Australians at War Film Archive

Pauline Willis (Pauli) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:30 **All right now Pauline, as I asked, you can you give us a summary of your life history?**

Well, I was born in 1922 in a very large mansion of a house, in a home birth; my mother was about twenty-three I think, at the time. And anyhow I was living, we didn't live there very long, my grandfather had lost all of his money, he was a Canadian banker,

01:00 owned his own bank and it was taken over by the Bank of Montreal, it was called the Bank Of Hitchcock, anyway, to cut a long story short, my poor, little grandmother lost everything. And she went to Dartmoor where she bought a little plot of land and helped build her own little establishment. My mother was living in London, my father was in the navy and unfortunately, he was sent to Australia for two or three years and he was unfaithful to my mother and

01:30 she then very bravely, after a lot of thought I imagine, decided she would divorce him. Which she did. This was no easy procedure in those days, there was no question of a 'no fault' business or anything of that nature. She had to prove that he was unfaithful to her which she was able to do. And her divorce came through when I was approximately nine.

02:00 Meanwhile my mother had to work and I was sent to my grandmother's on Dartmoor where I had the most glorious childhood, every summer holiday and every Easter holiday I spent with my grandmother on Dartmoor and my pony, riding in a way that a child nowadays would never be left to be so free., It was gorgeous, I could just say, "All right Gran, I am going in this direction." And she would say, "Well, try and be back in an hour or two." And I would say, "Okay." And off I would go having a whale of

02:30 a time, just going fording through rivers and galloping my head off, it was a marvellous childhood. But unfortunately I also had to go to boarding school because my mother was working. And this I hated. I had six years in a school I absolutely detested so that was it, and then my mother met a very nice man and remarried, in fact I was my mother's bridesmaid

03:00 which was something a little unusual. I enjoyed having a stepfather, he was very good to me and we got on famously. I had one full brother which was my father's child and then another brother came along, my half brother. Stop?

Just keep moving forward, for the brief kind of high points.

Okay. Anyway, to cut a long story

03:30 short, first of all I spent a year riding when I finished school. I left school young because I wasn't very bright and I hated it, and so they decided as I adored horses to send me to a riding establishment, where I had a wonderful time, the greatest year of my life. Anyway then there were war clouds and this wasn't good. And when war broke out my mother decided we had better go down to the country. So we went down to my stepfather's mother's

04:00 house, which was built right next door to Bomber Command headquarters. And this was quite interesting. It had a small farm, about thirty acres; I was probably about seventeen at the time. I kept a pig which I enjoyed having very much. I had a Danish harness and she was put out in the paddock or the field as we called it, so that she could circle around in circles in the field with

04:30 a long chain and not go wandering. And of course these signals interested the war office because they thought they were signals to the Germans. And we were investigated very fully. So I had to take the people in charge out and show them Annabelle with her harness on, snorting away and having a whale of a time. And that was that. Mum had a heap of people billeted on her. Heap of people from the Bomber Command headquarters.

05:00 And I used to help there but as I grew nearer to being eighteen I decided it wasn't good enough, I didn't want to go into a local factory, I didn't even really want to be on the land. I wanted to be in the air force. So I went into London on an excuse, I knew London quite well, and I rushed to the nearest recruiting

office. I stood on tiptoes to make myself taller, because we should be five foot two to be a transport driver in

05:30 those days, and managed to become accepted for the WAAF [Women's Auxiliary Air Force]. Went home and told my mother what I had done, which was slightly frowned on. But she realised that I would be conscripted if I had stayed free as it were. Came the day I went off and trained which was rather hellish actually because we lived in army huts, there were all sorts of people, and the camps were sometimes hastily erected and we had duckboards between out huts,

06:00 **I am sorry I am just going to have to pause you for a second. Try not to put so much detail at each step just briefly go through how you, where you were posted and what you did further on.**

Well when the training for the actually WAAFs was finished we trained for our actual categories, mine was motor transport. I was always on Bomber Station. It was a very interesting life. And

06:30 I finally met the man I was to marry, Tony Willis. And we got to know each other, I wasn't in uniform, he was Bomber Headquarters office, liaison office. And after about fifteen months we got married. He came home ahead of me, came back to Australia. Because it was in strict rotation. I came about two months afterwards and that was in a little ship that was a coaling ship,

07:00 and we went around the Cape to Durban and eventually I got off in Melbourne where we stayed for a couple of weeks until we came to Sydney. We motored across; we had a thirty hundred-weight ex-army truck. Tony had meanwhile bought a property in the Warrumbungles. And we finally took off for the Warrumbungles with an electrician on board and a lighting plant. And of course, we arrived in the middle of the night, we slept on our mattress without even taking the covers off and Clive got the electricity going the very next day.

07:30 We had but four years there, both of our sons were born there. The eldest boy was a very difficult baby to rear, it wasn't his fault, they didn't know what complaint he had and it was finally diagnosed as being wheat intolerant. And it seemed advisable to leave the property and go down near Doctor Kate Campbell, who was the kids' paediatrician at that time. And then we stayed in my father-in-law's house. He was overseas on business.

08:00 We stayed in my father-in-law's house down at Mount Eliza, out of Frankston, in Victoria. Which was lovely actually, we had two boys there and finally we swapped properties and bought another property near Hamilton at a place called Tarenlea. And we eventually went there to live when my father-in-law returned.

08:30 It was a funny sort of property, it had a road going through the middle of it and Tony didn't like it so we changed properties and bought one at Dartmoor which is quite near the South Australian border so we used to shop at Mount Gambier and things like that. Meanwhile we had two more babies, both girls which was very lucky. Having then gone downhill rather badly farming wise, we decided that we had better cut loose. And a friends of Tony's suggested going into the wretched tobacco industry

09:00 which Tony did, he was installing burners and things into the tobacco kilns while we lived in Albury. That was a difficult period, the boys were going to Albury Grammar and the girls were going to whatever local school. Then we bought a property at Yackandandah, which was a lovely, little, old village and we built a little house out of Mount Gambier stone, which was rather nice. The first decent house we had ever had. Eighteen months later Tony had a massive stroke,

09:30 a cerebral haemorrhage, he lost half of his brain. It was a very traumatic time. And he lived at home on the farm after that for four years. It was difficult because he had no short term memory, therefore he was a danger, if he lit a cigarette he wouldn't remember that he had lit it and it could start a fire and it was a rotten time for the two girls. The youngest was ten and the time and the other was thirteen. So they really lost their girlhood.

10:00 Finally he was hospitalised in Albury. I went to live in Albury, I leased the farm and the house and I worked in a children's boutique which enabled me to go and see him on a regular basis and that sort of thing. Anyway, to cut a long story short he lingered for two years and it was very miserable time. I took my youngest daughter then overseas, and I actually left her, she was seventeen

10:30 then, I left her to do a finishing school, which was actually a rip-off she told me. Anyway, she did learn to cook a bit. I came back to Australia and then I stupidly took a job at Geelong Grammar under the proviso that I could give notice if I was not happy, which I wasn't. So two months later I was giving notice, and this was very frowned on because the last matron had been there

11:00 thirty-two years and I had been there two months, anyhow they had to abide by what arrangement we had made. Then I came up to Sydney on a holiday, met a man called Fraser McEwing who had a newspaper for the rag trade, called Rag Trader, appropriately. He took me on, if I lived in Melbourne, to do children's wear. Which I enjoyed doing. I enjoyed the writing

11:30 and I enjoyed doing the whole thing. Anyhow, I was coming up to Sydney to interview all of the children's wear writers and he gave me the job of being the Sydney writer, so I moved to Sydney. Meanwhile the kids were scattered, one was married, another did this and another that. They were all out from under. Having worked for Rag Trader for about three or four years I suddenly decided I wasn't getting my money's worth and I left. Since then have taken various jobs, it

12:00 took a long time to get over being widowed. I didn't like it, I missed Tony very much. I missed the support, I missed the man but that was the way of it. You have to get on with your life. My mother always said people age if they become nostalgic or they become sentimental. I don't know whether I have succeeded or not, but I don't feel my age. Then eventually I bought a little flat in Sydney,

12:30 sold the farm and bought a flat for the money where I still live and enjoy. And I like it and I work as a carer. Was that all right?

That was perfect and now we're going to go back and get a lot more detail along every step of the way.

I am sorry if I over detailed a lot.

Just try to talk to me a bit more rather than the camera. Imagine the camera is not there if you can.

13:00 **Just imagine it is us having a talk.**

I will.

Now, in your early childhood your father had some contact with Australia, tell us about that?

I don't know much about it. he was in the navy. He was sent out here, I don't even know where he was. I imagine he was based in Sydney.

13:30 I was so small, I can barely remember him. I can remember when he came back. I can remember him driving me to get some petrol, that's all I can remember. I remember he once spanked me for wetting the bed, I don't know if that was the best thing to do or not, but I think I hadn't told the truth, that I wet the bed.

So tell us then about the circumstances of your childhood and growing up.

14:00 In what way? The happiness of it?

Let's talk about the period before your mother and father split up.

Oops.

So what do you remember of that period up until about nine years old?

We lived at a place called Berry Grange Farm but I have no idea where it was. I have no idea the name of the city, town or anything. I do remember my baby brother coming home, my own brother.

14:30 And I remember reading him a story and being furious and he was in this crib with the high shepherd's crook and lace everywhere and I was reading him a story about two children hiding under a table. And I said to my mother, "It is no good reading to him, he doesn't even wonder." Which he didn't. I saved his life once because I found the cat sleeping on top of his chest in the garden where he was in the pram. I think

15:00 the nurse got the sack for that one. That's about all I can remember. Mike was a darling boy except he had a fiendish temper. My grandmother had him to live with her, he actually lived there all of the time. She was extremely good with him. I can remember being terrified of his temper, he would just lie on the floor and shriek, but he grew into a lovely man, very placid, which is good. After that I was sent to boarding school. My great aunt told me

15:30 that my mother and father had divorced. I don't know why my mother couldn't have told me herself. It would have been very preferable because my great aunt really coloured what I thought about my father, she really made me hate him. I would go around as a child saying, "I hate him, I wish he was dead." That was really unfortunate, she didn't have to do that at all. And later he started to write to me, when he was in South Africa during the war, he was in South Africa and he used to write to me and I used to write back.

16:00 But then he died unfortunately, he got TB [tuberculosis], he was in submarines which were badly air conditioned in those days and he got TB, which of course is why doctors are still looking at me wondering how my lungs are managing, but I am sure it was because he was in submarines too long. Anyway, he died and was buried at sea off Durban when he was only forty-two. That was sad. Mum meanwhile had done various jobs

16:30 and the man she married had an architectural and decorating firm in Mount Street Mayfair, in London, very upmarket, beautiful fabrics, lovely furniture and that sort of thing and she got involved in all of that. So my childhood was coloured really by my grandmother who was a wonderful character, I was very lucky; she had a good sense of humour. She was still riding horses well into her sixties and a lot of fun

17:00 to be with. Even though she had lost all of her money and had to cope in a way that, where most women would have gone under.

What sort of status and background did your family have?

I would suppose that you would call them middle class, I don't really know. my father was a commander or a captain or whatever he was. As I say, my grandfather and his brother did have their own bank but they lost all of

17:30 their money. He had had a stroke actually and he made silly decisions, they weren't criminal or anything of that nature, and he couldn't see the end result, like a lot of people after a stroke, they can see one bit of a problem but they don't see through. If you see what I mean.

18:00 **Okay, tell us about your parents' divorce because it would have been unusual at the time?**

Well, you see my mother didn't talk to me about it at all which was unfortunate. Years later she said, well, it was a shocking shock. She went to meet my father off the boat train and he came back from Australia and was going up to him when this

18:30 other woman raced up to him and embraced him and he embraced her. And my mother had no idea about her even. No idea at all. And whether it was somebody he had met in Australia and had come back ahead of him I don't know any details. He did eventually remarry after the divorce. He married a Harley Street doctor's daughter who took him for a ride completely and he then divorced her. That was another little side bit.

19:00 Luckily I felt very fond of my stepfather and I didn't miss a male figure. Like a lot of children probably do nowadays, I always had someone there. He went off to the war of course, he was in Fighter Command as an intelligence officer, he was too old to be anything else. And then Mum was coping at

19:30 home on her own. She used to run dances for the WAAFs, not WAAF officers but the WAAFs, and she ran an organization making toys and things like that. They could get felt and things like that without it being rationed. Talking of being rationed, my wedding dress was a lovely, white, curtain material because we could get curtain material without coupons which was rather surprising.

20:00 **What sort of social stigma was attached to divorce in those days?**

It would have been difficult for my mother yes, because a woman who did the divorcing was considered as bad as the one who was divorced. And when she wanted to remarry there were very few churches in the Church of England who would remarry her. They had to get married in the city somewhere; there was a church that would accept her.

20:30 And she was married in a navy blue outfit from what I remember.

All right, well tell us about your schooldays?

Well, they were terribly strict from what I remember. We couldn't even write to an uncle or a brother without getting permission and they would make us leave the letters open so that they could read them. With the result of course that we were all absolutely man hungry.

21:00 If a plumber came on to the school grounds he was practically besieged by little girls asking questions about plumbing, anything. A gardener. Anyone. Because we were kept so segregated from the opposite sex that it was a wonderful mystery that we were all dying to find out so much more about. I had good friends, I was lucky in that respect. I hated the method of teaching, it was so dull and boring, there was no attempt to make things exciting at all.

21:30 And the two little old headmistresses that were sisters, Misses Mulliner, they used to have enormous toques [hats] on their head like Queen Mary used to wear, great big hats that were mounted high and they were formidable people, both of them. And we had prayers and yet more prayers. We had prayers in the morning, good grace before breakfast, and then we would have to go up to the main school from our house and we would have more prayers,

22:00 school prayers. And then we went off to our classes, and we had our lunch and our afternoons and came back to our own houses at night and had more prayers. It was inevitable.

What sort of subjects did you learn?

Geography, History, and all of it, dullest way of presenting it. they didn't tie any History in with Geography, there was no question of seeing how things

22:30 connected. Science, which I absolutely detested. Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, Latin, a little bit of French Sewing, I was no good at that at all. I was made to make a duster in the end, it was the only thing I could do. That was about it. We played netball we played tennis. Rounders, cricket wasn't on.

23:00 Lacrosse because hockey was dangerous. Lacrosse you can bash somebody else's hand if you're quick enough so I don't know why they let up play lacrosse.

What sort of uniform did you have to wear?

Gym tunic, tie, shirt, I suppose we must have had, I think we had black velour hats with the hat band around them saying what school we were from. Blazers, that sort of thing.

23:30 **And what about the life in the boarding house?**

Oh, we did everything we could to upset it. I must say that we were awful. We had rails with curtains so that each girl's cubicle was completely private and these rails were pretty sturdy. And anyone that snored we would swing along at night after lights out and put bits of soap in their mouth. I can remember

24:00 doing that, you know, we must stop the snoring, let's see if she bubbles. I can remember very well listening to the abdication [of the king] on the radio and how shocking it was. A divorcee? Oh goodness. Then of course I thought of my mother.

And what did you do in the holidays?

Apart from riding, in the Christmas holidays my grandmother would come up to London and stay because Dartmoor

24:30 was desperately cold and she would be isolated with snow and things. And she used to come up and stay for the month. And I adored that because she would take me off and we would go to the theatre and we would go to Gilbert and Sullivan and stand in the queue because it was cheaper to do this. Stand in the queue and get in 'up in the gods' [seats high up in the theatre] she always called it. so we would stand in the queue and all of these street buskers would come along and she would sing along with them much to my embarrassment,

25:00 We would get into the theatre and the overture would start and my grandmother knew all of the words and she would be piping away and I would be cringing just waiting for the curtain to go up and hoping to start and hope she would keep quiet and listen. But I loved her so much I could never get really cross.

And tell us about your great passion at that time, riding.

Well, I just adored horses, I don't know how come I married a man, I thought that Tony

25:30 would like horses but he didn't, he didn't trust them. He used to go off to the paddock leading the horse and he would come back two hours leading it back. I never knew if he got on the damn thing or not. My passion was, I thought I would like to take the Institute of Horse exam and I would like to do this and that. But it didn't eventuate as things don't very often. I enjoyed grooming them I enjoyed everything about them. It was a nice year,

26:00 I don't think about it much now, I do know that it was a lovely year to have been given. I did spend one holiday overseas before the war, I was able to go to France where a friend of mine lived in Brittany and that was great, I enjoyed that. It was a lovely little place near San Malo. I was interested that they always ate sour cream with everything and I can relate to that.

26:30 **You mentioned earlier you used to go riding on Dartmoor, why do you think that childhood is different from a childhood today?**

Well, because I had complete freedom. I could go anywhere, okay, so you don't talk to strangers etcetera. There was no fear of girls going off on their own. Now, I don't see that you would ever let

27:00 a child of nine or ten go off on a pony by herself into the bush anywhere. Do you? I mean cars might stop and so forth but you would just ride away.

What other games, songs entertainment things did you do as a child?

We used to have a wonderful time on New Year's Eve,

27:30 this is early in the war before perhaps. A friend of Mum's used to have an enormous New Year's Eve party, it was my favourite party of the year. And we used to play charades and we used to play games and all sorts of things. That was good fun. I liked acting; I did a little bit of acting when I was in the WAAF, which we toured around with for good fun. I was a little innocent ingénue [innocent girl] of course.

28:00 But I didn't care, it was good fun. We all went off on a bus and we all sung songs. The war was fantastic. Having had a boarding school segregation of the sexes and then being thrown in with them, lovely men, terrible men some of them. But it was an exciting period there is no doubt about that.

Tell us about why you left school.

I was a rebel.

28:30 I used to cry my heart out before I went back to school each term, it was ghastly for my mother, sobbing all of the way to school train. She realised I wasn't going to try dreadfully hard at my work and I am self taught since then. They both decided that it was expensive sending a girl to boarding school for no result.

29:00 So they let me leave when I was nearly seventeen, sixteen and a bit.

And then tell us about that riding establishment where you spent the next year.

Well, this was two old lesbians evidently, I didn't know that they were of course, I had no idea. They had ponies that they were training to sell. They had a brood mare, or several brood mares actually.

29:30 And they had a proper riding school, so they went around and around on the lunging range and over jumps and things like that. I was well known for not falling off to the ground, I was well known for semi-falling. I used to grab a hold of the horse's mane, lock my legs around its neck, anything rather than landing on the ground. And this did happen often so I got well known for it. We were taken then to what they call cubbing, which in

30:00 those days, this was prior to the hunt. And I adored that because it was wild and good fun. We were allowed to go out, there was another girl training there as well. We were allowed to go out together with the ponies on certain routes and be back by a certain time sort of thing. They had the most wonderful Hungarian cook. Boy, could she cook some wonderful things, apple strudel was divine.

30:30 And she used to make the most gorgeous spinach soufflé. I have never had one since and I can still think about it and wish I had one. And cheese soufflés as well she would make. And I was only there for a year but it was good.

At this point what ambitions did you have for yourself?

I thought I would like to be a vet [veterinarian]. And then the brood mare actually had a difficulty, she had a baby and she

31:00 couldn't get rid of the afterbirth. She was a very expensive brood mare and they had to get a very good vet, specialist vet to come to her. And he actually had to insert his hand into her womb, between the womb and the afterbirth. And I had the unlikely job of having to hold up the heavy afterbirth as the horse's head was being held. But she was so upset she was careering about the box and he said,

31:30 "If you drop that, that horse will die. Because it will leave behind a bit of the afterbirth attached to the womb." So with great trepidation I was holding this thing. And I said to him afterwards I would like to be a vet. And he said, "Well don't, because really there is no room for women." Which there wasn't in those days. "No room for women, except for cats, dogs and birds, you will never be able to look after bigger animals."

32:00 Which of course now isn't the case at all. So that was the ambition and then the war came. And once war clouds come like that all ambition has to go out the door.

Tell us then about the atmosphere that was building in those times.

As far as war? Well I think we all hoped that Neville Chamberlain [British Prime Minister] with his rolled up umbrella

32:30 "Peace in our time!" blah, blah. We all hoped it would be correct. But I think we all felt it would not be. And also I think we felt it was dreadful when Poland was invaded, we should have done something even more quickly than we did. I can remember the announcement of war very vividly, because we were in a very large house next door to the church where we were married, in a little village called Bradman,

33:00 and Disraeli [former Prime Minister] had lived in that house at one stage and it seemed rather symbolic to be hearing all of this about the coming war in Disraeli's old residence. I think we all felt well, good, this is it, lets roll up our sleeves and get on with it. Of course I was too young to join up so what did I do? We had a pony and trap, I harnessed up the pony, put on the trap and I raced around and collected all of the old iron that I could, people donated bits of silver

33:30 and papers, I collected a whole heap of newspapers, I don't know where they all went but they must have been collected by somebody and taken somewhere. And I had an illustrated scroll from the people in the village thanking me for my collecting work, which was fantastic. I used to breed from Annabella my pig, she had babies and that was quite exciting.

34:00 Unfortunately she was made out, I think it was about nine babies, she had nine teats and she had twelve babies. So there were always a few deaths. And they often lie on their piglets, they are not very clever mothers sometimes. But she was a very clean pig, very nice. She would lie down when I wanted her to. I would stroke her back and tell her to lie down and she would. And we kept Little Pig, and Little Pig would always lie down, I

34:30 only had to say it and she would start lying down and I could stroke her. Those were the only two. Little Pig finally went to Fighter Command where she was grossly overfed, and I saw her once, you could hardly see her little trotters. But I think that was almost before she was finally used by Fighter Command for other purposes, they ate her in the mess.

What was the morale of the civilian population like at this time as

35:00 **war was on the horizon?**

Anxious I would say, but also very determined. We knew we would win. There was no question about that, however dreadful, we were determined that we would get there, and of course eventually we did.

It was a very hard road to hoe, and it must have been terrible to have someone in Fighter Command or something like that with the losses that they had. I was

35:30 lucky I never knew Tony when he was flying. He did two operational tours. Got the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] and the DFM [Distinguished Flying Medal]. He said the DFM was the more valuable one because they gave them out less frequently as the DFCs. Anyway, he never saw me in uniform and that was good as far as I was concerned, it was a terrible uniform.

36:00 **What about your feelings and the people around you's feelings at points like the evacuation of Dunkirk?**

Well, it was certainly a shock horror, absolutely. I think we were all so filled with admiration, all of the boats going out, anybody trying to rescue people. I think the losses,

36:30 it is hard for me to remember this, my life was a daily life if you know what I mean. Getting on with whatever I had to do. I think we didn't talk about it a great deal from my memory. I do have lovely memoires of Tommy Handley during the war. With his radio program. How we all used to gather to listen to Tommy Handley, he was a great saviour of humour.

37:00 **So what were your circumstances, as the war hit this point of 39, 40 what were you up to?**

About to join up. As soon as I knew that I could. I did help my mother a lot at home because we had quite a few animals being on thirty acres. We had milking cows. We had a man that did the gardens and the milking.

37:30 Mum did a heap of bottling of fruit, mostly without sugar, which was rather revolting with gooseberries. We kept ducks, Aislbury ducks. We were allowed to kill so many for own consumption. We were allowed to use our own milk to make our own money. So in this respect we were well off but we did have so many people billeted with us because it was a big old rambly type of farm house,

38:00 we probably had almost all of the time at least six people billeted. Some were family, some were not. We had one family with two boys and that sort of thing. So it was pretty stretched.

What sort of privations did you have then?

Not a great deal. We were on a bus route to get to High Wycombe where we could get the train to London should we wish to go to London.

38:30 We didn't have petrol to spare, but in that respect it didn't greatly inconvenience my life. It might have done my mother, from the point of view grocery shopping and that type of thing. I don't remember that aspect of it. because I was more of an outdoor person and tried to keep that way. Certainly when we had the

39:00 lady with the baby billeted on us, they were short of accommodation and this woman hadn't a clue what to do with her baby. And I did fall into quite a lot of baby care at that stage. I don't know why she didn't know what to do but she didn't. She put the child out in the pram, nothing covering its chest at all with thick snow on the ground and a bitterly cold wind. She just hadn't a clue.

39:30 **Who were these people billeted with you?**

Mostly they were air force officers, but we also had a man attached to Bomber Command, a scientist, he was an amberly-shambley [untidy] sort of a man. And this woman that came with the baby, she came from some place wherever it is where you have babies and they didn't have room for her and we took her in until such times as she was fit to travel home. Wherever that was I don't know.

40:00 We had the air force padre billeted on us, he was a very nice man, in fact he finally married us and he was a sweetie. We had a Canadian billeted on us and he was attached to Bomber Command Headquarters.

Tape 2

00:30 **Pauline can you tell us about the attitude in the house where you lived, to the Germans?**

Well, we certainly didn't care for them. We had a lot of French, Free French at Bomber Command headquarters. We had a lot of Americans come to visit us. The American base, similar to Bomber Command headquarters, oh I can't remember the name of the school,

01:00 but they took over a girls' school. They were very amused in the dormitories, "If mistress required at night, please ring." Suited a lot of the Americans but they didn't have any luck. Anyway we got to know a lot of the Americans, a lot of the Free French and the Polish guy that was liasing for the Poles that were over in England. There were a lot of Poles flying in England, this was quite tricky, I don't know if you know this or not.

01:30 When they were flying they talked to each other in Polish the whole time and they liked to do their own thing. It was quite tricky to discipline these Poles in the squadrons. Anyway, I got to know Karol very well, he was Karol Radziwill, he was a prince. He had enormous estates in Poland which of course a lot of the Poles would have

02:00 hated him, he would have been rather like the Tsars, that kind of thing. We used to go bike riding together a lot. He always said, "I cannot marry you because I need somebody with potatoes." Potatoes being lots of money, which he did get eventually apparently. He married an American woman who was well cashed up. And his sister, or his cousin, was Lee Radziwill who was Jacqueline Kennedy's [wife of US President John Kennedy]

02:30 relations, something to do with the Kennedys, I can't remember now. So anyway it was very cosmopolitan, a lot of people that we suddenly got to know. You asked me what we thought. I don't think we actually discussed the Germans per se nearly as much as the way the war was going.

03:00 **And what were your thoughts about that?**

Well again you see, everything was very secret. We had some people very high up in Bomber Command billeted with us, but of course they weren't going to discuss too much with us because of security. One man who actually became the chief of the air force in the end. He and his wife

03:30 were billeted with us, she worked at as local factory in High Wycombe where she was of an age where she had to be conscripted into some form of work, and she wanted to be with her husband, so she was in a factory where she was assembling bits of radios all day long. Her two children had been evacuated back to New Zealand. They were both New Zealanders. Sam Ellworthy

04:00 was extremely high up in the air force, he and a man called Richard Saundby were under Lord Portal who was the chief of Bomber Command. But they would only discuss in generalities, they wouldn't go into any detail.

And can you tell us about the option for working women in World War II?

I wish I knew more, I don't.

04:30 All I know is that had I not volunteered I would have been eventually conscripted and I could have been conscripted into whatever area they felt I was needed. It could have been the land army and the ATS [the Auxiliary Territorial Service], the women's army. And as I wanted to be in the WAAF, I

05:00 particularly wanted to be in the air force because I felt I knew the people that were billeted on us from home, and I knew air force talk more than anything else. I never thought about the WRNS [Women's Royal Naval Service] I don't know why.

Can you tell us about signing up for the WAAF?

Yes. As I said I went to London and went to the first recruiting office I could find. And okay, you signed all of the papers and everything else.

05:30 And then finally you got notification that you had to report to a certain place, certain railway station to get to a certain place, wherever they were teaching you about the air force. And when we got there there was girls of all sorts. Hair down to the shoulders, high heels, sandals, all sorts of people. And we all caught this train and got to the camp.

06:00 And you know, immediately your heart sank and you wondered why you had done it. It was pretty grim. First of all we were told where we were to sleep. In the huts they had iron bedsteads of course and we had things called biscuits. And the biscuits were like seats, thin palliasse things that were the mattress, and in the daytime the biscuits had to be piled one atop the other and the head of the bed and then the blankets

06:30 had to be folded in a certain way and the sheets in a certain way and then one blanket had to wrap around the whole lot like a parcel. And that had to go on top and a pillow on top of that., and it had to be straight and in line. No question of anything being out of line or looking sloppy, there was trouble. So we were shown how to make up our biscuits. They were awkward to make too, three squares

07:00 they go every which way. And they weren't frightfully comfortable obviously. But they were hard which was good. I can't remember that very first night. I know we had to walk from the hut to the ablutions block, and they did have showers and they did work. And I do remember shortly after going with another girl. We had purchased some cleansing stuff and some rags.

07:30 We were going to clean the bath and then have a bath. And they partitioned, not to the ceiling, three quarters of the way, so we could hear all of the people in the next bathroom. Shrieks and screams and really painful screams. We wondered what the hell was happening. Anyhow after all of the screaming was over, obviously whoever it was got out and said, "Oh, if I had known it was all right I would have had one before." She had had her first bath.

08:00 So that was an interesting one. We had to go for medicals of course, very quickly after we got to the camp, within a day or two. And we all had to strip down and we had been issued, before this, to be

kitted out with everything you needed. Our kit bags, uniform, our underwear, our bras. They were

08:30 reinforced. The bloomers were bloomers, dark blue. Shirts, shoes, stocking, thick. I can't remember how we kept the stockings up; we must have had a suspender belt or something, because they were stockings, not pantyhose in those days, ever. Always stockings, black shoes, cleaning for the shoes, cleaning for the brass buttons. Hats, the lot.

09:00 So we had all of this and we went for our medical and we had to strip down to our bra and bloomers. And we had to sit in a line on benches and the doctor came along and looked at our hands, looked in our mouth and looked at our feet, and she happened to look at my feet and she said, "Nice, clean feet." And I looked and thought, 'Oh my God!' You know next door and one after. And we all had to stand up

09:30 and she came along the line and pulled each girls pants forward with her index finger and peered down at the lower part. Obviously looking for creepy crawlies or pregnancy, whatever she thought she was looking for. She would look down like that and went 'wham' and the elastic snapped back onto you again. We passed all of that

10:00 and then we had intelligence tests and so on. And I know they did say about me at one stage, this one could be an officer. I thought, no way, the last thing I want to be is an officer. I managed to get into the category I wanted to be in which was driving. I enjoyed driving cars. And after we had finished our WAAF training. We had a few lectures that were good and we had a hell of a lot of marching.

10:30 I am abysmal at that, really bad. But anyway, we had lots of marching and about turns and we all had to take turns to drill the squad and so on. And this went on for two or three weeks as I remember. We then move on from Blackpool to Markham where we did our driving training. And luckily I had driven so it wasn't particularly from scratch.

11:00 But we had to learn about vehicles. We had to learn how to take down a carburettor, change plugs, change a tyre and generally keep the car, wagon whatever it happened to be, keep it out of the garage situation so that we could do our own quick repairs. So we were tested on that. And then we were taken out driving. And this could be quite frightening because sometimes the girls would get into reverse when they're meant to go forward

11:30 and that sort of thing. Anyway, we all survived. And then we had three ton trucks that we all had to, we were in the Pennines, the Pennines are a very steep lot of hills, steep and curly, lots of a curls and bends. And this particular instructor was sure that he could teach all of us to listen to the engine and know when to change up or down gear without using the clutch. Because you didn't have

12:00 any synchromesh in those days, everything had to do double clutch [a double push of the clutch pedal to disengage and change gears], do you know what that is? Right, well we had to push in the clutch get the gear out, push in the clutch, gear again, get the gear into the next gear. Anyway, he said by listening to the sound of the engine you can do that without using the clutch at all. It was scary because we were on these

12:30 hills but we all had to do it. Somehow we did. And then we had all of our final exams and we passed or failed as the case may be. I don't know of anyone that didn't pass. I guess there were some that didn't make it. And we were then assigned to whatever station we were going to, and I was sent to this Bomber Command station. It was a pre-war station, it was very well laid out with gardens and that type of thing.

13:00 I was sent there and we were actually billeted in houses that had been airmen's quarters prior to the war. Married quarters. So okay we were in little rooms which were rather nice, a change from the big hut. They had little domestic fireplaces and things like that, and a kitchen, we could brew our own tea and coffee.

13:30 It seemed a bit more homely if you like. Anyway, apparently the station commander decided that the WAAF quarters or the WAAFery as it was called, needed to be isolated and he had rolls and rolls of barbed wire put around the whole thing. And the senior WAAF officer was furious and she marched in and demanded to see the CO [commanding officer], and she said,

14:00 "I tell you Sir, I am so shocked about this barbed wire. My women keep it here." Tapping her head. And he said, "I don't care where your women keep it, my men will find it." So we kept the barbed wire there. Anyway I drove a staff car I think at that stage. No, first of all I drove a little van around, that's right. And we would do all sorts of odd jobs, picking

14:30 things up, delivering things, getting to know the aerodrome because they were very big. All of the aircraft were dispersed. They were all out in different little bays so that if a German came over and dropped a bomb he wouldn't get the whole caboose at once, he would only get one or two of our precious aircraft, because they were very precious.

15:00 Anyway that was fine. And then I got on to driving a staff car around and I used to drive a group captain around, and this meant a lot of waiting. I learnt to be able to sleep for three minutes and then wake up and be refreshed. I could do it now this minute. Go off, just phase out and then come back completely rejuvenated. Wonderful attribute. I used to take a book and read, it was a bit

15:30 boring but that happened. The Duke of Kent visited us. And I remember I had to drive him from one spot, the officers' mess probably, to a hanger. But unfortunately I had to open a window because he smelt of perfume to such an extent I couldn't stand it. I thought I might faint. So that was an exciting thing. I remember walking one day over to our mess, the other ranks' mess, for lunch.

16:00 And there was a training aircraft in the sky, Wellington, which is two engine. And quite frightful because its left wing suddenly left it and floated down like a leaf. And of course the rest of the plane went down far more quickly and exploded on the ground. A most terrible sight. Nothing could be done.

16:30 I had to drive in a funeral, whether it was that boy I don't recall. And I remember that it was very difficult because I had to pick up the couple from the officers' mess and go to the mortuary, and then join in, the parents I mean, sitting in the car behind me. And then join in between two lines of slow marching men

17:00 that had the hearse going slowly in front. And this meant slipping the clutch the whole way so as not to stall the car. It was nerve wracking actually and keeping so that I didn't hit the men on either side. Once we got through the main gate we could speed up a bit. They were such a sweet old couple, they were so shattered at losing their son, they asked me why they couldn't see his body.

17:30 There was nothing left, I mean the coffin would have been full of stones and bits of bones. I hate to say it but that's what it was. I expect that they had their reasons, or whatever I tried to say. Anyhow we got to the church and they got out and I sat in the car and waited for them. It was very miserable really, listening to the Last Post. They were incredibly brave.

18:00 I then had to take them to the station and they were so sweet, they said, "This really must have been a strain for you, thank you so much." and I really appreciated that, because they thought that he had been on the camp that I was on, in actually fact he had been on a satellite station, which was frightful, a mud bank you know. I didn't enlighten them. I let them think he was on the nice station with the flowers all around you know. what else happened there?

18:30 I used to have to at one stage go out to dispersal points with crews. Not with the staff cars but with the thirty hundredweight truck and you would have several crews in the back going out to fly. And you would have to take them to G for George, H for Harry [the serial numbers of planes] whatever. In whichever order. And that was fine dropping them off, it was getting back

19:00 on your own because all of our lights were shaded in the trucks, there was very little light as it was. But they would start taxiing, to get to the head of the runway and poor old me would be trying to get back to the base. And you heard the noise of this aircraft taxiing and you wondered where the dickens they were. The same when we went to pick the crews up, it could be quite scary.

19:30 And one night apparently there was a little truck back near one of the Lancasters and the poor man started up his engine and he didn't realise that's the van was so close. And the prop actually dented the canvas. And he said, "Back to base, oh Christ I have killed the lot!"

20:00 And of course he hadn't actually, I don't know why but he hadn't. And the truck did get back okay, but it was really frightening.

And how aware were you of the bombing in London?

Oh very aware because you heard about it, we could see it. I could see it from home, couldn't see it from Norfolk, I could see it from home when I was on leave or anything like that.

20:30 It was like a firework display. It was really horrible.

Can you describe it for us?

Just flashes and flashes. And of course they would sometimes come onto Bomber Headquarters, but they never did drop anything very close. It was incredibly well camouflaged, but I am sure the Germans must have known its

21:00 approximate location. We were incredibly lucky in that respect, the defences probably stopped them getting that.

How was it camouflaged?

Because all of the actual headquarters was underground to begin with and they had put dirt over the top and planted small trees. And the whole thing was in the woods, the lovely beech woods, more difficult to conceal it in

21:30 winter because the beech trees lose their leaves, not like gums. I suppose snow would have covered most of it anyway but it was well camouflaged.

How long were you a driver for in Norfolk?

I can't remember how long I was in Norfolk for, or even actually where I went next. I think I went to a place called Medmenham,

22:00 which was quite close to home, quite close to Marlowe which I could bike home for dinner and bike back again. Up hills, fiendish hills and get back to camp on time. Medmenhamwas an interesting camp, I really didn't know a great deal about it because it was all of the photographic interpretation

22:30 that the crews had taken on their trips. Sarah Churchill worked there. I didn't know anything about that, I was driving but that's what they were doing there.

What did you enjoy so much about driving?

I think being in charge of the car. Something to be in charge of in a sense.

23:00 **And tell us about meeting your husband?**

Well, we had a very nice couple billeted with us, he was a group captain and his wife, an Australian actually. And he was billeted on us and I got to know him very well. I think Mum might have even known them before and they asked if they could come to us and we were able to have them. Anyway, they were going to London and they saw this tall guy standing at the bus stop,

23:30 so Geoff was going up because he had business to do so he had petrol and he said, "Let's stop and him give him a lift, he is the Australian liaison officer to Bomber Command." Anyway they gave Tony a lift to London and he gave them some petrol coupons, which was very nice of him and they established a friendship. And when they came back, "Oh, you must meet this absolutely… must meet this lovely Australian.

24:00 He gave me some petrol coupons." You know. So I said, "Okay, let's have a party." And we did and Tony was asked and he came, and I can remember going into the room, he was standing by the fireplace, very cold house, the fire was burning. And I looked at his uniform, he must be Australian, I said, "Hello, I am Pauline, what is your name?" He said, "Willis." I thought, 'Well that's a strange name.'

24:30 but anyway it was Tony. He was very shy, and we got to gradually know each other. I had to go back of course, and when I was next home on leave we resumed friendship and we used to go out together and that was the beginning of a romance.

And when did you get engaged?

Probably it was about four months later, from memory, and we were engaged for three or four months.

25:00 **Can you tell us about your wedding?**

It was nice. It was in this little church next door to the house Disraeli had lived in. Very small church. And we had a heap of friends, it was a good excuse for my mother to have all of her friends over and have a party. Tony's father happened to be over because the war had finished and he had business to do in Switzerland.

25:30 Tony came from, well his father had a firm called Willis and Sons and they used to import Rolex watches, they were the only importer of Rolex watches in Australia. And they had the odds bits of crappy sort of jewellery, and plate and stuff like that, and they looked after the little jewellers very well during the war. And he had business in Switzerland and see his Rolex people. He came to our wedding and we got to know each other which was good for me.

26:00 Very nice man, I liked him very much and I found he liked me too which was very good. Anyway we had the wedding, I can't remember very much, but it was very nice and good.

What did you wear?

I wore curtain material made into a dress with a veil and added some flowers.

And can you tell us how rationing affected

26:30 **your life in the war?**

Not a great deal because in the services we were very well fed, let's face it. it may not have been what we wanted to eat but there was plenty of it, no doubt about that. And we could always get buns and things from the NAAFI [canteen] van that came around in the middle of the day if we wanted them.

27:00 And of course we all smoked like crazy, so we didn't tend to be so hungry. My mother did well because having the cows and the ducks and like that, she was restricted in the amount she could use but she didn't do too badly.

So did she have to give some of her produce to the war effort?

Oh yes. Bananas were a thing we missed terribly. I didn't miss sugar at all in the end. I think the whole of the English populace was better for no sugar

27:30 well, very little sugar. The only thing that affected me a lot was that I never learnt to cook because no one could afford to let you play around with rations.

In the barracks what did you eat?

Oh, well, they would make up a good hash of this or that. We always had

28:00 a cooked breakfast, two courses at lunch time and probably less at night.

Can you describe for us what you did when you drove the pilots in the night to the airfield, take us on a journey?

Well, it would mean picking them up after their briefing, which was the briefing hut whatever it was called.

28:30 They would pile into the back with all of their gear, parachutes and the rest of it. and you would have one sitting in the front to direct you more or less. Or to make up to you do something. Anyhow you would take off and go around to the various dispersal points and the crew would get out, the appropriate ones for the appropriate plane. And then we would go back, collect the next lot and take them out.

29:00 Usually two squadrons on a station and the drivers were unusually working for one squadron, not both.

And did the men talk to you much about what they were doing?

No not a lot, some had a lot of jokes and bravado, others were quiet. I think I can remember very well indeed, Sergeant Smith's dance party,

29:30 propositioning me to go outside with him. I knew what that entailed and I refused and he said, "Oh come on, I might get killed on my next trip." Which was a dreadful thing to say to you really, and it was true. I didn't go out with him and then I felt dreadful because I wondered what the hell I was saving everything for because the poor

30:00 devil, he was killed on the next trip. It's a difficult one. But we were brought up pretty strictly you know.

And can you tell us about that, what was expected when they asked you to go outside with them?

Oh definitely to try and go off and have a good snog [kiss], if not, if there was an appropriate place where one could be concealed. All categories of workers had to

30:30 be on administrative duty once a month in the guardroom of the WAAFery to sign the people in from having had a pass to go out. You had to have a pass to go out of camp. To go to the pub or cinema or whatever. And we had to sign these people in that had passes for certain times, midnight or whatever. And we had these WAAF officers that were suspicious, with reason

31:00 and I can remember one of them saying one night, "Has corporal so and so come in?" "No, I don't think so, well maybe she has." you know trying to cover for her, "And she hasn't checked?" "Come with me." Out of the door looking down the hedgerows and finding them, of course immediately, "You're on a charge," Blah, blah. Poor thing.

31:30 **What happened then?**

I wouldn't know, she would have to go and face her charge and receive her penalty. She wouldn't get disqualified or sent away I don't suppose.

And were there cases of girls getting pregnant?

One of my very best friends. I had no idea at all until she told me. I didn't even know that she had been cohabiting. And poor Terri,

32:00 she was Catholic, I can remember that because I went once to midnight mass because she wanted company. Anyway she became very pregnant indeed and she had to be discharged and she asked me as a friend if I could go around and get everything, when you're leaving the air force you have to go around and get every single thing signed that you haven't got any of their

32:30 property or equipment. You have to get everything signed. And she was obviously pregnant. So I went with Terri, I can remember quite well, and we had a very tough woman sergeant in the motor transport, and of course she heard about this, and she did dress me down . Because I had lowered the reputation of the motor transport girls by association,

33:00 because she was having a baby out of wedlock, which was very frowned upon in those days. It was our one fear. Pregnancy was a terrible disgrace. Anyhow I said, "Well, I only went because she wanted me to and she was a friend." "How could you associate with someone like that?"

33:30 But see, there were a lot of girls that had not had the strict upbringing that I had had, I don't know about Terri but there were others that were freer and easier. Also we had to attend lectures on VD [venereal disease], VD was the biggest fear of all, apart from pregnancy, VD was really bad. And they showed us graphic films what could happen, gonorrhoea, syphilis,

34:00 it was horrible. And I can remember walking down the stairs afterwards and two girls saying, “They think they can frighten us with that?” And they were thoughtless in some ways, not the WAAF but the RAF [Royal Air Force], they had an ET room, that means early treatment for blokes, but it was on route from the WAAFery

34:30 to our mess, because the poor men probably hesitated, they didn't want the women seeing them go into the early treatment room, it was ridiculous, so they probably really let things go far too long. That was a very stupid oversight I always thought.

And was VD something that occurred a lot,

35:00 **were you aware of that in the girls?**

I wasn’t aware of anyone that had it no, either men or women but I am sure there must have been a lot of it. really because as I said there was quite a lot of easy freedom.

Living in the camp with the girls, how many in a barracks, how many in a dormitory?

There was thirty in our hut and then the corporal had a little room to herself,

35:30 the corporal in charge of the hut. Which eventually I got one of those rooms to myself when I became a corporal and it was just a little cubby, but it was a room to yourself.

You slept in there?

Yep. And then we were woken in the morning with the tannoy [public address system], which is the broadcasting thing, with Vera Lynn [singer] usually to wake us up early.

And did it get very cold there in the winter?

36:00 Yes. It did.

How did you stay warm?

They had a central stove these huts and we would pilfer, pinch, get anything we could to burn in it. And we were given an allowance of course as well, coke or what ever it is.

Was there never enough?

Not really.

And when did you become a corporal?

I don’t remember

36:30 I am afraid, towards the end I guess.

What greater responsibilities were involved in that?

Really organising all of the girls to different transports and that type of thing. More than anything it was an organisational thing, not anything else. Except in fact domestically I was in a room by myself and in charge of the girls in the hut.

37:00 **And did you have a desk in there?**

No.

Any electricity?

In the huts yes. I can’t remember if that was turned off centrally or not of a night, but we certainly had to douse the lights but a certain time.

And did you black the windows?

Oh yes everything was blacked out.

What was that like?

Pretty grim in the houses

37:30 for the civilians too.

Were you ever involved in checking that the civilians had their homes blacked out?

No I wasn’t, but certainly the home guard people did that, and the air raid wardens. They would be down on them like a ton of bricks if there was a chink of light, even a chink.

38:00 **And did you have much to do with the local civilians?**

Not during the war much at all no.

Tape 3

00:30 **I am going to go back and dredge out a bit more detail from earlier on, when you joined up, when you enlisted, it was quite some time before you got called up, is that right?**

Yes, I think it was about three months. I am not sure now.

And tell us again, there were height restrictions and so forth?

01:00 Well, apparently, to be a motor transport diver you needed to be five foot two and I was five foot one and a half. So I thought well, when I am being measured I will try and elevate my little heels a bit just to be sure.

And apparently it was successful?

Yes.

Why were you so keen to be a driver?

Well, I really think it was because I enjoyed driving.

01:30 You see if you didn't stipulate what you wanted to do, you could have been shoved into the kitchens to be a so-called cook. And I don't know why, none of the other options at that time appealed. I wanted to be more outdoors too see. I think that was it too, I had always been an outdoor lass,

02:00 with the riding and the small amount of farming I was doing in England.

What experience had you had driving motor vehicles?

I had driven a lot actually. My stepfather, who was a very good driver of cars, hopeless as far as traffic and other people were concerned, but he could handle a car. And he taught me to handle a car.

02:30 And he did teach pretty well, there weren't many things that I had to unlearn at that stage. And we were given very comprehensive driving teaching experience and in all weathers too, which is something they are complaining in this day and age as you know. And I don't suppose there are many people here that know how to drive in snow, why should they? But we had to.

03:00 **In civilian life at that point was there a stigma about women drivers?**

Not as far as I know. It might have been a bit unusual in the sense in the professional way for a woman driver, which is what we would have become. I don't think so, the men didn't seem to taunt us about it.

You mentioned that when you were going

03:30 **through the early training there, there was potential that you could be an officer, why were you so against that?**

Well, I don't know. I didn't like the thought of becoming an administrative officer that's for sure., bossy, I think it was a sort of form of rebellion.

At this point were any other of your family members in the forces?

04:00 My stepfather had joined the air force and he was in Fighter Command. My brothers were too young, my next brother was six years younger than me and my younger one six years younger than that. I had uncles, an uncle in the navy who did well indeed. He got the DSO [Distinguished Service Order] and bar. And another cousin in submarines and he did very well, in fact

04:30 he went into Narvick [Norway] in midget submarines. I am not sure whether he was in Sydney at some stage in submarines looking for something or other, I am not sure of that. And of course, my father was in submarines.

Were you in touch with your father at this point?

Not earlier, later. I don't know how he got hold of me to be truthful. He did at one stage, my stepfather wrote to him,

05:00 my father must have been at the Admiralty at that time or my stepfather must have found out that he was in England, and wrote to him and suggested that he bring myself and my brother up to meet him. This was very early in the war before the bombing had started, the 'phoney' war. And he said that he didn't want to see us. And I was told subsequently by one of his sisters that I met years and years later that that was because he couldn't bear to see us,

05:30 because that would be the only chance of ever seeing us and he thought he would be so miserable having to say goodbye to us. Whether that is so or not I have never known. But he did write to me.

Your family obviously had a great naval tradition, why were you not interested in that side of things?

I don’t know actually, I think it was really because we had so many air force people billeted with us.

06:00 I got into that side of it more.

And as a somewhat naïve teenage girl, what were your feelings about these air force officers around you?

Oh well, I think I was it was quite exciting.

06:30 I don’t know, I think I rather enjoyed not being an officer because they were all officers in a funny way.

Tell us again the story about the circles in the grass?

Well you see, in Denmark apparently they have these harnesses that you could put on a pig, it is a leather harness and you put it around the neck and behind the forelegs

07:00 and it is linked underneath and it has got a great big metal circle. And you hook on the end of a long chain the end of which is a swivel, which you hammer into the ground. And the pig can circle around and around for the length of the chain. And this is great, it means they can rootle around do what they like and you can move it to a different part of the paddock each day so that they have got fresh,

07:30 different parts to rootle in. And of course, this had left these big circles. And somebody must have flown over to be checking the security of Bomber Command I would think and saw the circles and thought, ‘Oh, this must be to tell the Germans where we were.’ Can do this with it and that with it, pinpoint it, this is an indication. And of course they came to question us about it

08:00 and were quite relived to see that it was Anabella doing it.

Did that not strike you as a bit paranoid at the time?

No, because security was so important. Look, if you remove every signpost, every train carriage had ‘Careless Talk Costs Lives.” Written in big letters so that you could not fail to see it.

08:30 No, you had to be very sure that a German parachutist got lost if he happened to bail out over England.

I will move on now to your training, what do you think attitude was of the men in the forces towards you women?

I didn't encounter any bad attitudes. But I believe there were definitely,

09:00 especially women going in as plotters and things like that in the ops [operations] rooms, they thought the women wouldn’t do it and actually the women did it extremely well because they are good on detail. I think women are often good on small detail. A lot of them didn’t like, the WAAF officers you know, and if they were a junior officer having to salute a senior

09:30 WAAF officer, they didn’t care for that especially to being with. The women got absorbed into it. In the end I think that the women were just taken more or less for granted, they were here and doing a good job that was it.

What about you as a driver and mechanic,

10:00 **were you taken seriously?**

Yes I think so, I mean it was very easy. The car engines in those days, to begin with there were no computers in cars, so if you took down a carburettor and you had a good swallow first or spit of something and blew down it to get rid of any grain of dust and put the thing together again and the car went again that was fine.

10:30 I mean I could still drain sump oil if I had to, I don’t want to but I could. Changing tyres and that sort of thing were all very simple, jacks were simple, they were very elementary by today’s cars. Plugs, if you had a lot of trouble you could take a plug out and clean it and put it in again. I

11:00 wouldn’t even like to begin with my little car now even thought it is twenty odd years old.

How did you feel learning all of these things as a young girl?

I enjoyed it, it was good. I never minded getting my hands dirty. And I mean, you would drain the water out and put in deep freeze and top it up again with water. I could do all of that, it was elementary really.

11:30 **What were they like to drive these vehicles, especially the trucks?**

Pretty rough, ragged. As I say you always had to double clutch, in any vehicle you always had to double clutch. It was quite an innovation when we had synchromesh. They were all right, they were rattlers. And obviously there came a point where you had to send it into the workshop.

12:00 And then if you were corporal in charge you had to organise somebody else to drive it or get another one. Chivvy [harass] the workshop to get one out to you again quickly, but usually the blokes were awfully obliging.

The steering must have been quite heavy on those vehicles?

I suppose it was.

12:30 I don't recall that very much.

Let's go and talk about again taking the crews out to their aircraft, what sort of aircraft?

By that time they were Lancasters, four engine.

You talked before that they had different attitudes on the way out to their plane, did you have to pick them up afterwards as well?

13:00 Yes. We did we hung around, if it was a very long trip maybe it wouldn't be us picking them up. But in general we knew the ones that didn't come back which was ghastly every time. And ghastly for the blokes as well, even worse for them obviously. You would wait and wait and hope to hear one coming I late.

13:30 It was awful.

Can you describe how the crews were different compared with when they went out?

They were bloody tired. Exhausted sometimes. And then they had to go into debriefing, before they had had their brekky [breakfast] or whatever meal they were going to be given.

14:00 And the debriefing could take a long time. I mean sure they tried to be cheerful, but if they had had a rough trip being shot at and weaving around trying to avoid the searchlights, they were tired.

How did you try to make things easier for them?

Listening I guess., it is no good being jokey when people have really had it you know.

14:30 You could be sometimes, it would depend. But in general just being quiet with them and welcome them. "Glad to see you back." sort of thing, drop them off.

Were you ever aware of any lack of moral fibre instances where you were working?

15:00 Never; that was something that I don't remember at all.

Do you ever recall any instances where men had been affected?

Not really no, they wouldn't talk about it to us, they probably wouldn't talk about it at all.

15:30 Even when they should have gone to somebody that could counsel or advise them. They were probably, because it was a team, I don't know if it was different in Fighter Command where they were loners in a sense, but they couldn't let the team down, and they really did meld into one unit, all of those men.

16:00 **And did you consider yourselves part of that team, that establishment?**

No, only on the peripheral. We felt very partisan towards whatever squadron we were working with, they were obviously going to be better than the other one, but that was a just a

16:30 natural way of thinking I guess.

What nationalities were you working with there?

There were quite a few Canadians, odd ones. A few, I don't think - we didn't have any Australians, they had their own squadrons and I wasn't on one of those airfields.

17:00 I do remember a nice Canadian actually, two or three of them. I don't think we had any Polish ones there. No they were mostly English. And Scottish.

Can you tell us actually what squadron it was?

Can't remember, isn't that a shame?

What do you think the crews thought about you?

Well, 'Here is the driver.' you know.

17:30 They would chat you up and when it was a jokey time we would joke. They just seemed to like you and that was it.

You mentioned before about witnessing the crash of a Wellington ,were you aware of other accidents even though you didn't see them?

18:00 That's a good question. I do remember having to go, when I was driving the staff car where I had to park and got to see whether an aircraft had crashed, and I think it must have been one of ours. We did find bits of the body as we were walking around. That's all I can remember.

18:30 I was lucky I went in a tank once. We had to go and visit an army base and they had tanks and they gave me a ride in one of their tanks. Horrible sensation, not nice.

Beside aircraft crashes you were actually involved in a crash when you were driving as well weren't you? Can you tell us about that?

19:00 I was driving a staff car and I was near Newmarket, which in England is very flat, which you probably know because they train the horses there. And I did not appreciate that, because we had this flat road, lines of trees between the different fields. I did not appreciate that one line of trees ahead of me was actually a road going off to the right, there was an army truck in front of me and it turned as I was

19:30 going to overtake it. and I caught the end of it, I couldn't get around in front of it. It was turning too fast, I was going fast enough and so I had to brake and try and get around the back of it and unfortunately I tipped and it went right over. And it had a live weight of army blokes in the back and one of the poor devils got caught between the strut and the canvas, and I think that broke a few of his ribs.

20:00 Anyhow we stopped the car, didn't have those mobiles in those days, and so we had to stop another car and say please would they get an ambulance quick smart, which they did. Group captain wasn't hurt luckily, I had hit my head on the steering wheel because I had had to brake so violently. It wasn't pleasant. We laid out the bodies on the ground as it were, nobody killed but a few hurt, not very badly except for this

20:30 one who was eventually invalided out so he probably thanked me. In a sense. Anyhow the ambulance came and I was made to go in it by the group captain, I don't know how he got back to wherever it was in Newmarket we went to, some hospital I suppose. I was checked over and so were the others. They were sweet, they sent me a message to thank me for keeping a cool head which was nice of them. my car was still serviceable and so we went on our way again.

21:00 And I was exonerated because the army truck was actually travelling far too fast and he just turned the corner. And whether he put, he had an artificial arm thing that he could put out. I didn't see it, I don't think so I didn't see it. so luckily it wasn't against me.

Did the group captain have any words with you?

No, he thought it was bad luck. He

21:30 agreed, I said that I just honestly, there was no sign posts you see? They had gone, you could not tell that there was a road there, so no.

In general what was your relationship like with your officers?

Very easy. Very few of them pulled rank on you, but on the other hand

22:00 you didn't give too much cheek either. I do remember we had a lovely Canadian wing commander, one camp I was on. He came rushing in to one transport yard I had and he said, "Corporal, I have got a flat!" and I had visions of Mayfair, but no, he had a flat tyre and I had to deal with it quickly.

22:30 In general they were always usually polite. There were a few I suppose that were bitchy about things but I don't really remember it much. Especially if you tried, if you were doing your best they couldn't bitch too much could they?

Do you have any memories of women who weren't pulling their weight?

23:00 I suppose there were some. I am sure there were some that were incredibly bored with their jobs, especially cookhouse people who shouldn't have even been there probably who should have been given something more suited to their intelligence. But I don't really recall anyone being specifically

23:30 lazy, no.

Were there girls who became romantically involved with flight crew?

Oh yes, all of the time. It was a mistake really, because it is very difficult to be romantically attached to anyone that you're working with. But there were and some probably did get married,

24:00 which was of course the epitome of what you should do if you were a young lady in those days.

Were there instances or do you recall anything of girls getting involved with flight crew and them flight crews not returning?

Oh yes. And such devastation. It did happen.

And what would you girls do to help each other in that case?

24:30 Be supportive, try and be understanding was about all you could do really. Nothing you could do, if they had gone they were gone. It was so sad, so many of them were so young that did die. And I think that has been one of Australia's problems, because the cream has gone twice to England, the cream of young manhood,

25:00 Because there was no conscription into the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] they were all voluntary and the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] also had volunteers as well, but there were also a lot of conscripts there. But the cream has been lost for two generations in those country and I think that is very sad. There weren't enough of them really.

25:30 **As the war went on what contact did you have with American personnel?**

Not a lot, I do recall we used to hitchhike everywhere. When we had leave I never went by train if I could avoid it, I always hitchhiked home, even cross country. And I do remember I was deposited on a rather remote road which was not really to my liking and I could see this jeep coming and I flagged it,

26:00 thinking it was Americans and it was Americans and they were all black, I thought, 'Oh God!' Anyhow, "In you get, quick, hurry up." Anyway so I got in and what else could you do? It was full of black Americans, and we didn't know black people at all then. Anyway, they were absolutely sweet. They warned me never hitchhike with a white American, they are the bottom of the pits.

26:30 And when we went to any town they hid me under a rug on the floor in the back because they would have been court martialled for picking up a white woman or a woman at all probably, and they let me off as near to where I wanted to get off as they could. They were absolutely sweet. That was my own personal encounter. Apart from that ones at Mum's that I had got to know that had been at the headquarters, they were

27:00 very nice guys, in fact one guy, we went to his wedding, he married another American girl in England, I remember him quite well. And another one called Ozzie, I don't know why. I can remember him but that's about all.

The Americans were legendary for having lots of food and lots of presents.

Well, Mum did get to know amongst the hierarchy, General Eaker, who was a nice man, I can remember him.

27:30 He used to arrive with bags for her, for the household actually. He used to come to different parties that we had there for the people that were billeted with us, they all knew each other.

Besides romantic liaisons in the hedges, what socialising was going on?

Pubs,

28:00 British pubs are great. Always used to go to the pub. And the women, and I could not get used to this attitude in Australia towards women in pubs when I first came here. It was just horrendous. We always used to go we were all accepted, boys would get a bit tight sure, they would all sings songs, but they were living a very tough life. We would bike back, or bike home, whatever we were doing.

28:30 If we would walk we would have two or three together, it was good. We would go to the pictures sometimes, they used to have camp films oi the camp. And whoops, there you go.

What songs were popular to sing at the time?

Goodness. I can't remember now.

29:00 I just can't remember even the names of the ones that Vera Lynn used to wake us up with. 'There Will Always Be an England'. 'Run Rabbit Run'. 'I'll Hang Out the Washing on the Siegfried Line'. They sound very old hat now, don't they?

Now we talked about going to the pub, you started to tell us about going to the cinema?

29:30 Yeah. Well they used to have camp films every whatever, fortnight or whatever it was and we used to go to those. And they used to run a lot of dances as well in the sergeants' mess, the other ranks' mess, and of course, the officers would have their own as well.

What did you wear to these dances?

30:00 Same old uniform.

Was there any attempt to glamour yourselves?

Oh, I think we all spent time on our hair and faces and that sort of thing but you couldn't do much with your uniform. There was a great day as far as uniforms go when we as transport drivers especially were given battledresses. That was a help because really climbing up into big trucks in a silly skirt wasn't easy.

30:30 Once we had battledress it was a much better business all together. I vastly preferred them but of course, we couldn't wear them to a formal dance..

Do you think the air force was prepared for women logistically?

No, I shouldn't think so at all, I think it must have been one heck of a shock of all of the services to have an influx of women come in and I think they must have had to

31:00 make up rules as they went along, you know.

In what areas do you think you might have been disadvantaged by that?

I suppose a lot of them were disadvantaged by a reluctance to accept a woman in a higher administrative job than many of the men officers,

31:30 in any form, whether it be a plotter or whether it be sheer admin [administration]. That was the area that probably met reluctance. I think the men felt threatened, and in a way they didn't want the women to be good at it, but then as the war progressed the men had to move on anyway

32:00 and they had no choice. I am not sure if it did a lot of men much good in the end. I think women's emancipation probably, oh rather reduced men's role.

What about in terms of your accommodation and ablutions and so on, do you think the air force had prepared well in that respect?

32:30 I think they made the best of a bad job as quickly as they could. As far as I was concerned, that's I what I found. I mean really, having to paddle across to the ablutions block over duckboards that were sweltering in mud and snow and slippery with ice sometimes, it was not good. But on the other hand we did survive and it wasn't meant to be a pleasure party.

33:00 I think we all appreciated that, that we weren't there for the fun of it.

Tell us about your promotion to corporal.

I don't remember. I just don't remember. I think it was

33:30 something that just happened, that is something that is gone completely, maybe I had to sit an exam I don't know.

What was it like for you coming from the background that you did being thrown in together with people from all different backgrounds?

Interesting. In a word interesting, sometimes easy, sometimes difficult. I found it quite difficult to relate to girls that were quite prepared to lie their heads off about something,

34:00 because I had been brought up to be truthful I found that some that were not very clean, difficult to live with. Or among… in a way, everybody, I think the standard of people that had not had that fortunate background that I had had, I think their standard got raised.

34:30 And I think that is probably a good thing, whether ours also got lowered that is another matter. I don't know. probably not, or maybe.

Can you recall any instances of bad behaviour?

Oh well, girls would come home to the camp drunk and that sort of thing. Usually we would try and cover

35:00 for them, even if we didn't like them you wouldn't dob them in [inform on them]. Obviously many of them hadn't had much experience of drinking either. And of course the boys were only too happy to keep on, "Have another beer." It was mostly beer that we drank. From my memory of it.

35:30 I can't remember ever drinking any hard stuff. And of course there were no drugs. That was a big thing, it was cigarettes. But there was not ever marijuana, anything of that nature. So it was a cleaner life in that respect, apart from the cigarettes I guess.

Did you form a special group of friends or were you all mates together?

36:00 Well look, you did have your friends, people you would meet in the NAAFI and people you might go out with., but of course, it was always fragmented. They were posted on or you were posted on somewhere. I have got nobody now that I knew then. I had a very good friend that was married to a Czechoslovakian. This is actually an interesting story.

36:30 Her mother had also remarried and remarried a Czechoslovakian. Sylvia was very English and very proper. And many years later when I was living in Albury, and Sylvia had always told me, and I had met Ernest her husband, he was a pleasant man. Many years later I am living in Albury and there was an evening paper and there was a photograph of this man Ernest, saying this man was saved in prison. Apparently Ernest

37:00 had got home where he was living with Sylvia and shot dead Sylvia's lover, had been put into prison and had been tested medically and they discovered that he had a heart defect and so they managed to save him. I don't know what happened to him of Sylvia or him, that was the last I heard of them. but he seemed a very pleasant man, not the sort of man to shoot

37:30 her lover. And she was prim and proper and I never thought she would have one, so there you go.

How did you feel about the treatment that was given to your friend who was pregnant?

I was rather angry, certainly the transport sergeant above me, I thought her attitude was ridiculous I must admit.

38:00 I was very sorry for Terri for getting caught as we called it. but I am sure that she would have knuckled down and made a good mother, she was a nice woman. She wasn't flighty, I don't know what happened to him at all. And unfortunately we lost track, as we lost track of everyone we had gotten to know really. It was very hard to maintain a friendship after the war, especially

38:30 coming to Australia.

I guess people sometimes have the impression that that was a very moral and proper time and everybody behaved, was that the case really?

Well I don't know I suppose, you talk about my background, girls of my background if you like, yes that would apply. I don't know about others, I just don't know.

39:00 I think they would be moral, certainly their parents would have been. They were beginning to feel their wings a bit. I know it is a funny simile to use, their wings, but they probably were. They were getting out from the restrictions of life at home.

Tape 4

00:30 **Pauline could you describe for us please, battledress?**

It was slacks and a bomber type top if you see what I mean, in a fairly heavy air force blue fabric. Stiff and heavy and we had to wear a shirt and tie under it.

What sort of shoes?

01:00 Oh black lace ups always. No choice.

And how did the clothing that you wore make your job easier for you?

Oh well, wearing slacks makes it much easier climbing up and down into big trucks and things, much easier.

And did all of the women wear battledress?

No, I don't think the plotters and people like that did but the transport drivers did.

01:30 And there were girls that drove tractors and took bombs out to aircraft, and they would definitely need it. That type of work.

Going back to before you signed up for the WAAFery, why did you specifically not want to work in a munitions factory?

I don't think I would have enjoyed it at all.

02:00 The lack of any change, repetition all of the time, no excitement attached to it I guess.

As the war moved on, how aware were you of the Japanese?

We were delighted actually when they bombed Pearl Harbor because it was the best ever possible thing to get America into the war. So in that respect that was good. But of course we were really

02:30 shielded from a lot of that news. I mean, news of places like Changi wouldn't have come through then.

Why not?

Well I don't think they would have had the means to get it out at that stage. A lot of the news was screened.

And was

03:00 **what was going on in the Pacific relevant in Britain?**

Only in as much as the Japanese needed to be defeated. It wouldn't have had the same relevance as it would have had to Australians. I am sure it wouldn't because, we had so much war at hand rather than remotely. I

03:30 could be wrong there, there could have been people so much more aware than I was.

And apart from going to the pub and occasionally to the cinema, did you read?

When you could. There was always noise in the house, the girls were talking. I could read when I had to wait as a driver, I would take a book with me and I could read then.

04:00 **What did you like to read?**

Anything I could get my hands on practically, as now really.

And where were you and how did you hear about the end of the war?

Jubilant that it was over, I couldn't be more pleased, I could hardly believe it. And the fact too that I had met Tony and we were likely to get married, and I was likely to come here, I was dying to

04:30 come to Australia. England was incredibly dreary for several years after the war. Still had rationing, I don't think many people realised this. It was deadly for them really. They had gone through all of this and then here is everybody giving airlift to Germany and food from America and the Marshall Plan [the scheme to rebuild Europe after the war] and all of this sort of thing, and poor old England, having been

05:00 the victor was at a disadvantage. It was pretty hard.

So where you were when you heard about the end of the war?

I don't remember but it might have been at home. My mother had a very bad [(UNCLEAR)], and she needed assistance at home, and I had special compassionate leave to look after her because she had no one to care for her. My stepfather was still away.

05:30 Obviously with all of those people living in the place there had to be someone there to run it. I think it was then that I heard about it. Funny, I don't remember clearly but I don't.

And what happened directly after the war, how soon were you married?

I was married March the 16th in 1946.

06:00 The war ended what date I am not sure [May 8th].

45.

I think it was 45 but I can't remember which month now.

And when did you come to Australia?

Well, Tony left two months after we were married, and then two months after that, so four months later I came via the Cape via a small coaling vessel.

06:30 **Pauline, can you tell us about your trip from England to Australia?**

Yes, my stepfather took me to the station, whichever it was, Liverpool Street I think it was to catch the boat train. And he took me up to some people who were also going to Australia and said, "Would you look after my daughter please?" which really infuriated me because I was a married woman by then I thought. Any rate I never

07:00 anything further to do with them. And when we got to the dockside, I think it might have been Liverpool. We boarded and it was a little boat, a coaling ship. So it couldn't go very far without getting more coal, which was fine with me because we went around to the Canary Islands and we went right around to Cape Town where we stopped, which was wonderful. We stopped for coal. And I had gotten to know

07:30 several people on board and we spent a marvellous time driving around the Cape, gorgeous place. Loved the architecture and everything, really loved it, I could have stayed, but of course, I had a husband here, so I had to keep going. We had a cabin which was actually a two berth cabin and it had a seat under the porthole which was the third berth. From memory I was on the

08:00 upper bunk on the other side .and there was a girl with her husband on board and they couldn't share a room because there wasn't a room, the men had to be with the men and the women with the women. And a third girl who was not married in our room. Now, we couldn't all stand up at once it was so small. Okay, so anyhow, Elizabeth Mary her name was, and I have never

08:30 known what's happened to her. And Nina Bray, that was the other girl, and her husband came from Adelaide and I don't know what happened to them either, which is rather a shame. Nina's husband was on board with his cabin, they were lent a cabin by some people called Porter from Adelaide which they could have dinner in and whatever of an evening, but by a certain time they had to vacate it again, which was very nice of them.

09:00 So they could have a few conjugal rights, which they wouldn't have had otherwise. Elizabeth Mary had her parents on board and she was with them most of the time. I got to know an extremely nice family who became lifelong friends which was extremely nice for me. The next stop was Durban and we had a lovely time there. And then Colombo as it was then, we went ashore and I

09:30 think we stayed ashore then because the coaling was taking so long. Then we had three weeks without

sight of land, the whole trip took five weeks. We got to Fremantle which was a mass of unclad little huts which was uninspiring. Perth was gorgeous. I spent the day being driven around Perth and shown everything. Adelaide the same thing happened, people were very good to us.

10:00 Landed in Melbourne, got off in Melbourne, Tony met me and his father. That was it, that was the trip out, but it was five weeks.

And can you tell us about seeing Tony again?

Yes, he was so shy he wouldn't bend to let me kiss hello. His father said, "Bend down and kiss her." He finally did I think. His father vacated his flat so that we could have his flat for a while in wherever it was, South Yarra.

10:30 And I liked Melbourne, I have always loved it actually, it is a great city. And we had this thirty hundred weight truck and we took off and stayed with some cousins of his in the bush near Shepparton. My very first night in the bush with a tarantula, which of course I hate. And then we took off for Sydney, also in a flat, just around the corner from here, in Wallaroi Crescent, we were loaned a flat for a fortnight.

11:00 And I remember walking down to Double Bay, and there was one little place, a café, where we could have dinner. Which was sort of egg and bacon and something else that was cold, salad all on the one plate, and that was Double Bay for you, it was just a village and a lot nicer in a lot of respects in those days, and then we motored off for the bush.

What was Tony's background, why had he chosen the bush?

11:30 He didn't want to go into his father's jewellery business at all. Wasn't cut out for that. He wanted to be on the land, so he did some jackarooing, he was on a very big property called Quantambone as a jackeroo, out of Brewarrina, which we went to visit one day and saw it, I saw the house and everything that he hadn't lived in much, he had lived out on the run as it were.

12:00 A lot of the aborigines, he used to cook for them because he thought they weren't very clean. And also they used to go walkabout rather than ride the boundary fence, so it was quite a tricky time for him. Then the war came and he volunteered and that was that but then he wanted to go back on the land.

And did you ever feel overwhelmed?

Not really, luckily

12:30 no. I did meet my mother-in-law, only twice. She was a very tall imposing woman. She and her husband had separated some years before. She lived in Sydney, he lived in Melbourne. I never got to know her. I do remember, I think she gave me sixty pounds to go to some shop, it might have been Farmers [department store] she suggested,

13:00 to go and buy everything I needed for the kitchen. I had no idea what to buy, I had never cooked, ever. That was overwhelming actually. I thought, 'Oh.' I talked about it to Tony. We need a kitchen table, chairs, need this, saucepans. So I enlisted the man in the shop to help me and I am sure I didn't get enough of anything I needed but we coped. We packed it all up,

13:30 we took everything up with us, in the thirty hundred weight truck, transported everything up to the bush.

So tell us about your first house in the bush, first home.

It was a dear little cottage. Had a little front veranda that was wired in with lots of little pink geraniums growing up over it, and I thought, 'Oh, that's nice.' It had two bedrooms and a little tiny sitting

14:00 room and then a big room that had been opened up with a three quarter size billiard table in it, covered over. The kitchen and the loo [toilet] across the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK run [henhouse], which you always had to check for redback spiders and snakes, which was totally alien as far as I was concerned. Finally we had one closer to the house, which was a septic, which was better. We had a little outside shed thing that had water laid on

14:30 and a copper [basin] and the tub. So we bought a washing machine, I am not sure if we bought it then or later, but we had a thirty two light volt plant, and we had the electrician with us. And we had the electrician with us when we drove up from Sydney, and the plant, and he installed all of that, so that we soon had electricity. I mean, all of the cables were showing everywhere, it was very elementary, but it worked.

15:00 And I suddenly got thrown into having to cook for Tony and Clive the electrician, which nearly threw me, but one way or another we got there. We had a few chickens, we had turkeys and sheep and cattle and got on with it.

And what from your experience from working through the war do you think equipped you for moving?

15:30 Stamina. I should think, in a word, stamina.

What were the best bits?

In the bush, the best bits? I love the bush. And I liked the animals and I did have a pony which I used to ride periodically. And I used to look after the dogs and of course the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, that's the wife's work. I think we used to have

16:00 gorgeous weather where we were. We were on a little winding track of the Warrumbungles which are a very old mountain range, one of the oldest in Australia actually, and they were volcanic, there is some soil around is good volcanic soil. And they had a chalk mine, Davis Gelatine had a chalk mine somewhere up in the mountains and they used to find fossilised fish there. It was under the sea at one stage, which is

16:30 actually intriguing because it is three hundred miles inland. The weather was gorgeous, not too hot in the summer. We would get showers of rain because the mountains would draw the clouds and we would get a shower of rain, and the winters were crisp and cold at night, but lovely sunny days. Gorgeous. The only

17:00 difficulty from my point of view was that there were twelve gates to open and shut every time we went to Coonabarabran, or to Bugaldie which was our nearest little place where we could get petrol and stores. Coonabarabran was twenty-five miles away. And as we had these twelve gates and the big high truck for me to climb in and out of, Tony was very adverse to me taking this big high truck on my own. I don't think I ever did, we always went together

17:30 into town, as they call it. When we had rain the creeks would run, and there were about ten creeks and we couldn't get in or out. Okay, so when babies were coming it meant going into Coonabarabran and staying in there for a month or two before they were due, as they were always a month or more late it meant a long haul away from the

18:00 farm and from Tony because I had to wait until they were born, my two boys.

Would he be at the birth?

No way, I wouldn't have wanted it but I always knew if I got caught in the paddock he could deliver it because he could deliver sheep and cows. I always felt that he could deliver it but I didn't want him around when I was having a baby, I could never fathom why one should. Things have changed haven't they?

18:30 **What sort of farm were you living on?**

It was four thousand acres, two thousand of which was more or less fenced off because it was very mountainous and had more or less mountain goats. Which are now breeding and they are using their fleece, but in those days

19:00 were just wild goats. So we had two thousand workable acres with cows and sheep and we did grow lucerne I think, up there. And there was something else, I can't remember what, it was a horrible crop to get off, tiny seed. I can't remember what it was though. Anyway it wasn't really cropping country, more grazing.

19:30 **Can you tell us about learning to cook?**

The worst disaster was too much salt in the curry. That really was, I must have done it twice. I suppose one just learns. I can remember being asked by a neighbour "Have you filled your tins dear? We always fill our tins on a Monday." I had no idea what that meant. Bikkies [biscuits],

20:00 you make your own bikkies, you don't go to the shop like we do now, you make them, and you fill your tins for emergencies and that sort of thing, well I hadn't filled my tins. Occasionally Tony would bring an emu's egg in and I had a really good recipe for some Christmas cake, I liked Christmas cake so perhaps that's why I didn't mind cooking it. And you beat up your egg,

20:30 you break it with a hammer practically. They are a very tough shell. And you beat it up and it makes the equivalent of fifteen hen eggs, and so you divide it in two and you make two good Christmas cakes with lots of brandy in them. And the fuel stove worked well with Christmas cake too, I had splinters in my hand from always throwing the wood in. And of course the kitchen was always hot in summer.

21:00 **And did you have much contact with England?**

Letters only. Had a dear little neighbour whose son had been lost over the Bristol Channel, he was in Coastal Command. She was a dear, little, crooked little thing. And her husband was a little, crooked man, his legs went every which way for some reason. And she was a sweetie, she called down and told

21:30 me she had lost a son, we knew the other son, he was a share farmer with us, pretty lazy bloke too, and she told me that she had lost her other son over the Bristol Channel, and I said, "I am really sorry to hear that." And she said, "My dear, he died for England." End of the story, she was quite proud that he had been

22:00 able to die for the mother country. This is something that is completely unthought of now. We wouldn't

even go to war for England ,why should we? He had volunteered and he had died for his mother country, and she was proud. Rather amazing.

What did you think about that?

I felt like crying in a way,

22:30 and I also felt frightfully sad that Australia wasn't its own entity, if you know what I mean. That we should, I am talking about we Australians. That Australia should have to send the cream of her manhood over to fight for this country that was so remote and not very nice to us anyhow, you know?

23:00 The rebel coming out again I guess. Her other son used to adore anything mechanical, so when he was taking a crop off or anything for us, if machinery would break down, he was as happy as a sand boy. He would put out sacks on the ground, he would take everything off very carefully, put it all down, all the bits of machinery, before he could possibly reassemble anything. Tony would be standing there watching the

23:30 clouds forming and the rain about to fall, absolutely gnashing his teeth and tearing out his hair, while this bloke, Bob I think, couldn't reassemble anything in time before the clouds burst, it was very dramatic.

While you were courting in England did Tony ever express an interest in staying in England?

He would have loved it.

24:00 We did go back with our two sons, I can't remember what year, I think it would have been about 1950. We went back by ship, Tony had been promised a job by Australia House in London and this unfortunately fell through, we did stay in England too long because we were away from Australia eleven months in all.

24:30 He would have loved to live in England, there were places he adored, I can remember him saying, "Wouldn't it be good to live here?" but he couldn't afford it; because he had been in the war in Australia he got certain perks, like the farm was on a war service loan which meant a very low rate of

25:00 interest to pay off. We couldn't afford to live in England. I would have loved it at that stage. I enjoyed Australia but I hadn't really become Australian at that stage either.

When do you feel that you did become Australian?

I don't know, when I stopped going to the [Sydney] Heads and looking out and thinking England is over there with a sob in my voice. I don't remember

25:30 when, but I know that when I did feel assimilated I no longer wanted to go back, certainly not to live, I no longer want to go back at all now. I have done it. my brother is living in Spain and I went there last year and really enjoyed it.

Tell us about raising two boys on a farm in a remote place in Australia?

26:00 Well, boys are boys, it was difficult because Simon wasn't well, so we really had to go, as I told you before, to Melbourne, to be under Kate Campbell. They thought he was a full celiac which means an intolerance to absorb either carbohydrates or fats. In actual fact he wasn't, he was wheat intolerant. Quite a lot of people are, they can't take the gluten. Kate Campbell decided he was

26:30 wheat intolerant and we had to diet him accordingly, and he could have steak cooked, no bread of course, he could have tomato puree, he could have a cottage cheese, I had to make it with the low fat content powdered milk, hang it up and make it, curdle the milk with

27:00 rennet or lemon. He didn't like it curdled with rennet so it was curdled with lemon. And then we hang it up in a muslin bag and all of the whey drips out and you have the cottage cheese left. He could eat that. He could have eaten eight bananas a day and he wouldn't eat one, which was a great pity because it would have helped fatten him and given him all sorts of extra bits and pieces that bananas have, they are very good for you. But he wouldn't eat them at all under any disguise.

27:30 Gradually we introduced a drop of egg yolk onto the steak, and then two or three days later three drops of egg yolk. It was a long process getting him weaned onto anything extra. I had to make him biscuits out of soya bean flour, and in those days wheat intolerance wasn't as recognised and it was very difficult to get the ingredients. But I used to make

28:00 them with cornflour and soya bean flour and egg yolk, a biscuit thing. And if he went to little kids' parties he would take his own food. He was okay. He is good. He is now living in Amsterdam, he is fine. The other boy Rick unfortunately got an enlarged liver, I don't know why or how, they never enlightened me on that and

28:30 we took him to a specialist in Melbourne. I was talking about him to Doctor Kate Campbell; she was asking me about him. Anyway he had to be dieted a totally different diet to Simon's diet. You have to use this bengerised mixture, let it stand for twenty minutes, nineteen minutes, eighteen minutes, all of the way down.

29:00 And that sort of helped him. I can't remember what else he had. And the first girl was highly wheat intolerant. But as soon as I had the final girl, I had been to Doctor Kate Campbell for so many years, and I told her as soon as I was pregnant and she put me on massive doses of vitamins. I used to set a tray and swallow all of these vitamins, morning, noon and night .and she didn't have anything wrong with her.

29:30 It was never conclusive that this is what should be done but, that was her way of treating me to stop having these wheat intolerant children.

Did Tony talk to you about his experiences in the war?

No, not a lot. I don't know, his very best friend he saw crash and burn and that is enough to silence anyone. He didn't talk about it very much at all.

30:00 **And did you struggle financially when you first got to Australia?**

We always all of our lives struggled financially to be truthful. Yes, the only thing was when we did take the kids back to England, wool prices were at their height, and of course, being Australian and having promised to take me back, Tony did.

30:30 But by rights we should have consolidated then, because we had money enough to take two children to England and back here, life might have been different. We should have consolidated, but we didn't. Australians don't naturally save anyhow, especially men on the land, if they get money they spend it it seems, it may be a generalisation but that's the way it seemed to me at the time.

31:00 **And its that a different mentality from English?**

I don't know, I had been brought up to be thrifty. I don't say that Tony was spendthrift, but okay, if it was something that he had promised to do, which he did, like take me back, then if he had money he would do it immediately. Rather than thinking ahead perhaps, to how we might have been

31:30 able to do that later.

Can you tell us about moving to Melbourne?

Yes, it was good actually. We were in this large house my father-in-law had bought. He gave Tony the job of dividing up land he had bought at a place called Denistone, this very old house. Balconies, verandas all of the way around it, timber place, and he bought it with twelve acres which he was subdividing.

32:00 But he was subdividing it into very large blocks and Tony was in charge of that side of it. Dick, my father-in-law, was determined not to have it built out with a whole heap of little houses and things, he wanted mansions there. To keep it select if you like. And we lived just above the little sea place, Davis Bay where he had also got a boathouse, so I used to be able to take the children down the cliff face, little

32:30 paths we had, and his friends used to come through and use that as well while we were there. We were there for about nine months. And then we went to Killrane which is where the two girls were born.

And did you move around a lot after the girls were born?

What in visiting? Or?

33:00 **Living in different houses?**

Not a great deal. We lived there for about, I can't remember how many years, two or three and then we did move to Dartmoor and I can't remember how long we were there. See my mind is filled with blanks to a degree because after Tony's stroke,

33:30 which was the most momentous thing that happened in my life in the sense of terrible shock and so forth, a lot of my life got blanked out because for everything, he was the focal point, or his hope for recovery was the focal point.

Tell me about his stroke then?

Well unfortunately,

34:00 he didn't have it on a working day because then there would have been better compensation. From that angle I mean. He had been for some time, I thought he needed a thoroughly good check and the doctor at Dartmoor had suggested he have one and he wouldn't go. He was a man that, he was tall, looked like an oak tree, there was no question of him having anything wrong with him.

34:30 After we had moved to Yackandandah, he became increasingly impatient over everything, myself, the girls everything. He was working for a fertiliser company called Privets and we only had a hundred and nine acres on this little farmlet, and he was doing the job that was actually eventually taken over by three other people. So he was covering terrific mileages

35:00 and feeling very pressured. He had the stroke on a Sunday, he had been on the tractor, brought the

tractor up, parked it, got off the tractor, bam, unconscious. And one of the children had been down there, the littlest, who was then about nine and one half or ten. And she said, “Mum come quick, something awful has happened to Dad!” And I watching the Forsythe Saga [television series] at the moment, why he had to have it

35:30 in the middle of an episode I didn’t know. Anyway I went down and there he was unconscious on the ground, so we covered him over and put his head to one side. Phone up the neighbours first and asked them to get the ambulance for me. And they offered to have the children ,and they did take the children although the kids resented it very much

36:00 afterwards, it couldn’t be helped. Rick had unfortunately gone up to the snow in Falls Creek that week. Simon was in Vietnam, or about to go to Vietnam. Rick felt terrible because he had been in Falls Creek. He would have been a great help because he had a driver’s licence, not that he could have moved him or anything. I did get the girls to open all of the gates first so the ambulance could come racing up.

36:30 The neighbour came and collected them, took them off and I went in the ambulance with Tony. Went to Albury Base Hospital, siren blaring all of the way and the oxygen tube came off the connection, and he was in the back with the helper, whatever, paramedic. I was in the front with the driver, the oxygen came off in the front, the connection and I had to try and put it on, but he wouldn’t slow up so that I could see, I couldn’t see the nozzle, I

37:00 was trying to get it onto and my hands were shaking. Horrible moment actually, and I often wonder if that caused more brain damage because he wasn’t getting any oxygen at that point for a moment of two. Anyway we got to Albury Base Hospital, he was a tall man and the stretcher was all too long to go in the first lift so we had to go around the back and get another lift. I can remember all of those sort of dreadful little details. And

37:30 I can’t remember what I did that night. I think I went to a friend’s place, got a message through to Rick and I went and stayed with a friend in Albury. And it was finally decided to fly him down to Melbourne to a neurologist, neurosurgeon. And so he was flown down to, I can’t

38:00 remember the name of the hospital. We had the whole thing organised, I flew down there, ordinary commercial plane and Tony went on the air ambulance. And I was told afterwards it was good I didn’t see it. They could hardly load him onto it, there wasn’t room, and it was late because they had to pick somebody else up en route. We finally arrived; he was unconscious for ten days.

38:30 I stayed again with friends. It was very difficult visiting him. I kept by his side more or less. When he did start to come around he was angry and couldn’t stand the sight of his brother, absolutely couldn’t. He started to go against me, the neurosurgeon suggested perhaps I shouldn’t visit him, but I couldn’t stop. He fell out of bed. All sorts of things happened.

39:00 He missed a meal, but eventually I got him home. And that was difficult as you can imagine. He could walk, he could speak. He had no short term memory. So he could start a story and then start it again five minutes later, he could listen to a story and you could tell it again and get the

39:30 same laugh five minutes later.

Tape 5

00:32 **All right Pauline, we will continue on with the story of the stroke, continue on with that and tell us about the care and so on after that.**

Well, Tony came home after he had been unconscious, I think for about ten days, but he was in hospital from memory, for about five or six weeks. And when he came home he could speak and he could walk, it wasn’t a first class walk, but he could. Unaided, he could dress himself and that sort of thing. There were

01:00 difficulties. He was quite incontinent at night. Nobody, no nurse, no doctor nobody told me that a man could be put into a pant that would absorb the urine. So of course, I was forever washing and changing sheets. Well, I was changing of a night and washing all day. And this also made the difficulties, you had to have the rubber under the sheets and all of the rest of it. There were a lot

01:30 of gaps those days I think, for carers, certainly no money. I think when I hear of carers getting paid today well, I think they’re so lucky, and I hear they do not get enough. Well, we did not get anything. And it was twenty-four hour, seven day a week job. Tony was always pleasant with me, but very impatient though with his elder daughter which created a lot of problems eventually, and

02:00 she became very much a rebel. She now lives in America and she has settled down .She has been married, she has been divorced, she has divorced her husband who was an alcoholic, which she supports entirely by herself. And for a woman in her fifties, which she now is, to be able to keep a job in America is not bad. She is working in a telephone

02:30 company, a good speaking voice. She has got two grandsons now, I met them all last year, we went to the Bahamas, that's another story. Tony was impatient towards Sally, she was thirteen, she had no fun as a young girl at all. We were living maybe ten miles from Wodonga and there was no life living on a little small farm in the country. The other child was more

03:00 adaptable because she was only ten and she was more easily amused. Poor Sally, she had a rough time. Tony had to go back to St. Vincent's in Melbourne, several times with different things that were wrong with him. They got righted each time. He did once spend a month in rehab [rehabilitation] down there. He was utterly miserable and he hated it but it gave me a respite,

03:30 and that's all that can be said in its favour really, it didn't rehabilitate him. It almost wasn't a possibility. His best rehabilitation was pottering around on the farm trying to chop wood. I made sure he wore socks on the outside of his trousers and boots. So that if the axe slewed off, which it often did, it really wasn't likely to cut him, and his strength in swinging wasn't as good as it could have been.

04:00 In that way it was good. I had leased the land, but we were still obligated to check the fences and the rabbits and the blackberries and that sort of thing. So we used to walk around the fences quietly together, and I would help him try and tidy up anything that needed straightening or whatever needed to be done. It was difficult because I always felt really on edge leaving him to even to collect the children from school.

04:30 I never knew if I came back if I would find the house standing. Well, it wasn't likely to burn because it was Mount Gambier stone, but I never knew what accidents might happen. But all was well. Most people have found, and I know this because after I wrote the short book that I wrote about caring for stroke people, which was published about twenty-five years ago now.

05:00 I used to go to Concord Hospital where a doctor there was very keen on separating husbands and wives, and I used to go in and be with the wives, and they would say how they lost all of their friends. It is a very sad fact for anyone that has had a stroke, I think they must be afraid that it is going to rub off on them because their friends drop them like hot potatoes, and this did happen to a large degree with us. And that makes for a lot of misery for us.

05:30 One man used to pass and see Tony in the paddock or whatever, and Tony used to wave and he wouldn't even bother waving back. And these things hurt people like that very much. It is a great pity that people aren't kinder. Anyway we pottered around there for four years. He had a very nice guy, Graham Johnson I think his name was, he was a psychiatrist

06:00 and he came because he had to interview Tony every so often for the war veterans and that sort of thing, And he used to come out to the house because he didn't want to have him agitated going into the hospital and that sort of thing, which was very decent of him. And he was very helpful for me too, which was nice to be included.

06:30 He said that I mustn't bear any false hopes for Tony's recovery, because he realised that by the time he saw him, this wasn't going to happen. And then he slowly deteriorated until finally, he came in one morning, he even got up, this was the last morning he was ever home; I woke up to see him standing in the doorway with his hand trembling

07:00 and he had a tea cup and he had tea in it which was spilling all over the floor. I think it was made with cold water, but that is neither here nor there. He had tried to bring me, as a gesture, a cup of tea, because he knew I was tired and still sleeping. I realised he had got much worse by the trembling and so forth. And he then had no idea, when he went to have a leak in the bathroom

07:30 he had no idea whether to turn the light on or push the thing to flush it. He didn't know which was which, what was what. So I rang the doctor and said, "My husband has deteriorated, he is barely walking." and that was true, by that time it was little tiny steps, "I think I had better bring him in." I brought him in and the doctor tried to persuade me to take him home and I knew I

08:00 just could not cope with this so I said, " I am sorry, I am not going to be responsible for your patient." And really had to stand up, he said, "Oh go on, take him home, he will be right." And so on. I said, "No, I am not going to, put him into hospital." Which he did and he never came out of it. And there were times, ordinary medicos, [doctors] I really had to throw my weight around such as it was. With a specialist no, they seemed to get the message and the picture,

08:30 but the ordinary country doctor seemed to be very hesitant to be helpful at times. It was rather sad that because I quite liked some of them. One time I also said that he had to go into hospital. They didn't know what was wrong with him, it was a Friday and I went back to see him,

09:00 I opened a drawer and there was a hanky, tissue, covered in really bloody sputum. I took it gingerly along to the sister in charge and said, "Look, my husband is coughing up blood. You'll have to do something about him before the weekend." So they had to open x-ray because it was a Friday, he was on the verge of pneumonia. Before that they had given him an

09:30 enema, and these things are very puzzling to the ordinary person on the street. Anyway he survived that particular period. And then when he was finally put into a nursing home in Albury, I then leased the house because I had to be closer to him, I couldn't keep driving backwards and forth sixteen miles a

day. And I had the kids, one child at school still, but she was in school in Wodonga,

10:00 so I went to Albury to live and worked in a children's wear boutique. And that left me, part time, that left me free to attend to him when I had to. That was that period.

How did you feel about this burden that you had been left with?

Very tense. I used to drive the car, and my hands were like clenched fists on the steering wheel. And I had to

10:30 positively stop to loosen everything up, I was going like that on the steering wheel and I realised. I do remember one time being absolutely in shock-horror because I happened to see a bed sore on Tony's behind in the nursing home. And he had sores, all over his body.

11:00 I then looked onto his chest and he had these great sores and things. I told the doctor, I told the staff at the nursing home, "Oh yes, yes, we're treating that." So I went to the doctor to see what was happening, and he said, "Well, he has become allergic to penicillin." And I said, "Well, why should he have it?" and he said, "Wel,l he can't die of pneumonia." I thought, 'Well, he is living dead.' He hardly knew anything then,

11:30 hardly knew me, he was really vegetating, and I said, "Well, in a sense does that matter?" "Rest assured dear Mrs. Willis." pat on the shoulder, "We will find something." And I just thought, 'Why don't you just let him go? Is it too bad to let him die of pneumonia?' That was my answer. Now I know that euthanasia is a difficult subject

12:00 but I am really in favour of not taking action when people can be left. That's my theory on that one. Finally he did die, God bless him, and good luck to him, because he deserved to by that time. Release from everything, there was no point in trying to make any effort, could feed himself, couldn't do anything. That was that, what did I do then?

12:30 Then I went stupidly to Geelong Grammar as a matron, you didn't have to have nursing training. You only had to count shirts and socks and underpants and say hello to the boys and take the chemist's lists. They were always trying to take the mickey out of me [tease her], one boy very cleverly wrote, he wanted anti-pissperant please, from the chemist. I said, "Pity you don't learn to spell."

13:00 I liked the kids but the housemaster was hopeless, he was so determined that Manifold House was the only house, and nothing could be wrong and then there was the night that one of them was drunk. Two little Greek boys, I think they were brothers. They had been home and one came back completely stonkers [drunk], and one of the older boys came down

13:30 and said, "Matron, such and such is not well." And I went up and I knew why he was not well. I decided to take him over to the hospital, they weren't prepared to come and collect me, so I had to take him. He was a little kid, able to put his arm around here and I held his hand, and there was this wide staircase, and we ricocheted down from one side to the other the whole way down,

14:00 walked to the hospital. They had to pump his stomach. Now that whole episode had to be totally hushed up because it would have reflected on the house. That irritated me because I believe in being a bit more open than that. They were nice kids, made a mistake and it wouldn't hurt anybody to know about it because other kids were going to do the same. As I say I left, I couldn't stand it.

14:30 **What connection do you think there might have been between Tony's war service and his condition?**

I think a very definite one, otherwise he would never have been accepted through all of the interrogations he was submitted to after his stroke. He would never have been accepted by the Department of War Vets [Department of Veterans' Affairs], which, he was because I am a war widow, he was accepted as a TPI [totally and permanently incapacitated pensioner].

15:00 There was a period when I know his mother had opened her trap [spoken] to somebody out here during the war, saying her son didn't like bombing this or that, I don't know. I can't remember, I don't have the paper cutting or even know which paper it is was in. but there was a great kafuffle because it looked like Tony, what was it you asked me before they couldn't go flying?

15:30 **LMF, lack of moral fibre?**

It looked as if it was, which it wasn't because he was still flying, but it didn't' reflect well and he was awfully upset by this. He told me that every sortie was just one big gritting your teeth making yourself go. I am sure

16:00 that everybody was like him, but I am sure that there were people who could take it more happily if you like. In a more relaxed manner. I think he was tense. Because he was also a very responsible type character so he felt a terrific responsibility towards the guys in the crew. And that would have been an added difficulty for him.

16:30 In case he failed them.

So you believe that stress may have affected him?

I do think so. I know he came back over the North Sea once with a cookie, the big bomb underneath was stuck, and they had to do all sorts of manoeuvres and all sorts of things to get rid of it, they couldn't land with it. It would have gone whoosh apparently. And I think they did get rid of it in the end, or they did land with it.

17:00 I forget now. Unfortunately I am not very clever with it, whatever. The whole crew then was given a DFM [Distinguished Flying Medal], that was when he was a sergeant, that would have been the first tour. I think he found it all very traumatic, maybe more than some. Maybe he was a nervous little boy. He might have been, as a kid he had been through his parents' bickering

17:30 and eventual separation and a lot of kids don't take that easily.

What kind of struggle did you have, if any, to get his condition recognised by the veterans' affairs people?

That I don't know really. Different members who had been in his crew were instrumental; Jack Cannon who was sports editor of the Melbourne Herald.

18:00 Jack had had an interesting war because his plane had blown up over England and he had been literally shot out into an oak tree which was a good safe landing, and when he came around there was a farmer there with a pitchfork saying, "You be up there or you come down here." Sort of thing, and Jack had to explain that he wasn't German. And Jack was instrumental in saying, "This is what you have to do."

18:30 And I said, "No, I am not taking charity we will cope." "You will not cope and Tony has got to be recognised that this is from war service." And Jack was instrumental in getting the ball rolling; I remember I had to take him for medicals in Melbourne, four hour drive there and back. We had to stay overnight of course.

19:00 He was very amazed because he had a long psychiatric interview in Melbourne and the psychiatrist was German which was ironic. I can't remember how long it took. We were fortunate in as much as the fertiliser company he had been working for, Pivot, came and interviewed us on the farm, his boss actually came

19:30 specially to interview us and see what the situation was, very early in the piece when I got Tony home. And they then decided to pay us a year's salary in case Tony got better enough to rejoin them, which I thought was very optimistic and generous. But he had been overworked by them also, which might have contributed to the stroke coming on when it did, I don't know. I

20:00 think it is an unusual thing to be accepted by the war vets but in a sense I didn't have any say so. It was his mates, his friends that rallied and started it.

Do you think there is any difference in the way the veterans from the Second World War treated mental illness compared to nowadays?

20:30 Well, how do you mean? Do you think the actual treatment is different?

No, was it regarded differently, the fact that stress for example could lead to a medical condition?

It might have been I don't know. You see some people say there is no such thing as stress, and I don't know about that either because we know when we feel stressed, get stretched whatever the word is that you want to use.

21:00 There is something isn't there that makes us taut and tense, and Tony was always a difficult man to live with in this respect. Always tense. I loved him dearly, like that, but he was always 'whoo' like that.

But that wasn't the end of your experience with war was it because you also had a son involved?

21:30 Yes, Simon's name was pulled out of the hat and he went to Vietnam with survey. I do know that it changed in as much as he came back with very little respect for women, it was all right as far as his mother was concerned, but I think it was partly because he had a very nice girlfriend before he went over there. She sent him a Dear John letter [letter signifying the end of a relationship] and that was the beginning of it.

22:00 And also of course the little Vietnamese girls were all over the blokes and then knifing them in the back or to do whatever they were doing to help their own tribe or effort or whatever it was. So he was not trusting of anyone which was a great shame. When he came back he came to live with us at Yackandandah and he worked on the

22:30 roads, there was no other job there. And he said, "I would like to give you some time at home Mum. Perhaps I can ease it a bit for you with Dad." This was very good of Simon and I really appreciated it. he did hard tack [work] on the roads, tarring roads and moving stones, whatever he did and lived at home for two or three months I think.

And he sent you back to England

23:00 **is that what you're saying?**

No, he was at home and I cooked for them all. No, he was just wanting to give me an extra person to have around to talk through that could actually think things through. Poor Tony he couldn't think things through because his memory had gone so far.

23:30 People could meet him for a short time, some friend of my mother's came and visited us, people I had known for years and he laughed uproariously about everything they said, hadn't a clue what they were talking about in actual fact. They would go back to England, "Oh it is great, fine. No problem with Tony." And of course my family couldn't understand the situation at all. Of course there was a problem with Tony, you needed to be with him for more than half an hour.

24:00 **Describe your feeling when your son's name was called out for conscription.**

When he told me I thought, 'God, why couldn't they have taken Rick?' Because I felt Rick needed to have the discipline and I felt he would have liked it. He had always been in the cadets in Albury Grammar and had always been a drummer and looked the part. Whereas Simon had not taken to that life in the slightest.

24:30 It was the wrong son in that respect. Simon was good ,he used to write regularly.

What fears did you have for him?

I just kept my fingers crossed because honestly when you're living with somebody like Tony, your husband, on knife-edge all of the time you have just got to keep your fingers crossed really, not much else

25:00 you can do. I hoped he would be all right and keep his head down.

Okay, we might back up a little bit more, I want to go back and talk a bit more about the Second World War time, not the Vietnam War time. Can you remember what your feelings were like at a point say, like the D Day landings?

25:30 Oh, jubilation. Quite an extraordinary thing, my stepfather as I told you was in Fighter Command and in intelligence, he had had for training purposes only a model made of the coast before the D Day landings. And they were going to discuss all of this and whatever they were going to do with it. And one of the senior officers happened to come in and see this model and said, "Lord!" Lord was his name, "Destroy that!"

26:00 And Bill, my stepfather, immediately thought, 'Oh my God, they had picked that exact area where they were going.' We were jubilant, we hoped it would be a walkover, I know it wasn't but we did hope that it would be. He finally went over, my

26:30 stepfather finally went over and he was in Belgium. I know Tony had to take a whole heap of Australian senators over there after the war for some reason. I don't I think we were thrilled with all of the little boats going over, and the way it was organised and the way they managed to keep it secret. It was very clever because

27:00 they had a lot of mock up places and things like that. They went to a lot of bother.

Was there a feeling that there wouldn't be war for much longer?

There was a great deal of hope that there wouldn't be, yeah. Because the flying bombs and the V2s [German rockets] were really terrible. Those did come over.

27:30 I remember one coming over and you could see the damn thing and hear it cut out and then you just wait for the whoosh, you didn't know where it would fall. The V2s they would just come over, vvvct, like that and then crash, that was a horrible period.

How often did you encounter say V1s or V2s where you were?

28:00 Not a lot luckily, a lot of the flying bombs were intercepted and shot down. The V2s weren't near us. We had one man billeted on us and his wife from London; they were evacuees with their daughter. He was a nice old boy but stone deaf. And he used to like to go out and watch the lights and his wife and daughter were like jellies. He would go out and not even hear the next door

28:30 street when it crashed down. Always they kept him quiet when they got down to us.

What was the procedure when a German air raid or a flying bomb was detected coming in?

Well, as far as possible take cover. It wasn't always easily possible, you were often in the middle of doing something else totally different.

29:00 If the sirens went off then okay you went down into a shelter. But you waited, people got a bit blasé about it I think, waited, well they are a bit close, they were in the next street or something so down they

would go.

Did you ever have any near misses?

29:30 Not as far as I know.

Back to taking the air crews out before the raids, can you describe the sights the sounds, the smell of what was happening there with all of the aircraft?

Well of course, once they started revving up, well the noise was bad and you never knew where it was coming from. And if they were taxiing, you might see a couple of lights, which end of it,

30:00 because the wings were wide apart. There was quite a lot of noise, smell, not particularly. Don't remember that. I think it was the… obviously they were flying when the moon

30:30 wasn't too bright, if they could possibly avoid flying with a full moon. So it was very dark, very black. Unless you got reflection from the snow, then it was a bit lighter. And then they had to clean all of the runways, clear them.

What were conditions on the base like during winter?

Well, it could be miserable

31:00 because if you had snow on the ground it got slippery, if it froze over it got slippery. And if it was dank and wet and horrid it wasn't very nice. Most of the huts were waterproof but slushing through on those duckboards is a horrible memory.

What did you feel about the British political leadership during the war?

Winston [Churchill – Prime Minister]?

31:30 Oh we all adored him. we thought he was getting there, he imbibed a lot, made a man of him in a sense. I am sure he drove some of the top brass totally crazy. But we thought the world of him, we were upset afterwards when Attley got in. I think,

32:00 he was a good leader in a great many respects and he had the people behind him. He did shoot from the hip and tell us, "All I can offer you is blood sweat, toil and tears." Whatever it was. That strengthened most people, the backbone came into it then.

What about the royal family?

A great admiration for them at that time definitely.

32:30 They were determined not to send the children away. And it must have been a temptation to send them to Canada but they didn't. I think they used to visit a lot in areas that had been bombed, the Queen Mother was very popular in that respect. So was the then Queen and King. They were very highly

33:00 thought of, I think the populace in general thought the world of them. We were proud to have them. It is so sad that it is not the same now. Well I don't say it is so sad but it seems a shame.

What about military figures like Monty [Field Marshall Montgomery]?

Oh, he was very revered. I am quite sure his troops adored him, isn't that right?

33:30 And I think Portal [Charles Portal-Air Marshall] in the air force; I can't remember who was head of the admiralty, no idea.

What about Bomber Harris [Head of Bomber Command]?

He might have had a few criticisms. It was his daughter I was with when I was in my riding place. Marigold. And I think she married an Irishman,

34:00 lives in an Irish castle somewhere, that's what I heard. She was a little older than I. I don't know how come but that's where we met.

How would you describe later on in the war, as things turned around and got a bit better for the Allies, how would you describe the spirit in Britain?

Tyring to ease up, trying to get rid of the tension and be optimistic,

34:30 I don't think we ever fell into a deep despondency because we were so determined. As a people. But I think that once you could see a chink of light ahead it was very good.

Did you ever have any encounters with say, the black market?

I don't think so I don't remember at all.

35:00 **When you came out was it a special ship for war brides that you came out on?**

No, you see I was on the first non-war brides' ship. Tony was in the Sterling Castle and he was with about two thousand brides and about ten men. And I was able to get on board to see him

35:30 off because at that time there was a Mrs. Jackson was a lady editoress of the Women's Weekly. And her daughter Hazel was a friend of Tony's best man, Bill. And Hazel managed to get a press pass for herself and me. So we got on board with a press pass to say goodbye to the troops. And she was interviewing brides and sending an article back to the Women's Weekly,

36:00 to her mother. So to cut a long story short, I had a pad and pen in my hand as if I was really doing some work. And I remember that we went into a cabin which was again a two berth cabin with three adults in it. Three women who had never met before. One had a small baby, four or five months, one had a child of two and one had a child of about four.

36:30 Now what a terrible combination, how they managed to remain even on speaking or screaming terms by the end of the trip I don't know. I remember Tony writing to me and saying he was disgusted, some of these women had married blokes in order to get the free trip to Australia, no intention of staying, which amazed me, but apparently that was the case. Some of them had shacked up with different crew members

37:00 or one of the ten. Tony's best man had to use a stick because he was in Coastal Command, had been shot down and he had a gammy leg and he had a stick. And he used to walk around the ship waving the stick in front of him to get rid of all of the brides. They used to try and run dances for them and all of the girls had to dance together of course.

37:30 The men weren't inclined to want to dance I think. They used to run quizzes because one girl was very suspicious and wanted to know what was meant by the Australian passionfruit because she didn't want any. Never heard of it before you see? What else? I don't know, little bits he did write about.

38:00 My boat had a hundred and fifty passengers, a businessman with his wife and children and a nurse on board because his wife was terribly pregnant and had a horrible trip. They were the ones that became my friends for life, unfortunately they have both died now. Anyway he was a businessman in plastics, and he was coming out to Australia, country for the future I was told. I said, "I wish I could stay in South Africa."

38:30 "Oh no, forget it." Okay, end of story. I will tell you who was on board, Matron Dougherty and Vivien Bulwinkle, I think she was the one that pretended to be dead on the beach; I can't remember where, Singapore? No. the Japs came and mowed down these people trying get out to the ship,

39:00 and she pretended to be dead. Anyway she was also on board, with Matron Dougherty who was also a well known matron. June and Tom Porter, he was Adelaide, and later became Lord Mayor of Adelaide. He had been on [General] Blamey's staff. I can't remember many other people. There was another Mrs. Willis, she had three boys on board and she was seen coming out of the wireless operator's cabin.

39:30 I was in a terrible fever, I thought my husband would hear this and think it was me, luckily nothing materialised from that one.

What facilities were there on the boat?

A bar which was something because all of the other ships had been dry. The food wasn't too bad I suppose, it seemed wonderful after English rationing. I think there was a canvas pool

40:00 and they ran little games and different things like that. Not a great many facilities it was a very small boat.

Tape 6

00:30 **Pauline, can you tell us about your first impressions of Australia when you arrived?**

Well, the first impression was Fremantle and not so favourable, but Perth was so nice, it made up for it. And I believe Fremantle now is gorgeous, they have done everything to make it upmarket and attractive. It wasn't then, it was as I said, tin sheds more or less.

01:00 I loved everything I think, from the start. I wanted to be here, I wanted to be with my husband. I wanted to live in the bush, be on the land, outdoors, I loved it. The isolation didn't particularly worry me, and of course, in those days it was all pre-television so we made our own interests.

01:30 We read books at night I guess, listened to the radio. Listened to the radio a lot the bush people did in those days, and the radio plays and things were very good. Jack Davey [radio personality], people like that. It was all quite an exciting time. I was sorry I didn't have more time on the beaches. I loved it every time we went on a holiday and went to the beach,

02:00 I am not a good swimmer and hate the surf, terrified of it. But I did like the beach.

Which beaches did you holiday at?

We were lent a house by some friends of Tony's who lived over at Coonamble and they had a house at Newport and we were lent this house which was wonderful for us. They were very old friends, Tony had jackarooed with

02:30 Dick Pearson and I am still in touch with Dick's son Tony, who is my Tony's godson, he is now living at Tamworth. He came over to Byron Bay for my eightieth birthday party. It was a great gathering; my daughter came over from America for the first time in twenty years and my son Simon came for the first time in twenty years as well. That was a lovely reunion.

03:00 He came to that. We used to go over to Coonamble a lot to stay with them. They had a big house. it was two squares joined together with a great big area in the middle and the whole thing was enclosed with fly wire so that the whole thing got every breeze possible. It was gorgeous, because it was a very hot area. They were very helpful to me, when I had new babies. Rick was only two months old before we went over for Christmas

03:30 and I mean it would be ninety [degrees] before the sun got up, really hot. And once the sun got up it was absolutely terrific. And I was taught by them how to deal with a young baby in the heat which is something that no English girl would really have any idea about.

What did they say to you?

Well, they actually said to let the fan play directly onto him which amazed me, because the little thing was

04:00 perspiring and they said, "No, just sponge him down the whole time and keep him cool. Keep the fan on him." he was fine.

Were there any other aspects of Australian natural occurrences that you found different?

Well, I wasn't used to yabbies [freshwater crayfish] in the dam as an example, and my Tony's godson, Tony Pearson, as a little boy of nine or ten used to

04:30 go and catch the yabbies. And to my horror he had filled his mother's copper with cold water, put the yabbies in and lit the fire underneath so it was a slow cook. He didn't know any better of course. I found that distances were amazing as far as, we drove over one morning, we left at four in the morning and we drove over to Brewarrina so that I could see

05:00 Quintamba and the old property where Tony had jackarooed. You couldn't see any track at all, but they seemed to know how to get to the next gate. There was no road. It was extraordinarily hot. And it was very dry the year I had gone up there, 1946, and the sheep wouldn't move for the car even, they were that weak. Dick had been shooting them all because there was no point in trying to keep the

05:30 poor buggers alive. At least he was compassionate enough to waste bullets on them. Anyway, we finally got through these half dead sheep and eventually I suppose we hit a road or track to Brewarrina, we arrived at the hotel at nine o'clock in the morning and had a cold beer. It was the best beer ever, I don't drink beer but gosh, that was good. We were like Red Indians with the red dust covered everywhere.

06:00 We all had showers and then all went to bed for an hour or two under the mosquito net. And then we looked around Brewarrina, went to an outdoor cinema, it was fascinating. All of the moths and things get attracted to the beam and they fly around and get all over the screen. The only other one I have seen was in Greece, outdoor cinema like that. That's the only one I have been to, canvas chairs to sit in.

06:30 There was a little English girl on the property next door to Dick and Lorn and this was very much in the plains, I don't know if you know that country, it is flat as a pancake. In my view it has no redeeming features except for flatness, bits of scrub and fences here and there. Kangaroos are prolific, but that's it.

07:00 Anyway we went next door to see this girl, she was English, I can't remember her name. She had been married to an Australian I think, he had been in the war too. And they had a tiny little house, hot as hot as hot. And they had everything open to try and get a breeze, and a dust storm came through about an hour before we were due to arrive. Luckily she had all of her food covered because she had gone to a lot of bother. And just before we arrived the wind changed and the dust storm came back again.

07:30 So we arrived when the dust storm was settling. And I think he eventually left the land and went into Berlei corsets, for some reason. A city job, which would have helped her tremendously. I envied people who were playing tennis and that, I was not very good at it, but I would have loved to have had the time. I would have loved to have the time for golf.

08:00 None of that came my way though because I had two children by then and no help at that stage and we were working awfully hard. There was always a lot to do.

Did you ever have any help?

Later in my life yes, after I had been to England we brought a girl back with us, sadly she died last year.

Ann was her name and she lived

08:30 with us as sort of a general help, and looked after the kids a lot. That sort of thing, and this was great, eventually though, we found that we couldn't afford to do this any longer but she still continued to live with us, help us when she could and she got a job out. She used to go out and work, she had done office jobs. And she finally

09:00 married a very well-off young Australian guy and they lived at a place called Mumbannar, near Mount Gambier, and they had four children and she really became a woman of the land. She was good as far as she was there.

And what did you think the differences were between Britain and Australia post war?

I suppose the biggest difference was this great antipathy to women as far as the

09:30 men were concerned. In as much as, you didn't go into a bar as you did in a little English village pub, hotel or inn whatever you want to call it. I think also at any social gathering the men would get together and talk and the women would be left to talk about cooking and sewing or whatever. There was very little interaction in conversation between men and women.

10:00 I resented that because I had been on a level if you like with the men in my job in England, in the WAAF. We weren't treated as a different species. We felt like that here. The men didn't seem to have any idea, the poor little woman, you know.

10:30 **And how did you deal with it?**

Probably not very well, rather bad temperedly at times. Until I suppose, we met up with a friend on Tony's when we had moved to Dartmoor and he was more civilised in his approach and I think then we started a breakdown. We got to know a Norwegian man and his

11:00 wife who were living in Dartmoor as well. And the Norwegians are not like that at all, they will talk to anyone that they find they want to talk to. And the wife and I got on well, and that all helped.

Was that a long process?

In general at first I was totally bewildered. We went to one family

11:30 we were asked down especially, the little English war bride. We were asked there for a Sunday afternoon tea it was, they had filled their tins. They had the most beautiful daughters, three lovely looking girls, absolutely luscious. And a son who they worshipped, the elderly couple who were older than I, the girls were nearer my age.

12:00 Anyway, we were separated immediately and then the afternoon came and there was a mixing, but no mixing in conversation. Because the men had to talk about the land obviously, and I do understand that aspect, they needed to talk about the price of wool or wheat or whatever it was. But there was never even any question of trying

12:30 to be a conversationalist. And then suddenly the girls had to go. I was left then with the aging parent, the mother and the girls had to go because they had to put all of the washing in to soak for Monday morning's wash. They had to do it because it was Sunday. So they all went off and collected all of the washing, put it into the laundry tub and set them soaking, they all had to be soaked thoroughly.

13:00 And blued, we all blued our washing. You don't know blue? Reckitts Blue [a whitener for clothes] very well known, you put this blue bag in with the rinse and that whitened your sheets.

Had you heard about this before you came to Australia?

I think so yeah, I think blue was probably used in England. I don't think my mother used it but never the less I am

13:30 sure it could have been used.

And what do you remember eating that was different?

Well, the three tier cream cakes, I can remember every time we were asked out they would have these cake stands, and they would have sponge cake, cream and jam, sponge cake, cream and jam, and then on top whatever.

14:00 The amount of cake eating was a surprise because we had not had cake. What cake we had was egg-less, you can make cake without eggs. Soda cake my grandmother used to make, and she used to make it without eggs and very little sugar. I think it had flour, must have had some sort of shortening, and fruit.

14:30 And of course the quantities of meat that were eaten here. And no fish, very hard to get fish in the bush.

The quantities were bigger in Australia than you were used to?

Oh gosh yes, we hardly had meat during the war. We did in the services but not the civilian population. Lambs fry, they were very lucky if they could get a lambs fry. Very questionable sausages.

15:00 You know, as to what had been ground up into them. Here there were chops for breakfast, chops for lunch, chops for dinner, whatever. We killed our own sheep. We killed two tooths [the age of the sheep] which is much nicer than lamb, it has got much more flavour, but it is hard to get in the city. And Tony used to cure his own meat well, he used to hang it well and we would have that.

15:30 He could eat two or three chops for breakfast, I couldn't.

And what did you think about Australia's involvement in Vietnam?

I thought it probably had to be because of the area in which we lived. I am not a very political person

16:00 so I haven't thought a great deal about it as far as politics go, I just feel that we live in the Pacific and perhaps that's why we had to go.

And as a mother?

Well, always sorry that's one of your children is co-opted into something that is not nice. But it is no good fighting it either, if it is ordained.

16:30 **And what do you think has changed in Australia in Australia's general attitude towards Britain?**

I think it is divorced really, in a word. I think that this country will become a republic, I am not against that but I am against pushing it or making it happen before it is thought out. Before we know what leadership we

17:00 would like to try and have and decide upon. I think it is a difficult thing to know whether we have a president or what we have, and how to get that person. So I would never vote at a referendum to get rid of the monarchy, it doesn't cost us a hell of a lot. The Queen actually doesn't slash down rules that we have to obey

17:30 or eliminate things or anything like that. She is a figurehead sure, but we have been under the Westminster law [law handed down from Great Britain] and I think it is a great pity to be wiping that too quickly. I think change is good but it wants to come about a bit naturally, rather like growing up.

18:00 If you grow up too quickly it is not so good. If you let yourself grow up slowly, teenagers and then young adult and then real adults, it is a natural progression. I don't think we should push it, that's my own thinking.

Back to your time in the WAAF

18:30 **you mentioned that you were quite a rebellious young woman, how did that manifest itself while you were there?**

Not a great deal I don't suppose at all. I mean, I didn't deliberately stay out of bounds late or anything of that nature. I questioned a few things, but certainly not to my disadvantage.

19:00 I tried to understand why certain rules were made, probably as one does all one's life wondering why this rule, is it a legend that has become a rule or is it really a rule, do you know what I mean? I was really more rebellious about leaving home. I wanted to leave home.

19:30 I didn't want to live in my mother's shadow. She was very attractive, very witty, very intelligent. And I felt overshadowed totally. I wanted to have my own personal life, my own personality, if any.

Is that why you were keen to leave England?

One of the reasons definitely, one of the reasons I wanted to leave home.

20:00 **Were you close to your mother?**

I didn't feel so very much so then. But later in life I did become so, I did nurse her through her final illness of cancer. She was ninety-five, within a month of being ninety-six before she died. And the last six months of her life she was so incredibly brave, so totally uncomplaining with a happy disposition all of the time.

20:30 Never saying, "Why me?" she had very bad cancer and she left it too late. It manifested itself here, her breast. The size of pullet's egg at any rate, before she let anyone know, and lucky I was there. I whipped her straight off to the doctor, it was a Saturday afternoon. And he was pat, pat, "At your age, don't worry. You won't go quickly but

21:00 that's what it probably is, cancer." And then we had to wait for specialist appointments and it went on and on. They put her on, I can't remember the name of the drug, it is used a lot now. It has just gone out of my head, but it did no good whatsoever. A surgeon, he couldn't operate,

she was too far gone so then she was sent to an oncologist. My brother, my half brother was in a total state of denial, didn't want to lose her, and this was difficult for me. But Mum and I became very close indeed I am very glad to say. As I say, her guts and attitude were absolutely astounding, I have never know anything like it.

Her arms swelled up. Tens days before she died she had to see the oncologist, we got back from Norway, we had had Christmas in Norway. How we got her back I don't know, how she stood the trip I don't know. Her arm was enormous. And she said to the oncologist very bravely and firmly, "Just drain it and then I will be fine." And then of course he takes my brother and I aside, and said, "Look, I am going to have to put her on morphine." which he did and she died ten days later.

But her whole optimism was wonderful. She opened a new business in her eighties. She coped with my stepfather after a stroke in a wheelchair, with nurses and goodness knows what at home. She was very gutsy.

And was she a source of support for you when you were nursing Tony?

No, not very much. She didn't believe it was as bad as I actually said, because these friends that had seen him, how fine he was.

No she didn't know at all how difficult it was until Bill had his stroke and then I think, from then on we got closer until we were quite close.

And where did you find that you drew support from in the time you were looking after Tony and he was in the nursing home?

Tony's stepmother was a great help. She was wonderful, she used to come and visit and as she said, "I am bored out of my mind dear, but I really can't leave you to it on your own." And it was extraordinarily boring for her. And she was really very good. And there was a guy that lived next to us on the next property. He was a funny bloke, I never could make him out .And he used to come up and say, "Hiya boss, how are you going?"

and he would talk to Tony man to man, never treat him like an invalid and I can't remember his name now, but my gosh, I owed him for that. He was so good. So kind. And another little man that took over his job with Pivet used to come and say, "I am going to take Tony for a drive." Oh relief, I had an hour or two to myself. It was fantastic.

This little guy would take him off for a drive and they might stop somewhere and have a milkshake or a drink, I don't know, but it was wonderful. I did get respite once with a trained nurse and came up here for a cousin's wedding and I was away for a week I think and Tony went to her place and that was actually quite successful but of course,

we couldn't afford it too often, and I think that was the only time.

And what did Tony think about Simon going to Vietnam?

Well, he would follow my lead whatever I said mostly. He didn't formulate opinion easily after his stroke. He

looked to me for support the whole time. It was such a change of role. It was lucky I was strong really, because before that he had been the strong one.

And how did you handle that change in role?

I had to, I had no choice. When you have got your back to the wall you have got to cope, you either go right under which wasn't an acceptable

option from my point of view, or else you struggle on.

You mentioned a tarantula not long after arriving in Australia?

I can't bear spiders. I couldn't bear them in England and I can't bear them here. I can't stand cockroaches or snakes.

I like animals but I don't like insects.

And how about that outdoor toilet in the first place you lived?

I was paranoid about it to be truthful. Luckily when you're young you don't need to get out much in the night, whereas now days it is a different story, now days I would be around the twist I think. But you do cope don't you.

Did you ever find a snake or a redback spider there?

Redbacks yes. Not a snake there but we found one in the laundry once. And we had them in the house at Dartmoor, it was a very snaky place, it was shatteringly snaky, and there were tiger snakes.

How did you cope with that?

I was so pleased to leave in the end, I did not like it.

27:30 **How long were you there for?**

I think about four years, it is hard to remember.

And what else about it there made you glad to leave?

I suppose the fact that we were going down hill financially was making life very difficult. So it was better when we went over to Albury,

28:00 leased a house and Tony was working. He wasn't there much, he used to come home weekends and the boys went to school and the girls I suppose too.

How do you think that the war has affected you and your family?

I suppose it really helped me in a sense to leave England.

28:30 I don't know where I would have gone other than that. I certainly wouldn't have stayed at home, but I had no training for anything, I was eighteen. And I didn't want to be domesticated particularly. My mother was always talking about going to a first class cordon bleu cookery school. just sent a shudder down my spine.

29:00 I just don't know. From my point of view it probably enlarged my horizons superbly because it brought me to Australia, that's just a personal thing.

Did you ever feel that as a war bride there was a stigma in any way?

No. Should I?

No.

Did people

29:30 feel that, I don't know? I suppose there were women here that were resentful that they had lost their men, they had been left here, but on they other hand they did have the Americans and a lot of them made the most of that. I suppose it started the melting pot didn't it? And then the end of the war started a lot of Europeans coming out of Europe.

30:00 For instance my doctor is Czechoslovakian, she got away. She thought she would never get back there to see her mother again, but now she can. She had to retake all of her medical exams, when she got here. Learn to speak English more fluently, did both because she was a dedicated doctor, she was married and she had two children.

30:30 Now there is no way that if there hadn't been a war that she would be in this country at all, she would be practicing in Czechoslovakia. It started the melting point of people coming to Australia. And of course the cheap ten dollar fare for English people to come out, that all helped.

Did you ever encounter any resentment from Australian women?

31:00 Not that I recall no. I don't think so. I don't remember anyone saying, "You stole our men."

Did you ever have moments of regret in moving to Australia?

Well, put it this way, I did get very homesick. I could really bear it if we went to The Gap when we visited Sydney and to see that ocean and know that England was so far away and

31:30 out of reach financially. I think had there not been a financial restriction I would have been able to whiz back and forth. I have been able to do that since I have been here, I used to lease this flat every time I went overseas. And very successfully without a real estate agent I might add. And it was wonderful, I paid for every trip I ever took.

32:00 **When you were in the WAAF and you were in the pubs, what did you drink?**

Mostly beer. Most of the girls drank beer or shandy, beer and lemonade. Lots of us drank shandy to break it down a bit. We didn't drink hard liquor at all.

And did you smoke?

Yes. I did unfortunately. Smoked a lovely cigarette when I

32:30 could afford it, called Passing Cloud, in a pink cardboard box, and they were oval and they had a gold band around them and they were scented and I thought they the were the ants pants absolutely.

How long did you smoke for?

Probably six or eight years and then I gave up cold turkey.

33:00 The girl we had living with us Ann, the one we brought out, she smoked and I was always offering her cigarettes and I thought well, I am paying for her cigarettes as well as my own, this is all together too much. And I got a bad throat infection and couldn't swallow, on antibiotics and the doctor twice a day, and he said then, "You will be able to either talk or smoke, which are you going to do?" and I thought well I do like talking, better give up cigarettes so

33:30 I never smoked again.

When you were in Britain how real was the fear of invasion?

Oh very real. Very. I think it was anticipated that it could happen. If it did happen we were still going to beat them, there was no question of that. All of the beaches were rolls and rolls of barbed wire, you couldn't

34:00 get to the beaches. And as I say security was tight always.

And was there a particular plan in place for if it did happen?

I don't know, probably the Land Army. Have you ever seen Dads' Army [television series]? Well it's a TV thing and on radio too. Dads' Army were the army guard and a

34:30 ragged lot they were and we felt that we had to depend on them.

And do you have any kind of message for Australians?

Be nice to each other. I think all Australians, if they are naturalised they should be able to speak this language, they

35:00 should be able to read this language. I don't think we should naturalise people that cannot. I don't think we should sell land as a golf course to the Japanese or other. I don't think we should sell our land, we should lease it by all means and get the money. The Japanese they don't spend money here, they spend it all in their own places here.

35:30 I don't know that they bring in a great deal of revenue, do you think they do? They have got their own shops. Their own bus lines probably for all I know. Certainly their own golf courses. I know because north of Cairns is the most lovely place and it is all Japanese. I don't think we should have sold that land, very false economy.

36:00 **And do you think Australian society has changed since you moved here?**

Oh its unreal the change. Yes. When I came here you could talk to anybody or anybody could talk to you. We could go into Coonabarabran and leave the car unlocked with all of the new groceries and not even think about it. You are not even meant to get petrol now without locking your car while you go in and pay for it.

36:30 I often don't and I don't bother locking it but by law I believe you are meant to. It is totally different and security in houses and blocks of units, it wasn't even thought of the way it is now. We have had security in this building now about six years or something. Before that it was all open, but people were coming off the street sleeping on the

37:00 stairs. It has definitely changed, and I think they live in enclaves too much the people that have come here, with their own nationality and schools, everything. They are not made to learn English in the way that they should.

Is there any other tale from your war experience that you haven't told us?

37:30 For publication, I don't think so.

Thank you very much for your time.

INTERVIEW ENDS