this lucky. Maybe it was because I always made the right choice. I don't think so. I just don't feel that I had any feelings of being tied in a background of women only and the men go off and do their own enjoyment things.

25:00 I don't feel that at all. So I never ever did. Maybe because I was too busy and I was performing for

people and enjoying being appreciated and clapped and this sort of thing. It just made a big difference perhaps.

You've done a lot of charity work, can you talk about charity work you've done that's meant a lot to you?

25:30 I've been for all of them. I've done Meals on Wheels. Twice annually I go and knock for Red Shield Appeal with the Salvation Army, for Red Cross Calling, I'm a Friend of Kokoda and I'm a Friend of Strathfield Library and I'm a Friend of

26:00 Police Community and Youth Clubs. I've done a lot of guest speaker talks. I think I mentioned that, but I talk about how memories make history. I've talked to Strathfield Historical Society and the Girl Guides annual Australia wide

26:30 meeting, to the National Council of Jewish Women New South Wales, the Friends of Strathfield Library. I enjoy doing it. I don't have to be stood over to do this and say that, I just enjoy doing it. It's part of life for me. It always has been.

Why do you enjoy it

27:00 **so much?**

Maybe it's just been part of my life for all my life. Once again, maybe I'm just an automatic pilot with it. I hope I can continue. It's the only thing that worries me every year, going, some other year, gone. What's going to happen the year after. You hate it. But I refuse to be anything other than 50

27:30 going on, so I'll keep going.

You've been awarded an OBE [Order of the British Empire].

OBM, OAM, Order of Australia Medal.

How did that make you feel?

Fantastic, I couldn't believe it. I showed you that thing I got from Government House, didn't I?

28:00 **Can you talk about it?**

Yes, it came in the mail saying that I'd been awarded an OAM and a whole heap of things that I'd done. This was what had been organised without my knowledge and had been given to the local member and he'd taken it down to Parliament House. Everything was involved in it including

28:30 naturalisation ceremonies and mayoral balls and Red Shield Appeal and Red Cross Calling and all the other things. It was absolutely incredible. I just couldn't believe it. I just didn't feel anything because I couldn't believe it. I thought, "I'll wake up in a minute and it's all been a nice nightmare," sort of thing. Then the day came and I had to go down to

29:00 Government House and get my medal. It was wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. Stand up there and shake hands with the Governor General Gordon - what was his name? There's a photo of me up there with him shaking my hand and putting the medal on me and wow! Don't believe it even now. Thought I'd do.

29:30 They tell you to wear this all the time. I am a lifetime member of the Order of Australia Association. They have a dinner every, round about every July I think it is. I've been to several of them. I've been to the restaurant in Parliament House.

30:00 It's very nice. Very nice meeting people again that you've met somewhere. I didn't go to one this year because I had so much else on my plate. So I missed that. I may go next year. We'll see. I've still got that to look forward to.

You've got another reason to go to Canberra, isn't your name at the War Memorial?

No, the photo of

30:30 the three of us is down in the War Memorial Museum. Yes, I think my name is on it.

There's a photo of the Highland Trio at the War Memorial?

Yes.

That must have been a great moment as well.

Yes. I knew that was going to happen, because I had been helping them move in, so the women that had anything to do with the war could be put in. For the first time the women were in

31:00 the Second World War War Memorial.

What do you mean 'move them in'?

It had been all men before. Then they decided to put a lot of the women that had been given awards and that. So they had to alter the men and move them a bit to make room to put the women in.

A different part of the room?

Yes.

What year was that?

That happened, that's what that is for, 1948 I think.

31:30 Up till 1948 there was no women in the War Memorial Museum?

I think there was only one and that was Nancy Bird Walton, the aviatrix. I don't think there was anybody else. I've known Nancy for years. She's an honourary Zontan and I was charge of secretary of Zonta Club of Sydney West Wisteria, which once again is another charity. We raised lots of funds for various things in the area.

32:00 We got a Sydney Morning Herald and a City of Sydney appreciation that was handed to us down in town somewhere. I forget now. I've got a photo of the Governor General handing us that photo.

32:30 I think why we got that was, we put on a big concert at the Burwood Girls' High School auditorium. They've got a big hall. We invited all the schools to partake and the children to do different things. They were dancing and singing and

33:00 John Southam who heads the choir of Trinity Grammar Boys', he was down there with his choir and they were singing all the time. The thing was, while we had that, we were raising money for different charities in the area. There was School for Handicapped Children and orphanages and a few

33:30 places. The place was packed. People came, they paid a lot of money.

Was that part of the Zonta Club?

That was the Zonta did it.

That's what you did? Donated this money for different causes?

Yes, we raised, I think it was about \$5,000 and what we did was have each of the students of the schools that took part in that,

34:00 to be there on the stage when we called the people up representing these organisations, to hand them the money that they'd been responsible in raising that night. So they saw how much they'd raised and who was getting the money. We gave all these people the money. That's why we got that certificate.

How did you think the war changed you as a person?

Me? I don't know

34:30 that it did. I don't know that it did. Life just goes on, something just crops up. I don't think it changed me at all. I can't think that I was any different before or any different after. I haven't even thought down that line. I know some people lost people in the war that were grief stricken for the rest of their life, but that didn't happen to me. Although I feel horribly sorry for

35:00 friends that I lost, I just don't feel that it's made any difference to my outlook on life of helping others. Continuing charity works.

What's your view on war today?

I hate it of course. Who doesn't? But a time comes when you've got to either protect yourself or suffer.

35:30 Even though a lot of people suffer with war, the next generations have been protected. When you look at Iraq for instance, how they've raised over 300,000 bodies out of graves that nobody knew where there. 300,000, 330,000 something or Iraqi people that Saddam Hussein killed and had buried. They're still going round

36:00 shooting people and cars. Even the women are taking part in these car bombs now. My upbringing and lifestyle, this is something you see in a horror movie, it's not something that can really happen in real life. But humans are still like that today. They're still doing it. I just can't believe it. We had Hitler, we had

36:30 all the other horrors before him and since him. Now we've got these people. Can't believe it. It's all - look at Mugabe. What he's done to his people? Who'll want him to come here and get rid of all us whites and bring all his mates over here? There are times when one has to do the right thing.

37:00 Even though it's horrible, people die, at least you may save hundreds of thousands of millions of lives now and in the future by doing it. So I don't approve of it, but I don't think it should happen. I don't think people should do these things that make other people have to do this. Do you?

Do you think

37:30 **the wars that Australia's participated in made our country a safer place?**

No, I don't, for the point of view that they've not killed enough of these people and they're still coming out here and trying to kill.

Which people?

I'm talking about the terrorists. The Islamic terrorists coming out here, nobody knows they're here. They

38:00 go over there to learn how to do it. When they get in a plane and fly a plane and kill 3,000 people in New York, when are they going to stop? How are we going to stop them before they do it to you? You've just got to reverse the tables so that you get rid of those that are creating this problem to save those who are the poor victims of it all.

38:30 **In Strathfield, there's a large Asian community. Your family's been here a long time, how does that make you feel having the ethnic makeup of your suburb changing?**

The ethnic makeup doesn't matter to me. What I do object to is that they come out here,

39:00 they don't learn English, they put all their funny signs up on shops, you can't read them. If you want to go and buy something you wouldn't know what shop to go into. I think there should be a law saying that all shops and public signs and everything like that must be in English and that everybody comes here must learn to speak English so that we can converse and talk to them and make them understand our lifestyle, they can't.

39:30 They come out here with all these brainwashed horrible ideas and they don't even learn our language. They open their own radio and television shows with all their languages. Don't like ours or listen to ours or read our papers. They've got all their own papers. I'm not saying to isolate them from their culture, but I'm saying there should be something saying that you must assimilate partly into our culture by understanding that this is an English speaking country, you've got to learn

40:00 to speak English. All the signs have to be in English, because this is an English speaking country and what you do in your own home is your own fare, but you've got to try and assimilate. I know at the naturalisation ceremonies they used to invite all the local members to come and say a few words to the people. They always used to stand up and say, "We're glad to have you, welcome. You're free to bring your own cultures

40:30 here, you're welcome," and all this. Not once has anybody said, "- but you must assimilate." The whole need of this country is that everybody must assimilate to become one part of the nation, not their part and our part.

What would you think is an important note to finish on here?

41:00 What about?

This is your chance to say whatever you like.

I think considering so many of our lovely young men have gone to wars to fight to keep us free and enjoy our lifestyle we should be able to enjoy it. People coming into the country would be made aware of our lifestyle so that although they keep their own cultures they should try to assimilate

41:30 and become part of the lifestyle of this country. They've run away from their country, it's been a mess and they've escaped from it. They've come to this country, which is so good, we want you to stay here and enjoy it, but, we think you must assimilate and become part of the country by learning to speak English and write English and put it on your shops, not have your languages of that horrible place you come from portrayed everywhere.

INTERVIEW ENDS