

Australians at War Film Archive

Marjorie Quinn (Margie) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1603>

Tape 1

00:34 **So, Marjorie, if you could start with that life summary?**

Right, well I was born at Oatlands on the 10th of April and it was a very, very cold morning because Oatlands is in the midlands of Tasmania, and virtually I've felt the cold ever since. Shortly after then my parents moved

01:00 closer to Hobart and remained in the suburbs all their lives. My father and my mother both came from farming backgrounds, but then my father decided, like all boys do, he wanted to drive an engine, so he joined the railway. He later became a driver with the Tasmanian Government Railways, so we did remain

01:30 close to Hobart. I went to the Moonah Primary School and from there to the Hobart High School, which was the only way to go in those days. And from there I went to work at a firm called Palfreyman's and it was from there that I joined the WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] in 1942. I served for just over

02:00 four years, returned home. I became a qualified ladies' hairdresser. I did own my own salon but I did have to give that away because of my health at the time and then I went back to what I'd been doing all my life, counting other people's money. I became a paymaster. Then from, from then on

02:30 I remained in that type of situation until I retired, but during all of that time I was the instigator of the WAAAF branch of the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] Association here in Tasmania and we have just about fifty years coming up and I have been the President, out of those fifty years, for forty-seven years,

03:00 because nobody else wanted to take the responsibility so that's where I have remained. And I'm still the President today. In the intervening years the three services joined together, that is the WAAAF, AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], the WRANs [Women's Royal Australian Navy] and together with the Royal Australian Nursing Service and the Land Army girls, we formed an organisation and

03:30 we decided that we would raise funds to build units for ex-servicewomen who were alone and needed units. Now we paid for those units, we did not get any government assistance at all and we have eleven units with ex-service ladies in them in New Town. We are very proud of our achievements there because they are very, very nice and we feel

04:00 that we really did something for the people who really needed help, at that point of time. And apart from that I love a social life, I love going out and we have, I've organised ex-WAAAF reunions and we've had four in the state. We began having them every five years but as we were getting older we decided we'd have them every two years.

04:30 The last one was just a gathering, it wasn't quite a reunion, a gathering at Alice Springs, this March, but prior to that they've been held mostly in the capital cities. And I don't know, that's about it I think.

That's excellent. Just if you could give us a bit more about the years spent serving in the WAAAF during the war and what roles you played and where you served there.

05:00 Right, well I joined the WAAAF in 1942, well I was accepted for the WAAAF in 1942 and there were no training schools in Tasmania, so all Tasmanians had to go to Victoria to do their initial training. I was very fortunate. I went to St Catherine's Ladies' College at Toorak and my first posting was to Ascot Vale, into the pay

05:30 office, and that was the biggest at that time, the biggest station in Australia. And you can imagine, I was an only daughter and when I arrived there I was in an area where I went to bed with about six hundred other people and I was appalled. I'd never seen so many other women in my life all together in their night attire. But I was in the pay office there and remained there for about

06:00 fifteen or eighteen months and then I had a posting to Southern Area Finance. Now this was not a

popular posting for me. I would have rather been on the station but I remained there for the rest of the war. Now in Southern Area Finance one was likely to be posted to any type of district, that covered just the wider area, and

- 06:30 so I was in several different places there, but all in Victoria. I did have a posting at one stage as far north as Cairns but that was very quickly cancelled because the chap in charge said, "She can't go," so that was that. We virtually had no say. You could volunteer but that didn't say that you were going to be accepted for anything.
- 07:00 And that's where I remained. I was in Melbourne for VP [Victory in the Pacific] day. I would say in my lifetime that was one thing I would never forget because from a wartime Melbourne with blackouts and brownouts and everything like that, everything came to life that day. Of course the war was officially over but I didn't get back home for about another
- 07:30 seventeen months because everybody had to wind down, and because we were in finance, of course, we were practically the last to go. And I really missed my air force days when I came home because life was different - half your friends were gone, some were married, some were killed. My only brother died in New Guinea during
- 08:00 the war and life was suddenly entirely different. It did take a while. I know a lot of people found it very difficult to settle down again but you just had to get on with life, and that was when I went to school and became a ladies' hairdresser.

Excellent. Well done. Very well done there. Now we'll go right back to the beginning

- 08:30 **and can you tell us about your mother?**

Yes, my mother was a lovely lady. She was born into a farming family. She had one sister and five brothers and of course in those days in the land they had to walk for miles to go to school and the school house was actually the church, and it was actually on the family property, or

- 09:00 one of the family properties. And she was obviously a very good student. She had a most beautiful handwriting to the day she died in her mid nineties and Mum was one of those persons you could go to and ask a question just about anything and she was always most helpful, a very loving mother. A fantastic cook
- 09:30 and very fastidious with her appearance and until her dying day every afternoon when the luncheon was over and everything was cleared up, my mother then went to the bathroom, emerged, changed her clothes and put the pearls or the beads on for the afternoon, and that was a practice
- 10:00 even when she was an old lady, living alone. And she never ever sat down to a table without a cloth, everything had to be just right, with the butter in the butter dish and the jam in the appropriate jam dish, with the appropriate jam spoon. She had jet black hair and light eyes. She was really, really pretty as a young girl and
- 10:30 then her hair went a beautiful silver, so she was a very, very nice lady.

And your father, what was he like?

Well my father, he was a Scot. Well his father was a Scot and they had, the family had migrated from Dunedin in Scotland, they'd gone to Dunedin in New Zealand and then my grandfather decided,

- 11:00 he met my grandmother who was visiting in New Zealand, which was quite a thing in those days of course and they married. And she must have talked him into coming back to Tasmania I think and they had a family of six children. And my Dad was a very gentle man. In all my lifetime I never heard him raise his voice
- 11:30 and I never ever heard my father use a swear word, but by the same token, when father spoke that was law, that was law in the household, believe me, for both my brother and I. But he never ever raised a hand to us, he only had to speak. I just wish it was like that these days
- 12:00 but he was a lovely guy. But my father actually died of a broken heart. When my brother died in New Guinea, he blamed himself for allowing him to join up, to join the AIF [Australian Imperial Force] at eighteen, but in those days he would have been drafted anyway and God knows where he may have been sent. And although he should
- 12:30 have been as safe as a church in a dental unit, he wasn't, and my father never ever recovered from that shock. Because it was a shock in those days, there was nothing else to be done. All you received was a telegram saying this is what had happened. And he retired from his work and he just suddenly became disinterested in most things
- 13:00 in life. Fortunately my husband, Athol, and he were very, very good mates. They got on very well together and of course this was not only a relief to me but my mother as well because it did help my Dad a lot.

And a bit about your brother, what was he like?

Oh, just like brothers are.

- 13:30 He was very outgoing. He was not my build at all. He was a tall boy and he always had a lot of friends around him and they used to play their games of cricket with the ordinary buy it yourself bails and that, and he was very interested in football
- 14:00 and very interested in movie stars and films. He used to love going to the films and when he died his room had been left as it was, of course, and he had these beautiful, beautiful photos of his favourite stars and things like that. And he was, as my father was, he was a gentle type, even though
- 14:30 he was big and outgoing and everything like that. He was a good student at school. We both got on very well at school. I guess we were lucky. I topped the state in marks on two occasions, both primary and otherwise, and I could always be assured of a hundred per cent in maths. I was very strong.
- 15:00 I used to love maths. I would read a maths book, just read it as a book. And to this day I still retain a lot, I'm pleased to say, but not necessary now of course. No, so we got along very, very well and naturally I missed him heaps, particularly when I first came back
- 15:30 from the war because suddenly there was virtually an empty house and everything was so quiet. My father was musical. I had my cap and gown for music when I was still at primary school, so there was always music in the house, pianos and things, but suddenly
- 16:00 all of that ceased, of course, and Dad seemed to just lose his will to live.

Was your brother a big brother or a little brother?

A big brother, oh no, I was older than him but that didn't seemed to make any difference because it didn't take long for him to beat me (demonstrates) in stature, so

- 16:30 we got along very well. We never ever argued about things, not like families do now for goodness sake.

Did you help raise him a bit, being older?

Oh no, I wouldn't say that, no because mothers were home mothers in those days and life was very, very different, very different. I mean

- 17:00 in my mother's case she could not have gone to work or done anything at all, not even housework or anything like that because my father had a government job. If the male had a government job the wife could not work, those were the rules, so most
- 17:30 mothers stayed home. If there husbands were unemployed that was just so unfortunate because I didn't realise it until I was older, but at that time Australia was coming out of a Depression and the work force was still, I would say, in a worse state than it is now, because there were not the opportunities for young
- 18:00 people. But we, as youngsters, didn't realise that somehow because particularly if the father was employed full time. I mean life sort of just went on and you took everything for granted somehow.

When you said 'those were the rules', was that a law?

Yes, yes.

- 18:30 If the male worked for the government the female could not work, that is right.

How did your mother feel about that?

Well she would never, never have gone, left us, no way. My mother was always there when we went to school and she was always there when we came home. If she had to do business or go to the

- 19:00 city or do anything else she did it between those times, but she was always there for us, so we were never alone or left to fend for ourselves at all. We grew up thinking that was the norm.

And what was school like?

Wonderful, I loved school. I loved learning. The only thing I didn't like at school,

- 19:30 history was a bit boring because that was the past but I didn't mind history. No, I didn't mind that so much but geography that we used to learn in those days, that one I used to hate some of that but the more, I found the more you disliked a subject the more I retained it. I could recite it word for
- 20:00 word, rather than have my own version of it, so I had no problems at school. I could always top the class at school, without trying, and I was just so, so shy in those days, so shy. I used to get so embarrassed when I had the top marks and had to go out to the front of the class or something like that. I mean now I
- 20:30 jump out.

What did the other kids think of you when you got the top marks?

Oh I don't know, I never thought to ask. I think it was just accepted. Oh some of them were pretty close handy. It got a bit worrying sometimes when they got to within one mark.

21:00 **Were you very competitive or naturally talented?**

Oh I didn't think about it. I did not give anything a thought in those days. I went to school. We had a weekly test. We had our exams and it wouldn't mean anything to me, at all, so I was then, I

21:30 was always nervous about the weekly tests, let alone anything else, which was really silly because I wasn't striving to do anything.

Did you study hard?

No, I used to do, my homework was done religiously, yes and that type of thing, but once I'd read it or done whatever it was I had to do, that was it.

22:00 And of course, going back over the years, we didn't have, studying was not really easy because a lot of people still didn't have electricity and they were reliant on kerosene lamps and things like that. I suppose by the time

22:30 I finished school, this was in the outer suburbs of course, I used to feel sorry for those students we didn't have the desks and the lighting that students have these days, that they can sit for hours and doing things. So it was a case of coming home from school and getting on with it and then you had your evening free.

23:00 **How did this shyness affect you in life?**

Oh I was terribly shy. Oh that was terrible, terrible. I used to be so embarrassed about things and backward. I'd never ever speak up unless I really had to but that stayed with me I suppose until I went to work

23:30 and I was with more adult people and then anyone who was in the services wouldn't have been shy for more than a week, because that really changed life completely. And when you are there with thousands of people doing exactly the same thing that you are told to do all the time, for

24:00 example, I loathed showers. I vowed that ever the war finished and I was ever back home again I would never have another shower, because I don't think that in all those years I had a hot shower. It was terrible and on the stations, my God, perhaps no doors and just duck

24:30 boards on the floor, oh dear, but I could put up with that to a small degree but oh, no, you didn't need to be shy, let me tell you.

Back at school, was Empire a big deal?

Oh yes, yes, we had our Empire Days and we saluted the flag, we saluted the flag all the time and we had an assembly once a week

25:00 and we had a flag raising and that went on in all the schools here and the Empire, of course, well the Empire in those days when you saw a map the British Empire was in red and it was just everywhere. But it started to shrink and now of course it's just in selected parts, but to us

25:30 the King was the one person in the world to look up to. Oh yes, the Empire was everything to look up to and that is why when the war eventually declared in 1939, that is why people just rushed to join up, for King and Country. That's why we all joined up, so I don't

26:00 doubt it wouldn't happen again today but put to the test, and I hope it never is but that was the motivation, no two ways about that.

Did you know people who weren't that much in respect of the Empire?

Not really, not really, not that I noted

26:30 at that time, no, not at that time I don't think. There were a lot of people who would not have voluntarily joined the forces. Some of them because their parents had served in World War I or had lost people in World War I and they were either (a) just

27:00 did not believe in war, which none of us do, or on the other hand they were afraid of the prospects because World War I was certainly a vicious war and which all wars, are but I think that was, the memory was still there because the fathers who had come back and those who were suffering

27:30 they were still there. And it was, they didn't want their sons or daughters to, of course daughters, the only people, women who had been in uniform in previous wars had been the nursing sisters, so we really paved the way for women's liberation.

28:00 **What did you know about World War I and what had happened?**

Oh that was taught extensively in our schools, oh yes, yes, we knew all about that and that was why we

appreciated and were part of all this flag raising and the services that we had.

28:30 But we were brought up very much to that. I mean students don't have that these days and which I think is a shame. I do really think that the education system has missed something there because a lot of young people don't know who they are or where they are. I find it more that we have more migrants here and migrant families

29:00 who become Australians and I'm sure that apart from being an Australian citizen, they don't really know why they are Australians. They don't know the background that we have, the British heritage, and that is where it began. Now having said that there's been a lot of people who have made Australia what it is today,

29:30 but initially it was British heritage and a lot of these people are being brought up not to know anything about it, which I think is a shame. They've got to find this out for themselves.

Did they teach you about the actual horrors of World War I?

Well when we were at school of course that hadn't been over very long.

30:00 Yes, to a degree I suppose but probably learnt more in the home. I can't just remember or recall about that but I know that everybody knew somebody and you had family, uncles, who had been to the war because we used to think they were such heroes

30:30 and Anzac Days were not quite like Anzac Days are now. That was a day, believe me and that continued for a long time and it was nice that these old diggers could, they weren't so old then I suppose, but they used to get together and that was their day and we also had

31:00 and now is being revived, what we call Remembrance Day, in November, when World War I ceased and I think that should be kept alive as well. Of course, I was going to say I think we started with the odd Australian with the Boxer Rebellion and

31:30 then the Boer War. There were Australians there and of course nothing happened really until World War I, as far as we were concerned. Mind you we didn't have the population really to be losing all of those men, and they were all young men, sort of in that era

32:00 and that was a blow to Australia. We always seemed to be fighting someone else's wars, I don't know why but we always seem to be doing this, don't we?

Did you have family members in World War I?

Oh yes, uncles, yes, oh yes, and some of them they died very young, those that came back.

32:30 Some did not return of course and my father-in-law, Athol's dad, he served in World War I. He was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal and then he was wounded but then he joined up in World War II and he was too old and they wouldn't allow him to go overseas,

33:00 that didn't please him very much and he was the regimental sergeant major in the Brighton Training Camp here. So he served in two world wars.

Did your uncles talk about their experiences?

No, not much, only the funny things that happened, something light or, no.

33:30 Virtually I suppose, not that we have much to recall but we don't talk about sad things either and there were some sad things happening around us, but you never hear anybody talk about that. It's only the highlights that really are discussed and I'll think you'll find that with everybody from any war or indeed

34:00 any disaster. Once it's over you think of the positive things and you don't think of anything else.

Did the uncles seem like a normal part of the family, everything was okay with them?

Well yes, but they were changed, well I didn't realise it but folk

34:30 used to say they changed entirely. They were different people when they, of course they were different people when they returned and they had a lot of sickness. They were in and out of hospital a lot, some of them and one uncle in particular, he had been gassed in France and I was at his bedside in New South Wales when he

35:00 died. My mother was sent for, so she took me. I was only young and I'd never experienced anything like that and it was dreadful and I made up my mind, standing there, that there would be no more wars. That was terrible but of course that wasn't for me to say. And

35:30 others they suffered in some form or another until they died. I mean you can't be shot about or have bits of shrapnel all over you and things like that and not have any effects, can you? And of course the mental effects I would say would be worse than anything else, particularly from World War I. So you could

36:00 usually pick an ex-serviceman. They were somehow different, if I can say that. They didn't have that happy go lucky sort of outlook, some of the time but not all of the time.

How big a weight was the occurrences of World War I on the community

36:30 **at the time and your family?**

Well I was too young to know, I suppose. It was sort of kept from us to a degree. We were brought up to know that war was a dreadful thing and of course it was never going to happen again you know? That was the war to end all wars and

37:00 so in the family I think we were shielded. I think the young folk were shielded a lot and war was something that was sort of not brushed under the carpet, but it wasn't discussed a lot, not with the children. Just protected I suppose you could say we were.

37:30 **So when you were in the hospital with your dying uncle, did you know what actually happened to him at that time?**

Oh yes, yes, yes, I did then. I would have been I suppose perhaps a young teenager then and yes and my mother had told me and then my aunt she had told us

38:00 what the general situation was overall, so that and how sick he was. And as I recall they lived in Armidale in New South Wales and we went by boat, from here to Sydney and then by train to Armidale and the train at Armidale used to arrive, the Sydney train, used to arrive about two o'clock in the morning

38:30 and my aunt was there. We went straight to the hospital and my uncle died about four o'clock. He lived until we got there and the staff said he'd never make it until we got there, but he did. Very sad, it was, very sad and

39:00 as I see it as far as wars are concerned it is all for nothing. Nobody wins, nobody gains anything out of war really. There's only the sorrow and the wreckage left behind. Having said that if somebody does attack you, you have to defend yourself.

39:30 **You were very close to your uncles?**

We were a very close family. We always have been. I have a cousin who lives in Buderim, in Queensland. She's very sick at the moment but we're in touch all the time. Even though she's so far away we ring each other all the time. It's nothing for us to have an hour or two hours on the phone together, catching up. And this

40:00 would be quite frequently, this happens and cousins scattered around the state. Not all of them. There are some people in life that you sort of click with more so than others of course, but we ring each other all the time, yeah. I'd say we're pretty close.

How did the family deal with the uncles' deaths?

Well

40:30 I think, looking back, that they were expected. People were sort of dying, if they were going to die they died within the first few years and particularly if people had been gassed. Oh that was a shocking thing that gas and

41:00 so you just had to get on with it, don't you?

Excellent Marjorie, we've just run out of tape, change the tape over.

Tape 2

00:31 **...during the Depression years and its importance in your life, your family's life?**

Well religion has always been very important in my family life. I wouldn't say that we were avid church goers as such but we've always been very religious and we've

01:00 always tried to live by the Bible, so that has spanned the whole family. And I have to say way back, when it was not fashionable to be separated or divorced, there was one divorce in the family and that was considered

01:30 to be the worst thing that could have possibly happened to anybody, because you just didn't do that. It wasn't acceptable at all and we were mostly in the family, we were either Anglicans, my father Presbyterian, Church of Scotland, my mother was one of the low churches, but this was bought about

02:00 because of isolation. So that you went to a church every Sunday, you certainly went to church every Sunday when you were young and if the church that you'd been christened in wasn't in the area you

went to another church, so you had to attend the service. And the same as I always went to church, I went to Sunday school and then went to church every Sunday when

02:30 I was a young person. I actually grew up in this area and I actually went to the church in Springfield Avenue, just down from here, that you would have passed and I was confirmed there and we were married there, so it's all on home ground.

There's a bit of history there?

Yes,

03:00 so the whole family I would say, the extended family I'm speaking of now, yes they've always brought their families up in the same manner.

Can you please tell us about the Catholic Protestant sectarianism that existed during the 1930s?

Well I suppose yes, it did exist, but within my family we

03:30 were Protestants, there was never ever any animosity because of my father's beliefs that if anyone believed they were Christian and it didn't matter to him how they went about their faith, so I guess I was brought up in rather a unique

04:00 household, as far as that went, because I do know of other families that had a lot of friction and that of course I could never understand because I wasn't brought up that way. And I still have those beliefs, so it doesn't bother me what faith anybody is

04:30 and I'm speaking for my family now, it doesn't bother me what faith anybody is as long as they have a faith and they believe.

You did say about other families having tension, can you tell us more about that please?

Well I mean if you were a Protestant you weren't supposed to be going out with a Roman Catholic

05:00 boy, or the other way around, a Roman Catholic boy wasn't supposed to be going out with a Protestant girl and if they were married it was always accepted that that marriage was conducted in the Roman Catholic church and that any children of the family were brought up Roman Catholics, and this did cause friction, of course. Naturally it had to, but of course that doesn't happen these days.

05:30 To my knowledge that doesn't happen now but it was very, very strong then, very strong and I've had friends who are, perhaps girlfriends who had met a very nice lad at a dance or something like that and their parents would not allow them to continue the association because they were a different religion.

06:00 And I could not understand that and my parents wouldn't condone that at all, that's wasn't acceptable.

Is it going beyond religion though? If you were a Catholic and you had an Irish background, that was the case really?

Yes, my father had a Scottish background and the Scottish and the Irish, now going back we used to have singsongs.

06:30 We used to sing all the time in the home. We'd sit down and sing and my father used to play a squeeze box, a la Scots, not the bagpipes but a squeeze box and we would have sing songs and I suppose we would sing as many Irish songs as we would Scottish songs. Yes, there was never any animosity as far as I knew but I think you can be

07:00 Irish Catholic and you can be Roman Catholic and they seem to me to be entirely different. That one has more dogma or something than the other but I don't really understand what they're all about so it has never ever occurred to me that anybody with

07:30 a different religious background is different. So that is my upbringing, you judge the person for what they are.

You seem to have come from a middle class background?

That's right.

Your father was working on

08:00 **the railways, how did he initially get into that position?**

Well he was brought up in farming, with a farming background and that was jolly hard work then. I mean everything was done manually. He loved his horses and I think he loved the farm work to a degree, but he wasn't going anywhere and like all boys he wanted to drive something. So

08:30 he applied to the railway, the Tasmanian Government Railway, and he was accepted and then he sat for his exams, over a period of time, and he became an engine driver and that he remained until he died. Oh until he retired.

I understand the railways was quite a respectable profession?

09:00 Oh my word, my word, that was one of the top positions to have.

Your education, can you tell us more about how they instilled in you a sense of Empire?

Oh well yes, that was quite simple because from the time we started school when we were very young and very impressionable, as all young children are, that's

09:30 the time you teach. We would have an assembly every week and that would be flag raising or the hand on the heart and standing and the whole bit, standing to attention. In class we would have perhaps a half hour of history pertaining to whatever that was, so that

10:00 you grew up with that feeling. I mean there was always a flag in the classroom and a photo of the King and things like that, that you actually grew up with, that was our life. So that and that has never wavered. To me Queen Elizabeth will always be the head of state as far as I am concerned.

10:30 **The monarchy, was that taken home with you, your parents felt the same thing?**

Oh yes, oh my word, oh my word, very strong, very strong and you would find in those times in most households, most households there would be a photo of the monarch, there would be a photo of the King.

What about yours?

Oh yes, oh my word.

This is skipping the time line a little but

11:00 **when I think it was King George, I understand, who abdicated from the throne later.**

No, no, no, no. Edward, Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David was Prince of Wales.

I've never been much of a monarchist myself, I'm afraid, so I can't even remember the names but you can tell me.

He's the only one that I can tell that. They were his Christian names, Edward Albert Christian

11:30 George Andrew Patrick David Gelp was his name and of course during World War I that King became so upset with Germany that they changed their surname to Windsor.

I'm aware of that and I'm also aware that the King was a supporter of Germany, initially?

Well of course half of them

12:00 were of German descent, they married into the German royal family.

We're going beyond Germany here, we're talking about actually Nazism?

Oh no, no, no, they didn't have a bar of that. That was when they changed the name.

What about, was there ever any sort of, in your sense of loyalty to the monarchy did it ever

12:30 **sway you or your parents?**

No, never, never, oh no, no, no, no. They were England.

Why is the monarchy important or why was it important rather at that time?

Oh well, everybody looked up to the monarchy and I think every person and every country needs something or someone to look up to.

13:00 This you've got to have and as far as I am concerned the British monarchy has stayed for so, so long and been there and I'm sure that it will be there forever.

Can you also tell me why Empire was important? Why was it important? What did it represent to you at the time?

Well

13:30 we belonged, at the time we belonged to England. We were part of England and it was just how we were brought up I suppose, that that was what we respected but sadly the British Empire

14:00 diminished but under the present monarchy I feel that whilst Queen Elizabeth is Queen of England we are as strong as we've ever been.

You're talking in a contemporary sense?

14:30 Yes, so whilst ever there is a monarch in England, as far as I am concerned she is my Queen or whoever

would be my King and I think you have to, you have to have someone to look up to and how would you be if you didn't have anybody?

15:00 We'd be floundering around here in Australia and what would be doing? We wouldn't have a head of state as such. You've got to have, you've got to have it.

Are you saying a symbolic head of state rather than a president?

Yes, yes, yes. A symbolic head of state rather than someone who is elected is what I am saying because elections

15:30 can run off the rails.

Now on the question of monarchy I would like to ask you more about it a bit later on. There's another question I'd like to ask you, in the '30s, what understanding did you have about the tensions between Germany and England? Like late '30s I'm talking.

'38-39

16:00 you're speaking about?

Yeah, '38-39, before the war.

Right, well it wasn't until Mr Chamberlain started to go on his missions to Germany and coming back and making statements that I think we in Australia were not as aware that things were as serious as obviously they were and I don't think we don't even expected a full-blown

16:30 war really. But of course once it was declared it was really on, full on but in thirty seven, thirty eight, to go back to those years, no I don't think the expectation was here in Australia. It may have been with some people, certainly I didn't think about it, not until it was actually declared. Even with

17:00 Mr Chamberlain going to Germany and going back to England and saying no, they weren't going to war, as everybody says, but and then it's on the next day of course, no to answer your question, I didn't really think much about it. I don't think anybody did.

Were you aware of the Spanish Civil War?

Not really, it was something that was on.

17:30 I think, particularly when you're younger, these things are happening 'over there' and you're not really involved. I think you have to be involved to understand just how serious things can be but where you're not involved at all you tend to think that it's somebody else's

18:00 problems.

So quite understandably you didn't have any sort of understanding about the Spanish Civil War, apart from it was happening?

It was happening and you hear about it and you read about it in the press but of course we didn't have television and radio, what you would hear on the radio would not be as edited and as perhaps as comprehensive

18:30 as it is today. You might hear the results of something, which wouldn't mean terribly much because you wouldn't know exactly what was going on.

Were you aware at least in this extent that women were fighting in the Spanish Civil War?

No, but then again from time to time, and this has bothered me quite a bit, I've often thought about this,

19:00 when in different wars and you've seen women, obviously they've been women in uniform and it has crossed my mind what sort of a country would put their young women in uniform in the front lines? Now when it became Australia's turn we had the most wonderful director in Clare Grant Stephenson

19:30 and she said that her girls and neither was anybody else going to leave Australia, that they would not fight in the front lines, and give or take a few that had to go, that remained for the whole of the war.

I want to come back to that question, but can I ask you another one,

20:00 **what were your aspirations as a young girl, nineteen thirty eight, thirty nine, at the eve of well you could say a few months before the war started, what were your aspirations to become career wise?**

Well I still always wanted to be a concert pianist, but that was not to be, that clearly was not to be.

Why do you say that?

20:30 For one thing you get away from the piano for four or five years and then with so much going, oh no, that was impossible, just impossible but when I was young that was an aspiration of mine. I used to play

for all sorts of things socially and things like that but I used to tour camp concerts before I joined

21:00 up. I went with a radio station here and I used to go round the camps and play for sing songs and things like that. That was frowned upon by music teacher. She wasn't too happy about that and play all the jazz and the wartime stories, that didn't go down very well.

So you were an accomplished piano player?

I was, I don't play now. I don't play now.

Can we convince you to play a tune for us?

No, I don't think so.

21:30 The extent of my playing is I play for a Probus Club, and I play for the Christmas carols and the National Anthem at the drop of a handkerchief and things, oh occasionally, but I honestly really don't have time.

That's now though?

That's now.

But at the time?

22:00 Well in between that I've always gone to business, so I've been running a home and going to work full time and that didn't leave very much spare time. By the time you sort of go out to the odd dance or cabaret or something and you have to get away from the workplace sooner or later, and so I've really

22:30 never had time, which is a shame but my goddaughter's daughter, I've given her a piano and she's going along nicely. She's twelve years of age and she's doing very nicely so I'm going to encourage her along the way.

But outside being a concert pianist what were the other aspirations you had?

23:00 Oh well I always thought that one day I would settle down and have a family. I settled down but didn't have a family and I guess just to have a happy life, that's all. I used to love dancing, have always loved dancing actually. Liked being out and meeting people socially and doing things. I do, since the war,

23:30 which changes people completely, I've done a lot of welfare work. I served for twenty years as a committee person on the Services Canteens Trust Fund and I'm now a trained welfare officer with DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] and a trained pensions officer with DVA, so I've kept busy in that sort of

24:00 sense and I am the State Chairman of the RAAF Museum. I am the State Chairman of the Australian Veterans' and Defence Services Council.

You've got to stop impressing me cause you're doing a damn good job impressing me.

I was State Vice President of the RAAF Association and I am the State President of the WAAAF branch of that Association. I've been President of the Probus Club.

You'd

24:30 **better type it out for me because I don't think I'd ever be able to remember that.**

Now is there anything else you'd like to know?

I'm sure you've got more to tell me. We really do want to ask more of these post-war questions. It's probably more relevant to the post-war stage though.

Yes, I know what you want.

But nonetheless quite interesting.

You were asking me, and I realise this is going to be edited and not used, but I'm just telling you so that you've got a background. You asked me a question so I'm answering.

That's all right, we're quite welcome to go on themes

25:00 **as well, not just chronology. We try to stick to chronology when we can but nevertheless that's quite dense and certainly deserving of questions later. So okay, you had aspirations at one stage to be a concert pianist, so the WAAAF, coming to the WAAAF when World War II started was quite a divergence, something unexpected, certainly. Can you please tell, we'll get to the WAAAF though, but can you please tell us what you did or**

25:30 **what you were doing the day that war was declared in '39?**

Oh well, I would have just been, oh dear, '39, I would have been at work, just going about my normal duties I'd say, yes, yes. I was a comptometrist at Palfreyman's and I balanced the daily

- 26:00 sheets. Going back, just to put this into perspective as to why I was doing this, was we used to have just ordinary cash desks, it was a huge place and people would sit at these cash desks and the staff would go and get change and everyone had a docket, a handmade docket in those days, and then we would have to balance those dockets with the
- 26:30 moneys that came in the bags from the cash. Then to be very upmarket they put in one of those overhead things. You've probably never seen them but you just pull the string and you had all these places to put things, it was an air thing and they went to all the different departments. Well they still had the docket system, the handmade docket system, which
- 27:00 comes through a machine these days. But it was, the result was the same and then we had to balance, each of the cash areas had to be balanced against the dockets, that's what we did.

How old were you when you entered the workforce?

- 27:30 About eighteen I suppose, perhaps seventeen or eighteen I suppose, seventeen, something like that, because I wanted to join up, perhaps seventeen. I wanted to join the air force in forty one but my employer wouldn't let me go
- 28:00 and you had to be eighteen and then he said, "No, you're not going," so no, I didn't go. And then I said in '42, I said, "If you don't let me go, I'm going to go to Melbourne and join up." So he said, "If your parents..."

Sorry, I'm just going to have to pause with your microphone. Yes, I'm sorry, you were saying?

That's right. Where was I?

- 28:30 **Actually you were talking about joining up the WAAAF when you were in the workforce?**

Yes, yes, yes.

I also wanted to ask you about your interest in education, you really did like it and why didn't you proceed any further? Was there any compulsion?

Well because my mother said that was that and she didn't think I needed any more. She wasn't, the principal

- 29:00 at the school nearly had a fit. He wanted me to go to uni [university] and it was only later that I did some uni courses, but that was on my own and different other studies that I've done through TAFE [Technical and Further Education college] and things like that. I've always gone back. Every once and a while I go back and do something, just because it's there to be done, not because I need it
- 29:30 but I like the environment and I even did a course, not last year, the year before. I've done two lots of computer courses and that sort of thing.

You must have an enormous CV [Curriculum Vitae]?

No, they take me on face value, or they don't take me at all. I don't believe in those things. I don't believe in those things at all.

- 30:00 **In what things?**

In these CVs. I don't believe in that and when I was working I used to do, well in one position, my cousin actually owned the business, this was the last one when I retired. I used to retire regularly but then I used to go back and he was interviewing one day, he was interviewing these young men and they came in and

- 30:30 they had all these CVs. And he said, "To begin with, I don't want to see that at all, at all. I don't want to know anything about it, nothing." And he would just conduct the interview and he'd be spot on. Now when my husband was teaching he had an outlet for three boys who were finishing high school,
- 31:00 for three students every year, this particular firm would take them on as apprentices or whatever, wherever they needed them in the firm and he was never allowed to submit the first two who came first or second in the class. They would take the top ones. They only wanted the next three. I can never understand that but that was the
- 31:30 way that chap worked. He said that the others were always better students. That they were always more willing to learn because there was something else there to learn, so I know a lot of people who go to an awful lot of trouble getting their CVs up and their backgrounds and things like that, but I can't
- 32:00 see that is necessary. As long as you can read and write, I mean that helps. (TAPE STOPS)

Now we're recording again. Can you tell me what was your reaction to the declaration of war in 1939?

Well I think like everybody else I was horrified. I was horrified. We certainly weren't

- 32:30 I suppose prepared for it. We didn't think it was going to evolve the way it did and from 1939 of course,

with Hitler and his Nazi brigade they were well trained and ready to go where as the rest of the world was just

33:00 caught on the back steps, so to speak because I don't think that any of us ever thought that it was going to develop as it did. No, I didn't, well when I say I, my family or anybody around me, we weren't looking that there was going to be war next week or sometime and if there was going to be anything

33:30 it was going to be a skirmish and it was going to be finalised through debate, but that didn't happen, did it? That just does not happen, that's just wishful thinking so really when it all happened it all came as a bit of a shock I would say to everybody, Australians I'm speaking of.

34:00 **There was talk about war finishing very quickly. Some politicians were saying that. When France fell in six weeks, what was going through people's minds?**

Well we were always hoping it was going to finish tomorrow, but then things just went on and on and became worse and worse,

34:30 and really I think that World War I ended because both sides were absolutely exhausted and had nowhere to go, they had lost so many lives and suddenly it was over and the men were coming back home. But I don't remember much about that,

35:00 well I don't remember anything about it but from family, being brought up in that era I think that, well I wasn't there, '14-18, of course I wasn't. But I think the results of that were people sort of withdrew a

35:30 bit. The war that was going to end wars, everyone was very pleased when it was over because there wouldn't be another one and when we started to hear about wars, I suppose in the home we were more or less protected, to a degree, because well they were things that shouldn't happen and young children shouldn't know about them anyway.

36:00 And it wasn't until we went to school that and we started on the history bit and I think that we really learnt what had gone on. Very dark area that must have been because the Boer War was only just in South Africa of course and there weren't many Australians, per capita I mean, there

36:30 weren't many involved there but there were so many in World War I, so many. And of course the landing at Gallipoli was just the worst thing that anyone could possibly imagine and something that, well I hope will never be forgotten because that was a lesson to everybody.

Why does Gallipoli stand out in your mind and not Pozières?

37:00 Oh Gallipoli without a doubt, putting those men ashore in front of the guns on top of the hill, no, that was unreal.

You don't think Pozières was worse? Five thousand Australians dying in two days?

Yes, yes, I do, that could have been worse, but Gallipoli shouldn't have happened and maybe

37:30 if they'd landed in a different spot and done things differently, the second wave may not have happened, because they lost so many men initially there who should never ever been put in that position. That is how I see it. It is history that I read and I see it and I read about it and I always ask why that happened.

38:00 **And this was going through your mind when the war started, the Second World War?**

Yes, well of course when the Second World War started the first question you ask is, you say to yourself, "Goodness me, not again," and, "Is it going to be as bad as the last one?" See World War II wasn't supposed to last for six years either, was it, when they started? And

38:30 six years was a long time and it certainly wasn't supposed to come as far south as Australia.

How did your brother react to all, he joined up obviously but can you tell us how he reacted when it started?

I don't think any of us, we were too young to realise the implications and I don't think Don really realised he was

39:00 going to join up and that was that but he wanted to go in the army so it was a matter of doing the right thing. I think we're back to King and Country here again. It's the way we were brought up.

Is that really what he felt, Don?

Yes.

Are you sure it wasn't a sense of adventure as many men felt?

No, no, that

39:30 wouldn't be an adventure to Don. He'd have to have a reason to go.

Can you tell us a bit more about Don just before the war? What did he do? What was his personality like?

Well he was outgoing, he was friendly, he had a lot of friends and he liked going to the football and he played some sport. Well in those days sports wasn't the main part of one's life, like it is

40:00 today and he loved going to the movies. He loved the movies and he was just a fun loving, home loving boy.

What did he look like?

Rather nice looking, I have some nice photos. I don't have them handy but I do have one I can show you. He was always pleasant. He was never moody, no matter what

40:30 you did to him or what anybody did to him, he'd just, he might be upset at the minute but that was gone, that was gone, the same as my mother. He had Mum's personality, never hold a grudge against anybody. So I suppose, really, my parent were lucky to have we two, weren't they?

41:00 **We'll pause there.**

Tape 3

00:32 **If we could go back just a bit, what was life like during the Depression?**

Well I wasn't here actually. The Depression, the time I was aware of anything was over, because we were never, see fortunately my father was always in full employment so although the Depression did

01:00 effect everybody we didn't virtually know about it. We were only told that sometimes we would take surplus garden vegetables and things like that to different people in the neighbourhood that my mother knew. We never knew why. We would just say, "Mum has too many and could

01:30 you use these?" And it wasn't until we were much older that we realised that this was what was the reason, that these people just didn't have any work and it was just pathetic to see some of the children because well they couldn't afford even proper clothing for them apparently, but we didn't know really anything about that until we were very much older.

02:00 It didn't affect us. When I think about it even though they were coming out of the Depression I was going and having music lessons and things like that, well that didn't happen in a lot of families, couldn't happen.

Could you see it on the streets, the effects?

Well I suppose so,

02:30 things weren't upmarket like they are now. They weren't expected to be. People I suppose were poorly dressed, they had to be but that didn't really mean a thing either. So really I was not, the Depression as far as we were concerned

03:00 was something out there and had to be respected and we were never overindulged, let me tell you that, but we always had the necessities of life so we were very fortunate, very fortunate.

Do you think you were too young to understand the effects

03:30 **of it?**

Yes, yes, it wasn't until much, much later, I would say high school teenage years that and speaking with other students and that that I really realised the effect of

04:00 all that because they would sometimes mention, for example what they had for their evening meal the night before or something like that and I'd be horrified and I'd go home and say to Mum, "Did you know so-and-so only had bread and jam last night for tea?" And then of course she would start to explain to me as to why we were having meat and vegetables and sweets and cream

04:30 and the whole bit and other people didn't have those meal, so that was when it started to sink with me when I was mixing with other people and they were talking about things like that. They weren't complaining because they didn't know any different. No, but that was a very, very sad time, very sad and

05:00 to this day I really feel for anyone who genuinely wants employment and can't find it. I really feel for them because I think everyone should be able to be in a position to be independent in life.

How many people at school did you see affected?

Well I wouldn't know really because

05:30 I wouldn't know. There were I would say a lot of families. It would be very difficult to say because for one thing you didn't know what families were doing or what they were all about. It was just that some people had more than others and

06:00 that was no gauge because in some families and to this day some families gamble and do other things with their money and they don't put their children first, as my parents did, so no I wouldn't know.

Was there class distinctions between the haves and the have-nots?

Not that I noticed, not

06:30 that I noticed. That wouldn't have worried me because everyone was equal as far as I was concerned and that wouldn't have occurred to me at all. I suppose that did exist yes, I suppose it did but not as far as I was concerned, no.

Why not as far as you were concerned?

Because what people

07:00 have or don't have, doesn't really matter does it? It doesn't matter to your friendships or to you genuinely knowing each other, or something like that, well it shouldn't matter. It didn't matter to me at all.

Was that something you were taught or you came to the realisation yourself?

Oh it was something we were taught in the home, yes.

07:30 And that has always remained with me because I found some of the nicest people and some of the most polite people and the most reliable are perhaps amongst the people we would have come and do the gardening or something like that and have no skills at all, because they haven't had the opportunity

08:00 but they are some of the nicest people that you would meet, so there should not be any distinction. You mean them and us?

No, no, I'm just asking what your thoughts are. Moving onto the education part and your mother didn't want you to go to uni, how did you feel about that?

Oh I didn't care.

08:30 That sort of thing doesn't impress me at all and it impresses me less now and I look at some of the students and some of the things they do and I think, "I don't want to be there, I do not want to be there," but that didn't, no of that. If mother didn't want it, it wasn't done was it?

Did you know a lot of women

09:00 **that went to uni?**

No, not in those days there weren't an awful lot, no.

So you didn't have a deep desire to go?

No, just take life as it comes.

Before the war how important was women's work?

Well I guess it was necessary

09:30 for everyone to be employed if they could be. Wages were very low, very low but then the cost of living was low as well, so everything I think balanced out and well most people had jobs I think. Bearing in mind that, looking back

10:00 I suppose fifty per cent of the young women were married before they were eighteen, way back when and then they had families straight away of course, so they were not in the workforce. Mothers with children did not work. They stayed at home and cared for the children so

10:30 that that took a lot of people out of the equation and for the rest I think the majority were able to find a job somewhere. Though having said that it mightn't have been the position that they would have chosen but work was there if people looked for it.

When you were seventeen, eighteen was it

11:00 **easy for you to find a job?**

Oh yeah, I didn't have any trouble. Actually my school principal asked me if I'd like to have my job so I never ever applied for a job.

So you were offered one and that was it?

Yeah.

Did you feel privileged to get that job?

11:30 Yes, I was very pleased with the fact that it was there and I didn't have to do anything about it, bearing in mind I suppose I would have done something else. I don't know. I would have probably studied something or done something but that came along and I was there with that firm when I joined up.

12:00 **And before the war can you describe your relationship of the men working and the women working, what was that relationship like?**

I don't know because I was only in an office situation and in my case there was the man who owned the whole caboose and

12:30 there was his secretary, male and his accountant, male, who was there on the premises all the time and then the females were in the sort of general office part. There were males in the departmental stores and there were males on the appropriate departments always, there were male

13:00 buyers. The same as there were females in the appropriate departments so it was a sort of a mix. Everyone seemed to get on all right. To my mind there was never ever any animosity with the two working together, no, but then I only had the experience under the one condition. I don't know

13:30 what happened in other places. We had a lot of factories in those days too. We had the IXL Jam Factory and that was a big employer, Cadbury has always been a big employer and of course there are male and female at Cadbury and I don't know how balanced that was but quite a lot. And the Zinc Works

14:00 of course, the Electromagnetic Zinc Company, they only employed male people because that was a man's job over there. But in most of the factories there were both men and women and then there was a fish canning place here and that was both men and women and that was the horror of horrors, that you would be Manpowered into a fish canning factory.

14:30 Gosh, but no, to my mind, all the departmental stores they worked on the same principle, they had the male persons serving the men's clothing and things and usually male persons always sold dress materials. Now

15:00 way back when every departmental store had a vast department of dress materials because people, clothes were hand made or made by a dressmaker or whatever as opposed to now, everything's made in a factory offshore, so everything comes and in looks as if it's been made in a factory,

15:30 whereas in those days everybody had something made individually, so no we got along very well together, I would say.

Do you have any stories of males that didn't appreciate the women there?

No, never, never, that nonsense was never on in those days to my knowledge.

Not in other work places or anything?

No, no, I never ever

16:00 heard of that. We had here a very large munitions factory which was later taken over by, oh dear, the people that used to make sheets and things, the upmarket one in Australia it was, but a very large munition factory here and they also

16:30 made the gun sights and things for guns and we were the only factory here. They used to buy them from the Germans. Well they were hardly likely to be selling them were they, to us? And there was one in England but because of the bombing that was not very successful and even here, from this factory, they even supplied

17:00 the American forces with these prisms and there was a part in at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery there that had the prisms in it and I was asked to actually open the exhibition in there for that. It was enlightening to me and yet it was on my back doorstep as to what they really did here

17:30 at that munitions factory. Well they were men and women and making prisms they were mostly women because they had a steadier hand. And apparently that is a very, very upmarket type of operation, to make one of those, or to make them. I don't understand much about it even though I was told and I've seen the jolly

18:00 things. They come up like a diamond and they're beautiful when they've finished them. So to answer your question, no, I don't think there was any animosity in those days. If there was I didn't hear about it.

What did women at the time think about the pay conditions and the working conditions?

Well I don't think, well we weren't too happy about the pay conditions, doing the same job and

18:30 some of them doing much better perhaps because of a job a woman was perhaps more suited to, but pay

was always less. Conditions were appalling, absolutely appalling in some places. You wouldn't believe that it happened but if you didn't know any different, very few people complained and

19:00 who were you going to complain to? Because there was nobody out there to complain to but when I look back at some of the conditions that people worked under, they were shocking. It could not happen now. We wouldn't want it to happen now but I think they've gone a bit too far, the pendulum swings just that little bit to far always, doesn't it?

19:30 **Can you describe in more detail those conditions?**

Well you would be, there would be a cubby hole or something and everybody would put their gear in there. There would be no privacy, there was no privacy for anybody. And even toilet facilities were just there and that was all. There was no heating in anything

20:00 and in wintertime it gets mighty cold here. And the same as we can have heat here, you can be another ten, fifteen degrees higher than we are but you aren't as hot as we are here because we've got the ozone bit and boy does it get hot. But there was no air conditioning or anything like that and some of the offices,

20:30 goodness they were shocking to work in and of course we all had our little radiators in the wintertime and we were lucky because we did have that and we were in a confined area that was liveable but some of the conditions were shocking. And for people, I've never been into one but I have been told people who worked in factories where there couldn't be

21:00 any heating or anything because food was being prepared I believe some of the conditions there were beyond description and people would just sit and eat your meal. There was none of this business that you had to have an hour or half an hour or whatever it was off for lunch but dear oh dear there were no dining rooms or anything like that

21:30 supplied to these people. I think Cadbury would have been the most upmarket in those days. They have always taken care of their staff and looked after them very, very well and they always had a very big staff out there.

Why do you think the conditions were so bad?

Well I don't think the employers worried much about

22:00 the employees. They were only interested in what they were doing for the day and that improved dramatically during the war years, when I wasn't here of course and I don't know about it except for what I've been told by people who remained in those positions that things improved and of course

22:30 following the war all the rules and regulations were drawn up and things really, really changed.

How big a part of working life before the war were unions?

I don't know about that. Where I was my boss wouldn't allow any unionist on the floor of any

23:00 of his properties. We were not supposed to join unions and but on the other hand if we had anything to say and this applied to a lot of employers we went directly to that employer and talked directly to him about it. Now in my case if anybody went and complained,

23:30 well discussed anything they would be listened to and it would be talked through. They wouldn't lose their job. There was no fear of anything like that. You only had to ask but of course life is different now, isn't it? You may ask your employer for something and he might tell you to get lost,

24:00 but not then I didn't notice. But I can only speak from my own experience, can't I?

How did workers try and improve these conditions?

Well we tried to pretty things up ourselves and move things around and shift things and ask for this and ask for that every once and a while. That's how you do go about things

24:30 but we didn't have any unions come in and say, "That's got to go," or, "That won't be tolerated," or something like that. That never happened, never happened, so I, it was only in later life that I became aware of the power of unions, post war.

When you were seventeen, eighteen, nineteen,

25:00 **did you have a desire to work the rest of your life or what was your desire then?**

Well I suppose I was going to get married, that's about what was going to happen and but I had such a good life. I had employment, I had nice clothes, I had a good

25:30 home, I had my own room and my own space and I went dancing, every Saturday night I went dancing and sometimes other nights of the week and we had beautiful ballrooms here then and jolly good bands, really good bands for dancing and we were just a group of friends. We used to have a wonderful time.

26:00 We used to go out and climb the mountain and do things like that on Sundays, all those stupid things you did, go out for picnics and the like. Like it was, I suppose looking back to us it was just life. That was how we were and how we were and when I look back I think perhaps we had a far better time than the young people experience

26:30 today with everything that they have. I think we look forward to things and to go to a dance well that would take a day to get ready for that. We'd all get dressed up. The men would either be in a tuxedo or a dark suit, otherwise they weren't admitted, so that was that, full stop. And we had to have long frocks or we weren't admitted to certain ballrooms, only

27:00 certain ballrooms and it was a pleasure. You went out and really enjoyed yourself. There was good music and everyone was nicely dressed and everybody was really happy and a different atmosphere all together. Oh to see some of these young people now enjoying themselves I wonder. But we had fun when we went out and we used to go to the movies and that was wonderful. We used to see the

27:30 trailers and the thing that didn't come back or Tarzan would come back next week or something like that, yeah. So no life was pretty good, pretty good.

Did you feel independent?

Yes, to a degree but I think we always depended on our parents to a degree

28:00 because everything was discussed with parents, particularly if you were running short of cash or anything like that. I don't there's any difference now but or if you were going to buy anything, you always talked about it with Mum or Dad or whichever one would have been involved with whatever it was. The same as my brother Don would have discussed with Dad

28:30 about getting a new bike or whatever at the time. I think it was just taken for granted what happened. Yes, I felt independent because I was employed, I was self sufficient, I was able to pay my board at home and as I say I had a nice wardrobe and I was able

29:00 to make a lot of my own clothes. I did spend, not a year solid, but for a year every Monday I went to a school of domestic science and learnt all the finer points and I could turn my hand to anything like that so yes, pretty self reliant.

Did you know women and girls who simply got married and raised a family

29:30 **and never worked?**

I did, I did, they never went anywhere, they didn't do anything, they had no ambition and by the time they were fifty they were old ladies and I did know them very well.

What were your thoughts on them?

I couldn't understand it. That wasn't my scene at all.

You didn't think your life were fulfilling?

30:00 No, no, no, no, they had no ambition, they weren't going anywhere, they didn't do anything. They probably didn't even bother to read a book. Probably didn't have a book in the home.

So your thoughts were even if you got married you would continue working?

I hoped so, yes.

Do you think you were ahead of your time

30:30 **with that thought?**

Possibly, but I don't know why. I possibly was looking back now because I've always wanted to do things. I've never been idle that's for sure but I've enjoyed a working life. I've enjoyed being with people and I've enjoyed the challenge of being able to

31:00 every day to balance that money and have it in the bank or have the wages ready on time to pay to people. Having been through the union bit as to why they've got two and six docked this week or something like that, but that to me is an achievement. The same as it is now I do all the books for the WAAAF and when I can take that

31:30 to the auditor and he doesn't come back with one question and he signs the bottom of it, that to me is an achievement and I like doing it.

Before the war you were doing payroll were you, yes?

Assisting then but mostly I was balancing money, the day's takings, which were astronomical

32:00 sometimes because we are talking about a very departmental store here that had seven stores in Tasmania and it would be larger than Myer is here and we used to get the balances in from the seven

stores, from their banking

32:30 and their slips so there was a lot of work going on there.

A lot of responsibility?

Yes, and a lot of responsibility and I suppose the average person now would sort of blink at and think "I can't do that" but it was a case of getting on with it. And then I was in the pay hall in the WAAAF and then from

33:00 there I went to Southern Area Finance. Well I was a comptometrist there. I was a comptometrist at Palfreyman's actually.

We'll get onto all that later.

Because the comptometer was a forerunner of the calculator. You're right, okay.

We'll get onto that later. We'll cover that in great detail. This is fantastic. As we approach the war, war is declared and how did your world change in the following days?

Well it didn't. It didn't, nothing happened.

33:30 There was a war on and everybody was upset and it was headline news but nothing happened for quite a while because it didn't affect us for quite a while. You see these things take time. It wasn't until the men were joining up and they'd sort of gone overseas and suddenly we're getting a shortage of manpower.

34:00 All those positions had to be filled, didn't they that those men had had? And there were positions that could not have been filled by women because there was so much manual labour in those days, as opposed to now and well even it would have been unheard of for a woman to be a tram driver or something like that, absolutely unheard of.

34:30 That didn't enter anybody's head that that could be done and suddenly there was a manpower shortage and people had to be duck shoved from place to place and that was when the manpower business came in, that they said who would do what.

How long after the war was declared was the realisation of the manpower draining away occur?

35:00 Oh I'd say it took, in the first twelve months it was shelling up because as strange as it may seem there was a big surge of people who joined up at that point of time. Mind you there was still a deal of unemployment around so these boys were flocking to join the army and see

35:30 the world and as a friend of mine joined the army and she joined really to see the world. She'll tell you to this day, and she didn't go beyond Campbell Town in Tasmania. It's a matter of where you are sent. No, it would have been within the first twelve months that we started to feel the pinch there because they would have been,

36:00 the men who had gone, they'd gone in batches, which had caused a vacuum there so manpower had to come in and do something about that cause like all government organisations they overdo things and they don't put the correct people in the correct position. They even manpowered the shop assistants.

36:30 They were plucking different people out of departmental stores and putting them in factories, which was quite inappropriate because (a) they couldn't do the job, they were just hopeless at the job because they weren't geared for that sort of thing. Whereas they had other people who were perhaps were unemployed and would have loved to have gone in the factories and would have done that job and done it well, but no, they had to duck shove people all over

37:00 the place and that caused a lot of angst everywhere.

Can you tell us the details of how they did this? Did they just rock up to the?

They'd send you a letter and say that you had been manpowered, so I understand, you had been manpowered and you were to turn up at the IXL Jam Factory on Monday morning and your employer was told. I don't know how much notice they gave. They must have

37:30 had to have given some notice of course but that was the way it worked. The employer would get a letter and the person would get a letter and if the employer wasn't really strong and didn't have contacts that's where you went.

So this was just women or men and women?

Men and women, men and women, oh yes, everybody.

Being shuffled

38:00 around?

Yes.

Did you think the war was far away?

Oh yes, it was always over there. It was always over there. It was never going to come to Australia. I don't think anybody ever dreamt that Australia would be invaded because wars had traditionally been fought in

38:30 Europe hadn't they? Perhaps the odd skirmish in South Africa or somewhere but wars had been in Europe or across that sphere there and of course nobody envisaged that World War II was going to be so savage either. But with one country fully prepared and nobody else even thinking about anything, I mean

39:00 it made the balance impossible at that point of time.

And being in Tasmania, Tasmania would even feel further away?

Oh I don't know, oh I suppose so. We were, as a Tasmanian I suppose we're not isolated but we're way down there and we were about as far away, with New Zealand, that you could get

39:30 from the action, so I don't really think that we really realised or had the realisation. Had we lived in perhaps north Australia or even if we'd been in the sub continent, Africa, I've often wondered about and I don't know much about the workings of

40:00 Africa because they don't seem to be very settled over there. They would be a long way away from it I think. I don't think anybody would want to invade Africa with all the cultures that they have and what are they going to do with it having taken it?

40:30 South Africa is far away. I wouldn't imagine that South Africa would be invaded.

As a Tasmanian can you quickly describe how you feel a part of Australia?

Of course I'm part of Australia. We're one of the States. Not noted by all Australians. In northern Queensland I went into Townsville

41:00 and asked for some postage stamps, in very recent years, and the girl said, "Where do you want them for?" And I looked at her and I wanted forty cents or forty-five cents or whatever they were, and someone else down the thing had said something about Tasmania and she said, "Of course that's overseas and you've got to pay," and we get the overseas chart out and I said, "Excuse me, but when I left home last week we were still a part of the Commonwealth."

41:30 And she said, "Oh no, you're overseas." I said, "I'm not overseas."

Excellent, we'll finish that tape, that's good.

Tape 4

00:35 **We're recording now. I'll start with my first question. Can you tell us what Hobart was like when war was declared? What were the changes taking place in Hobart?**

I guess like any other capital city we were advancing and everything was changing for the better and in Hobart at that time our main

01:00 transport was trains, suburban trains and we had a very extensive tramway and very few cars on the road and very few taxis. The only taxi company in my memory was a Yellow Cab, but that was a real luxury if you travelled by taxi anywhere.

01:30 Mostly when anyone went out they used the public transport. And I think Melbourne is the only city that retains that public transport day and night.

What was the changes that took place when Hobart was on a wartime footing?

Well of course as soon as war was declared we were travelling in a brown out or black out at night. The

02:00 streetlights of course were dimmed. They were all browned out as they called it. There was just one small light direct onto the ground and we had restrictions as far as food was concerned. I never know why but there was food rationing and clothing rationing. Now this wasn't, in my memory, wasn't very severe.

02:30 The rationing continued all through the war period but I did not consider that it was very severe. In some cases it continued after the war but people got used, well we had to get used to it and it was more difficult for people living alone or just a couple than it was for a family,

03:00 because in the family environment with the extra rationing you could do more sort of with it, but when

you were restricted to the basics it did become difficult at times for some people.

Was there much military activity around Hobart?

No, not here. Our training camp was at Brighton, which is to the north of Hobart,

03:30 and then there were small camps set up around different areas in different training camps but you see there was never an air force base in Tasmania and there was only recruiting bases and things of that nature and later on they used the airport at Launceston and that became an air force facility but only on a small scale

04:00 compared to mainland states. It was never what you call... (TAPE STOPS) You did have people come down for training to our technical college and I would say a few perhaps to the university but that was only a handful of people for specialised training. So and we used to have a

04:30 ferry across to Bellerive, just across the Derwent. Folk travelled by ferry to go to work or for entertainment but we didn't have a bridge there until a lot later and then the bridge was a floating bridge, which was one of very few in the world, I believe. But ferries were very, very prominent on the

05:00 Derwent in those days and we've always been a noted harbour for fishing boats to come in and during the war the boats used to come in and pick up apples and other exports that we had from here. They all went that way through the Hobart port but of course with the passing of the years things change

05:30 and that has changed as well. So any more?

Yes, was there an American presence in Tasmania during the war?

No, no. Sometimes a ship, a boat or a submarine would come in but that was only R&R [Rest and Recreation] or to refuel

06:00 or something like that. But then again I wasn't here so from '42 to early '47 I was not here and I only knew when I came home on leave if there was something going on there you understand, so really that was a lost period for me on the home

06:30 front.

You don't regret that of course?

No, no, if all this happened again and we could turn the clock back I would do that again definitely. Not because it was a bowl of cherries all the time either

07:00 but it wasn't all that hard. In fact I think we all left the services better people with more understanding of life than we would have had at home as civilians.

The WAAAF was raised in 1941?

41 on the 15th of March.

So you

07:30 **actually had two years of work before you chose to join up?**

Yes, yes, yeah.

What was the decisive point where you chose, "Okay, I want to join up"? What made you?

Well everyone was asking for enlistments. Every time you turned around they were in public transports - Enlist now and join the AIF. And do this and do that and when the women's services started, actually

08:00 I belonged to the Women's Air Training Corps here but as well I wore a uniform every weekend and some nights we used to have parades and things like that and we were the Home Service Legion and we used to give up our time to man dining rooms and things, and we had

08:30 one in Murray Street in Hobart and we'd work all weekend. We'd go in on Saturday morning and we'd prepare the meals, serve the meals, do the washing up and things like that and then I used to play the piano for the dances at night and some other people would come. Because you could not form a band or anything like that because you didn't know where anyone was going to be next week, so it was just a matter if someone could play drums or

09:00 someone would come in with a violin or whatever and you carried on from there. So that's what I was doing when I actually joined up, but that was definitely a weekend volunteer job and that was where, to my father's horror, I was taught to

09:30 assemble and pull apart and fire a .303 rifle and he nearly pulled the plug on it when I mentioned the word rifle, and he said, "That's not on, you don't do that." But when we joined the actual services of course we didn't have to do anything like that.

You said you had camp concerts for twelve months travelling around?

Yes, when

- 10:00 I was working. What used to happen was there'd be the Brighton Camp and then there'd be one at Dowsing Point and there might be one at Sandy Bay and in different areas they'd have these camps, these specialised camps. Now they'd be closed camps and perhaps the troops would be given leave at weekends or something and they were in camps and there was a radio station here and they
- 10:30 decided that they'd form a concert group and of course they had to have volunteers and they had to have people who were backups because the same people being volunteers weren't always available to do those things and we used to go around and we used to serve suppers and things like that. And we'd have a choral group sometimes and sometimes we'd just have a sing along.
- 11:00 We'd just sing war songs and Wish Me Luck As You Wave Me Goodbye and that type of thing. They were very popular those camp concerts. In Melbourne, for a short period in Melbourne, I used to go into a Salvation Army establishment in Collins Street and they used to serve meals and they used to have a
- 11:30 dance and sing songs and things like that and another lass and myself we used to go in and we would play one or two nights a week when we were on leave and when we weren't doing anything else.

Why were you doing so much?

Oh I don't know, I've always been busy, always been busy.

Would you have considered yourself a patriot at that

12:00 **time?**

Oh no, no. Just did what was necessary I suppose.

Not a lot of women were doing that though?

I know but then perhaps I was different and if I could see that I could do something for somebody else and at that stage to a degree we were helping the war effort,

- 12:30 weren't we? If we were keeping people happy and providing some entertainment for people that they normally wouldn't have and a lot of people, both men and women, when they were away from home and confined as they were they became very depressed, very depressed. And I've seen people actually discharged because
- 13:00 of depression and they just could not handle it, so it's better that they are not in that situation and position. So I guess that's what we were trying to do, to help things along a bit.

You were paid for these concerts?

Oh no, no, no, no.

13:30 **All voluntary?**

Oh no, it was all voluntary of course, everywhere. Oh goodness no.

How did you support yourself though in the period?

Well I was working here or I was in the services there, so it was my spare time you might say that I used to do that, but I never ever considered that a big deal.

- 14:00 It was just something I was able to do and if I was asked to do it, well off I went. I guess that it saved me from being lonely too, when I was away because you can be with an awful lot of people and be
- 14:30 very, very lonely. You just feel there are things you want to talk about but there's no-one there, that's war. I think that's anywhere where people are away from their home environment and under restrictions. For
- 15:00 example boarders at university or something like that, they're surrounded by people but they're just lonely and all the people in the world don't make up for your family and those closest to you.
- 15:30 **Did you have any friends close to you that were interested in joining the WAAAF's when it was first created?**
- Yes, yes I did. It was very difficult to get into these services you know. You just didn't go along and say, "Look, I want to join the air force," and bingo that was it. Your family didn't want you to go,
- 16:00 friends didn't want you to go and relatives who had been certainly didn't want you to go and your employer he was not on your side at all so you had to get through the whole lot and then you had to pass your exams and then you had to pass your medical and by this time you started to wonder if it was all worth it.
- 16:30 But eventually if you did get through that lot well you waited for a call up. Now having been called up

and then sent on your initial training course called our rookies, there were a few people who didn't make it there. They just could not manage the life and if they showed signs that

17:00 they weren't going to be able to manage it, they were discharged and they wanted to be discharged because they couldn't handle it. I didn't know anyone who didn't remain in the services but bearing in mind with a small population we didn't have the volume coming from Tasmania

17:30 that they would have had say from Victoria or New South Wales or Queensland. Neither did they have the volume from Western Australia. South Australia I think they had a good grouping but Victoria or New South Wales I would say would have been the two biggest states for recruiting.

18:00 **What were the attractions involved in joining the women's services?**

Well for me it was the same as it was for the men, that there was a war on and it was a King and Country and we should be doing something, that was the whole thrust of it.

There was more to it than that surely? You have for the first time in western Europe and Australia you

18:30 **have women's services created in the armed forces, outside the medical establishment?**

And we were the first, so there was no-one to look to to say how this or that should be done.

In that sense there's something quite significant then?

Yes.

What is that?

I don't know, I don't know. It was there and I wanted to do it, apart from the

19:00 fact that I felt there was a need for it. I knew the need was there and I knew why the need was there and I just thought, "Here I am and if I can do something." King and Country is what it amounts to, so whatever little bit of help I could have been and I feel that ninety nine point nine per cent

19:30 of people, of the women who joined felt the same way.

When you say King and Country, in principle that's correct of course as far as a concept was concerned, sure you're fighting for King and Country but underneath there's something quite deep there. You got away from Tasmania, you experienced, well you

20:00 **travelled firstly, you got to interact with a wide variety of people, including Americans, for instance, and you were also in a pioneer unit that had never before raised, so King and Country really is subsidiary to?**

Yeah, but without that we wouldn't have been there would we? If we hadn't had that, now I've lost the word, if we hadn't had that, we wouldn't have joined up.

20:30 It would have been irrelevant I would think, if you weren't thinking that you were going to be doing something worthwhile. I mean we're talking about wartime here. We're not talking about someone joining in peace time. That is an entirely different situation. In peacetime that is your choice. If you want to have a career in the

21:00 services that is your choice. In wartime it is not a career because you are needed. Your country needed you and that's what the banners used to say, "Your country needs you." Whether it was for the men or the women and they

21:30 used to have in all the trams and trains and things there were all these very large advertisements for the different services to join the RAAF, join the air crew or join some other crew or whatever and the same thing with the WAAAF.

Was there a social hierarchy as such, as far as status was concerned, social economic status

22:00 **in any of those services, starting with the WAAAF, the WRANs, the AWAS, etcetera?**

How do you mean?

Well in the sense of social status which one of these services or the units of the women's units were considered more glamorous?

No, none of them, no.

Amongst women that is?

No, no, we never had anything like that. Even

22:30 for the Australian Women's Land Army who were never, they were never part of the fighting forces, they were all considered on the same level and we used to interact with each other. If we were out socially we'd interact and it wouldn't matter whether the lass had an army uniform on or a navy uniform or

whatever, that didn't make any difference at all. In fact to go out and to

23:00 be in mixed company like that was really a relief sometimes because you were with your own people all the time and then if you could go out and maybe chatting, not that we chatted about what we did at all, but different places where you were and different situations that you were in maybe and it was quite nice. It was enlightening to talk to the AWAS and talk to the WRANs.

23:30 **See amongst women perhaps I could understand that but you must have been aware I suppose that there was a hierarchy in the men's services? That air force chaps generally did get more status?**

I wouldn't say they had more status unless they were air crew. The air crew yes, they did.

24:00 There was that status symbol there but I wouldn't say amongst, I didn't notice it. If it was there I didn't notice it. Now those things don't worry me so it wouldn't have made any difference. If the Chief of the air force had walked through the door, he's no different to me. He's there doing a job the same as

24:30 I'm doing a job, so that doesn't hold any water at all.

Amongst your colleagues or just the girls, your girlfriends, how did they see the services, the army, the air force? I mean you did say the air crew generally were treated specially. Why did the women like the air crew specially or the air force? They did have some sort of?

25:00 I don't think it was just the air force that we're speaking of here. I think everybody had a respect for the air crew because if you were shot down that was just jolly bad luck and we lost more airmen in one week over Europe than the army lost in the whole of the war in Europe and that was when the bombing of Germany took place.

25:30 **You're talking about the AIF?**

The RAAF, the RAAF, yes and just to talk to some of the chaps now and knowing that X number of flights went out last night and seventy per cent of them did not come back, did not give you very much encouragement to go out tonight, would it?

26:00 So they did have a part to play, there was no two ways about that and it was a jolly dangerous part but having said that they wouldn't have been in the air at all if it hadn't for the men on the ground, would they? So everybody did their own thing.

It's interesting that you say the air force suffered more casualties than the army?

Yeah, than the army, army.

Yes, the AIF that is and militia?

That's right.

26:30 That's right, in that period in Europe. That's history but well we've got The Great Escape or something on tonight, haven't we? You might get the details in that, so I don't think that nothing worried us. I mean goodness gracious, I think the majority of us,

27:00 and particularly once we, there's something about a uniform. Once you get that uniform on you know that you're freedom has gone. That you are then controlled by whatever service you are in and if you aren't prepared to live up to that expectation well you may as

27:30 well not be there because I can assure you that they are going to control you whether you like it or not. Yes, those were the days, let me tell you. Of course a lot of things went on that nobody knew about.

Please tell me?

I wouldn't dare, not even now.

28:00 **You don't have to give names.**

Oh dear, oh dear, some of the things that happened were unreal.

Come on, history's not black and white, we need colour.

Sometimes I think we would have been in gaol for the rest of our lives if we had of been caught, only prankish things of course.

I'm curious?

I don't think I should tell you even here. I'm sure it's not going to be in the archives.

28:30 **We're looking for any details.**

Yes, I know you are. One thing that still comes back to me and practically every time I do the washing up I think of it, one's stations when you went to the mess for a meal, you always carried your own cutlery and you carried your own drinking mug.

- 29:00 Plates of course, were provided because the food came on the plates and bowls and anything like that but you had your own cutlery and drinking mug. Now as you left the mess you washed that in a huge cauldron of water and then you rinsed it in the next one. Now if you weren't lucky enough to be in the first one or two sittings you couldn't see through that cauldron of course,
- 29:30 because we'd washed our cutlery and we'd washed our mugs and if people sort of didn't drink all of their tea then that was an exercise and a half too, didn't drink all their tea and I often wonder why we didn't die of some dreadful disease or something. But nothing happened to us, nobody ever got sick yet now the slightest thing and someone will be
- 30:00 ill if things are not cleaned in a restaurant or something like that and that has always bugged me, as to why that happened. Well nothing happened.

Where was your first camp?

Ascot Vale. Oh when I went to rookies course it was at St Catherine's Ladies' College at Toorak. This

- 30:30 was an exercise and a half too because we used to live in one house. They took over these stately mansions in Toorak and we used to live in one house and we'd have to go across the road to another house to have our meals. Oh that was very dignified there. It was only when we hit the stations that things really got out of hand, where there were thousands of people. When we were doing our rookies there were only a certain number at a time,
- 31:00 particularly in my day when we were going through, but if they did their rookies say at Ascot Vale which catered for everyone from the rookies right through and they took them through to the schools where they came out as flight mechanics and all sorts of things, that was a different matter. Because they were then, there were so many at a time but where we were and we were very lucky to have been posted there, I mean
- 31:30 we didn't know what was ahead of us because that was quite dignified and ladylike.

In what way?

And then of course once you got your posting and the penny dropped when you realised what this was all about, this was an entirely different matter, entirely different.

How old were you when you first joined the WAAAF?

I was

- 32:00 just on twenty.

Did you have a boyfriend?

Yes, yes, I was engaged but he was in the Middle East and he said to me via a letter that he didn't believe in women in uniform and if I joined up we could consider that we were no longer a couple.

- 32:30 So I wrote back and said that we were no longer a couple and that I was joining the Royal Australian Air Force and that was that, but we remained friends for ever, until he died. And he came back home and his family did everything, and I mean everything, to make me change my mind, cause he's simmered down a bit after that but no, the glow had gone and that
- 33:00 was that and we were just good friends.

Now how long were you engaged to him for?

I don't know. He joined up, he was in the Middle East with the 7th Division. Oh a couple of years I suppose because they were away because we're going back to thirty nine when the war broke

- 33:30 out and then you see I didn't join until forty two, but anyway that was history. And we both married, we were always good friends, all of us. He didn't live here in Hobart.

On the topic of his disapproval how did other people react to?

Other

- 34:00 people?

Well just generally speaking through your interactions?

Well no-one was really happy because this hadn't happened before and my grandparents were blown out of the world. They didn't think that my parents should allow this to happen and I said, "Well I'm going,

- 34:30 sooner or later I'm going." So they mellowed, after the first couple of years they mellowed when I came home on leave and I think they even got to the stage where they were very proud of me in my uniform. And to be able to say "my granddaughter is in the air force you know?"

35:00 But oh no, there was a lot of resentment and it was only because it was the unknown and it hadn't happened before and I couldn't get it through to them that we weren't going to be front line soldiers because that was an Act of Parliament, that we were not to be there. Not to be assimilated like they are

35:30 today where women can pilot planes and do all these things.

Do you think that's inappropriate, do you?

I don't think overall, in a wartime situation are we talking about?

Yes.

In a wartime situation, I don't think that women should be in the front line, I don't think. We're made differently to men and I don't think

36:00 there's a place in the front line for women, myself.

When you say made differently, what do you mean?

Well we haven't got the stamina of a man, we're not made that way and I just think that there a lot of things that women can do, a lot of very vital things

36:30 that women can do during a war or indeed in peacetime but I know we've just got our first air vice marshal ever in Australia and to look at Julie Hammer, she'd be about my size, with long blonde hair, which we would have been killed for. We would never have been off the station if we'd had hair like that, let me tell you and she's really a petite little thing.

37:00 I've got nothing against her being an air vice marshal. In fact I'm very proud of her being an air vice marshal because I think the time has come and gone on several occasions but I don't think that she should ever be in a position to be in the front lines. No I don't really agree with that. I don't agree with other countries who put their young women in the front lines as soldiers,

37:30 so why would I agree with my own country.

Is it because of the traditional sense of men fighting men has been accepted but women can fire a gun just as good as men?

Yes, I'll grant you that.

So is it the actual act of killing that concerns you?

Yes, I think that's one, that a woman is placed in

38:00 that position, yes.

Is it because it's out of character to the way that you view women should be or are?

Possibly, and it's possibly my age group. Now if I were coming up today I may think differently about that but I don't think I'm ever going to change my views on that. I think that women certainly have a place

38:30 in the services certainly and I think that some jobs they can do a lot better than the men can do and in reverse and this is why I think the men should be in the front line of the services and the women should be supporting them. I don't think I'm going to change my mind on that one.

When you first joined the WAAAF

39:00 **in your initial training, did you really have an understanding of what the men went through in combat? Or what did you know?**

Oh well, yes because of the connection that we would have all had with the returned soldiers from World War I, but there were no women to tell a story, only the Nursing Service and their stories to

39:30 say the least, a bit horrific at times because they were in the worst areas. They weren't with the dead as such and they weren't with the fit people. They were trying to mend those bodies that were broken and they saw the horror. Those nurses were the ones that really saw the horrors of war because it was with them all the time

40:00 that they were away, all the time and they are very much unsung heroes.

Now these nurses you came across were nurses who had served in the First World War?

Yes.

And also served in the WAAAF as nurses?

No, no, no, no, no. This is before I joined the WAAAF. I'm misunderstanding you. This is before I joined the WAAAF.

40:30 I even had a couple of relatives by marriage who were nursing in World War I.

But I understand there were some women who were?

Oh there were some nurses in, oh yes, there were hundreds of nurses in World War II but I didn't really get to know them except when I was in hospital myself on two or three occasions and

41:00 then they were only sort of looking after me and everything was rosy. But some of those nurses, the ones that went overseas they were in the same position as the World War I nurses, I would think, except that they may have had more facilities, so I don't know that there would have been any from World War I. They wouldn't have repeated that I'm sure and if they had

41:30 done they definitely wouldn't have been overseas.

We're going to have to pause, I'm afraid.

Tape 5

00:33 **We're rolling now. When did your brother join the AIF?**

He joined, oh dear, I can't tell you but I had one, before he was sent away I had one leave, home leave and we were photographed together

01:00 and that was the last time I saw him and then he went, he was sent away. He was sent to New Guinea and he actually arrived in Port Moresby and because he wasn't twenty years of age they sent him back to Australia and he was in northern Queensland and then he was sent back to New Guinea and he had his twentieth birthday and

01:30 in six weeks he was dead. So if they had left him there in the first place goodness only knows he may have been safe and that we'll never know, will we? But that was the army, you join up but why they sent him there in the first place and then sent him back I do not know. It was an Act of Parliament I suppose that had been passed and became law

02:00 so that's what happened. It was just unfortunate I think.

Did he join up before you joined the WAAAF?

Oh no, and he had trouble then too, because his employer didn't want him to go anywhere, not that they had the final say at that

02:30 point in time because we're getting into the Japanese department here.

About what year was this? Forty two?

Must have been '43 I reckon. No, it was after I joined, it must have been '43 when he joined. Gee that's a long time ago, isn't it? Yes, yes, because he died in '44, yes, on the 31st of July 1944.

03:00 And he'd only been there six weeks but he'd been and then he'd been back to Australia. It would be '43 when he joined up.

And he had trouble with his employer as well?

Oh well yes, really if he'd wanted to stay there I'm sure that he wasn't going any place.

03:30 Now how could a boy possibly have his sister in the air force and him not join up? I wanted him to join the air force of course, but his friends were all joining the army so I can understand that. And he wanted to be with them, which is only natural but as I pointed out to him before this happened that he

04:00 necessarily wouldn't see them after he did his initial training because they all went in different directions, which he didn't in particular because he was the only one, there would have been others of course, but he's the only one that I know of that went through Brighton Camp and went into a dental unit and of course his commanding officer was a

04:30 Sydney dentist and he had quite a large business in Sydney, I understand. I did visit him in Sydney but and then he wanted Don to stay with him and be in his business. He offered him a position when he came out of the army and apparently they got along very well together. He was a very nice chap, very nice.

05:00 **Was your brother very intelligent like you?**

Oh I wouldn't say I was intelligent, but he was quite bright, quite bright and outgoing. I don't know why we were like that because our parents weren't although my mother blossomed in her later years. I think it was being brought up in a country environment where you don't see a lot of people all the time and you don't have the contact with other people.

05:30 You would naturally be more reticent I would think, whereas when you go to a school where there are a lot of people and you socialise with a lot of people, it's a different atmosphere all together, isn't it? But Don he was very outgoing. A very loving boy,

06:00 very kind to his parents. I like to think we both were but as a boy he was very thoughtful, very thoughtful to his mother.

How much do you think it played that you were in the Armed Forces and he wasn't in his joining up?

Oh he was going to join up, there was no two ways about that. That was never a question, never a question at all.

06:30 But when he did join up he didn't know, see the army is different to the air force. We more or less, more or less chose what we wanted to do and if we were suited to that position that was what we were given but in the army you were likely to be sent anywhere. Like I suppose Athol eventually got the job he wanted in the army and he

07:00 was in the Northern Territory and he went through all the bombings until the last one and it was that night that he was injured and that was the finish of his army career, the last bombing of Darwin. And we grew up in the same area and I actually knew Athol but then we didn't meet until I'd been home a long time and he

07:30 had not very long been out. On VP Day he was actually in a convalescent home out at Claremont and he spent about a year out there.

So he was in the bombing of Darwin?

They were on when he was serving up there, yeah.

We'll have to talk more about that I think.

Seventy-three bombing I think there were, or something like that, but it was the last one on the last night that he was injured.

08:00 **Between '39 and '42, that time before you joined up, what were you seeing coming back from war, the soldiers coming back and so on?**

Well there weren't all that many here because most of the soldiers when I look back over this because those first men, seemed to me went to the Middle East.

08:30 If they were fit enough they went to the Middle East and they were in the 6th Division and the 7th Division and then they had Montgomery's 8th Division and then there was the 9th Division and one of my cousins was a Rat of Tobruk. Now he was actually a Rat of Tobruk when he was sixteen years of age because he was a big boy, he put his age up and he got away with it, because his dad

09:00 had been over there in the First World War and he was going to go too. And they weren't sort of coming back very much at that point. Those that were injured were going through the hospital system up there and then back in Australia and there weren't very many coming back home and if they were on leave the most leave I ever heard of anybody getting was six

09:30 days and some of them were coming home and they were getting married during those six days and things like that. Oh my gosh, and I never went to so many pre wedding parties in my life as I went in that period, let me tell you. But no, it was from memory and then of course I wasn't

10:00 here to see it all. I was over there, so when I came home I felt as though I was a stranger in a strange place. Life had changed in those four years, changed completely and the post war WAAAF weren't reformed until 1951 and

10:30 if I hadn't have been married I would have gone back then. Couldn't stay away previously to that because my parents were just so bereaved and I just had to be here but I definitely would have joined up again.

So when the soldiers came back for that six day leave how many would come into Tasmania and Hobart and so on?

I would have no idea,

11:00 no idea whatever. You see a lot of them would live out of town and in some of those conditions a lot of them never left their parents homes because they hadn't been home for so long and they'd only be going round their relatives and meeting them again and they were pretty worn out these blokes. And I think

11:30 they were being pampered at home, which was the way to go of course so I didn't, apart from my own friends and friend's friends I didn't come in contact with a lot of them.

Do you know if they were saying what was going on over there?

Oh no, no.

You didn't know or they wouldn't say?

They wouldn't say. They didn't say. They might

12:00 say things are grim and something like that but you'd never ever get any details. "Loose lips sink ships." That's what they used to say.

Could you tell from their demeanour that they'd been through some things?

Oh yes, they were no longer the happy go lucky boys you used to know for dances and social evenings. They aged,

12:30 we all did. We all changed. There was no doubt about that, we all changed, so whether it was for the better or not, I don't know.

So when you see these soldiers coming back and they've changed and then your brother says, "I want to join up." What are the thoughts that go through your head?

13:00 Oh I wouldn't have ever said, "No, don't do it." No, that would never be an option, no, if he wanted to do that, that's what he did. I wouldn't have been very happy if my brother had not been in uniform. Of course, you don't think that anything is going to happen, do you? You don't really

13:30 think of that, that someone's not coming back, no matter what. If you stop and think you must know that there's going to be a number of men who are going to die and who are going to be injured. I mean that's war, in spite of the fact that George W Bush says that we'll go over there and we'll finish this and we won't lose any Americans

14:00 and we'll just come home. But that's not life, that's not the way it works, but I would have been disappointed in my brother if he hadn't have joined the services.

So the thought never really crossed your mind that he might not come back?

Never.

Do you think that was more out of hope than reason?

No, it was

14:30 just I didn't think about it, never ever thought about that, never ever.

Do you know if your parents thought about it?

Oh yes, yes.

Were they worried for you the same way they were worried for him?

I think so. It would have been in a

15:00 different way I suppose but if they had of known how I used to come home on leave sometimes they'd have worried.

How would you come home?

I came home on one occasion, I got a flight home and it was in a small plane and there was about, there was the pilot and the co-pilot and I think there were three or four others of us, that was the capacity. There were two sailors and they'd had their

15:30 ship sunk and these boys were coming home on leave and they had these new kit bags and things and we got in the plane and we had to be up at four o'clock in the morning or something in Melbourne. We were taken by tender to the plane and as it went to take off the whole thing filled with smoke and that is not a good start. That is not a good start at all so anyway

16:00 they decided that they'd take the guy out, you're in with everything. You're in with everything, right there in front of you. You can see what's going on and a WAAAF came out and she flew with us and she took over the control. And we flew so close to the water at times, and of course they're talking to each other and the pilot's explaining to us that and saying what he thought of the plane and saying that it was

16:30 one, it had been shot down or something and it had been repaired and he just hoped that they plugged up all the holes. Well eventually we got to the north of Tasmania and we landed out in the bush, on a strip that had been used as a crop dusting strip and it was emergency landing only. I mean there were no facilities or anything like that

17:00 except a few bushes here and there and we landed and he took off and there we are, the two sailors didn't speak. They knelt down on the ground, they looked towards heaven and they raised their hands and they said, "As God is my witness, I will never fly in one of those things again." If I'd have known

what they were going to do I would have gotten down with them. But all was well, we got taken into Launceston and then there was another long trip

- 17:30 home by train. I travelled from about five o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock at night, eleven or twelve o'clock at night to get home that day from Melbourne, so that's quite a journey. And as for the ships they used to stop all the time. We were not allowed to undress or go to bed or anything like that. They always travelled at night. We were all in
- 18:00 our gear and we'd have the drill on the boat and there was a terrible bloke on the boat. He was in charge of it, well we used to think he was terrible but I suppose he had to keep law and order and they'd keep stopping and you could hear that as they went they dinged those depths things that they used to put down during the war. You could hear this ding, ding
- 18:30 thing and then when they started it, because the Japanese subs were in the strait. Whatever anybody else thinks, that's where they were, and they used to zigzag like that and that was a lovely motion and they used to call this thing a ship but I called it a tub. It was shocking, it was a troop ship and there were no refinements. I mean there was no food on board the thing or anything like that, you didn't have any meals. It wouldn't matter what time you got in and I've been
- 19:00 on trips when we should have been in about six thirty, seven in the morning and we didn't tie up in Melbourne until two thirty, three in the afternoon. And that was a nasty trip across Bass Strait so I don't like ships any more. I travel by plane, I love plane travel.

Now let's go back to the Japanese were in the Strait, did you know that for certain or?

- 19:30 Well they were down here in Tasmania and the chap that was here in the River Derwent went back to Japan and he wrote a book, which is still available in libraries and do you know he had this little plane and my father used to say to me, he said to me, "There's been a little plane flying around here," and that chap did the whole circumnavigation and did all the business of Tasmania and I have always thought that maybe
- 20:00 the Japanese were going to settle in Tasmania first and fight their way north.

Was that a personal thought?

That's my personal thought. Had I been taking Australia that's what I would have done. I would never ever have bombed Darwin, that was a silly thing to do, like I never ever would have bombed Pearl Harbour. See that's not intelligent at

- 20:30 all.

Did this man actually see the submarines?

Oh the submarines, no you don't see them, you don't see them but this chap was here. He wrote a book, this Japanese book and it is printed in English but I can't remember the title of it but it was available I know in museums, I mean, museums, I mean libraries.

- 21:00 But there were definitely submarines in Bass Strait. They wouldn't have taken all those precautions and done all those things if they weren't there.

This guy actually said that there were and he knew that there were?

You mean the chap on the boat?

The one who wrote the book?

Who wrote the book, no he only did the, what do you call that when you do the sketch of the outline? He went up the River Derwent. He had the River Derwent perfectly

- 21:30 up past the Zinc Works. He knew Cadbury's. He knew everything that was here.

So you're saying he was like a spy or something?

Yes, for Japan, yes, but he was never, nobody ever gave him a thought apparently or if they did nothing was done about it.

He just blended in with society?

Well he would never have come ashore, he would never have come ashore because

- 22:00 he had this submarine and he had this tiny weeny plane but different people saw the plane. He used to fly around and of course he confirmed it by writing about it.

What year was this do you know?

No, I don't. I wasn't here when it happened.

Very interesting. Before you joined

22:30 **did you want to leave Tasmania at all or stay?**

No, no. I never ever wanted to leave Tasmania for any reason and but of course that became necessary and when you join up you join to go where you are sent and it wouldn't matter what you thought about it. That's where you're going so it never entered my head to

23:00 sort of move. People didn't move about then. They were more likely to stay within their own State, even if they went to another town or something. They didn't move about then as they do now.

You had no desire to see Sydney and Melbourne and?

Oh I'd seen them but only as holidays sort of thing but no, I had no desire to ever go and live there.

23:30 **So when you joined the WAAAF you went through the exams and so on and you were lucky to get in?**

Then I would say we were very fortunate to make it then.

And then they sent you to Melbourne, is that correct?

For my training, yes, because it was only a recruit office here and that was in Macquarie Street in Hobart.

24:00 **So when you joined up what did you think was going to be happening to you and what were you going to be doing in the WAAAF?**

Well I knew, as far as it was possible to know, that I was going to be in the pay section because that's what I was used to doing and that's what I had asked for on my application form. Actually

24:30 I did think of becoming a wireless telegraphist and I even did a course at the University and became very proficient with the old dit, dit, dit, dah, dah, dah, but I had my mind changed on that. Someone said to me, "Don't do that, it's all shift work, and this that and something else and you'll go crazy anyway, so change that and do something else," which I did.

25:00 **Just on that job quickly was that with Morse code?**

Oh yes, I had my certificate for that lot.

And what would make you crazy doing that job?

Oh that was not an easy job doing that, eight hour shifts and you didn't have, you used to have breaks but not the type of thing that would be recommended today. Oh

25:30 some of those girls, they used to be stressed out. Things were pretty hairy you know, we were in the middle of a war and it was full on no matter what you were doing. There was no time to sit down and read a novel or something like that and it was really a concentrated effort, no matter what they were doing. And even the girls who

26:00 worked as mess stewards or cooks and assistant cooks and people like that, they had shocking jobs. That was really hard work and people didn't really appreciate it. People would say, "I'd like to do cooking," or something like that and not realising what they were letting themselves in for. It was dreadful or would have been. Imagine

26:30 with a large thing of potatoes that had to be peeled or something and no easy way to do them except to get in and do them but I have to tell you that on the stations everybody was, on the stations everybody was kept very healthy. Now for breakfast there was always practically the same thing. You had prunes and cereal,

27:00 toast, cold toast, and there was porridge sometimes and sometimes we had to have the equivalent of three eggs I think a week or something, we were supposed to have. Lunchtime there was prunes and rice and for the evening meal there was prunes and custard, so you were kept very healthy

27:30 in that respect. Anybody mentions the word prunes, oh God.

28:00 **When you joined up and you went for training and they're handing you rifles and you're training with them?**

No, they didn't, no, not in the air force, no, no, no, that was before I left home that we had the rifle training, rifle drill.

So in what capacity were they training you with the rifles?

I think that was a lot of nonsense because I don't know why we were ever doing it

28:30 because we weren't even in the services and we were wearing uniforms but not the uniform of Australia's fighting forces and I think perhaps their idea was that they were training people per se in case.

Men and women?

Oh yes, well the men were being called up and trained but see the women

29:00 weren't called up for any training and if we belonged to an organisation I suppose the thought was "You might as well be trained as well" but it wasn't solid training. We used to go one night a week to that, something like that.

So were you in the WAAAFs at this stage or?

No, no, no.

This was before?

This was before I was called up.

29:30 **And so how did they organise this training of rifles?**

Back here the army used to do it.

They just knocked on the door or?

Oh no, no, only for, we had to belong to an organisation. I was with the Home Service Legion when that happened and there was the Women's Air Training Corps was formed here as well and most of us, but most of us in the early days who joined the

30:00 WAAAF had belonged to the Women's Air Training Corps and we knew a lot of the rules and regulations and things like that before we actually became WAAAF. I suppose you might say we were well armed before we became WAAAF because we knew a lot of what the expectations were.

So what year did you join this organisation?

30:30 Oh I suppose in '40, '41, '42, '40 I suppose some time that I became involved with some of those and but they were only what I called playtime things.

They were just weekly meetings?

Yes, yes, and

31:00 then as I was saying before we used to man the Anzac buffet and we used to do all the cooking and the cleaning and the washing up and serving of meals and that to the chaps who either were on leave from Brighton camp. But they may have lived on the north west coast or the west coast or away somewhere so they couldn't go home, they only had a day leave pass or something like that and they'd come in and have their lunch and their dinner there, or something like that there.

31:30 That was very well run, that exercise.

When they're handing women rifles, aren't you worried or scared that something's happening that you don't know about?

No, if you're scared you shouldn't be there. Mind you I didn't know which end of it fired but still I found that out.

32:00 **You did fire the gun?**

Oh yes, my father went silly but all this happened at the time, at the time when all this came to fruition it all happened at the time when I was called up and he said, "Thank God for that."

He thought you'd be safer when you joined up?

Oh yes. I wasn't really happy about that. I wanted to find out what it was all about but I wasn't happy when all

32:30 this happened. No, that's not for me.

What did you think about firing the gun? Did it give you even just a tiny glimpse of what was happening or?

No, I wanted to know how it worked more than anything. That was, you must have thought about things in your life and thought, "Now I wonder how that works? I wonder if I could do that?"

33:00 And my Dad had a gun which we were never allowed to touch of course, that was definitely. Being on a farm naturally he had a gun and I used to see him cleaning that so I knew how to break the thing and do this and do that and something else with it but I wasn't too happy about that. So I found out, I found out, that was all I wanted to do.

33:30 I wanted to find out how it worked.

What about the other women around you? Did they enjoy using the guns or what was their thoughts?

There weren't many of us, it was a very select little group and I think they all felt the same way. Nobody became gun minded, no. Well in those ways we were all treated to treat firearms with respect.

34:00 I mean firearms were not for killing people, they were a necessity on farms and places but they were not for killing people, so that was how we were brought up so I don't think anybody got trigger happy over that lot.

So for a lot of women there this would not have been the first time that they'd handled a gun or saw a gun?

34:30 Some of them it wouldn't have been if they came from farming backgrounds.

And so was it a natural progression to go from this volunteer organisation into the WAAAF?

Oh yes, but a different ball game altogether, a different situation altogether. One was more a social club, if I could put it that way compared to being in a wartime environment

35:00 and they couldn't be compared really. You were doing a different thing. You were doing your own thing on the home front and if you couldn't go one weekend or anything you had to have a jolly good excuse but you didn't go and there was no-one, the worst thing that could happen to you was for them to tell you not back again. That would be the worst thing

35:30 that could happen to you but once you were sworn in as a member of the fighting forces I mean you became their property, so you either had a jolly good reason for not doing or being or you were up on the mat and in serious trouble. I was never in that position,

36:00 thank God.

As a fairly independent woman at that time was that hard to take once you put on the uniform you had to start to conform?

No, no, once you're in that uniform and you've got hundreds and thousands of people around you, that's not difficult at all, no, I wouldn't say so.

Not for you personally, no?

No, no.

36:30 You were there to do a job and rules had to be obeyed, so we came under air force law, the same as the men did, and we had to live by the rules, the same as they did, and that was that.

37:00 So it wouldn't matter if Daddy was the air marshal, you still came under the same rules.

Did that mean that you really felt like you were in it with the men then?

Yes we were all equal, I would say. We were allowed to be at every mustering that the men had, except air crew, air crew and guards,

37:30 there were two, guards I think was the other one, because they were allowed to be sent to some rather remote places at times but we weren't allowed to be air crew, even those that had pilots licences and a friend of mine, well she became a friend afterwards, she was 2IC [Second in Command] in the air force and Starky had been a pilot, she had her licence but they weren't even allowed to fly

38:00 transport planes, as the Americans did. They just were not allowed to do it. So she had to be content to belong to her aero club and that was that.

How far did you think you were going to go geographically wise? Did you think you were going to be leaving Australia or?

No, we weren't allowed,

38:30 we knew we couldn't leave Australia. There were only a few. They went to the WAAAF and because they were doing chemical warfare and different other things like that there were a few went to New Guinea and some went to the Solomon Islands. Now the Solomon Islands seems to me to be a funny place but that's where they went and some of the AWAS went to New Guinea towards

39:00 the later end when things were getting a bit sticky up there. I don't know how they got away with that but there were, I think there were a couple of hundred of them were there but there weren't that many WAAAF and as I say they were only specialists that were allowed there.

Do you know of any women who joined thinking that they were going to Europe and so on?

No, no, we were told that. There was no

39:30 misunderstanding there whatever. Well you see the British WAAAF were in Europe, several of them, several of them were killed by the Germans. They used to be dropped behind the enemy lines and of course they were so stupid, they used to drop them in their uniforms, didn't they? And of course,

40:00 when they were picked up they knew exactly who they were even if they did speak fluent German. And some of them were even in the camps and were burnt in the ovens, that's history, that's terrible.

We'll talk about that a bit more in later tapes. Just to finish this, just a couple of little things, when you were doing the Morse code and the wireless, did you handle codes at all?

No, because I didn't

40:30 do that in the air force. No, I changed what I wanted to do. I took advice for once. I was very pleased that I had done that because, although in a way those girls were very close knit. Well of course they spent a lot of time together and when you're doing shift work with people

41:00 I think you become closer to them when you're on those all night shifts my gosh. And this is when the majority of women, as I've always pointed out, very few of those girls smoked when they joined the services, any of the services but cigarettes were available. We all got a ration and there were plenty of cigarettes because those that didn't smoke

41:30 used to pass their rations on to the others and when you're working all night and working long shifts, well they started smoking and then they couldn't kick the habit.

Sorry, Marjorie, we've got to stop, end of tape.

Tape 6

00:31 **So you arrive at Ascot Vale racecourse, what's going on there?**

Ascot Vale was the showgrounds next to the racecourse, yes. Well that was certainly a hive of activity with so many people were there and I was horrified when I saw where I had my sleeping quarters, although one was usually so tired it didn't matter much.

01:00 We were in our own sort of little sections where the pay clerks would all be together or clerk general or whatever and those girls would all be in their own areas but it was in the Hall of Industries with terribly, terribly high ceilings, corrugated iron, so in the winter of course with all the bodies there it just dripped and

01:30 dripped condensation. And quite often one had to sleep with a great coat over our beds to keep the bed dry but apart from that you can imagine we had shower blocks and toilet blocks and my goodness those ablution blocks had to be seen to be believed. Never having been away from home before and

02:00 never having had to share a bathroom with anybody, far less I had never seen a naked woman before, so that came as a big shock to see all these different bodies wandering backwards and forwards in and out of these showers and I thought, "Oh my goodness, what have I got myself into here?" But and then there were only certain times you could use those facilities

02:30 and for people, if you happened to be on duty and come off at an odd time or something you either (a) weren't supposed to use the showers because the gentlemen going in and how did they clean all these things? Just with a hose, no refinements, they just hosed everything down. Walls and everything got hosed and I don't think I ever had a hot shower at Ascot Vale because with so many people using the water

03:00 it just wasn't possible to keep up with the demand and then we used to joke about it and we'd do our laundry and so help me you'd have to sit under the clothes line to make sure you got your own clothes back, because everything looked alike, oh dear. And we were issued with the most atrocious things like bloomers

03:30 blue and they were bloomers and of course the majority of people didn't even know what bloomers were with elastic around the legs and around the waist and they were navy blue to match everything else. Oh dear I thought the end of the world had come when I saw those, nevertheless we were issued with coveralls, the same as the men wore

04:00 and we used to wear those to work. Now they were the best things ever issued to anybody, coveralls, because none of them ever fitted anybody so you could put all sorts of things underneath them on winter days and be nice and warm or strip off to the very necessary in the summer and be cooler. So they were a wonderful invention, but not very elegant

04:30 and we used to wear a beret with those, the same as the men did with their coveralls. They used to wear a beret and we only wore the caps when we were in our blue uniforms and our summer uniforms until such time as Prime Minister Curtin decided that we'd have wide brimmed hats and then we were all known as 'Curtin's Cowgirls'.

05:00 I loved the wide brimmed hat. Actually my drab uniform and my hat are in the RAAF museum in the city and on a model, so there I am. That was, the drabs in the summertime I think most of us found were

more

05:30 uncomfortable to wear than the blues. If we were allowed to wear a blue skirt and just a blue shirt they were much more comfortable than the drabs were because the uniform part was wool which is adaptable to the heat as well as it is to the cold weather. So we had I suppose you might say unless we were on parade, we had a small choice of one or the other.

06:00 **At Ascot Vale were the women from all over the country?**

All over Australia you'd find them there because it was such a vast station and they were there from their rookies course from training until some of them, as well as the men. There were men doing training there as well and then there were men who were on embarkation, coming through. Of course they weren't there very long. They were only there to be

06:30 assessed and to be issued with their final kit, whatever that happened to be, be paid and off we went.

How did they separate the men and the women?

Very easily, goodness me, plus they had armed guards everywhere. When we used to go home at night on the trams we'd get off at the gate, because everything had to be a blackout and you could hardly see a hand in

07:00 front of you, now where we were was a long, long way down the Showgrounds from where we got through, came through the actual gates. And we'd be taken by an armed guard always down to the barracks.

Why was that?

Well there was no hanky panky going on, that was for sure.

07:30 **So how many? One armed guard, two armed guards?**

Oh they always went in twos from my memory.

And that was simply to separate the men and the women?

No, that wasn't, that was for our security as much as anything else I think because it was so dark. When you get hundreds of thousands of troops like that there are always a few who are

08:00 not going to conform are there and do the wrong thing so we were very well looked after I would say, very well indeed. I was quite happy there actually. I didn't really want to leave once I'd settled in and gotten into the swing of leave, I didn't want to leave Ascot Vale. I certainly did not want a posting to Southern Area Finance

08:30 but once I was there, in different areas, but that's where I remained.

Did you know anything about criminals joining the AIF?

No.

This wasn't one reason for the security they were giving you?

No, no, no, no. If anyone had a criminal record they I'm sure they would not have been accepted. I'm quite sure about that,

09:00 because they wouldn't have been trusted would they? No.

So how many women were you in at Ascot Vale?

Oh there would have been six hundred of us and then there were trainees, about a thousand I suppose. I wouldn't be sure because people seemed to be coming and going all the time and that was one thing about the services. You'd just make

09:30 friends with someone and then one of you would be posted and then off you'd go to the unknown and begin the thing all over again. But that was part and parcel of the services of course and they were always moving you around.

You described a bit about it before but being a girl from, always having your own bathroom

10:00 **to all that was going on, can you just give us a bit more detail and what that was like and so on?**

Well it was terrible. First of all on rookies course there weren't so many of us but the bathrooms in those stately mansions, which some of them would have been built before the turn of the century, I don't know, but they were not new homes of course. They had these great winding staircases and God only know what out there

10:30 at Toorak. Of course all the furniture had been removed. They were really barracks and the only things, most of the paintings were gone off the walls and the crystal chandeliers were, in the main they were

removed. But there they, the house that I was in, in the bathroom they had a shower over the bath. Now we were told we were not to have a bath. We were not

11:00 to use the bath for bathing. If we were caught we'd be on a charge sheet and that of course was for hygiene reasons, and so the showers there weren't I suppose so bad but when we arrived at Ascot Vale all the sections were done with timber and nothing had been planed down or any refinements like that. They were just like a fence or something

11:30 and the doors were short of up from the bottom and down from the top sort of thing, they were just there sort of thing, if there were doors on them at all and then we had these duck boards in this area and there was a long line of hand basins that went for ever and these duck boards all in front of them, oh my God. It was dreadful, even to clean your teeth it was dreadful.

12:00 **Was it what you expected?**

No, I don't know what I expected but and I guess it could have even have gotten worse in some places but it was the number of people involved. Now that was only in our group, that was only for the Hall of Industry. Where the trainees were they were in the cattle sheds and they had been cleaned out and whitewashed and

12:30 things like that and they were used, that was where they slept, in the cattle pavilion if you don't mind. And they had their own ablution blocks of course. The same wherever you were, they had their own ablution blocks but they were all of the same standard.

So all these women in the one place,

13:00 **was there any lesbian activity?**

No, that was something I never ever even heard of. As a matter of fact until I joined the air force I had never heard of that word and when we had our medical lectures that came up and I had to ask what the doctor was talking about because I'd never heard of it.

So this was brought

13:30 **up at medical lectures?**

Oh yes, we had all the, oh yes, well and truly and gay men weren't called gay. You were, if you were gay you were happy and outgoing, that was a gay person and that was brought up and apparently, see where there are numbers like that, that doesn't

14:00 flourish because there's too many people around, so I don't think, I never heard ever heard of that in the whole time I was in the WAAAF, of anyone having problems.

At the medical lectures did they cover such things as sexual diseases and?

Oh yes, oh my word. Mind you I don't think we knew what they were talking about but they did that, yes. Yes, charts, large charts

14:30 on walls and oh yes everything was fairly covered. It was quite an eye opener to the majority as well.

And were these lectures just given to women or to men and women?

Oh the men had their own lectures. They were only given to us as a group, yes, only WAAAF. There weren't any men present when this happened and a female doctor always conducted them.

15:00 **How big were these groups?**

Oh as far as we were concerned there might have been about fifty of us or something like that, but on other stations I don't know. It would have depended on the number of rookies involved but we weren't in very, very large groups, not for that sort of thing.

15:30 And they were done in a very professional manner I must say. A lot of the girls said to me that the doctors had talked about things they'd never heard about.

Would that be the vast majority or?

I'd say, I'd say, yeah, because

16:00 things like that weren't really discussed in homes in those days. There was I suppose no need, it just wasn't there and if anything had happened I guess it would have been hushed up and fixed up and no-one would have ever known about it, and we were definitely told how not to get pregnant.

16:30 That was very firmly instilled and that really and truly with all those thousands and all the troops around and the Americans and God knows who else in town and all over Australia there were very few, very few pregnancies, so something must have

17:00 worked. And if they were single girls they were quietly given a discharge and if they were married they were allowed to stay for as long as they wanted to and the doctor thought they could stay, if they were

married women and then they were discharged when the time came that they wanted to be. There were a few,

17:30 how we came to have those married women would be that they would be in the WAAAF and their husbands would have returned from the Middle East or somewhere or wherever he'd been, Europe or whatever and they'd married on leave and then if they were pregnant later well that was no big deal really.

18:00 They were very, very good to those girls. I only knew, what about, in the whole time I was there I think I only knew two, so that wasn't very many, was it? And one of them I recall had to travel to Western Australia on the train warrant and we were all terribly upset that she had to go so far on this troop train

18:30 but she made it and everything was fine.

Did you think the lectures and so on were necessary?

My word, oh yes. I'd never heard of things like gonorrhoea and all those things and what can happen here and there and my heavens, no. I didn't know those things existed although I had heard that people got funny things during World War I but

19:00 no-one was ever prepared to spell it out and say what it meant but when it came our turn to be in uniform I mean it was a matter we should have known, yes.

If you weren't in the WAAAF would you have wanted to hear that lecture?

Oh yes, yeah because my mother couldn't tell me because

19:30 she hadn't been told first hand so I think all girls and boys at a given age should be able to attend these lectures and they should be given by a responsible person of course and there's a certain amount of detail perhaps you wouldn't go into with younger people. It all depends on whether you're going to do this in high school or

20:00 college or whatever but I think a lot of people would gain a lot of knowledge and be able to lead far happier lives if they knew what they were doing.

So you're in support of sexual education of the young?

I am definitely, definitely, for both boys and girls.

What was the most surprising thing you learnt

20:30 **from that lecture?**

The most surprising thing? Oh well was the diseases and what they did and what they could do, definitely. I'd never heard of those things but forewarned is forearmed and had you ever been in that position and got

21:00 yourself into that position, well it was your fault wasn't it? Because you knew what could happen and when you don't know where people have been and it's one thing to be on the home front and to have grown up with someone perhaps and have known them all your life. It's another thing when someone's been overseas and in staging camps and in different places and then they are suddenly on

21:30 home ground, well you don't very well ask a chap do you if he's clinically clean? So I think that everyone should be told and should be told in a right and proper manner.

Did that lecture occur at Ascot Vale?

No, that was on our rookies.

Sorry, in Tasmania?

22:00 No, in Victoria.

After Ascot?

No, before Ascot Vale, on the actual rookie course when you were taught to march and salute and do all those things.

How much fraternising was there between the WAAAF and the armed forces, the males?

Well again that depended where you were. There was certainly no fraternising as such on the stations because you're in different areas, sort of thing.

22:30 Having said that we worked side by side with the men. I mean even in the pay office I would say we would have been sixty forty and there were men there and we had one chap who was a flight sergeant and he was a pilot and he'd been shot down and because he couldn't go back into air crew he had elected to do this and he was in

23:00 the pay office and we were working with someone who had been to Europe and had been sent back

home. But he didn't want a discharge so he was doing a desk job. He was flying a desk at that point and of course the pay masters they were always male and there were two or three others that were there.

23:30 No, everybody worked side by side. They were a mixture. Well I don't call that fraternising. We were working together. When we fraternised I call that socially and I guess a lot of people met a lot of people and went out with them and married them or whatever, became engaged and things on stations. I know some people got married while they were there on the stations but that was

24:00 not the way to go. As my mother gently told me, "You never ever get married in the middle of a war," last words.

Did you know of men and women at Ascot Vale going to each other's camps?

Oh no, no way. Oh no, that wasn't on. If people tell you that was on, that's a furphy, it wasn't

24:30 on.

Why not?

Well it would have been impossible. I mean can you imagine, now can you imagine, get the scene here. We've got six hundred beds with six hundred ladies in them and can you imagine one lone male walking through that door? I don't think that's going to happen.

They had security between the camps as well?

25:00 Oh yes, yes, there was security everywhere. You never knew when Foo was going to turn up. Foo was everywhere.

What was Foo?

Foo was security.

They were like ghosts were they?

Yes. They were ghosts.

Was it a rewarding experience at Ascot Vale with

25:30 **all these women?**

Oh yes, yes, yeah. Looking back it was a wonderful time. We were doing a job and I met some wonderful people there, some really wonderful people and some I've stayed in touch with all these years and going to these reunions regularly we meet up again and renew friendships and then we'll meet somebody else

26:00 who says, "Oh, I was there. Do you remember me?" Sort of and you look at this grey haired old lady and you say "No." That's not kind, is it? Bu that's the way it goes. No, that was a great life really. As I say we worked hard and we didn't have, we couldn't do as we liked and if you can take

26:30 discipline, you enjoy yourself. If you can't accept discipline then you're going to be behind the eight ball all the time. But somebody has to be the boss don't they. We had some lovely officers there. They were really lovely, so I've remained friends with some of those people and even Clare Grant Stephenson, who

27:00 was the director of all the WAAAF, she went to every reunion and she has even been here, in my home entertaining her WAAAF officers downstairs in the playroom and she's used this house as her base sort of thing to do that. And she was just a wonderful lady, a wonderful lady.

Would you say there was a mateship between

27:30 **the women?**

Oh yes, yes, we used to help each other. I mean if someone was running a bit late of a morning you'd find someone would grab a broom and sweep under her bed or we used to have to fold our blankets up every day. I could never understand that. We used to have to fold them up and the blue stripes had to be right down, everything had to match, sort of right down the sides. You put your pillow on top of that and your hat on top of that, your cap

28:00 on top of that and your dilly bag was on a padlock on the end of your bed. That was the most amazing thing. You really knew you were in the air force then because you were handed a Hessian bag, headed towards the straw to fill this Hessian bag and there was someone standing there to tell you how much to put in it. A cyclone wire bed, which you are not going to believe, a blanket

28:30 to lie on and a blanket over you, a pillow and you were in the air force and that was that. That was all the refinements you had. I mean now they have a room to themselves, they've got a dressing table, they've got a wardrobe, they've got the lot. They don't even know they're in the air force.

29:00 But we were all the same. Nobody was any different so it didn't worry anybody and there was one lass we were with and she used to sleep in every morning and she would get up and she'd be running late and we would think, "Oh, if we don't help her, we'll all going to be under the hammer. Something's

going to happen if the duty officer comes through and her bed's not made," cause we all copped

29:30 it. And so anyway we used to help her and when she did get out of bed she tipped her dill bag up and she'd grab for the pair of stockings or whatever it was she wanted out of there and we'd have to be shovelling these things up, packets of biscuits and lollies and all the rest of it and dirty clothing and clean clothing and the whole lot. That was where we had to keep all our gear and makeup and as she walked on parade she was never

30:00 ever late for parade and as she walked on parade she'd be putting her lipstick on and she'd just be there in time to say, "Present." She never failed. She never let us down on that parade bit. So some people can, see I couldn't do that. I've got to be ready and know a good five or ten minutes beforehand

30:30 that, "Right, everything's right. I'm right. We're ready to go." But then other people, I suppose that's the way she was at home and there's always somebody that will come and pick up after those people.

Were there other women that let you down?

Oh no, no, never.

Were there fights and so on between personalities?

No, no, not that I ever saw. You would expect that

31:00 but not that I ever saw.

Why don't you think that happened?

Well I suppose maybe because there were so many of us and one or the other was going to think, "I'm not going to win here because there are too many people who are going to be against what I'm saying," and that could have been a lever there that stopped that.

31:30 But I think it was because everybody was on the same level. In fact I'm sure that's what it was. We were all on the same level. We all wore the same clothes, nobody had a better uniform than the other person and nobody had longer hair than anybody else because we weren't allowed to have it and nobody, of course we weren't allowed to wear jewellery of any type

32:00 and everyone was exactly the same. And I think that is why being on the same level that there was no bitterness amongst people, so no I didn't experience anything like that anywhere.

Did you feel that everyone was there for the same reasons that you were?

Oh I guess, I don't know that I ever thought about it at the time but if you were in a uniform you must have had a

32:30 reason for being there and I would think that everybody joined up for the right reasons, I'd like to think.

You didn't know that for sure though?

Well you'd never know would you?

It was really a melting pot of lots of people from other states, different backgrounds, probably different religions and all this and yet it all just molded together?

33:00 It all came together but I put that down to the, there's always got to be someone at the top who's guiding these things and I get back to this director. She was just wonderful. She was a no-nonsense person and the WAAAF was just so important to her that it wouldn't have mattered who it was, if they'd said, "The WAAAF should be doing so and so" and Miss Stephenson didn't think so, they wouldn't do it,

33:30 so it was just as simple as that. And I think having someone like Miss Stephenson made it so much easier for us because she made the rules. Oh, parliament made the rules but she was the person who had to see that everything was carried out strictly to the letter and that she did.

34:00 And she took no nonsense from anybody. I often wondered and when she used to speak to us she'd go into the theatre at Ascot Vale and she'd never use a microphone. I can remember that and there'd be hundreds of us and she'd just plant her feet on the stage and set sail with what she wanted to say.

34:30 We always felt secure because of Miss Stephenson.

And when you're living so close to each other what are the habits that get on your nerves?

Well very few people smoked as I've said, very few but that increased later in the service of course but at that point in

35:00 time. The only thing I didn't like was people running late. I still don't like people who are running late. I can't handle that because some people make a habit of it. They're late for everything and I don't think it's necessary. But apart from that, it took me a while to settle down

35:30 to some people's eating habits. I was not impressed with some of them?

What did you see?

They got the mess, not using their cutlery correctly or the way they buttered their bread and things like that, oh my goodness but they got the message when they watched other people. These people didn't know any different,

36:00 I suppose. That was the one thing that bugged me, people's eating habits – still bugs me. I can't stand messy eaters.

Living so close to other people did you have to learn to be tolerant?

Oh yes, yes.

Is that the key?

But we were all tolerant weren't we? We had to be,

36:30 we had to be. We had a lot of fun you know? We had a lot of fun.

What about personal hygiene? Did anyone's habits get annoying?

Yes, we did strike that sometimes but if people are, were not inclined to wash as often as they should have been washed

37:00 there was always the solution that a couple of people would frog march them to the showers or something like that and they got the message very quickly but that was the exception rather than the rule, because we'd been through these lectures about washing. That was part and parcel of the hygiene part of it and we'd been through that lot.

37:30 But you will always find that men and women, you will find even in this day and age that they are just a tipsy bit afraid of water and what it might do to you, but that was easily overcome and didn't affect any of us, I don't think. I only heard of that happening once when I was at Ascot Vale and all those hundreds of people

38:00 and I was horrified, horrified that anyone would do that but I got the message that it became necessary of course. That was okay. Some people who are,

38:30 there are other things that can be contracted. I had a very nasty encounter with a tropical disease that I got off the slips coming back, the pay slips coming back from the islands and I must have put my hand up to my face or something and I had this all through my hair and it went all over

39:00 my face and it was terrible and I was sent to see a specialist. He was an English specialist at Camp Pell with the army boys and he said to me, "You may never ever get rid of this because it's tropical and you go back to Tasmania where it's so cold." And he said, "It's going to surface

39:30 again but I will treat you." And anyway he gave me whatever he gave me and it worked, it worked whatever the ointment stuff was and I've had, it never showed up again, thank God. But you could get things through handling these things. We were handling things that

40:00 had been in the tropics and then at Ascot Vale we had the infectious hospital there and if people couldn't go on a pay parade they'd come up to the pay office and they'd get these things and you'd hand them a pen to sign for their money and they'd be covered in all sorts of things, blotches and stuff and you'd take that pen back. You'd never think of it doing anything

40:30 and they'd had it in their hands and their hands are mostly all bandaged up and I've often thought of that. We should not have been doing that.

That's great stuff Marjorie, we've just got to finish there.

Tape 7

00:32 **So I'm interested in asking you some questions about the Americans, can you tell us about them?**

Well the American arrived for R&R and also for training and they were on the eastern sort of Australia from Cairns I suppose down to Melbourne

01:00 in particular. Well they were here to have fun. Some of them I will say had been injured and they were recuperating and well you met them wherever you went. There were American serviceman and a few servicewomen but

01:30 they more or less took over the town when they came to Australia because they had nice uniforms, they

had plenty of money, that was for sure and they had access to their PX [Post Exchange - American canteen unit] stores so they had plenty of cigarettes, chocolates and sweets and things and an abundance of silk stockings.

02:00 **Why would they need silk stockings?**

Oh well, I'm not prepared to even think about that but they made very nice gifts, let me tell you. Yes, so they, I found the American servicemen to be very, very nice. I found the down point would be during a period when I was doing a course

02:30 we were, my best friend and I were billeted in Spring Street in Melbourne when we could have gone home on the other side of town but however we were billeted at this place and the course was rather intensive. That went for about three weeks and at the time three women were murdered in the area and Leonski

03:00 was in the camp, close by, so that was a bit upsetting because the last one happened when we were in the area, and it wasn't very far away. But he was I think his own troops knew what was going on and I think someone must have

03:30 had him picked up. He was later executed but he couldn't be executed in Australia because we had a Labor government and they took him to New Guinea, I understand. So that was a bit of a sad time because that cast a shadow over everybody but my special friend was a marine and he

04:00 had joined the marines when he was about fourteen or fifteen as a career and he was a career soldier sort of. He wasn't just a wartime recruitment, so he'd been everywhere and done that and he was a top sergeant at the time and then he was called in and he did an officers' course. He had

04:30 been I think at that time at Suez Canal, but I found them very, very nice, very nice.

How did you meet this marine?

It would have to be at a dance because we used to go to every dance that was on, not every one that was on but every one we were able to go too. We'd go out dancing, my friend and I. What else did you do?

05:00 You went out dancing or you went to the pictures sort of thing, so that was very nice and when they were in town, he was stationed a bit out of town and whenever he and his friend were in town, we used to go out for dinner and go to a dance somewhere or go to the flicks, whatever was on. And then he sailed off into the sunset to do his officers' course but he was a full time marine that lad.

05:30 **Were you seeing him as in?**

Oh we were pretty close.

So that's a yes?

But there's no way known that I was ever going to live in America and as he was a career serviceman, see he could have been sent anywhere. I think there home port was San Diego but he could have been sent anywhere that the American marines

06:00 were required and of course with his experience and background he would have been the first out, no matter what anywhere and I wasn't very happy about those wartime marriages. Some were successful but others had very unhappy endings, very unhappy. It's one thing to know someone standing in uniform, it's another

06:30 thing when they become civilians again and they're people altogether. They've got to be different and I know some of my friends who married American servicemen and the marriages broke up very early in the piece.

Why did you find Americans attractive? What did you like about them?

07:00 Well they were just nice guys.

Why, why were they nice guys?

Well they were nice in every way. They had nice manners, they were very polite. They treated us as if we were perfect ladies. There was never any, well I would have trusted my marine anywhere. He was a really nice guy.

Does he have a name?

Only Bill. Bill was lovely.

07:30 And to meet someone like that was really a pleasure to me because we used to sit and talk for hours and he'd tell me all about life in America and I knew nothing about America really, only geographically but nothing about the American way of life and the way they did things over there and

08:00 it was quite an eye opener and I used to really enjoy my outings with Bill. He was really nice and he was

a good dancer too. Most of them were shocking but he was a good dancer and we enjoyed each other's company, so that was a very happy interlude in my life, young Bill.

How long did you actually see him for?

Oh about six

08:30 months I suppose, something like that.

How did you handle his departure?

Oh that was part of being in a war wasn't it? That was no different to saying goodbye to one of my neighbours even or another guy that I had grown up with and been to school with perhaps or something.

I'd say it is actually because you had feelings for him?

09:00 Oh yes, but I might have been going out with an Aussie boy for quite a long time and I did know a couple of them too over a period of time but I think Bill was different because he was such a considerate man. He was really wonderful

09:30 and he showed my photographs from home and things his parents would send him out and he was so thoughtful. He would always ask me where I would like to go and what I would like to do and not that, "We're going to so-and-so tonight," like some of the girls used to tell me. And I used to say, "Well if you don't want to go, you just don't go," sort of. Oh we went to all sorts

10:00 of things. Even found myself at a boxing match one night and that's something I can't handle but I thought, "I've got to do this once." Oh dear, but he was... The Americans that I knew, they were all quite nice.

There was a saying that they were overpaid, oversexed and over here,

10:30 **well why oversexed?**

Well that was what the Aussies used to say. The Aussie boys used to say that and I don't think there'd be any difference if you're asking me. Someone on R&R, I don't think there'd be any difference between them but so long as they had the bromide in their tea, they were as right as rain.

It had a sedating effect?

Well that was the purpose of that exercise.

11:00 You must have heard about that in your interviews?

Yes, I've heard of it. Today it's the opposite, people need Viagra to...

Yes, there you go you see.

You obviously moved forward when it came to the behaviour of men, were you aware at the time that Australian soldiers overseas were pretty much what the Americans were doing?

Oh yes of course.

Brothels, all

11:30 **sorts of illicit sexual activity?**

Yeah, yes, that had to be didn't it?

At the time you were aware of this?

I learnt very quickly, yes.

How did you get aware of this because some girls weren't?

Aware of it?

Yes.

Well you just thought about it, you just thought about it and then it was a strange thing when people would, some of the men would come back and come home on leave and they would actually

12:00 discuss these things. Not perhaps on a personal level but about Joe Blow, so you put two and two together and.

Can you just walk me through an example of someone talking about another chap?

I can't remember that but I remember someone been told on more than one occasion about the brothels in such and such

12:30 a place you didn't go to because they weren't very well controlled or something but in another area the

girls were taken care of and I could never get onto that. That was something in life I could never ever understand from either side. I could never understand that. Actually to this day I can't understand it either but

13:00 yes, you learnt very quickly about the do's and don'ts.

Were you aware that most Australian soldiers that went to the Middle East had been in brothels pretty much?

No.

You weren't? At the time you weren't?

No.

What about now?

No, I wouldn't say the majority. No, I would not say that.

Why's that?

13:30 I think the values then, if we're going back to the 1940s that people's values were a lot higher than they are today, a lot and I don't think a lot of those men would have lowered those values to use those places.

14:00 I'm quite honest in that and I would back the men that I knew or anybody's brother or whoever and particularly if they said no, that they'd never, that they'd never do that and I would believe that because it was either you had your own values or there was always that dreadful fear, no matter

14:30 what of contracting a disease that could be with you for life because they didn't have the antibiotics and the things that are available now to people and that was something that stayed with you for a lifetime. Now I think that would have been a big deterrent myself.

I certainly agree with you but on the other hand

15:00 **some of the soldiers that I have interviewed said the war clearly changed them. You're fully aware of that in many ways of course. They would say, "We weren't sure if we were going to be alive the next day."**

Now that is no excuse. I've heard that many times and that would be the poorest excuse of all, that one.

But does that show, in a sense from that time period

15:30 **a derogation in their own values?**

Yes, definitely.

To men who maybe would have been very austere in their lifestyles, in their religious beliefs, would have changed or deteriorated overseas?

Yes, because people who were brought up as we were brought up, no I don't think that

16:00 would apply to a lot of people but I've heard that story before and I can't come to grips with that at all. I think if you have a standard and you have your beliefs well you're not going to do these things. I do think a lot of people are drawn into things they would normally do,

16:30 by peer pressure. Everybody else is doing is so I should be doing it too, I think that played a big part with the younger people and perhaps the type who were not quite as sophisticated. And that's why I think that we had so little trouble because of the peer pressure that people were afraid that

17:00 someone was going to look down on them or cease their friendship or something like that. And that also on the other end of the scale helped to keep people on line but with these men of course it was the other way round and I can understand, well I know, I've sat and talked to them and said that you're crazy but I've heard that story about,

17:30 "I may die tomorrow," well I don't buy that one at all.

Don't you think that it holds some water, though?

No.

I mean there were people who were literally living by the day, who didn't really know if they were going to live or die the next day?

Can you honestly tell me that it's going to make any difference if you have sexual intercourse once?

I'm not sure but what I'm trying to understand is that I suppose

18:00 **they were looking for any release that would relieve their pressure of battle, the stress of it, and it may sound, of course, shallow, but in the same instance these are only men who are living amongst each other and the only outlet they all had with a woman was through that.**

No, I don't find that necessary at all. I really don't.

18:30 And I think to lower your standard and to risk what could be a life time of misery because an incurable disease would be a misery.

Have you heard the stories where some soldiers, Australian soldiers received gonorrhoea three times?

Oh yes, they'd go back. I mean I've seen that happen. I've actually witnessed that

19:00 and they'd get this bloke just about right and he'd go off on leave and then he'd come back into hospital again. It was terrible. He was dying.

Gonorrhoea?

Yes, he was dying and it was terrible to see him but he would still go back and they used to say to him, they tried,

19:30 they said, "If you'll tell us where you are contracting this from, we will cure the person," but he would never tell them.

Where was this? In Melbourne?

Yes, during a period of my service and because I used to pay him, that's how I knew and it's very, very sad.

20:00 A very sad situation and to my mind quite unnecessary but as I repeat, way back then there were not the cures or the treatment that is available now, so people now are not putting their lives on the line like they were then.

20:30 **Australians you mean?**

Yeah, Australians I'm talking about, Australians anywhere, overseas, anywhere.

Now American soldiers had a reputation for being oversexed and we were discussing before and I have heard that they were known to be rather forward in their gestures and propositions towards girls?

Well there's one thing I will say about them, you knew where you were at and

21:00 you had then, you had the time to say, "No, no."

No to what?

To whatever overtures they were going to make towards you. At least if they were up-front like that, rather than sneak up, you knew what it was all about and you were on a level playing ground.

21:30 **Now I have heard some pretty up-front things about what they did say, what sort of things did they say to you or your friends that you have seen or heard?**

Well nobody ever said anything to me. I was never ever, and I can honestly say this, I was never ever propositioned by an American serviceman and I was out and about a lot. By the same token I think it might depend on

22:00 how one conducts oneself. That never happened to me and it never ever happened to any of my friends, because I would have known but then again it depends on the environment in where you happen to find yourself or what you're doing at the time. If you are out, now a lot of the,

22:30 and I don't know about servicewomen here but the young girls are all over Australia, but let's talk about Melbourne. You would go to a hotel for dinner or something or you might even go for a drink and that was odd if you could get an odd in a hotel but the Americans always could, and these girls would be. You'd go in say late afternoon and they would be quite

23:00 inebriated and not knowing what they were doing and I used to be really disgusted. Of course if anyone was picked up like that in uniform you would have known all about it I can assure you but that I think is why some of these servicemen on R&R

23:30 got the idea that everybody was the same because these girls wouldn't have known what they were doing. But of course if we became inebriated in our uniforms, we wouldn't repeat that, I can assure you, because you didn't do that. So I think having a clear head all the time certainly helped.

24:00 Mind you I enjoyed a glass of champagne or sparkling burgundy or something like that.

I was waiting for that. At least two glasses.

Well two glasses.

I find it sort of surprising that women would be drunk I suppose

24:30 **publicly in that sense?**

Oh civilian women were. I saw a lot of that, a lot of it but then again some of them, no matter how much makeup they had on or how they were dressed I think were too young to be out and about and I blame the families. They should not have been there, should they? Particularly in the day time. Now going home the parents must have known that they've been drinking. I don't mind the odd one or two drinks but

25:00 they would be drinking glass for glass with the Americans who were buying, plying them with this liquor no doubt but I was never in that environment and never in that company, so I can't speak for them.

There were a lot of married women who had their husbands overseas who were seeing American soldiers, that was a common practice?

So I believe but then I didn't know any of them

25:30 and I don't like to say anything about hearsay because I do think some of these things can get out of hand a bit but that's life, isn't it? That is life because a lot of those people, the same as the men might feel fancy free who were overseas, but a lot of those people

26:00 got married on the spur of the moment. Let's face it, they because someone was going away, they'd been going together or they knew, I knew people who got married like that. And it's doesn't make for a lasting partnership because it's when the man's away for about three or four years, it's a long time, isn't it? It's a long time on

26:30 both sides.

So why was that? Why didn't you like Dutch servicemen?

They had such an air about them. They were not gentlemen. I don't know, they seemed to think they were superior to everybody.

27:00 **Where did you meet Dutch servicemen?**

I served with them.

Where?

They were in Melbourne at Toombul Court.. They had their pay thing there as well and they were there for quite a few months and to go to their club, which was in Swanson Street, was the biggest eye opener of World War II. They had all the luxuries. They had everything.

27:30 Queen Wilhelmina said that her troops overseas would be the highest paid and the best dressed and they certainly were. There's one word for them. They were arrogant and they knew it and they were arrogant. I could never understand that.

Were there any fights between Dutch and Australian troops?

Oh no, I wouldn't think so. See there wouldn't be many here in Australia,

28:00 there wouldn't be many here at all. And we did have, I'll tell you there were some Dutch Indonesians but they were different people altogether. Queen Wilhelmina's troops were of the fair hair type and of course the Indonesians were of the dark skinned and smaller stature type, you know what I'm trying

28:30 to say? And that was never the twain shall meet situation.

And where did you see that?

They were in Melbourne too.

How did they treat each other? Oh more the Dutch?

Well I don't know how they treated each other but as far as I was concerned I never saw the two together although I did know one gentleman. He was

29:00 Dutch Indonesian and he was quite a high ranking officer so he used to go to that Dutch club that I mentioned but apart from him, I don't recall seeing them together. They could have been of course, I wouldn't know.

29:30 **Were you at any time uncertain that the war would end with an Axis victory? Was there any time you were actually about Australia winning?**

That I didn't think we weren't going to win? Never, never.

Why?

If I had to stay there until I was a hundred years old I was sure that we were going to win.

Why was that?

Oh I don't know. If you didn't think that you shouldn't have been there,

30:00 should you really? I was quite confident that in the end we would, if we overcame the Nazis, we had to overcome the Japanese and things got fairly close to home when they started dropping bombs around the place and particularly bombing Darwin all those times.

30:30 Have you been to Darwin?

No.

When you stand there and see the havoc that was caused and you go through the cemetery at Adelaide River it really brings back home just how close we were here in Australia, just how close. Because if they had really invaded, and there were millions of them, if they had really invaded

31:00 Australia, see we were busy fighting other people's wars and we'd lost so many men overseas in Europe and there was so many still there, particularly air force, that we were running out of troops, let me tell you, but then America came to our aid. If it wasn't for American aid, as I swear you and I would not be having this

31:30 conversation now, if America hadn't entered the war when they did.

Do you think that Japan would have invaded all of Australia?

Well how were we going to stop them? Because we didn't have, Australia's a big place up north and they could come in the backdoor anywhere there. See they send all those raids over Darwin and then they got down the track a bit

32:00 and they never knew, of course you don't know when an air raids going to happen but they made a proper mess of everywhere they were. And if they could do that in a sparsely populated area like that, what would they have done if they'd come farther south to Brisbane, Sydney,

32:30 etcetera, because practically here we had no protection. Because as I say either our men had been killed, they were in hospitals or they were over there. They weren't here, but no, the thought never entered my mind that we wouldn't win out in the end.

33:00 **On another note, when you entered the WAAAF, you were demobbed in 46?**

Late 46, yeah.

Did you ever see yourself as a feminist?

Oh good heavens no, no, no. I suppose we all were but

33:30 no. I wasn't out there burning bras and doing things like that, if that's what you're asking?

Well not so much burning bras, but did you have a sense for women's rights?

Fair rights, fair rights I suppose, such as more equal pay for women who were working and

34:00 doing the same job and perhaps the right to work if one wanted too. See I could never understand why anyone would go through university, get yourself a degree and get yourself a job and perhaps a high government job, perhaps you're a doctor in a

34:30 government hospital and when you married you're not allowed to work. Now that to me was a waste of time or effort or it might be a solicitor or something like that. You could work on your own I suppose or do something but there was that 'them and us', that restriction there. That had to be addressed which has been addressed and now they've gone

35:00 too far. But I think that, yes there were some things that had to be tidied up and by and large that was going to happen as far as I was concerned because once we all went back to civilian life we were not going to be satisfied with the way some things had been. I was quite sure of that so and things

35:30 did change and the very fact that we were wearing the uniform of Australia's fighting forces was the first step in that direction, that we had been accepted in that manner and I felt that was our most forward step that we ever made.

36:00 But I'm not into people banging drums and doing things like that. I don't think anybody would have been on that bandwagon at all. Mind you I do say those women were very brave. Looking back those women who did those things, they were very, very brave women but things seemed to fall into place naturally after World War II.

Now there were men who were saying

36:30 **that when they came back the jobs that the women did or held in their absence they would have to go back into minding the house and what they did before the war basically, how did**

you see that?

That applied to me too. I had to be given my job back. That applied to everybody.

You got your job back?

No, I wouldn't take it.

37:00 **But you had the choice?**

Yes.

Not all women had that choice?

I think they did, ex-servicewomen.

Ex-servicewomen perhaps but?

Yes, ex-servicewomen.

But I'm just talking about the status of women generally speaking?

Right, right, sorry. Well if they were doing a job I always felt that was most unkind. I didn't think the government was saying the right thing by saying, "Well you can do that job, you were doing a good job, but now somebody else

37:30 wants it back and you are out." Now to me that is not a right or fair approach in anyway and that was why I decided I would do something entirely different. So I applied for and did my full course and became a qualified ladies' hairdresser.

38:00 So that was not only different but I didn't impeach on anybody else's job or their welfare in any way at all. I felt that a lot of people could have done, which I'm sure they did too. And of course a lot of those girls as soon as they, they were engaged and they got married very quickly

38:30 after the war. See I wasn't discharged for another twelve months after the war ended. Well it was more than twelve months before I was discharged and then I didn't come back home. I was discharged in mid September and I didn't come back here until early February. I didn't get back home

39:00 so in that time I had been home and I had been and seen my employer and said, "Look, I think I'm going to have a break from all of this and I'm going to do something entirely different," and that's what I did and that was lovely.

Quite an independent woman, aren't you?

Yes.

39:30 **It's not that you were, you still are.**

Don't cross me.

No, I've been very careful not to. VP Day, can you tell us what you were doing?

VP Day, yes I can. I was using my

40:00 calculator, my comptometer and someone came in and said, "It's over," and of course where I was in that point of time much to my disgust there were a lot of civilians working there, Commonwealth Public servants, and of course they downed tools right then. Then we were stood down straight away, there weren't many of us there,

40:30 only about a dozen I suppose in uniform at that point and we were stood down and told to come back sober the following morning and we went home and changed our clothes. You wouldn't risk going out in your uniform and we changed our clothes and went back into town and I've never really experienced anything like that because it was a one off.

41:00 Because Melbourne had been a brown out and blackout here and the trams were all browned out and there were no street lights that shown directly round or anything, no matter where you were and it was just so sombre and suddenly the lights were on and everyone had taken all the blackout shades off their windows as the trams went by. And the trams were all lit up and they had extra lights on them.

41:30 There was beer appeared from all over the place. There were bottles of beer being passed around the street and everyone was singing and dancing. The place went wild and you've probably seen the man with all that ticker tape and him dancing and that, well that was happening everywhere. I couldn't believe it.

00:33 **How did you handle the post-war period, when you were demobbed [demobilised]?**

Very difficult, very difficult going back into civilian life. I found the transition far worse going from a civilian to a service woman.

01:00 Going back to civilian life was very difficult for me because, well it was for a lot of people I know. First of all when you arrive home you think that you're going to pick up the threads of where you were when you joined up. Well it doesn't work like that because four and a half years later when you do sort of settle down to knowing that you're back home

01:30 you're friends have either married or they've moved away, those who were closed to you and people have young families so their lifestyle has changed completely. A lot of other people have died. I had cousins who died, cousins who were prisoners of war and who were very sick as a

02:00 result of that and my god brother had been shot down over Germany and the people that, family closest to me did not return and it's only after that you're out of uniform that you come to grips with this and then you're sort of starting off again. But as soon as I

02:30 really settled down and got into my course I had a job to do and an aim there. I was going to become a good hairdresser and I was determined that I was going to study and make it that way, which I did and I think I became a good hairdresser. But then unfortunately I couldn't carry that on through my life. In retrospect I'm quite pleased that

03:00 I had that experience and I did it because it's a very, very difficult job. You are dealing with different people all day, every day, some very difficult and you have to do, you're mind is on your job because a small mistake can cost you a lot in reputation and everything else connected with

03:30 the job. And I mean you don't want to tell a lady that she's going to have steel blue hair, which she chooses to have died to that colour, and it came out royal blue or something like that, which did happen to me on one occasion, due to the product and which I had the presence of mind to correct straight away. But

04:00 things like that I mean, you've obviously heard of them, people can sue you for a lot of money if something goes wrong and it might not always be your fault.

Why did you choose to leave it yet?

That was for health reason. It was standing and bending and as you can see, there's not very much of me and that solid business all day was really affecting my back,

04:30 so my doctor said, "You either give that job away or you don't come back and see me again," so I thought, "Right." So reluctantly I had to give it away.

Hairdressing, how was that seen, the profession of a hairdresser? Was that seen as more of an avant-garde?

Then if you were a hairdresser you were...

And a woman of course?

Yes, yes, you were really looked up to.

05:00 **You were looked up to? Why was that?**

Because we had control of the curls, whether we were cutting the curls or whether we were perming the curls or whether we were straightening the curls. Some people with really curly hair would much prefer to have it straightened. Others were spending a fortune to have the same curls done.

So was it seen as a,

05:30 **you were saying it was seen as respectable?**

It was something that other people couldn't do, if you can understand that. No-one was allowed, particularly at that time, I mean things have changed, allowed to set up shop unless they were either (a) apprenticed or (b) they had that certificate. They'd been through a school so it was something you had to work for.

06:00 I would say that no matter how talented you were in the school atmosphere that it would take you two or three years to become proficient in the salon and that is only just the general work.

So how many years did you do hairdressing?

Oh about seven or eight I suppose.

And

06:30 **what did you choose to do after that?**

After that I went to counting money and I went back as a, I used to do banking and I was a paymaster after that.

That's quite a change, isn't it?

Well you see I had done that before.

During the war?

No, yes, during the war and pre-war and so I went back to that. I enjoyed that, I enjoy that now. I enjoy bookkeeping and that

07:00 sort of thing and I pride myself that I can balance the bank account every time but I've always been interested in that sort of thing, so it wasn't a great chore to me.

How did the war effect you? How did it impact as your evolution as a person psychologically?

Well it

07:30 changed me completely I would think, it changed my outlook completely because it virtually changed my family. I no longer had a brother and I had very sad parents and then I lost my father, but my mother lived until she was in her mid nineties and she was a wonderful inspiration.

08:00 My mother was a wonderful inspiration and we got along just fine together as well and particularly in her later years and she and Athol got along very well together. I got along very well with Athol's parents and which was wonderful because we had them so often here for meals and

08:30 special occasions and things like that. We always had them there and it was just lovely but there was always that loss, that gap there and I guess that war hardens you in some ways that you build up a sort of defence, "This is

09:00 not going to happen to me again. I'm not going to be hurt again like this," and you tend to look at life a lot differently after an experience like that. So I think once I settled down, and of course then once I was married, and Athol and I have worked together on everything and we've never done a thing without discussing

09:30 it with each other and we've had everything that we wanted. We've been on some wonderful trips together and I think we've really had a good life. Unfortunately he was not a well man when we were married because of his war injuries.

How old was Athol when you both married?

Oh dear, do I have to do my maths. I'll tell

10:00 you when we were married.

You're just avoiding so you won't tell me your age. What year was it? When did you get married?

We got married in 1949 and no, I'm not going to tell you how old we were. Yes in 1949 we were married and Athol built this house and we moved in in 1952.

10:30 And we've been here ever since. We've thought about, we even bought ourselves a penthouse at one stage, which we sold before the property rise which was, we never ever moved in of course and I took a look at that with a lift to go to a penthouse and I suddenly thought, "That's really not the way I want to live. If I can't open my back door and step out and smell the roses, there's something wrong," so

11:00 we sold it. But it was an exercise.

I know your, this is going back to the question I originally asked you about how the war affected you. Your brother's death...

That affected me greatly, as it would any family, not only because it affected me personally but of the way it affected my

11:30 parents and there was nothing I could do about it. There is nothing that you can do to make it better under those circumstances. If somebody loses something or their house is burnt down or something like that, perhaps you can replace it and you can start again but when it's a son or a daughter, they've gone

12:00 and there's nothing that you can do to help things at all, except be there.

Do you still think about him?

Oh yes, every day. Oh my word, but I often wonder, I often wonder how life would have been. He would have been married

12:30 I suppose with children and I would have been an aunt, and all sorts of things but that was not to be so

there's nothing that can be done about that. You just had to make the most of it.

Do you dream about the war?

No, and I never have done.

Not even about your brother or friends?

No, no.

13:00 That is something, I can block anything out of my mind if I put my mind to it, I can block anything out. Like sometimes I would be doing something, say with maths or something like that, I would be doing books and things weren't going right, that happened sometimes and I'd go to bed and you'd wake up and you'd be thinking about it and I felt this is nonsense this is.

13:30 So I had a little chat to myself before I went to sleep that we're going to sleep and we're going to wake up at seven o'clock in the morning and that's that. I never have done but I know some people have horrific dreams and things like that but I guess I've been fortunate in that area.

What about your husband? Has he had dreams

14:00 **or problems?**

He certainly had problems. The last air raid on Darwin he was driving an officer and then a solicitor and then two witnesses to a court hearing and coming down the road, they weren't allowed to have lights on their cars at night. Nobody could show a light at night. That was a sitting target, wasn't it?

14:30 And the public works, or whatever they call them up there, had put great piles of white gravel on the road to be spread and they'd put them in the middle of the road and of course, he drove right into one. No-one was killed but everybody was injured. He was badly injured and he was taken to two or three hospitals and

15:00 eventually down to Melbourne and eventually home to the Lady Clark Convalescent Home where he spent twelve months out there but then he picked himself up and he went to the Education Department but he was seconded and he ran a school for ex-servicemen at the Repatriation Hospital,

15:30 for two or three years. Then they closed that down. The need wasn't there any more and he went back to the Education Department as a teacher and of course he did a lot more studies over the years but he has always suffered from different things and the last five years haven't been very happy for him at all. He's had a lot of sickness.

I'm sorry to hear that.

But I guess I'm lucky to still have him.

16:00 He was very outgoing and he could do anything, do absolutely anything but it's sad to see someone who's just sick. Oh he's had cancer and all sorts of things and that's been very debilitating but that's, and it was the last raid that the Japanese made over Darwin this night.

16:30 I think he went to Katherine or he went to Adelaide River, I think, or he was going to Adelaide River when this happened. That is actually where the war graves are, at Adelaide River and of course he was never back in the army as such. He never ever recovered enough to go anywhere else.

17:00 **Do you think Australia after the war was a broken society? I mean even though the war was won and the façade of all the gloss and everything else?**

I don't think it was broken. I would say fragmented.

In what way would you say fragmented?

Not broken, it was fragmented because there were so many people not with us any more and our lifestyles had changed. Everything had changed and

17:30 we had to get used to, during the war, to rationing and that type and the frustrations of people, the things that they could not do during that period and even just because someone says, "The war's over," doesn't say that the next day everything is right. I would say that that took a good

18:00 five years before they started collecting themselves and a good ten years before the effect, the local home effects all disappeared from the war, because there were so many things to be patched up.

But psychologically, especially the men, then again the women as well, your life had changed so much?

Yes, you were different people and this is why I say it took all those settling down years

18:30 and it took a lot of patience from some people and there were people who didn't understand. They didn't understand the frustrations of those men. Now I know men who, dear me... (TAPE STOPS) Yes, well I've known an awful lot of people, both men and women, but

19:00 mostly men though, who don't talk about the war at all and their wives don't know where they were, they know they were ex-service. They wouldn't even know their service numbers.

Why is that?

Because I do welfare work and the man suddenly dies and the wife doesn't know where her husband served or anything about it. They just shut the whole lot out,

19:30 and they just refuse, they won't talk about it. Some talk about it all the time and overdo the effort but there are others who never ever talk about it. And their wives don't know and then they die and they've got no contact with anybody because they don't know any service numbers and they'll say, I would say to them, "Do you know your husband's number? Do you know his medical number?" "No."

20:00 "Do you know his service number?" "No." "Do you know where he served?" "Oh, he was overseas." And that's it, full stop.

Why do think there was that lack of, even with intimate relationships?

Yes, they don't tell them.

Why is that?

I don't know but they have no idea of anything but yet others get bombarded the whole time.

Well the one's who, well there's obviously

20:30 **a lot of sensitive men out there who needed to talk about it because it was killing them, quite literally, did you know of any of your friends, any of your girlfriends who could communicate with their husbands about these severe psychological traumas?**

Oh well some did, yeah, on the other side of the scale but I've just dealt

21:00 with a lass recently, she knew nothing. She didn't even know where to start to find out any information and it's on her own, she was in no-man's land, she had no way of getting this information. I mean I was able to get it, to get a start. If you haven't got his service number, you're not going anywhere.

You also said about welfare, that you work in welfare, were there

21:30 **incidents where soldiers did commit suicide well after the war because of an inability to handle their stress?**

Well nobody says that, do they? But suddenly they're not there, so that's what I would suspect what happens. Mind you that doesn't happen an awful lot but it did happen to a very close friend of ours. He was a Japanese prisoner of war and he just could

22:00 not handle the situation at all and he had a job and they had a little girl and on the surface everything was great and suddenly one day he went off and committed suicide. He couldn't handle it and he would have been the last person in the world, as far as I was concerned.

22:30 If someone had said to me about Ted I would have said, "No way."

He hid it well?

But he did it. Oh yes, nobody knew. Even his wife didn't know, even though there were a few signs afterwards when she told me a few little things that had happened. Well I don't know that I would have thought of suicide.

It makes me think, it makes me wonder that was society at the time between,

23:00 **matrimonial ties between a man and a woman was it really a formal affair or was it really intimate at all?**

Oh yes, yes, they were married before the war this couple.

Was there real intimacy?

Yes, they were a good, great couple.

But he would never talk about the war with her?

Oh yes, he would talk about the war. Oh not, he didn't play on it all the time but occasionally you'd hear something about the prison or something like that but to me it was never a warning signal. He never seemed to me

23:30 to be depressed over the whole lot, but he did commit suicide and that really stuffed all of us because that was dreadful. That was a waste of life.

24:00 **We'll pause now.(TAPE STOPS)**

Tell him how long we'll be, will you?

So what do you miss most about the war?

I don't miss anything about it really except the camaraderie, I suppose, and the closeness that we had. War does funny things to different people and I found we had a closeness that still

24:30 exists today and when we go to reunions it makes no difference whether we've met each other before or whether we meet regularly at these functions. When we go to reunions we are there, we are all one, we are all back in the air force and we all have a wonderful time together. Now we talk about things, we laugh about things, nobody ever

25:00 or very seldom do you ever hear any sad stories but when we come home we switch off, that's gone. So that's why I think it's very important that we do keep meeting in this way.

How important do you think World War II was to the women's movement?

Well we were,

25:30 I suppose the women's movement. Now what do you mean by that exactly? We became very self-sufficient and we had entered a field that no-one else had entered before. I meant there had never been women within Australia's fighting forces except the nursing services

26:00 as I said before but that was the beginning of a new era and once we were accepted there I think women were accepted everywhere, whether it be in industry or just general business circles.

Do you think that World War II proved to women themselves that they were able to do a man's job?

Oh I'm sure it did, I'm sure it did.

26:30 because for want of another word, they had always been suppressed and being brought up to know that their role was in the home and perhaps you could become a nurse or a schoolteacher but there wasn't, or perhaps an office assistant really, perhaps work in a shop but there wasn't any further outlet

27:00 there. I mean it was very rare for a woman to be, well to be in charge of anything. That didn't happen so as soon as we were accepted as servicewomen and had proven ourselves, I think life changed completely.

For the better?

Oh yeah, I would say.

How

27:30 **proud were you to be part of that generation?**

I was very proud to be part of that generation. I think we sort of grew up. I think Australians grew up in that generation and I think a lot of it was because it wasn't only the men who were fighting for their country. Men and women shared that era

28:00 and I think that we had something to be very proud of and we've never looked back, have we?

Do you think that's the major thing that's shaped our country in the last hundred years?

Oh not the last hundred, no, in the last sixty years maybe, because it

28:30 wasn't until the '50s that it became apparent that women could do jobs of work that hitherto they hadn't been allowed to try. See women had never trained as mechanics and things like that. That was unheard of but suddenly they found themselves being able to do all sorts of things

29:00 and it made such a difference because people that had that ability to train for those things were able to do it. So yes, I think, I really think it improved the Australian way of life completely.

Do you think if it didn't happen that women would have as many options as they do today?

29:30 No, they wouldn't.

So you've been through World War II, what are your thoughts on war now?

Well my thoughts on war haven't changed at all. I think war is a complete and utter disaster to all concerned and there's got to be another way because I think we have to be vigilant

30:00 and if a country is, well it's never a country, it's only people isn't it and whoever is head of state who causes all these things and if these people are doing the wrong thing then they definitely have to be curtailed.

30:30 **So what do you think leaders should know about war?**

Well first of all I think that people should be, they should talk more and if there is something fundamentally wrong, this should be sorted out. I can't see anything that can't be done around a table myself and people

31:00 who become stubborn and stockpile weapons and do all these things and then go out and do the unthinkable, somehow they've got to be stopped but I can't see that a war is going to stop them because they come out the back door and they're going to come in the front door again somehow. This won't

31:30 be cleared up in my time and if one reads one's bible, whatever one's persuasion may be, the Holy Bible says there will be wars and rumours of war, so I don't think we are ever going to be free of hostilities. I can't see it with a reckoning of people as people are now.

32:00 **Do you think Australia will be invaded again?**

I would hope not. I would hope not because this is the last paradise on earth, isn't it? Australia, as a continent, I'm speaking of and I have my doubts as to what may happen in America but surely commonsense will have to prevail. I

32:30 can't see why Australia would be invaded. I have given this quite a bit of thought. Actually there's a lot of dirt in Australia and I think places that are invaded should always be

33:00 to the invader, they should be in forward going concern and not have to be built up from the ground upwards and I can't see much progress in anybody taking the deserts and northern Australia really. Although having secured that lot they could take

33:30 the rest without much trouble, I suppose. No, I just hope and pray that Australia is never invaded.

What are your thoughts on nuclear and chemical warfare in this day and age?

Well of course that is diabolical. You are not fighting a war with that type of ammunition because you are killing innocent people. That should never be the

34:00 purpose of war, to kill as many innocent people as possible. That should never ever be equated so using chemical warfare and atomic bombs and things like that, we've been through that disaster and I think any country who even has those thoughts should seriously think again to the outcome and what they are

34:30 doing.

Did Australia have a chemical warfare program in World War II, do you know?

I don't know, I don't know. And if I did know, that's not for publication. I don't think we were geared for that at that

35:00 point in time. See we weren't even geared for war per se, were we? Most of the war was fought outside of Australia, so we on the home front were not prepared for that at all. I don't think that, I don't think that alone we could handle

35:30 an invasion. We've got too much coastline. We would have to have help and please God that never happens.

Could you put into words somehow how much pain and suffering there is in war?

Well nobody wins. Perhaps some people, the few on top,

36:00 they might think they've won something but at what expense. You couldn't really, if you were a natural person, you couldn't live with yourself. If you gained anything from the sorrow, the frustration, the pain and the agony of other people, I don't think you could live with yourself because it's not only the person who is fighting the war,

36:30 it's the families of the people who are fighting the war that suffer as well. And I think to put it in one word, it's just futile.

Personally you lost your brother but did you also lose your parents in a way through his death?

I did, I did, they were different altogether.

37:00 My mother did recover to a degree but I would say it took a good twenty years for her to come to grips with that, a good twenty years. And looking at my family I realise that others must have been in the same position. All families suffered in war.

So there's more casualties?

37:30 There's more casualties on the home front than there are at the front lines.

Are you worried in today's world?

Yes, I do worry in today's world because I think we've, we as Australians have lost something somewhere and I believe it's over indulgence.

38:00 I believe too many people want too much right then and now and they're not prepared to plan their lives and enjoy life and to enjoy what you get out of life. Now if you have everything at once, it's going to be old hat tomorrow, so if you plan your life and you go along and you keep enjoying life with the things you can either do,

38:30 what you achieve or what you can acquire or buy or whatever, or perhaps the trips that you can take and things like that, if you can do that over a period, you're going to have a long and happy life. If you get it all at once, then there's nothing to look forward too and I think that's where today's young people are sadly, they think they've got

39:00 it all, but sadly they're missing out.

Can you quickly tell us what the secret is to a good, mature life? Keeping you mind active and such?

Oh yes, you've got to do things, go there, meet people, you've just got to, this business because you've got to retire at sixty five or something and tomorrow you don't do anything is ridiculous. You haven't changed

39:30 one thing, one iota but yet people thinks that their life is over but that's when life begins because you are free to do that things that you want to do. You can go on an air walk, you can go up in a small plane, if you want to you can go sky diving. You can do any of those things that you've always wanted to do. And you can join clubs, you

40:00 can interact with other people, people that you would never have met before in life and it's just wonderful.

Marjorie, we've got about a minute and a half to go, is there anything you'd like to say to the Australian public or the people that hear this tape, anything you've left out, the last minute and a half is yours, so whatever you want to say?

Right, I think I've just about covered everything from my point of view and my angle but I just would like to say

40:30 that I hope we've put all types of war behind us and Australia can look forward to a happy and peaceful future.

Marjorie, thank you very much for the day. It was great.

INTERVIEW ENDS