Australians at War Film Archive

Judith Carson - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 6th May 2004

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1870

Tape 1

00:32 **Judith, if we could just start with what we talked about before, just a few big points in your life?**

I was born in Brisbane in 1922. I lived with my parents in Toowong. I went to school first of all when I was four, to a little kindergarten school.

01:00 Then when I was nine I went to St Aidan's which was a small church school in a suburb called Corinda. I stayed there until the end of 1939, when I left school and went to university and graduated at the end of 1942,

01:30 and asked my mathematics professor what I could do for the war effort, and he told me about Central Bureau, and I interviewed the colonel and went to rookie's camp to learn about the army,

02:00 and then ended up at Central Bureau and stayed there until the end of the war. When I took a job with Professor Room, with whom I'd been working at Central Bureau as a tutor at Sydney University in mathematics, and

02:30 at the end of 1947 I was sent to work in New England University College in Armidale, where I met my husband, and after twelve months we were married. We lived in Armidale for a little while, and then

03:00 he got a job in Sydney, but we didn't like that very much. Mainly because we didn't have any money and we had to live in, we had no car, we didn't have money. We were living in Fairfield, Smithfield actually, it was very lonely and difficult, and he got offered a better job in Adelaide

03:30 and so we went there to live in Adelaide, where I subsequently had three children. Unfortunately, he died playing squash when he was fifty-five. I married again to somebody that I'd known while I was in, somebody from Central Bureau.

04:00 And he died in 1994 and I've been living here. I've left out a lot of bits and pieces.

That's all right, we can go back.

Right. I went off with Tony after Eric died and we lived in Perth. I went to Perth in 1978

04:30 and lived there until 1986, when I came to Sydney with Tony, and we've been living in Manly until he died in 1994. Since then I've been living in the flat by myself. That's all very boring.

No, it's not boring at all.

05:00 **That's a great summary, and now we're going to go back, right to the beginning of your life. Can you tell us about your earliest memories? Tell us about your family.**

My three brothers. One of my earliest memories is of my twin brothers, who were younger than I was. I can remember them in the bath, and I can remember my mother in hospital just before they were born. I was three years old when they were born.

05:30 We lived in a house on a big piece of land, which was a fairly usual thing in those days because there was lots of land, it was not very expensive. It was a big old house, and our family life was actually

06:00 organised round our holidays to the seaside, to Stradbroke Island, which is just near Southport on the Gold Coast. We had a fairly rough building, which we called the camp with a 'k'. That was a family joke, to spell 'camp' with a 'k' and 'farm' with a 'ph'.

06:30 In those days there were lots of fish and there were very few people and a bit of rainforest with lovely places to walk. Our whole life, really, our life centred on that place. Fairly large accommodation, but very rough. There was room for all our friends,

07:00 and that really was what my life was built around when I was a child.

How did you come to have that place on Stradbroke Island?

My grandfather came out from England. My name was Roe when I was young. His name was R.H. Roe, and he was the first, not the first,

07:30 the second, I think, headmaster of the Brisbane Grammar School. In those days they had four school terms, and the holidays between terms were too short for the boys from the school to go home. Very largely, the boarders were country boys from all over Queensland,

08:00 and it wasn't worthwhile going home for a fortnight on holiday because the trains were so slow. So he started taking these boys camping on Stradbroke Island and it was very much the first sort of ideas about Outward Bound, because the boys had to

08:30 chop down trees to make supports for their beds, and then they would sling hessian bags across these supports that they'd cut from the rainforest. It was all very rough. There were a lot of mosquitoes. They used to swim and catch fish.

09:00 Mostly they, the fish that they caught were a very important part of the diet, because my grandfather was a schoolmaster, he wasn't terribly well off, and he'd take these groups of boys. Then the whole idea was handed on to the family. Then my father used to do the same sort of thing with me and my brothers and all our friends, only it was a bit more comfortable.

09:30 As time passed it was easier to be a bit more comfortable. We had things, we finally ended up with a kerosene fridge, which was a very luxurious thing in those days.

What was it like being the only daughter?

It was rather good, actually, because I was always surrounded by little boys, and I came to enjoy that.

10:00 My twin brothers, who are younger, were my slaves. The three of us used to do things together. They were little daredevils, and so because they were younger I couldn't possibly let them do something that I couldn't do, so we used to climb trees. Round our place in Toowong was a very high fence with a fairly narrow board across the top of the fence.

10:30 The twins used to run along the top of the fence, so I had to too. They stayed my followers until 1938, I think it was, when they would have only been thirteen, I think,

11:00 but they started to take an interest in little girls. They went off and didn't even ask me to come too, so I was very cross.

What was the dynamic like between yourself and your two brothers who were twins? I imagine they must have been really close to each other.

They were close to me too. I was the leader of the gang. In a sense I was the leader,

11:30 but then they had their own little dynamic of being very brave and foolhardy and doing outrageous things that I had to follow. My eldest brother, we didn't really mean to cut him out of what we were doing, but he was older, three years older than me.

12:00 So the physical things that he could do were things I was unable to do, whereas I could match the twins physically, but not my elder brother, so he tended to be left out of the mad adventures that we had. So where are we going to now?

You said that it was easy to own property in Brisbane, land was cheap.

12:30 **Can you tell us about the house you grew up in?**

It was a big wooden house on stilts, because the land wasn't even. It had been built on. My father lived there before he was married. He lived there with his sister and his mother and father for a while, so he probably lived there something like

13:00 1915 or '16 or maybe earlier. The house had two parts. One part had been built on from the other, a marvellous old house. Two very big entertaining rooms, a dining room and a sitting room and

13:30 fairly big bedrooms for everybody and lots of room for playing when it was hot, and there was an attic which was reached by a staircase and was very full of spiders and was dusty and rather spooky. We used to play up there sometimes.

Tell us about your parents.

14:00 Well, my father was a doctor. He also was the first Rhodes Scholar in Queensland. He went to England. Because when he became a Rhodes Scholar, and this was, I think it might have been the early twentieth century, something like 1904, he went straight from school because there was no university at that time,

14:30 so he was very young. He was younger than the Rhodes Scholars were later. He was very homesick, and he didn't like the English at all because they wouldn't talk to him. Anyway, he studied physiology, which was a new subject for doctors, and

15:00 of course when he got back to Brisbane people would not appreciate what he knew. After he graduated from Oxford he worked in Guy's Hospital, London, and he has said to me and to others that this was the happiest time of his life. He loved the people in London's East End.

15:30 Said they were very friendly, and very poor of course. The people from Guy's Hospital, even though it was supposed to be a very dangerous area, were always absolutely safe, nobody would harm them in any way. Then after he graduated from there he came back to Australia.

16:00 He must have been there for a little while, because that's when he married my mother. Then he went off to the war and he was away until the end of the war. Then he came home and started to practise in Brisbane.

What did he tell you about his war time?

Nothing very much. In fact

16:30 this has been the thing with all soldiers even in the second war. Nobody talked about anything until, the first time I knew about a lot of things was fifty years after the end of the war, 1995. There were so many documentaries and stories by people.

What was it that he did during World War I?

17:00 He worked in a hospital, in England, I think. I don't think he was ever actually sent to France.

Having a father as a doctor, did that mean that he treated you for all your ailments as a child?

If they were minor ailments, yes, but if anything was serious he'd have a friend who would. The idea was in those days, this was before there were any Medicare or,

17:30 people didn't even insure themselves for medical expenses, doctors used to treat each other's families for nothing. That was accepted, but for other people, of course, they had to pay. Except that my father was a very generous man

18:00 and he never made patients pay. Also he was a surgeon. He was a urologist. He was actually the first urologist in Queensland, and a surgeon would have a team of people, have an assistant and an anaesthetist. Dad used to, the old fashioned way was for the surgeon to pay all the assistants,

18:30 and he'd send one bill to the patient. If the patients didn't pay you it was just too bad. Of course patients didn't pay you, so he had a lot of friends all over Queensland anyway.

What about your mum?

Well, she left school when she was fourteen, which was a shame,

19:00 because she was a very able woman. She was a marvellous organiser, and also it was thought in those days that if you could afford not to, then girls should not work. It was the time of the Depression anyway, where there was so much unemployment.

19:30 So my mother left school at fourteen and did nothing, which was a shame.

How did the Depression affect your family?

Not directly very much at all, except that there were gangs of boys in the street who just hung around the billiard saloon and didn't have much to do.

20:00 They were considered to be sort of mildly nasty, but they weren't actually. They didn't ever do anything except that, just at the back of Toowong there's a small mountain called Mount Cootha, and these boys used to ride their go-carts from the top of Mount Cootha

20:30 to the bottom, which was a very windy road and must have been extraordinarily dangerous. And in fact one of them did get killed finally. So they had nothing to do, but that was the worst thing they did that I know of, and that's not very bad.

What games did you play when you were a child? What do you remember?

21:00 We played cubby houses mostly, made little…I had a friend who was slightly younger than I. Her name was Anne Priestley. She lived quite close and we used to make little houses. She used to come and play almost every weekend. When we were very little we used to play cubby houses.

21:30 Then later Mum and Dad built a tennis court, and I used to play a lot of tennis. We used to climb trees. I have marvellous memories of balancing. We had a tree which we called a golden fir. The leaves were slightly golden, and

22:00 it was a bit like a pine tree, but the leaves were thick and you could lie back on them and pretend it was a bed and get out. If you climbed out to the leaves, that was fairly far out on the branches and there was a bend. It was slightly precarious, I don't know what my mother thought about all this, but we used to spend most of our time up the tree.

22:30 As I say, there was a lot of room. We had pet animals that we used to have. Guinea pigs. The twins once bought two guinea pigs in a fête, a school fête.

23:00 They had to travel home by tram. Our house was on the tram line in those days, and they asked the conductor if they could bring the guinea pigs and the conductor said no, so they just waited for the next tram and didn't ask. So they brought the guinea pigs home.

23:30 They used to sit and play with them and feed them carrots. Another thing we used to do was sing. We all loved to sing and we sang, we memorized songs off those 78 rpm records and we had a great repertoire of everything that you can imagine.

24:00 What else did we do? We used to play skipping games. There was a game called kit-kat.

Can you describe it for us?

Well, you had to carve the cat from a piece of wood which had a rectangular cross section,

24:30 but you shaved off the corners a bit so that it wasn't a circular cross section, but it didn't have any sharp edges like an ordinary piece of wood has.

25:00 You'd have something that was approximating to a pipe, but the two ends were pointed like little cones, and then you took a stick and you banged the pointed end and the cat would fly up in the air

25:30 and somehow or other you counted how far you'd managed to make it fly. You scored in that way. It was a very dangerous game, actually, and I think it was banned in schools after a while. And we played marbles, of course. We had no television, we had no radio.

26:00 We amused ourselves. We had lots of friends, and I think that's pretty sad that kids sit in front of televisions these days. It's a different world.

What about your early school days? What can you tell us about those?

I went to this rather marvellous little school that had about a hundred children, and

26:30 it went from kindergarten to sixth form, which is the same as year twelve. The school grounds were made from two adjoining private homes. They'd knocked down the fence between them

27:00 and built a couple of tennis courts, but there were still lots of trees and two main buildings, one for the juniors and one for the seniors. It was lovely, actually, we had lots of room to play and trees to sit on for our lunches and things.

How many teachers were in the school?

27:30 Well, I suppose they had quite a few, because there were a lot of different classes, and they had to have one per class but most of the classes had no more than a dozen students. I suppose there'd have been three or four junior staff and five or six senior ones, I don't know.

28:00 We had to go by train. I had to go by train. Dad used to drive us down to the train station at Geelong and we went in the steam train. The steam trains were very obliging. If they saw the girls running for the train, even after they'd started to pull out of the station the trains would stop and wait for you.

Was it just girls at this school?

28:30 Yes, just girls. Oh, they had a few boys in the kindergarten, but mostly it was girls. They had a basketball court too. Only it was netball, of course, a netball court. We played netball.

29:00 It was a funny little school. They used to employ old girls as teachers, and even when schoolteachers had an award they used to make the teachers give back some to the church. That was not very good.

Did you attend church a lot with this school?

29:30 No, we used to have a few prayers every morning before we started school, but we only went actually to church for special occasions, two or three times a year maybe.

What did you wear to school?

We had two uniforms. We wore the sports uniform, which was

30:00 a brown tunic over a white blouse and brown stockings. Our skirts had to be very short. Four inches above the knee for our sports shirt and we had long brown stockings and brown shoes.

30:30 And bloomers. You had to have brown bloomers which would meet your stockings. You couldn't have a gap. Later the shops produced for us very long stockings, so that was better but we had bloomers, and because we had long stockings and our skirts had to be very short

31:00 the bloomers came down below the skirt, so I think we looked a bit funny. Then we had another uniform, which is very like a ladies' uniform now. We had a skirt and a blouse and a broad white collar, navy blue uniform it was with a broad white collar, which

31:30 makes you look like a penguin, rather. The children today have a school mascot, which is a penguin. Quite a nice looking uniform. We wore hats and gloves, even though many girls had gloves with holes in them we still had to wear them.

32:00 They were probably very sensible, actually. In fact, until I was about thirty or forty, if I went to town I would wear a hat and gloves, which was probably pretty sensible in Queensland anyway. Especially for someone with skin as fair as mine was.

32:30 Anyway, they were very good to me in that school, and when I wanted to learn German, I had a very beautiful and talented teacher whom I've loved all my life. I met her when we first moved into the senior school, and I was in the first class that she taught.

33:00 We were very nasty to her, we played up. However, we only did it once and after that we adored her so much that we didn't do that again.

Do you remember her name?

Her name was Nina Maximov, she became Nina Christianson when she married. She was a Russian woman. She had come to

33:30 Brisbane with her parents as a refugee from the Russian revolution. Her father had been an officer in the Tsar's army. He was a White Russian, an officer in the Tsar's army. They came to Brisbane through China. She arrived in Brisbane when she was about twelve, not knowing a word of English.

34:00 She went to state school with a little note saying, "I am Nina Maximov, I am in the tenth grade," or whatever it was, sixth grade. There was nothing much in the way of unemployment relief for her parents. She had to support them, and she did things like

34:30 scrubbing floors and studied at the university at night. Did very well in English and French. So she came to our school to teach English and French. When I said I wanted to learn German she said, "All right, I'll teach you." She was friends with a man who was teaching German at the university. I didn't know that

35:00 she was just one lesson ahead of me all the way through the book. She got him to correct my exercises and to help her.

Why did you choose German?

Well, of course I was fairly good at languages, I also studied French and Latin and English and mathematics. I wanted to, they had a strange

35:30 system of awarding scholarships to the university. It was heavily weighted towards science and languages. They just took the raw score that you got in the exam. They multiplied it by, I think, six for mathematics or physics or chemistry

36:00 and five for languages and lesser numbers for things like history and geography. You had to have a total, accordingly to the subjects that you chose, you had to have a total of thirty-two points or more. Then they'd balance the marks you got by

36:30 multiplying by these fives and sixes. The idea was that I should have a go at getting a scholarship, and I needed to have something that had a lot of points. Anyway, I did a lot of languages anyway, so German seemed the thing to do. I'm very grateful to it actually, because

37:00 throughout my life I've been interesting in singing, and of course the Germans wrote the most wonderful songs. I know dozens, tens, hundreds of German songs. It's been a great pleasure. So she said, "All right, I'll teach you German."

37:30 **You mentioned that you did a lot of other languages at school. Can you tell us about your education?**

Well, it was strictly academic learning. It wasn't meant to give me a job or anything like that.

38:00 The Latin that I know has been one of the greatest delights of my whole life, really, because it illuminates meaning in English. When you understand what's the Latin derivation of an English word you get a

38:30 more intense idea of what the meaning is. More so if you're interested in old church music which I am. If you know what the Latin means it's a help too, in all those old Latin masses and things. The things

that I really loved and the things that I've got most pleasure in my life,

39:00 many of these pleasures derive from the knowledge of Latin.

Who taught you Latin?

There was a woman called Winifred Hoff, I can't remember, I think Miss Hoff taught us Latin. She became the first

39:30 statistical actuary, the first woman statistical actuary in Queensland. She was a very able woman. She taught mathematics and Latin as well. She was a rather strange woman, but she was a bloody good teacher. We all enjoyed her classes.

40:00 It was a small school, and I knew the name of every child in that school. And I may say that in my class there were about ten or twelve girls. Almost all of them went on to do some sort of tertiary training, which was unusual for girls in those days, and they're all still alive except one who died a long time ago.

40:30 They're marvellous, straggling, enthusiastic women who talk about what they're doing non-stop all the time. They're wonderful people.

Tape 2

00:31 **As you came towards the end of your secondary education, Judith, what did you know about what was going on in Europe and starting to brew there?**

I knew very little. I was a very ignorant and innocent sort of child. The Courier Mail was a notoriously

01:00 conservative and un-informative newspaper and I lived a very sheltered life and rather spoilt. My main object in life was to be good, I think, and do what my parents said, what was expected of me, enjoy myself.

01:30 **So political events in Europe didn't play a big part in your life, then?**

No, not until much later when I read about them. Actually, I met my first husband straight after the war when politics were very divisive and seemed very important. It all became very interesting

02:00 and attractive to me then, but not as a child.

How common was it for females to go to university at your time?

Not very common. I think there was something like two hundred women day students, when I was there, eight hundred male day students.

02:30 Of course that would have been limited, this was during the war, so it would have been limited by the war perhaps and about eighteen hundred, there were evening students as well. There were more evening students and there were a huge number of correspondence students from all over Australia because the Queensland University was a special university for correspondence students.

03:00 **And as you came to the end of your secondary school what were the options for a female? You could go to university, what other sorts of things were open to you?**

Well, I was not meant to go to university, really, but I ended up getting a scholarship, so that's why I went. I was expected to stay home and just have a good time, actually.

03:30 That would have been the alternative.

With the idea that you would find a suitable husband very soon?

That's right, yes.

There would have been no question in your family of you going to work, in a job?

The idea was that if you could afford not to work, it was during the Depression, that you should not do so. My mother really

04:00 should have worked, because she was very able but she never did, because first her father supported her and then her husband.

You say that you weren't supposed to go to university, were you not expecting to get the marks?

Well, I wasn't, I mean, it was all a game, there was no great emphasis on getting marks.

04:30 **You sound like you were quite a talented student, though.**

Well, I always found mathematics easy. The thing was that the whole system was weighted very heavily towards science and mathematics. I think that was probably mainly one of the reasons why so many boys went to university and not girls. Of course

05:00 there weren't, anyway, before the war, girls were just supposed to have a good time and look after babies and amuse themselves and other people.

At high school in those days what was the level of mathematics that was taught? I know it's hard for you to compare to today.

05:30 There wasn't very much mathematics even known in those days. I did an honours degree at university and then later when I was about, it was 1976, so I was fifty-four,

06:00 I started studying mathematics again. Most of the maths I know now, I learnt by doing one subject a year after I was fifty-four. There wasn't a huge amount of maths taught and it was taught in a different way. We were expected to memorise the theory and then to do problems

06:30 involving the theory. That's gradually been watered down during the time I was teaching, and I think the whole emphasis of mathematics keeps changing. Also St. Aidan's wasn't a marvellous academic school either.

07:00 Except we had two really good teachers. One of them was Nina Maximov, who was my great friend and who stayed friends with me all my life. I kept in touch with her. She died recently. I happened to ring her, I kept in touch and rang her every now and then and when I rang her I said, "How are you?" She said, "I'm dying," so I went down to see her.

07:30 She stayed herself right till the end. In fact she gave a lecture of some sort. She's dying of cancer, she gave a lecture two or three weeks before she died. She was a marvellous woman.

How did you feel when you won your scholarship to university?

Oh well, it was quite a good thing.

08:00 I was pleased, of course.

What did your mum think?

Goodness knows. Nobody ever made much fuss about these things. We just took it and went on and did it.

What subject choices were open to you then at university?

Well, I actually would like to have studied French and German,

08:30 but they weren't offering it that year, so that's why I did mathematics and I wasn't madly keen actually, then, but I have since become quite enthusiastic about it.

Between the different faculties and subjects, how did those genders balance out?

At university?

Yes.

Well, I did

09:00 most of my maths with engineering students and there were only two girls actually doing maths. One big class, there might have been thirty or forty men, I suppose. I did maths one, applied and pure and then second year maths. I was one of the very few women in the class.

09:30 **What sort of subjects were most of the female students doing?**

Most of them were doing English. I studied German for a couple of years at university, although I didn't take it any further. My friends studied English. Some of them did Latin and French.

10:00 Mostly languages, I think, and history and geography. But they did arts degrees.

How did the male members of the mathematics fraternity react to you?

They didn't care. They took the girls for granted. Of course we had fun with the male students. So I've had a lot of

10:30 friends who were engineers. And what has surprised me was that these boys that I knew who were shy and diffident and not marvellously attractive perhaps, well, they weren't jazzy heart throbs, they went on to become leaders of the community

11:00 and lived most fulfilling and satisfying lives, made great contributions to society.

You mustn't have wanted very much for male company while you were there?

No. For girls at the university there was no lack of male companions.

11:30 The ratios were heavily weighted in our favour.

Was there kind of a sorority amongst the female students, watching out for each other and companionship?

Yes. We made very good friends. The friends that I made at university are still my friends, and

12:00 very close friends. The sort of people that you rely on. When I first came to live in Sydney I had no children or grandchildren with me in Sydney, so I shared those belonging to my two friends whom I'd known from my university days.

12:30 We always shared Christmas. It was great, because there was no pressure then for your children to come along. You could always enjoy each other's. It's been very good.

What was a fairly typical daily routine at university, as far as hours and where you'd have lunch and these things?

Well, I think I used to have maths lectures early.

13:00 There were only, at most three lectures a week. There were no prac classes, no tutorials, and the lectures consisted of writing down theory, theorems and things that you were supposed to understand and be able to reproduce. You might be given a couple of problems to do,

13:30 but they weren't corrected and they were optional, I think. The examinations consisted mainly of being able to understand the theory. So we'd have perhaps three lectures a week for maths. And the German lectures too, I'd have three lectures a week. Apart from that I used to go and sit in the library

14:00 and go through my notes and keep up with what I was supposed to understand, and I would have morning tea at the union. Actually I used to eat a cream bun for morning tea, and straight after that I would have a German lecture.

14:30 There were only, at most, three of us doing German, so it was all very quiet and my stomach would rumble with the cream bun, which was rather embarrassing. Embarrassing enough for me still to remember now. And that was it. The rest of my day I spent like a good girl in the library.

15:00 Oh yes, then the exam, you see. We didn't have an exam until the end of third term. In fact the boys, the really bright boys, used to run all the clubs and play all the sport and go on, didn't do any work until third term, and then they'd come top.

15:30 **What was the union like as far as facilities and social activity?**

There was nothing much. There was just a wooden building, I think, and you could get a cup of coffee and a bun or something.

So in your subjects that you did the only real assessment was an exam in third term.

That's right.

16:00 **And what about for German, was there a lot of talking or was it just translating literature?**

No, and this is the case with all the languages that I studied. I could read them all right and write them, but I never learned to speak another language. Which is actually a very important mistake. There just weren't people in Australia who could speak, in those days, foreign languages, so you just learned to read it, that's all.

16:30 And this is really bad, because it's only when you have to summon the words quickly and make sense that you became facile in the language and it becomes a part of you.

What sort of, given that the war had started in Europe, what sort of political viewpoints and activism were on the university campus?

17:00 Well, actually I don't think there was much political activity at all. I don't recollect. They did have a Labor club but I came from such a conservative background that I didn't have anything to do with that. I don't know how big the Labor club was. I do recall the name of one man, who actually was a member of the Communist party later,

17:30 he was a friend of my brother's. I remember him, he was a very bright student and I remember him because he had never read Winnie the Pooh, and we gave it to him to read when he was eighteen or nineteen. He thought it was the funniest thing he'd ever read. I can remember him rolling about with laughter.

18:00 **By being students at the university, were males then exempt from going into the military?**

Oh no, you could only allowed to be a student if you were studying something that was likely to be of use, like engineering or medicine. There were no male arts students. Well, no, I think that only came

later.

18:30 I think there was no regulations in 1940, but later when there was conscription you weren't allowed to.

Ok, so there wasn't a case of men going to university to shirk military life?

I don't know of any. The people that I knew, the boys that I knew at university, even within the first year,

19:00 dropped out and joined the air force. Many of them were killed, actually, because our air force were so awful. They flew Wirraways and they died.

Were you aware of young men disappearing?

Oh yes, I was.

What about your older brother?

He was a doctor too, so

19:30 he joined the air force as a doctor when he graduated and went up to New Guinea. I think his time in the air force was very important to him. He has written about it. He actually wrote, he entered an essay competition for the air force.

20:00 He had to describe a character that he admired and he wrote about the squadron leader of the squadron that he was attached to.

What about, you've talked a lot about your hard work in the library and your studies, what about some of the big social events that would happen at university?

In those days they had

20:30 a marvellous institution really. They called it commem pracs [Commemoration Day practices]. They were meant to be, the university had a collection of songs, which maybe they still sing, but they did sing them for a long time. I think they came from America originally. But all the different faculties had a song and

21:00 there were some songs about some of the lecturers, and Commemoration Day when the degrees were awarded was some time in May, and there was a big commemoration ball and the students were supposed to go along to Commemoration Day and then they would sing the songs.

21:30 Then of course there was a party at night. The idea of the Commem Pracs was that we all went along to learn the songs, and then after the song practice there'd be a little dance. So that the newcomers, the new girls, would get to know the old boys and find partners to go to the ball.

22:00 We had these marvellous Commem Pracs, which were great fun and very informal. Of course, in those days most, not the Commem Pracs actually, at most parties, most dancing parties, the proper thing to do was, if anybody came up to speak to you and you were standing in a group, that you would introduce

22:30 this one to all the members of your group. So people did learn to meet new partners so that they could all go along and enjoy themselves at the commemoration ball, which used to go all night sometimes.

Can you remember any of the songs that you used to sing?

Oh yes, but I don't know that I'll sing them. I can remember a lot of them actually.

23:00 At least not all the way through, but little bits.

Were they cheeky songs or serious songs?

No, no. Our idea of cheeky songs was very mild, I may say. I will try to sing them if you promise to let me vet them.

Okay,

23:30 **it would be great to have some of them on the records.**

It would actually. The 'Engineer's Song' was a favourite. I can remember the words, and it had a refrain that went, "I'm a helluva, helluva, helluva, helluva, helluva engineer. A helluva, helluva, helluva, helluva, helluva engineer. Like every honest greaser I likes me lager beer.

24:00 I'm a rambling wreck of polity, I'm a helluva engineer. Oh one day a lighthouse keeper was looking out to sea. I gave a yell and he said, "Oh hell, a ship in distress, I see." But the captain of that mighty ship, he bade him never fear. For the man he had in the engine room was a varsity engineer."

24:30 I can't remember the arts one, I should remember. They had songs about, there was a professor of Latin and Greek I think, called Professor Mickey. It said

25:00 'Professor Mickey's joke', something about Professor Mickey's jokes being dry and obscure and the

voice he uses gruff,

25:30 I can't remember now. Anyhow, it said, "Glory, glory, Micksey daisy. Dry, modest and so lazy and he drives the freshers crazy with his shy romantic grunts." I don't know.

So some of the songs were taking the micky out of some of the professors?

That's right, Professor Mickey.

26:00 So some of the songs were about our lecturers and some of the songs were actually faculty songs and people used to sing them at the commemoration ceremony, I gather. Unfortunately we had a commemoration ceremony the first year I was at university, but after that not because of the sort of austerity,

26:30 the nature of the war, it was thought to antagonise people. Because the students also used to get up to all sorts of jokes and go trooping through the town and hold up all the traffic. Then it was decided that wasn't a very good idea once the war was on.

So that cut back on your fun?

27:00 Yeah, well, silly fun anyway.

At the dances, what sort of etiquette was involved with partners and dancing?

Well, everybody had a partner. Also, for the commemoration ball, and all the faculties had balls, you would have a card. The boys and girls would each have a little card,

27:30 and you would put your partner's name on the first and last and supper dance, and if it was a rather special partner you would perhaps give him a couple of extra dances. And then, of course, as I said before, you would stand around, and if anyone,

28:00 if you were standing with a group of girls and your partner came up, he would be expected to ask all those girls for a dance. In fact, you know, it really made a nice evening of it, because you didn't just dance with one person and you got to know other ones. It rarely happened that anyone stood out and didn't dance.

28:30 **What about the obligations there of asking, were you allowed to refuse a dance?**

No, no. That was a very rude thing to do. There were people who, it was all ballroom dancing, so there was some skill involved.

29:00 If somebody came up to you who you knew would tread on your toes you just had to dance with them anyway and be as nice as you could.

And what would be considered rude or boorish behaviour from a man in asking a girl to dance, maybe too often?

Well. It wouldn't be too often, because he'd only do that if he knew she wanted to come, but if you didn't ask somebody and you were introduced that was very rude.

29:30 You weren't supposed to do that. So a man, a boy, would only come up, he'd know that he was expected to dance with everybody so he wouldn't come up if he could see that he didn't want to take on that lot.

I was going to say, a group of ten girls standing with each other.

Well, there wouldn't be ten, there'd only be two or three. He might know them well anyway. Of course he could always say,

30:00 at some stage, of course, his card would be full, wouldn't it? Then it was safe.

And I imagine that breaking an appointment on the card would be quite a faux pas?

Yes, that was a faux pas, you wouldn't do that either.

It sounds like a minefield.

No, it was fun actually.

Alcohol involved?

No, not at all. I don't think we drank at all

30:30 at parties. I don't think you'd have alcohol supplied. I can't remember, really. Oh yes, we must have because every now and then there were just two or three people who were notorious for drinking too much, so they must have got alcohol from somewhere. And there were some people, too, with whom it was dangerous to drive home.

31:00 I don't remember dancing with people who were drunk, except one guy. I think they had to go somewhere away from the dancing place to get alcohol.

So what refreshments were there at they dances?

I guess there was supper.

31:30 If you went to a private party supper was always quite an event. I used to go to lots of dancing parties from the age of twelve or thirteen. We used to go to dancing parties in private homes. Mothers used to give a party and there were a group of us who went to the same parties and there was always a wonderful supper.

32:00 **And at the university was smoking common?**

I didn't smoke until the war. I don't think young girls used to smoke, I'm not sure. I know that in the films that we saw the

32:30 actors all smoked in a very elegant and attractive way, and certainly there was not much worry about smoking in those days. My grandmother used to smoke very elegantly with a long cigarette holder, and the tobacconist down the street used to keep her special packet of cigarettes,

33:00 which she used to get every week. Even during the war, when cigarettes were hard to come by.

As your studies went on, what year did you graduate, sorry?

1942, the end of 1942. Actually, I graduated in March 1943. That's when I received my degree.

As your studies went on and

33:30 **the Japanese entered the war how did that change the atmosphere in Brisbane and at the university?**

Well, not really very much. There were more boys being killed that I knew. They were mostly in the air force. They flew the Wirraways, and the Wirraways were just no match for the Zero, the Japanese plane.

34:00 So I knew quite a lot of boys who were killed.

How did that affect you?

Well, I was sad about it, but see, in those days they were friends, but they weren't very close friends. We didn't have

34:30 intense relationships with boys, really, until we got married. I never had a moment's fear of what might happen. The British, of course, had always won, and the good guys were gonna win again. I think there was

35:00 quite a sort of censorship on information, I think, and we were not supposed to know too much about it. Even when the Japanese joined the war it never occurred to me that they might actually land and do nasty things to us.

Why do you think that never occurred to you?

Because I was very young anyway, but also because we didn't have any information.

35:30 Nobody knew how badly Darwin was bombed and it was mainly because I had every faith that we were the good guys and we would win. It's only quite recently actually that I found out how close we came to not winning and how

36:00 badly we were served by our political and military leaders and also what sacrifices people made for us and I have quite strong views about what's not being done to tell Australians about what happened after the fall of Singapore and what sacrifices were made for us in the islands.

36:30 There seems to be a lot of stories about the defence of Britain but there aren't many stories told about the defence of Australia. These people were directly responsible for the lives that we've been able to live.

You said you referred to us at the good guys.

37:00 **Do you think you had at that stage a faith in Britain and Empire?**

Oh yes. Britain and Empire and us. I mean, we'd always won, hadn't we? I just thought it would go on. You see, there was very heavy censorship of news. We just didn't know.

Were you aware that the news was censored at the time?

37:30 No. We just thought that that's what must have happened. We didn't know that a lot of things were happening.

Had you any inclination to volunteer in any way while you were a student?

No. I couldn't have done much anyway. It was only when I graduated that

38:00 I thought I might as well do something for the war effort.

Those feelings obviously changed as you got to the end of your degree.

Well, when I realised I could do something, yes.

How did you go about finding out what you could do?

I went down to the university and asked my professor, and

38:30 he told me about Professor Room who had been a maths professor in Sydney and was then working for Central Bureau and he said that I should get in touch with him. I think we got in touch with him, and he referred me to Colonel Sandford who was in charge of the army unit at Central Bureau,

39:00 and I interviewed Colonel Sandford and he said to join the AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], so I had to go to private's camp, which was really quite an amusing – well, amusing now – and strange experience for me.

39:30 **So you met Professor Room first off before you met Sandford?**

Yeah, I think that's what happened.

What did Professor Room say to you?

He said, "Come along and you can do something." He didn't really have a say in what would happen to me.

What did you think mathematics could be used for then?

I knew it was, cryptography was the issue.

40:00 **Had you any experience with that sort of thing?**

No. The idea was that mathematicians and linguists were the ones you should employ.

So you had an interview with Colonel Sandford and he said you had to join up?

Yes. I joined up.

What did you know of the AWAS before that?

Nothing. When we went to this first camp we were all billeted in tents.

40:30 The tents had a wooden floor and we had to start off by taking a hessian sack and stuffing it with straw for our palliasses. Actually, before or after that we lined up for our injections and we got injections for cholera and typhoid and various other things, I suppose.

41:00 Tetanus, I think gives you a very sore arm. So everybody in the first night, everybody stayed awake all night, I think. I certainly did. Partly from the discomfort of sleeping on the palliasse. It's very difficult to get your palliasse just right and have it either not too full of straw or too thin.

41:30 And I remember that first night there were people cursing all night, complaining about the pains in their arms.

Tape 3

00:31 **I'm just going to go back a little bit, Judith, and ask you a couple of questions that occurred to me before. Firstly, you seem so interested in languages, so why did you choose a degree in mathematics?**

Well, as I said, I wanted to study French and German, but they didn't have a course in French and German so I ended up with mathematics. And I'm glad, because it's meant that all my life I've been able to

01:00 get a part-time job very easily. That's been optimal. Full time I was, a full-time maths teacher for a while. Whenever I wanted to get a job I could get it, because there's such a demand for maths teachers. Also I've become very interested in it too. I wasn't terribly interested when I was studying, but I have become so.

01:30 I got a lot of enjoyment and also I was paid, so it was good.

And you mentioned that there were no degrees open to men that did not somehow contribute to the war effort, like engineering, that they couldn't do arts. Was there any atmosphere at the university or in society that judged men that didn't want go directly into battle?

02:00 Well, once things got serious I think that university students were only allowed to study if they were studying subjects that were going to contribute to the war effort. So I wasn't aware of any marked discrimination against people who didn't

02:30 go to the war. People did make a bit of a distinction between the volunteers in the early divisions and the conscripts. And I had a friend whose

03:00 brother was in the 7th Division and was rather prone to applaud the performance of the 7th Division and shake her head about the militia. I didn't really know much about the militia during the war, but I don't know if you'll remember but

03:30 fifty years after the end of the war there was quite a big celebration of the exploits of people during the war and I saw one of the most wonderful documentaries I've ever seen about the performance of militia battalions on the Kokoda Trail, when the Japanese

04:00 landed at Buna in New Guinea and were crossing the Owen Stanley Ranges with a view to regaining control of Port Moresby and the airfields there. According to this documentary, untrained troops, militia, untrained troops of conscripts were sent up against these very experienced Japanese forces.

04:30 And to make up the numbers in some of these battalions boys were taken out of their beds in the middle of the night, given a gun, put a troopship and the only training they got was on that troop ship, where no doubt they learnt to take out a gun out of the box, and I don't suppose they had practice in firing it either,

05:00 or maybe they did on the ship. So there was absolute chaos when they got against the Japanese on the Kokoda Trail. And some of the groups broke and they were unable to stop the Japanese

05:30 In this documentary, there were two men that were the main talkers on the documentary and they wept in front of the camera. They were telling their story for the first time in fifty years. It was marvellously done. They showed documentaries which I think had these same, they didn't actually say so, but I recognised some of the soldiers in the documentary

06:00 as these men speaking on the television and they told how these absolutely inexperienced people were unable to hold the Japanese and they said that one colonel managed to keep control of his men and to retire in good order

06:30 on a track parallel to the track that the Japanese were taking and he would every now and then move in and harass the Japanese.

I just wanted to get back to your story. I've got questions about your experience. So just to clarify, there was no

07:00 **white feather sentiment against the men who decided…?**

Well, I was not aware of any. And certainly the people that I knew, I was there in the beginning of the war, so the people I knew, at university anyway, graduated and went off to the army.

And these dances that you were describing to Matt [interviewer]. What did you wear?

07:30 The commem pracs were fairly informal, and we just wore our nice dresses. And then every faculty, we had an arts ball and a science ball and an engineering ball and a medicine ball and a sports union ball, and they were all pretty formal.

08:00 We wore a long dress and they had special cards you had to fill in and were quite important.

Did the cards have the pencil attached?

Yes, a little pencil.

Did you make your own clothes?

There weren't many clothes to buy, and my clothes were made by

08:30 a sewing lady who used to come every so often and do mending and also made clothes for us and made shirts for my father and dresses for me. Some time in my second year at university I actually bought something called a playsuit, which was a one piece outfit which had a sort of shirt top

09:00 and a rather full-trousered skirt, so that it looked like a skirt but it was really trousers. And one of the young men at the university said to me, "I didn't know you had a figure." Meaning that I looked so lumpy in my dresses that were made by Mrs Hammer that he was pleasantly surprised when I got into

09:30 something that had a decent cut to it.

You said that there weren't many clothes to buy. Where did you buy that from?

Well, there must have been something, but there were very few things to buy at all. There was very little

advertising. Maybe we just didn't have enough money, but we didn't

10:00 go in and buy things off the hanger.

How did your parents react to your very active social life?

Well, my mother sort of shook her head a bit, and she used to stay up until I came in every night that I went out. I only knew that because when I was first married I went out

10:30 with my husband and she heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Oh, I won't have to wait up until you come in now."

My mum always used to wait up for me too. Did you find that frustrating at the time?

Yes, I did rather.

Did you ever challenge each other on it?

No. One night I came home. There was very little petrol during the war,

11:00 and we lived on the tramline at Geelong [?] or close to the tramline, and sometimes boys used to come on the tram with me and then they would sit and talk to me while the tram went a few more stops to the terminus and them came back. Then they would catch the tram back into town. Do you understand?

11:30 I was sitting with this young man whom I had known for five or six years and with whom I was friends, but I had never been particularly close to him and we were talking about philosophy or some high-falutin subject, sitting at the top of our steps in the light of the streetlight.

12:00 My mother put her head out the window and said, "Judy, go to bed." So I did. I was very cross, but by the time I went to bed she pretended to be asleep so I never said anything.

You were talking about your first experience with a palliasse. Can you tell us about your initial training for AWAS?

12:30 I can't remember terribly much. We learned about bit, thing about getting paid and legal things and I remember we had a lecture on hygiene and we were told about various sexually communicated diseases and things like that.

13:00 **Can you remember what you were told about sexually communicated diseases?**

Not really. Oh well, yes. We were told to be careful about lavatory seats and towels. I don't think they got to be too explicit about anything else.

13:30 And things like crab lice. They weren't terribly helpful. They weren't helpful for me because I was living at home, but I suppose they might have been helpful in other directions. In fact if you have a look at that film that was written about the women during the war, it gives a different picture from the one

14:00 I had, which was extraordinarily naïve really. Because I lived at home. And I didn't go and live in camp with lots of other girls.

Were you aware of examples of girls who you worked with getting pregnant?

No, I wasn't.

What was your daily routine like in those initial training weeks?

I think we had a fortnight

14:30 and we learnt to march and wheel and go there and back and obey commands. That's about all I remember beyond the initial injections and the very strange. We went on leave after a week and everybody said, "Don't eat the porridge."

15:00 Because they put some sort of sedative in it so that you won't have any sexual desires. I don't know whether that was true or not, but that's what they said, I remember that. I remember that there was a young girl in our tent, a country girl who was very, she looked very healthy

15:30 and strong and young and everything, and she told me that she had all her teeth taken out so she wouldn't need to have them filled. People did that. She had these false teeth, she went on to flash them at me.

I imagine that would have been quite a shock.

Yes, it was to me. Lots of things were shocking to me in those days.

16:00 **When you talked about the sedative in the porridge to stop any sexual desires, what did you think about your own sexuality when you started that training?**

Well, in those days,

16:30 I was not really aware of actual sexual activity in any of my friends, and I think I'd have known except there were some girls in the university that had a reputation of being quite fast, but whether they were actually sexually active I don't know. But for all my friends, we were all absolutely naïve. I mean, we kissed and cuddled in that way but that's all.

17:00 **And what about the boys, did they put pressure on you?**

No, it wasn't a nice thing to do. This is one thing that I'd be very interested to find out. It seems to me that, certainly what I remember of that time, that sexual activity then was quite different to what it is now,

17:30 and I've been quite amazed at all these stories of rape by footballers and people like that. It seems to me that the whole attitude of society contributed to that, although the men can't be forgiven the whole attitude of society is that sex is the only thing that matters

18:00 and that it is extraordinarily important for people to chalk up a certain number of conquests, and this adulation of these young men is increased and encouraged by the newspapers, and

18:30 I can imagine that the signals that the girls give to the young men are very confusing and it's certainly the case that many young girls, as far as sex is concerned, give signals which they don't understand they're giving. They do things that boys misinterpret.

19:00 Because they don't understand what sex is. They don't understand what they're doing. Then the whole flavour of society is quite different from the attitudes of people when I was young. There is a mean somewhere between the two which is the best thing to do, but it seems to me now

19:30 that when people say love they mean sex, and they're not the same.

You talked off camera before about rape not being reported in the press at the time when you were serving in the AWAS and we were just talking about now with all the press talking up the footballers and all that sort of thing.

20:00 **What sort of a role did the newspapers play in your daily life when you were serving, did you read them every day?**

No, I didn't read them very carefully. There was no news much about what was happening because it was heavily censored. There was a very big social page.

20:30 I have a friend who has copies of the Women's Weekly with all sorts of stories about people getting married and parties and things. Of course it was the Courier Mail. It wasn't the Courier Mail exactly. There were two papers, the Daily Mail and the Courier, which became the Courier Mail later. The Courier Mail,

21:00 I think it's still a very conservative paper, and it was certainly very conservative in my day.

What were your living conditions like when you were doing that training?

I don't really remember. I just remember that we slept on the floor on palliasses in the tent. Didn't have much room, we had to keep everything very tidy, which must have been

21:30 difficult for me, and I suppose the food was pretty terrible, but that never worried me much.

What about hygiene, how did you deal with hygiene in such big groups?

We must have had showers and latrines and things.

22:00 I'm not sure. As a matter of fact one of the lectures that we had about hygiene, I think showed us an army latrine which was just a pit with a seat over it, and he was obviously a cook or something like that in the kitchen. He had an apron on and he went into the latrine

22:30 to use the latrine and there was nowhere to wash his hands so he came out and wiped them on his apron and went off to deal with the food. This was an example of what not to do, of course. Then he swatted a fly with his carving knife and went on carving the meat. Ridiculous what you remember, isn't it?

23:00 These are examples of things that you don't do, I think. This may well have been a fairly-fixed camp. We might have had quite good showers and toilets and things. I don't remember.

How many of you slept in each tent?

There would have been eight to ten, I think

Did you bring personal items from home with you?

I think we were only allowed to bring a small number of things.

23:30 We came in ordinary clothes, then we would have been issued with everything – underclothes, shirts, skirts and jackets and things.

What did you think of the uniform when you first put it on?

It wasn't bad. It was quite reasonably tailored and fitting. We had nice comfortable shoes.

24:00 **Can you describe the uniform for us?**

We had a summer uniform and a winter uniform. They were both khaki uniforms, and the summer uniform was made out cotton. We had cotton shirts and skirts.

24:30 They were quite well tailored and well fitting. People used to grumble, but they weren't bad. Then, of course, in winter we had a shirt and a skirt, a cotton shirt and a woollen skirt and a woollen jacket which was quite warm. I can't remember having a jumper, but

25:00 we may have had some sort of jumper. Yes, I think we did have a jumper that went under your jacket if you were cold.

Because of the way that you became involved in the AWAS, did you skip any initiation or enrolment process, enlistment process?

No, I don't think so. I just had to do what everybody did. They gave us an intelligence test.

25:30 **Do you remember what that test was all about?**

No, there were a number of parts. It was just a standard test. They were very keen on intelligence tests in those days. They used to think it really measured something, but I think that's no longer, it's not gospel in the same way any more.

What else did you learn about being in the AWAS while you were in that initial training camp?

26:00 I don't remember. I never used it, of course, because I didn't have to really be an AWAS. It was mainly marching and standing to attention and making a straight line and all that stuff. "Fall in."

What did you think of all this?

Saluting, I had to learn to salute. We had a hat too. Quite a nice hat, actually.

What did you think of all the discipline?

26:30 It didn't worry me. I was only in the camp for a fortnight, so I was quite happy to do what they said.

What kind of a hierarchy was there within the camp amongst the women?

With the new people I don't think there was much of a hierarchy, but then we had sergeants telling us what to do,

27:00 doing the drill and things. Then I think there was probably a captain in charge of the camp itself, who was responsible for the whole thing.

What do you remember of the people who were your instructors?

Nothing, I'm afraid.

So after those two weeks what happened to you then?

Then I went home, see. I lived at home and used to go every day to Central Bureau.

27:30 **What was your responsibility at Central Bureau?**

I was allotted to Professor Room's unit, and we were working on this weather code that I mentioned to you, which was sent out to Japanese pilots.

28:00 The weather, I think the messages started with something which indicated what sort of message it was and where the additive numbers were taken from and the weather material, the material about the weather, was first of all

28:30 encoded using a three-digit number to signify a word in Japanese, and then it was further enciphered by taking a succession of three digit numbers from a special cipher book and adding those numbers to

29:00 the code numbers by non-carrying addition, and then the result was sent out by the signals expert and picked up by our signals expert, typed out on messages and sent down to Central Bureau to decipher.

By non-carrying addition what exactly do you mean?

29:30 Well, if you have a number, six, three, nine and you had to add seven, two, one or something. Nine and one's ten, but you just write a zero and you don't carry the numbers. And you have two and three are five in the next one. If you were doing ordinary addition you would carry from one column to another,

well, you don't carry any numbers.

30:00 **How did you learn to do the encrypting?**

Me, I was doing deciphering, not enciphering. I imagine the cipher clerks would have had some sort of initial training, and then would be let loose on it all.

So how were you taught the deciphering?

Well, to tell the truth we didn't get much responsibility.

30:30 We were just, what the underlings did mostly was just sort messages. We were told a bit about what was going on, and what we were doing was looking for patterns. Repetitions and patterns in the material we received. I'm not sure, but I think

31:00 that early in the piece a Japanese codebook was captured so they knew what sort of…I'm not even sure about that. Because there was nobody in our unit who knew any Japanese, or much Japanese. We were mainly concerned with the additive numbers that were added to the code numbers.

31:30 I don't see how we could have got very far unless we had some information about those original code numbers. If you know what the original code numbers are you could try them

32:00 in different places of the message and if you happen to hit the right place you can work out what the additive was and if you do that in a number of messages and see the same numbers coming up then you could make a guess that this was a genuine piece of the additive book. You're looking for patterns all the time, and when you get the same numbers

32:30 appearing then you can guess something about the original material. They did have some machines doing the sorting, but we didn't use them because our code was not deemed sufficiently important, I don't think. And so we did most of the sorting by hand. If you kept your wits about you when you were doing the sorting there's a chance

33:00 that you might notice something other than what you'd been told to look for. That was of some interest.

Sounds incredibly complex.

Well, it is very complex and you don't get a start unless the cipher clerks sending the messages make a mistake, actually,

33:30 like overusing one part of the book. But you just have to keep on trying things and guessing, and once you start to build up a few bits of additive code then you can try them in different positions in your message and see if it gives you a piece of the

34:00 original Japanese codebook, and when you get repetitions occurring then you can make a guess, something about the additive and something about the codebook. You're guessing all the time, and your guesses get more certain as you go along.

What do you remember about your very first day at Central Bureau?

34:30 I don't know. What would have happened would be, the first thing that started every day was roll call. We all had to fall in, all the Australians did, probably only the people who weren't on night shift. A lot of us worked from nine to five and those people would have to fall in for roll call.

35:00 There was a staff sergeant called Peter Hastings who later became a quite well known journalist. He used to have to get us all to fall in one line. "Eyes right," or, "Eyes left." And you had to answer your name, stand to attention, answer your name and then you could fall out and go off to work.

35:30 So I went to Professor Room's little group and was told what to do.

What were you told then, can you remember?

No. We weren't told much at all, actually.

36:00 It seems a bit unfair, but I never found Professor Room to be a terribly good teacher. He always had that reputation. I think he had that reputation in Sydney too. It mightn't have been his fault, because there was such a tight security everywhere that you weren't

36:30 told anything that you didn't need to know. There was not much attempt to fill in any background. I think that's why I don't remember very much, because I didn't know anything of the wider pattern, or only tiny snippets that filtered through over two or three years. There was very tight security. Which was probably a good idea, because

37:00 one of the main troubles about espionage, this sort of code breaking and stuff, is that you don't want the enemy to know that you're breaking his code, and when we did get the information you had to pretend you'd got it some other way, and not let the Japanese know that you were actually using their code.

37:30 **I can’t imagine how daunting it must have been to sit down with a list of numbers in front of you. Was that how it was?**

Yes, that’s right. Sequences of numbers.

Where would you sit?

We had little tables, I think, and the messages spread out in front of you and you had to go through them and see if you could see, perhaps, the same set of numbers recurring.

38:00 The other thing that we had, that we used, was that the message types tended to be stereotypes, which meant that, for the big codes they would sometimes have lists of men that they’d send, a list of men who were going on leave or sickbay or something like that,

38:30 but in our case they were lists of weather conditions, and they tended to be much the same and things would recur. That’s another thing that gives you a chance with decoding, what it’s all about, because the same groups of numbers tend to recur, then you can guess that they belong to the same code and the same cipher.

39:00 So you’re looking for patterns all the time.

What do you remember of the first time you really noticed a pattern?

All I can remember is that I’d been told to sort the messages on the third group of three or something like that, and I did notice something else that I hadn’t been asked to find.

39:30 Which brightened the day somewhat, because sorting messages is a bit boring.

Who did you report your findings to?

To Professor Room, because he was in charge. But he didn’t tend to delegate really very much.

How many sets of numbers would you have per page that you were deciphering?

Can’t remember.

40:00 There’d be a full message, you see, of weather information.

And when you found, for example, a set of recurring numbers what did you do to single them out?

I just pointed it out. It was a small group, you see, so if you found anything you thought was interesting you just told the Professor and he would decide whether it was significant or not.

40:30 **Who else was in your group?**

Well, they changed actually. Most of the people in Central Bureau were eggheads of some sort. They were either university people or…one of the people in our unit was Donald Friend and there were two really nice newspaper men,

41:00 a lot older than I was, but they were very friendly.

Tape 4

00:30 **I might just go back and ask you to say that again on the tape. Can you describe the actual physical facilities that were there at Central Bureau?**

Well, Central Bureau administrative part was in a big old house at 21 Henry Street in Ascot, Brisbane. I’ve been there since, and there were a number of

01:00 small buildings in the grounds at 21 Henry Street, together with an open space where I think we used to fall in for roll call in the morning. My memory says, but it’s a bit vague, that we started off using one of these huts in the grounds of 21 Henry Street as the place where we did our work.

01:30 I think that later Central Bureau expanded into a number of huts on Ascot Racecourse, and I think we moved into one of those huts later. In fact that picture that was taken was in front of one of the huts.

What about the room where you worked, that was inside one of the smaller huts?

02:00 Well, we started off in one of the outhouses at 21 Henry Street, and then later moved to a hut on the racecourse.

Were they comfortable surroundings?

Not terribly, no. I don’t know what sort of comfort. We had reasonable chairs to sit on and tables. But it was all very much army stuff.

What was the mixture of nationalities and skills amongst the people?

As I said before, they were

02:30 mostly eggheads of some sort. A large number of these people became academics afterwards, even if they weren't at the time, and there was Donald Friend and there were two different newspaper reporters in our group.

03:00 **What sort of skills were these people being employed for?**

Well, some of them were interpreters. There were also a number of people who worked with us at the end who were Japanese interpreters. In that picture there is a man called Barry Smallman, who was an Oxford undergraduate, good at languages,

03:30 and he was given a course at Japanese and then sent out to Australia. The Brits sent out a group of a dozen or so interpreters with the rank of warrant officer, and one of whom was Tony Carson whom I later married.

Any Americans?

Were there any Americans in the group?

04:00 Yes, off and on, especially towards the end. I remember one American girl who told us that she had had to do a course before she came to Australia which included crawling under barbed wire with real bullets being fired at her, over her head.

04:30 They didn't do that to the AWAS, I'm glad to say.

You obviously were working with some quite high level academics and minor geniuses.

That's right, absolutely.

How did you feel fitting in as a very young, only just graduate?

Well, quite often, I didn't know this at the time because they were all just

05:00 army people in army uniforms, and actually some of them became academics afterwards, not during the war, and I didn't worry. I just did what I was told to do.

How did they accept you as a female?

Well, there were only a few women and lots and lots of men, so of course they were very pleased to see a few women around.

05:30 We were all spoilt with lots of parties and dances and going to pictures and things.

Were there ever aspersions cast on your ability because you were a female?

I don't know. I didn't notice.

06:00 I sort of looked at myself as not being quite the same as a boy anyway, so I wouldn't have noticed really.

You said that Professor Room wasn't the greatest of teachers.

This is unkind. The man's been dead for many years, he can't support himself. I think it mightn't have been his lack of teaching so much as the fact that he had a very strict idea of

06:30 security, and he just didn't tell us anything that we didn't need to know, which wasn't much.

Do you think it was warranted?

It's true that Central Bureau deciphered numbers of messages that were extraordinarily important, messages about very important sea battles and things like that,

07:00 and I think also, I know now that they must have contributed tremendously important information, and I'm quite surprised that it wasn't leaked, and the fact that it wasn't leaked was extraordinarily important, so I guess that was the only thing they could do.

07:30 **It does seem, though that you might have felt it was counter-productive in some ways.**

It might have been slightly. It certainly made it a bit boring, but that wasn't important, the most important thing was the really tight security.

What was your relationship like with Professor Room?

Oh, he was always very nice to me. He was a shy man and

quite reserved. He gave me a job after the war, so that was when I left home and went to work at Sydney University, so that was quite an adventure for me.

As well as being one of the only females you must have been one of the youngest there as well.

I think a lot of us were very young, actually. There were a lot of young men too.

The more senior people were older, of course. They were married. But there were plenty of young ones.

Now, the original things you were working on was breaking Japanese weather codes, is that correct?

Yes, that's right.

Why were they given a priority of being broken?

Partly because we needed to know weather information

for our pilots. Largely because we needed to know extra weather information which the Japanese were sending out from the islands in the Pacific and which would be of use to our pilots.

Where were those Japanese transmissions originating from then?

I have forgotten, but from

various islands that were occupied by the Japanese, like Leti.

Where were you getting the messages, how were they passed to you?

The messages were mostly intercepted by wireless operators in Darwin, and then they were sent to us by landline using a machine, I think, which must have been very like the Enigma machine, and because they were sent by landline

they were virtually unbreakable because they were inaccessible by wireless, of course.

When you got a sample message, physically what would it look like?

Well, I've forgotten now.

I think we got a copy on a special form that had the call sign for the place that it came from and all sorts of things and the name of the operator who intercepted it and things like that on it. Sometimes if we, we were mostly deemed not important enough to use the sorting machines that we did have, which were the sort of forerunners of computers,

we had machines that sorted them, and mostly we didn't use them, we did it by hand, but every now and then we would get the messages typed out for some special reason in a big book.

And they were just groups of numbers, were they?

Just groups of numbers.

How many?

They were three-digit numbers for the weather and the other,

more important codes were four-digit numbers.

What would those three digits represent, a character or a word?

Well, what happened was that there was a code book of Japanese three digit numbers, which would represent words that gave information about the weather, then there would be

a cipher book of random three-digit numbers which would be added to the code numbers. The message would start off with information about what sort of a message it was going to be, and then

they would have some enciphered, no, it wouldn't be enciphered, some material to tell you where it started so that the Japanese operator receiving the message would know how to look up the additive in the additive book, and then you'd get the message.

Now, with a random system or a near to random system of digits,

exponentially it becomes very hard to crack if it's done properly, you've told us. So can you tell us some of the ways that you got around that probability of just stumbling on the right translation or the right deciphering system?

Well, I think I told you that I suspect, I don't remember this clearly, but I think

we must have captured a codebook and then you could, the Japanese tended to overuse special parts of the additive book.

Can you explain to us what you mean by that?

Well, they had to add to the code sequence a sequence of three-digit numbers from a special additive book

14:00 and they tended to do what most people tended to do, start in the top left hand corner or something corresponding to that in Japanese, I'm not sure how the Japanese do these things, it might have been the bottom right hand, but they tended to always start in the same place, so a lot of the messages would use the same additive.

What did that give you?

Well, then

14:30 if you subtract two messages and you got the same additive you might get, the differences between the original numbers would tend to be the same and you might get repetitions if you happened to be using the same words in the messages, so you just keep on subtracting to see if any patterns arise.

In the case of weather information I would also imagine that a lot of the

15:00 **phrases would also be quite repetitious.**

That's right, there would be stereotypes. There was in fact a long message called a sorii [?], which I remember, which I think might have been one of those, it might have contained information that you get by sending up a balloon and it has a sequence of similar information

15:30 obtained at different heights above the earth, so you would expect to get a set of stereotypes in those messages, and then if you subtract them and the underlying word is the same then you get the same difference, you get differences between the additives, things like that, so you get all sorts of patterns coming.

16:00 **Over coffee you also told us about a message that a Japanese man had mistakenly sent twice. Can you outline that to us on the tape, please?**

Well, I'm not sure whether that was one of our messages or whether somebody told me about that. I think it was one of our messages where the operator encoded the information,

16:30 sent off the message, then realised that he should have added the cipher additive to the coded message, and so he fixed his mistake and then sent the message again, which told us, of course, so we ended up with a list of code words, and also when we subtracted we could find a sequence of

17:00 the additive numbers as well. I know that did happen, it was an initial breakthrough in some code message, but I can't remember whether it was in ours or in somebody else's but it was the sort of thing that might happen if you were lucky to give you a break in, right in the beginning.

17:30 And once you got a few numbers that you know are additive or perhaps code numbers, then you can subtract them and find more.

So is it fair to say that without these human errors in the encryption on the part of the Japanese you wouldn't have had much chance with the decryption?

That's right. I don't believe, actually, that

18:00 you can decipher a code unless the enemy makes mistakes. You can't do it. Even in battle I believe commanders sent out their commands enciphered in some way, but it's usually a very simple cipher that you can work out very easily, but

18:30 by the time you would have done so the whole action would have been over. For these other codes you really need some sort of help to get you started, and then you can keep going. And when the Japanese were hampered by the fact that so many of their positions were on little islands and so it was very difficult to get new

19:00 material to them, and once we were reading a code then what happened was that the Japanese would send out instructions to their people to use an additive upside down or change the ciphers in some way, and we would know because we'd already been reading that code you see. Once you're in, you're in.

19:30 It made it easy, especially when the Japanese were retreating, because they would send instructions as to how you should use the code in future, and also the first thing that we did when the Japanese were retreating was send Central Bureau people in to grab the codebooks.

So in your opinion the logistics of

20:00 **the way that Japan was spread around the Pacific meant they were using codes longer than their, and then that gave you the chance?**

To keep going, anyway. Once you're in you have a tremendous advantage.

You've talked a lot about subtracting. I imagine there must have been a more higher-level application of mathematics than just subtracting numbers?

No, there wasn't. Well,

20:30 just the idea of looking for patterns really.

Does that take a mathematician?

Yeah, sure, that's what mathematics, is really. When you're trying to solve a mathematical problem you look for patterns, repetitions, things that connect other things. That's what mathematics is,

21:00 it's looking for patterns.

How often would breakthroughs come? You must have looked at an awful lot of numbers before you cracked the nut.

Well, as I recall, we were trying to build up additives, the enciphering additive, and we started off with very little,

21:30 and once we had a little bit, had decided on a little bit of additive, I think what we used to do each day, before we got going on anything else, was to go through the messages we had and try the additive that we had to see if it made sense when you applied it to the messages,

22:00 and then if we found messages that were actually using the bit that we knew we would decipher the code bits and send them on somewhere which I don't know about, but towards the end of the year we had quite a lot of additive and we used to get quite a bit of information each day and that would be sent on to our pilots, as far as I know,

22:30 to our weather people.

So when you got a message were you trying to guess and plug in things?

That's right, we were just guessing all the time.

So what sort of process did you go through?

23:00 If we knew a bit of the additive, and that's what we were trying to do, build up the additive, strips of additive, and we got a new message, then we would try subtracting and we would try it in every position all along the line, and if any position gave us a code number that we already knew,

23:30 then we would assume that the rest of the subtractions gave us code numbers, and we would try them and if they turned up again in another message then we would put them in our book, but I don't recall anybody doing anything with Japanese with the codebook, so I think what we would do,

24:00 we'd send off the codebook to somebody else who knew Japanese and would know what the digits meant in Japanese and translate them and then send them on to our own weather people.

So initially it would just be a trial and error process?

It was all trial and error. And when the same numbers kept turning up then you could guess the significance that they had.

24:30 **You must have gone through a lot of pencils and paper.**

Yeah, we did.

And I imagine that very meticulous record-keeping was important.

I suppose so, yes.

To cross-reference all these things?

Yes.

You mentioned before that you think there may have been some earlier breakthrough which led

25:00 **to how people in your branch started to work through the code.**

I think they must have captured a codebook, actually, because we didn't ever have any Japanese experts, we were just working with the additives.

Because I believe early on there, as breakthroughs with the Japanese diplomatic code and so on, and I just wondered whether all the codes in Japan worked on roughly the same system.

No, no, quite different.

So you were aware that there were different codes?

25:30 Yes, I'm not sure, but there are lots of different codes, and certainly the diplomatic codes were quite different systems from our codes or from any of the military codes, I think

Was it hard work to leave behind at night?

No. Well, I didn't have very much responsibility

26:00 and also, I mean the weather was reasonably important, but it wasn't dramatic in the way that some of the information was.

So you didn't go home and lie in bed…

No. I was too small a fry.

Do you know what happened to your work as you passed it on?

No. Not at all.

Did that worry you at the time?

No.

26:30 Too young, and also I accepted this whole security thing. Looking back now, I just see that if security had been broken then the whole enterprise was just destroyed. I think it was amazing, really, that the Japanese didn't work out that we were reading their messages, or maybe they did know but there was nothing that they could do about it.

27:00 Certainly once they started to retreat.

How was the security manifested at Central Bureau in who you talked to, where you went and who you mixed with?

Well, we signed very serious looking documents that we would never tell anybody anything ever, and it's taken sixty years before anyone did

27:30 tell anyone anything. Even though the stuff we were doing was available in any book on cryptography. We didn't, I don't think use, any special methods. The thing that was important was how much success we were having. I believe that

28:00 I did hear some gossip about the main code that they were studying, which was a four-digit code and had a little, the additive applied to the code was one with a number squared, which made it a bit more complicated than ours was, and somebody said to me that this code was

28:30 broken from scratch, that they didn't capture anything to start it off. Although I expect they had mistakes from the cipher clerks to help. I was also told, someone pointed to one of the huts and said, "In that hut they deciphered a message about a Japanese fleet

29:00 that was coming to invade Australia," and because of that we managed to send up a force to intercept them.

So were you aware of what was going on in other huts?

No. This was very much after the event that I was told this. Normally we knew nothing.

That's what I mean about how the security was manifested,

29:30 **you obviously didn't mix with people from other sections.**

No, we didn't really. I suppose we had our lunch together. Nobody gossiped at all. We'd all promised that we wouldn't and we didn't. I suppose people felt very committed to the whole enterprise and they didn't question any sort of regulations like this.

So there were all these little groups that never chatted to each other?

30:00 That's right. We did have some sort of social activity together, but we didn't ever talk about our work.

Did you feel any imbalance between the Americans and the Australians as far as Australians being kept out?

30:30 Yes, I did. Well, it was obviously an American show. It was different, of course, from the American navy, this one was run by Macarthur. I knew that Professor Room had had experience in code work before the war

31:00 and knew some Japanese, but I only vaguely knew this, but I thought that towards the end of the war he was rather sidelined. They had him working on the weather and all the real action was in some of the other codes there. I think that the Americans played the major part of the whole activity.

31:30 **You think that maybe the Australians were kept in the dark a little bit?**

I don’t know about that. I shouldn’t think so. They weren’t told anything they didn’t need to know, but it was an American show. They had more numbers and they did very important things.

32:00 **You were at this time living at home and coming to work every day like a regular job. There was no security issue with that, with you leaving?**

Oh yes. We all had passes with our photographs and we had to present them when we went in and out. Very strict security.

Any searches when you went in or out?

32:30 No, I don’t think so. Maybe we had to open our handbags, but the guards knew us all and we all knew them.

What about notes and things like that that you were working on during the day?

We never were allowed to take them home.

Were they destroyed?

I suppose. They destroyed the rubbish bins carefully, I think.

33:00 I don’t remember being very strictly searched by the guards, I suppose if they could see your photograph on the pass and they knew you’d been vetted very carefully to get into the thing at all they didn’t worry too much after that.

And the notes and material

33:30 **you’d been working on during the day, you were not allowed to take that out of the hut?**

No, we weren’t allowed to take anything out of the hut.

And that was burned?

I supposed the rubbish was burnt. It was very strict, the security.

Did the other AWAS girls tease you about going to live at home?

No, nobody bothered. A number of people did. See, the men

34:00 lived in boarding houses in town. I don’t think anybody lived in a tent. I think I might have been one of the few who lived at home, but various officers lived as, they stayed with various people in Ascot, in private homes, were taken as a boarder.

34:30 **What were you told to tell people about what job you were doing?**

I wonder. I don’t know.

When people said to you, “What are you doing in the army?” what did you say to them?

I don’t remember. Don’t think it came up very much. I suppose I might have been able to say I was

35:00 working at cryptography or something like that. It doesn’t seem to have been a big issue.

We had another AWAS lady from Central Bureau who was told she had to tell everybody she was a cook.

Oh, really? Who was that?

I’m not allowed to tell you. Maybe she was a cook.

35:30 **You mentioned that there were some sorting machines at Central Bureau.**

Yes, there were. Sort of beginnings of computers.

Did you ever see those?

Yes, but they didn’t mean anything to me.

What did they look like?

They were large and they went ‘clank clank’.

Obviously didn’t capture your imagination at the time?

No. I didn’t know what record, what historical things they were going to be.

36:00 They were very noisy and they filled a whole room.

Was there a feeling that they were better than people or that they would never replace people?

I don’t think that issue came up, except that we didn’t think much of the printouts. We would rather

look at the real messages, actually. They made mistakes, of course. I think the material on the printouts had to be typed

36:30 into the computer somehow and mistakes were made. The original messages were more accurate.

So there were machine errors involved?

There were machine errors, yes.

What sort of communication did you have with other code breaking establishments like Bletchley Park or its American equivalents?

Well, I didn't know about anything like that at the time, but I do believe

37:00 there was communication with Bletchley Park, and also with some people in India too, I think. I suspect there wasn't much communication with the navy, actually.

Our navy?

Yes.

Why's that?

Well, the American navy really, because I think there was a lot of, I've only found this out later. I didn't know anything about that at the time.

There was rivalry?

37:30 Well, yes, I think there was, probably. There've just been stories later about rivalry between Macarthur and naval officers.

What did you think of Douglas Macarthur at the time?

We thought he was our saviour, and I suppose he was. We were very pleased to see the Americans.

38:00 **What did you have to do with the Americans in day-to-day life in Brisbane?**

Nothing much in day-to-day. I was taken out to pictures and things by some Americans, but I think mostly day-to-day I had speech with Australians actually, mostly.

38:30 **What sort of reputation did the Americans have up in Brisbane?**

Well, the Australian soldiers who'd been in the Middle East were very angry to come home and find the Americans taking all their girls, and they had much nicer uniforms and more money.

39:00 When they first came home Brisbane had blackouts in the night, but they had such fights between the Australians and Americans they turned the lights on again. That's my recollection. Certainly there was an inoffensive American officer in Central Bureau who arrived in Brisbane just about the time of these riots and

39:30 somebody came up to him and said, "How dare you take our girls?" or something that meant that, and clocked him and knocked him out. This poor, inoffensive man who just arrived from America.

You obviously had no particular grudges against Americans.

Oh no. We were pleased to see them, I mean everybody, we would have been sunk without them.

40:00 **What did you think about your fellow females who were on the arms of Americans?**

Well, I don't think I was particularly judgmental about anything like that. I was not interested in taking a view.

Tape 5

00:31 **Judith, when you were cracking the codes, deciphering them, how long would you be expected to take to do this?**

Well, as long as it takes, of course. It depends on what assistance you get, how much material you know before you start.

01:00 Some codes they might work on for months before they get a break at all and they'd keep going if it was important.

Who decided if it was important?

Don't know. I suppose it was the top brass. The Americans probably, all the sort of people at colonel level or higher.

What did you think of the top brass that you encountered?

Well, they were very remote.

01:30 As far as I could tell they were competent and behaved decently, even if the colonel was a, reputed to be gay, of which I knew nothing in those days.

Tell us about that.

Well, the gossip was that the colonel was gay and most of the officers. And I had never, there was no talk about gay people in those days.

02:00 **Were they called gay people?**

No, they were called homosexuals, I think. And there was quite some slur attached to it. The colonel's batman [soldier acting as an officer's servant] also was gay. Did I tell you about the party? After the war, when we were all waiting to be demobilised the main part of 21 Henry Street was shut down

02:30 and we all went to work in the colonel's residence, which was somewhere close by in Ascot, I've forgotten where now, and the place was looked after by his batman, who was also gay. And

03:00 a woman called Nancy Reichelt was a captain and in charge of the AWAS. She was a quite prim sort of woman, I don't know if she was prim, but she was quite stiff and was always beautifully dressed and hair beautifully done and she was in charge. She had been going about with a man who was married and he went away,

03:30 so she was very upset. So Colin, the batman, thought that he would throw a party for her. There were quite a collection of people involved who were stationed in Brisbane from a mixture of services and nationalities, including the man whom I married later,

04:00 he was my second husband. He was already married, actually. He was only twenty, but he was married and he had a child. So we all gathered for this party and Colin had put together some trestle tables which he had covered with white sheets,

04:30 off his bed I expect, and he had collected flowers along the street, he had collected frangipanis that had fallen from the trees and picked flowers from a poinciana tree, if you know what a poinciana's like, it's very beautiful, and he made a most impressive and beautiful decoration for the table, and he had made a huge saucepan of soup. We all took along some wine, I think.

05:00 There were a number of bottles of sherry. We started the evening drinking sherry out of glass cups, which were the only things available, and Nancy got terribly drunk. We drank, I think it was while we were still waiting for our meal, we all got fairly high on

05:30 sweet sherry, I think it was, out of glass cups and Nancy got drunk and started throwing eggs against the wall just to see them break. This was the very well-behaved, stiff captain of AWAS. And then we heard that Commander Nave, who was one of the very senior officers in

06:00 Central Bureau and who lived with his family nearby, was going to come down and give somebody a kitten which was the child of his domestic cat. So we didn't want Commander Nave to see Nancy quite so drunk, and it started to rain very, very heavily and we pushed her outside in the rain.

06:30 We put a greatcoat on her and an army hat and pushed her out in the rain because we thought that would sober her up, and besides she would avoid seeing Commander Nave when she was so drunk. So Nancy was outside wandering around in the dark, and it was absolutely pelting with rain. The house was built on the side of a little hill and the rain came down

07:00 the hill in absolute torrents and ran down the side of the hill and into the verandah at the back of the house, which was sort of leaning up against the side of the hill and where we were all dancing. So the verandah was covered in about two inches of water and we all took off our shoes and

07:30 danced around the verandah. Meanwhile, a man called John Stunn was heard to say, "I always drink my whisky neat," and very soon was found chasing one of the girls around, who locked herself into a room, and he was trying to beat the door down. So this was actually, this was when I was dancing in a rather

08:00 illicit manner with a man who was, thirty years later, to be my husband and we were all having a great time, and down came Commander Nave with the kitten, and Nancy was not to be found anywhere, which was just as well. So he deposited the kitten and went off again, and after he'd gone we brought Nancy in and her face

08:30 was deathly pale, as it gets when you're rather drunk, and she looked as if she was going to be sick at any moment. Her hair, which was usually beautifully in place, was straggling down in very wet looking ropes. She was terribly wet, so we just let her sleep it off somewhere on someone's bed. It was all fairly fraught and fairly amusing.

09:00 Everybody laughing and dancing and making jokes. So that was how we passed our time waiting to be demobilised.

When did the change happen in terms of alcohol? You said at the beginning you never used to drink, but then at the end of the war…

That was at the university, people didn't drink very much, and I must admit that I never did drink

09:30 very much ever, but in this party, this was something a bit unusual. I think it was really stirred up by Colin, the gay man, who really was fairly mischievous in this sort of way. It amused him to get people doing rather outrageous things.

Can you tell us about the romance with the man who became your husband in later life?

Well, there wasn't any really, because he was already married,

10:00 but after the war ended he came to stay with my parents and me at our holiday place on Stradbroke Island. We were just kids playing. We had a most wonderful time. I taught him how to sail and we were swimming and surfing and wandering about the sand hills and making bonfires. It was all just very young and

10:30 happy and free of any sort of care, and from then on we just kept in touch. I knew where he lived. He was an Englishman but when he migrated to Australia he wrote to me and said where he was, that's all. Until my husband died and he came over to see me then.

11:00 **Thirty years later.**

Yes, just about. 1978. We knew each other in '45, so yes it would be thirty-three years later.

That's a long time for the seeds of a romance to blossom.

It's very powerful knowing somebody when you're young, because we had this idyllic time that was just free of any responsibility or care,

11:30 and when you know somebody and you're both young your image of them doesn't really change, you always see them like that. He was fairly dashing anyway, young or old.

So after the war did he return to England?

Yes, he went back to England. Then he came out

12:00 to Perth on one of those ten-pound assisted migration things. I just knew where he was and he knew where I was, and actually we met up again because some close friends of his in Perth came to live in Adelaide where I was living. He came to stay with them actually, and that's when I saw him again.

12:30 **While you were working as a decipherer what did you know of the progress of the war?**

Well, we only knew what was in the newspapers. We knew about the big battles and things like that.

13:00 We didn't know much. I didn't really find out, lots of things about the war I didn't find out until quite recently. I told you I watched those documentaries fifty years after the '45, in '95 and I learned how close we came to being, well

13:30 I learnt how disastrous things were in New Guinea. At the time we learnt, this was when this term 'chocolate soldiers' was coined, when the conscripts where knocked about so badly on the Owen Stanley Ranges when the Japanese were coming across from Buna, but I hadn't learnt the details

14:00 and I didn't know that these conscripts that suffered so badly were just kids, they were eighteen-year-olds, like my grandchildren, just taken out of bed and shoved against the Japanese with no training. The worst thing about war is the mistakes

14:30 that the politicians make. This really made me cross at Anzac Day this year to hear everybody saying how wonderful the men were, and this was true, but they were betrayed again and again by the politicians who didn't prepare properly and sent them out to fight with no training and bad equipment.

15:00 Sent my friends up to fly Wirraways, which were no match for the Japanese. We used to say that the Japanese were so stupid that they couldn't build aeroplanes and that ships that they built would sink.

This is something that has recurred for us in people we have spoken to about their opinions of the Japanese. How did you form that opinion?

Well, it was a national opinion.

15:30 I think it was formed because at one stage, when the Japanese were first becoming a manufacturing nation, their goods were not as good as the European ones. That's happened with lots of countries, when they first get going they flood the market with a lot of cheap stuff that isn't very good quality, but then they get to do it better.

16:00 Japan did it, and we used to buy stuff from Japan but it was despised, and it wasn't very expensive but it wasn't very good either. They said they couldn't see very well to fly the planes. They wore glasses

anyway, but that was taken to be evidence, I think. And I think that people were just very racist.

16:30 They liked to think that the whites were better than everybody else. In fact, I'm sure that they were very racist.

What other ways did you see that manifested?

Of course there was the White Australia policy, which was extraordinarily strong and all-pervasive, really. And also the

17:00 Asian nations that we knew were part of the British Empire. And the Indians. They were obviously inferior. That's what people thought.

What did you know of the Brisbane Line?

Well, we all believed in the Brisbane Line but it didn't worry us. We all knew about the Brisbane Line,

17:30 and one weekend the university conducted a retreat. We all decided we were going to retreat up into the little mountains behind Brisbane and be a guerrilla band. So we all evacuated Brisbane through the gullies in the little mountains

18:00 behind Brisbane. We had a lovely day. We had a picnic and a nice walk. We were all laughing and the girls said they were going to be cooks and the boys said they were going to be a guerrilla band. It was all a joke to us. We didn't know how likely it was. They were going to, I think they were going to defend Brisbane, but nothing north of that.

18:30 **Tell us about your family life. You were living at home while you worked in the Central Bureau. How did the war affect your family?**

I had two brothers who were younger than me and they were engineers and they didn't graduate until the end of the war. My older brother was a medico and he went off but he didn't graduate until,

19:00 he might have graduated when I did or the end of 1943, about the same time as I did really, because it was a longer course but I started later. He joined the air force and was sent up to a station in New Guinea, and he's written about that and obviously

19:30 tremendously impressed by the courage and the skill of the pilots, especially the leader of the squadron, whom he admired very much. And I think it was something that had a lot of meaning for him for the whole of his life and I guess it would have too, when you're living with men whose skill and courage is so important.

20:00 **What about rationing?**

Well, we were rationed for clothes and some food, I think, and of course petrol. That was right from the beginning of the war, so I used to go to university on my bicycle and ride, a lovely ride actually along the river, and then…

20:30 The old university was more or less in town, just on the outskirts of the real city part, so I used to have to ride along North Terrace, which is quite busy and then down George Street to the university, and I used to enjoy that. And of course, as I said,

21:00 I think at some stage, there was very little petrol for private cars, so we used to go everywhere in the trams. I suppose there wasn't terribly much traffic on the roads. In fact it might have been 1942 or '43,

21:30 I and a number of friends one Easter went to stay in Southport on the Gold Coast, and there were almost no cars and we all had our bicycles and we had a group of some twenty or thirty kids on bicycles and we just took over the road. It was fun.

22:00 **How much did you as a family talk about the war at home?**

Not at all. I think my family were protecting me. I know my father listened to the news every time with some anxiety but he didn't ever talk to me about it, and I think deliberately didn't want to worry me.

22:30 **As the Japanese became obviously a very real threat, rather than incapable manufacturers as they had been perceived before, what were the rumours that circulated about what might happen, what they were like?**

Of course we didn't know anything about the treatment of those prisoners until after the war. We should have known something about, we did hear

23:00 stories of brutality in New Guinea. I can remember that I spoke to somebody who'd been a member of the New Guinea Rifles, which was a fairly tough group of soldiers, and he said, among other things, that if you were taken prisoner by a Japanese private you would probably

23:30 be shot and not taken in to be interrogated, but if you were taken prisoner by a Japanese officer you probably would be taken in and looked after as a prisoner of war and interrogated. He said the same

thing would happen with Australians. They also said that one of the dreadful things about the Kokoda Trail

24:00 was that, or reputed to be, the Japanese used the prisoners as bayonet practice, but he said once the troops found that out they did it too. I don't think that brutality in war really belongs to just one group. Although of course

24:30 the Japanese didn't even sign the Geneva Convention, so the treatment of those prisoners of war seems to have been deliberate, which was awful.

It seems that several of your family members were involved in the war in one way or another. Your extended family,

25:00 **you had an uncle in the navy and your father had served.**

They were in the first war. My uncle in the navy was in the second war.

Did you feel part of an Anzac tradition?

Between the wars we always used to go and watch the parade on Anzac Day. Yes, I expect I did.

25:30 My first husband was a pacifist, actually, although he's admitted that he was wrong to be a pacifist in the second war. I think the first war was so terrible that this was the time that people first became pacifist, and there were strong pacifist international organizations.

26:00 Which carried on to the second war to some extent, although in the second war people were more likely to understand that the enemy was something that had to be resisted, that it really would make a lot of difference if they were allowed to

26:30 do what they wanted and not stop.

How did your role develop in the Central Bureau over the time you were there?

I got promoted. First of all I was a sergeant and then I ended up as a lieutenant. But it was a sort of a

27:00 technical appointment. I could never more have commanded a group of men than fly. It was just laughable really, they just paid me a bit more.

What did you do with the money that you earned?

Put it in the bank, actually, because I had very little to spend it on during the war. I was very spoilt. I lived at home, and in those days when you went out men paid,

27:30 so I had very few expenses.

Did you pay board?

No, I didn't. Spoilt.

Who else was living at home at the time?

My younger brothers were. They were still studying.

Who did you correspond with during the war?

Well, I think the only soldier

28:00 I wrote to regularly was a man called John Bennett, who'd been a student when I was a student. He was an engineer and he was in a radar unit and he was a good friend of mine, so I used to write to him when he was away. I used to write to a boy in the air force but he died quite soon.

28:30 My brother, I guess, I wrote to, the older one.

What was it like with these friends overseas, and you said one of them died? What was the mood like at home?

Well, it was very sad when you heard of somebody that you knew who had been killed, but I guess it was part of the life of that time,

29:00 so you just got on with it.

Talking of your promotion. With the promotion to sergeant and then lieutenant, what extra responsibility did you have?

None, it was just a skill qualification really, and time.

29:30 **Did you undergo any tests or any courses?**

I had to go to a sergeant's course, and then a lieutenant's course too.

Can you tell us about those?

Well, they weren't terribly different from the private's course that I did, the initial one. I can't remember where the sergeant's course was.

30:00 I think it must have been somewhere in Brisbane. The lieutenant's course, I went to a little town near Ballarat, and in both of them we learned about marching and drilling and something of the responsibilities of an ordinary sort of officer in a group,

30:30 more about the law and health and hygiene and the responsibilities of an officer.

Were you given training in etiquette?

What sort of etiquette? Who you salute and who you don't salute? Probably.

What about table manners?

Table manners? No, no.

31:00 I don't think so. The day we were graduating in Victoria we all had to parade and they inspected, there was a big general or something or other going to come and pat us on the back and we'd learnt to do all this wheeling and marching round in circles and

31:30 halt and divide up and all that, so before he arrived we all fell in on the parade ground and we were inspected for clean shoes and uniforms spotless and hat on the right way and all that stuff, and actually I was sent back because my shoes were not clean enough. So I polished them and go back and as we started

32:00 the parade it started to rain mud. I don't know if you've ever been in that sort of…well, it was a dust storm when it rained and it literally rained mud, and within a few minutes we were covered in mud, and we were not allowed to postpone the parade

32:30 so we just kept on going. We were told to, all our hats had a little elastic that went underneath our hair, so we were told to put the elastic under our chin so that the hat wouldn't blow off. It was blowing a gale, and then on we went. You could hardly hear the voice of the girl who was

33:00 supposed to give us commands, just as well she had a big voice. We carried out the parade. We must have looked like wet ducks or something. All bedraggled. It wasn't just water, it was mud. We kept going. We were praised for our excellent behaviour. I think I've been in a

33:30 situation where it's rained mud. I had heard of that sort of thing, but that was I think the only time I've ever been in a mud storm like that.

Where was it that you did these courses?

The officer one was at a little town called Bacchus Marsh which is very near Ballarat.

34:00 I think to get there we went on the train to Ballarat and then we had a bus to Bacchus Marsh, I think.

How many of you?

Don't know. Forty or fifty, I think.

And how long would you be there for before your return to work?

I imagine it would have been about a fortnight.

The way you talk about the marching it seems like you almost thought it was ridiculous.

34:30 Well, it was the main object of all our training really. At least it stands in my memory, and the other things I've forgotten. So I don't know, it seemed to be important.

Did life change at all after the European war ended?

Well, I suppose after the European war ended there was much more emphasis

35:00 on the Japanese war and things became much more optimistic. We really started to push the Japanese back.

What do you remember about the end of the war?

It was all a bit of an anticlimax, actually. I remember hearing about Hiroshima, and then

35:30 the war ended a few days afterwards. Then I thought we were justified in dropping the bomb, but I'm not so sure now. It's very hard for us to be critical of the suicide bombers when we started it off. They killed more people in Hiroshima than

36:00 what's been killed by suicide bombers. It seems to be all right if you do it officially however many you kill. It's these solitary martyrs that are scary anyway. But I don't think anyone's managed to do anything

like the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

36:30 **At the time what did you hear had happened?**

We heard that the bomb had been dropped and that the towns had been flattened. I think that's about all we heard, that it was a wonderful new bomb, but we didn't hear any details.

Had you ever heard of atomic bombs before then?

No. I think they might have said something about splitting atoms but we didn't understand what it meant.

37:00 I think people didn't know much about the radioactivity either in that time. I thought it was a good idea to stop the loss of life that would have happened with a slow end to the war, in fact the Russians

37:30 came into the war a couple of days after that and that probably would have hastened the end. Anyway, it was all dreadful.

What made you begin to change your mind about what happened in Nagasaki and Hiroshima?

I guess it was my first husband, because he was very politically aware

38:00 and had lots of things to say. He realized that pacifism wasn't a good attitude for the second war but he certainly talked about things that I'd never heard discussed before that.

In terms of pacifism?

Well, in terms of,

38:30 people, I think until the second war, people had the idea of war as just an imperial contest of two great powers each wanting to be wealthy. Then the second war people got the idea

39:00 that one regime was a lot more savage than the other. And now we have this very sophisticated situation where it's pretty hard for anybody to set themselves up as lilywhite, isn't it?

39:30 I used to belong to a rather marvellous organization called the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, and we used to march down the street with banners and things, during the Vietnam War anyway, and we used to think that it was important to dress up for these occasions to show how respectable we were,

40:00 so we used to wear hats and gloves and carry our handbags and our best dresses, and we took good care to march near the Seamen's Union or the wharf labourers because we thought we'd be fairly safe from opposition that we met from various people who were critical of that idea.

40:30 **How was the end of the war celebrated?**

Well, it was all a bit of an anticlimax, really, at least it was for me. I went to work that day and we heard the war was over and I just got on a tram and went back home. There were people in the streets, but not like that wonderful photograph of the man in Sydney. That really was lovely, it's showed so often, isn't it,

41:00 dancing down the street.

Was there any celebration in the Central Bureau?

No, because, why wasn't there? We didn't have a celebration, we just went home. I think it was after that that a lot of people came back to Brisbane, because we had people stationed up in Darwin and also people in the islands.

41:30 One of the things that my about-to-be husband Tony did was to go with the troops when they were landing in some of these places and rush to seize the codebooks before they could be destroyed.

Tape 6

00:32 **I'm going to jump around a little bit here, because you've got to the end of the war already, but I want to go back. When you were doing your initial AWAS training, not to mention your subsequent promotion courses, how were you different from the other girls that were there?**

Not at all, was I?

You tell me.

01:00 I had led a more sheltered life, I suppose, but I didn't notice it. I tried to make friends with all the girls who came along, and actually I think in all the courses I made some friend who would, you pair off a little bit because you need somebody who will do things with you. If you want to go shopping or

something it's nice to have someone who'll come with you.

01:30 There was one woman I made quite friends with, who was a cousin of that VC [Victoria Cross winner] who became governor, Roden Cutler. She was a nice woman.

What was her name? Can you remember her Christian name?

Her name was Peta something and she told me that her cousin was a VC. I also

02:00 heard about that, you know, in general when a man was promoted from the ranks to become an officer they would send him as officer to a different unit from the one that he'd been in and while I was doing that officer's training course there was a men's officer training course somewhere, in which there

02:30 was an aboriginal man who'd been promoted, and they sent him back to his own unit. I don't know what that means. They thought he'd manage better in his own unit. Australia was very racist.

Were there aboriginals that you encountered around in Brisbane?

No, and I very seldom saw a black American.

03:00 I found out afterwards that the black Americans were quartered on the south side of the river and they weren't allowed to go to the other side and I believe, I've seen documentaries about, they were allowed to do things with aboriginal women and not with white women. It was all pretty strict.

03:30 **Was there some sort of culture of fear about black Americans?**

I suppose so. But as I said, I didn't ever meet a black American during the war. There weren't any in Central Bureau.

04:00 The stories of how the black Americans were treated during the war were pretty awful.

You said that you would usually make a friend in one of the training courses. If you did go out shopping or into town or whatever, what would you be doing?

Well, I think with Peta, I think we were allowed to go off to Bacchus Marsh perhaps

04:30 every now and then, and you'd need someone to go with and you'd tell each other jokes and things. You needed to have somebody to talk to.

When you had to go down to Victoria in this case, you'd be going by train?

Yes, by train.

That must have been quite long trips from Brisbane.

Yes, it was. We didn't have sleepers or anything like that, we just sat up. But then I was young.

You hadn't really

05:00 **travelled before that, had you, apart from Stradbroke Island?**

One of the great times of my life was in my last year of school when I went with a school party to ski at Mount Buffalo, and we went by train and it was a very special time.

When you were travelling by train down to

05:30 **one of your promotion courses would it just be you and how many other girls together, or would you be by yourself?**

I think in the train we might well have, I can't remember the train trips, but it would have been a troop train and it would have been full of other men, men mostly.

Would you have had segregated compartments?

I think we probably would have been put together, the girls. I can't remember.

06:00 **Was your level of education atypical in the AWAS.**

I imagine so. I mean, women didn't get educated in those days anyway, but it didn't make any difference.

Why do you think Professor Room was keen to have you?

Oh well, he was just ready to accept my interest and the fact that I'd done some mathematics, that's all.

06:30 **Were you specialised in a certain part of mathematics that was relevant?**

Not really at that stage. The mathematics wasn't really relevant, it was just thought that you had an inquiring mind, I suppose, but in fact I think linguists were more important than mathematicians.

You spoke a few moments ago about

07:00 **the discomfort you have with the atomic bombings that took place. How do you feel about the great part that mathematics had in the designing of those weapons?**

They've got a big responsibility, haven't they? I think that I feel, I'm old, and I feel some trepidation about a lot of scientific discoveries. I mean, all these genetic ones are really scary. There doesn't seem to be

07:30 any way to stop people inquiring, but the complexity of the inventions now makes it really hard to be able to forecast all the side effects and what's going to happen.

08:00 **What do you think the image of the AWAS was during the war? What did the public think of women in uniform?**

I don't know. I think in general they were highly regarded. The thing is that they were needed. They did a whole lot of jobs that men otherwise would have had to do and there weren't

08:30 as many men that could be spared and the part that the air force women and the army women played was quite helpful.

When you were on the tram in uniform going to work, people were friendly and chatting to you?

Yes, but not any more so than anything else. They didn't notice us. You got so used to having uniforms in the

09:00 trams because there were lots of soldiers going backwards and forwards.

You never bore any derision from males?

No.

What did you think of the Aussie soldiers that you met that had come back from places like New Guinea or North Africa?

Well, there was a tradition of not talking, and I think that I said I was so moved

09:30 by that documentary fifty years after the event because I realised that these men had had terrible things to talk about and nobody ever talked about the second war. There was no counselling, not that that's much help, but it wasn't done even for those prisoners. Nobody let them talk about what had happened to them.

Would you have been aware of what to talk about with them?

10:00 No, that's the thing, but then when I saw them talking fifty years afterwards I thought how dreadful the burden must have been for those men who had that awful experience and couldn't say anything about it for fifty years.

When you were at Central Bureau working in your particular area what other projects or code breaking attempts were you aware of going on around you?

10:30 Well, after a while I was aware that there was a main code that was much more important than ours. There were little hints dropped about it, such as the fact, I think they said, that this code was broken from scratch in a way that other codes were sometimes not.

11:00 I mean, other codes might have captured some material to start it off.

Was this the code you were talking about that used a number square?

Yes.

Can you explain what a number square is for us?

Haven't I done that before?

You did it over coffee.

It was a ten by ten square and across the top and down one side there were the numbers

11:30 zero to nine. They may or may not have been in order by size. I think they must have been in order, because otherwise they'd have been very hard to use. I didn't work these, so I'm just sort of reconstructing this. And in the body of the square each

12:00 row and each column had all the digits from zero to nine in some order. Now, if you wanted to combine, say, one and two you would take one along the top row, two along the left hand side, and then

12:30 you could form a rectangle with the corner of the square and the one and the two and in the third corner of this rectangle you would find the number which would encipher one and two together. It's like

an addition of one and two which

13:00 would give you the number in the fourth corner of the rectangle. Does that mean anything to you?

It sounds like it would be hard to crack from scratch.

Well, I think they used to change these ten by ten squares every so often and so constructing the first ones would have been very difficult and

13:30 once you'd done that they might well have had to send the new squares by wireless, and so you might pick them up if you're already reading the code.

Retrospectively, are you aware what that code was called or known as?

No, I wouldn't ever have known, I don't think.

Was that the only other project

14:00 **that you were aware of going on?**

Yes it is, but there were lots of others, I think.

Was there a status involved in working on different projects?

Oh, I think so, yes. You've spoken to Helen Kenny, haven't you, she's got a marvellous letter from a man called Joe something who was American who talks about the things that he was involved in,

14:30 which I didn't know anything about but which are extraordinarily interesting. It's an extraordinarily interesting letter. If you could get her to show you, you'd get some idea of the importance, he talks about things that he was involved in which I knew nothing about and which were tremendously important for the conduct of the war.

15:00 **What sort of shifts, as far as hours, were going on at Central Bureau, in your hut?**

We just worked nine to five. People like Helen who was working a typewriter thing. I think she worked shifts. The girls who received messages from Darwin, they worked shifts and I think the ones who worked with the

15:30 computer, the sorting machine, they worked shifts too.

But you just worked office hours?

Mmm, choco.

Who used to call you a choco?

Someone said to me that before he met me, he didn't know that there were choco AWAS.

What would your parents say to you or ask you when you got home at night?

16:00 Nothing. I mean, they weren't allowed to, were they?

I know that that's the letter of the law. Surely they must have been curious.

No. I didn't say anything and they didn't ask me.

Did you ever feel important in this secret world?

No, not at all, because all I was doing was sorting messages. Also because I didn't

16:30 think that the weather was hugely important in itself. I don't know, we couldn't have produced terribly much weather, but I suppose every now and then it might have been helpful for the…it might have been a little bit more information to put into the weather map that our weather people were

17:00 trying to complete, I imagine. Weather forecasting was very primitive in those days anyway, and maybe a little bit more evidence might have been a help.

I guess with all intelligence work it's all about a jigsaw puzzle.

That's right, and guesses.

You never know what part your piece may play.

Yes.

Retrospectively,

17:30 **do you feel like you made a contribution in what you were doing?**

A very slight one. I think they'd probably learnt more without decoding the messages from the volume

of the traffic and things. If some weather stations started sending out weather information about a special town and broadcast it to a station

18:00 that had lots of aeroplanes I suppose you would guess that it was likely to have a raid, that town, that sort of thing.

But you would never know what the translations of those messages were, would you?

No. But just the very fact that they were sending. You'd know it was a weather message, perhaps, and the very fact that the volume of traffic was coming tells you something.

As the war in the Pacific

18:30 **kind of began rolling very rapidly to a conclusion did the volume of traffic you were dealing with change in any way?**

I'm not sure, because I wasn't terribly concerned with where the messages were coming and going to. I was just concerned with the content of the messages. But as the

19:00 Japanese retreated we got more information about the code. They captured codebooks and things.

Was there ever any expectation that you would move north from Brisbane and maybe into the Pacific?

I tried to at one stage, but they wouldn't take any women.

Can you describe how you went about trying?

Well, just towards the end of the war

19:30 when a lot of the men, as the Japanese moved back our people were moved up to Darwin and I applied to go to New Guinea, but they didn't take any women at all, and that was sensible I think.

Why do you think that was sensible?

Well, they're probably more trouble than they're worth. At least that's the reason I thought they weren't taking women.

20:00 I mean, you've got to have special billets for them and look after them. You can't just bunk them in with the men or anything.

Did you feel left behind?

No, not really. I knew it was just a dream, really.

I want you to tell us the story about your friend Mr. Friend and his sketchbook.

20:30 Well, I knew that Donald Friend was a famous artist, so I said to him would he show me his sketchbook and so he did and turned the pages for me and watched me look at it over my shoulder, and I was very embarrassed because they were all sketches of naked men

21:00 sitting with their legs sprawled wide open. I had never seen such a thing. I wouldn't have minded if he hadn't been watching all the time to see what my reaction would be.

And being a blonde with a pale complexion your reaction must have been quite noticeable?

Well, I don't know. I kept myself under control and pretended that it didn't make any difference to me whatsoever.

21:30 **Do you know why he was spending his time drawing naked men?**

Well, I knew he was gay.

You seem to sort of hint at the fact that there was quite a high proportion of homosexuals.

In the unit?

Yes.

Well, it was reported to be so, that a lot of the officers were.

I think I know how you're going to answer this, but were you aware of homosexuality

22:00 **and what it meant at the time?**

No, not really. I knew there were homosexuals and that they had something to do with men and men, but I didn't know any details. I knew that it was to some extent reprehensible, but I didn't know in what way.

What about in the AWAS, lesbians, didn't come into the equation at the time?

I don’t know. No, I don’t think so. I’m a bit like Queen Victoria, anyway.

22:30 You know what Queen Victoria thought?

Enlighten me.

She just thought it was quite impossible and that’s why she made laws about homosexuals, about men but not about women. She just didn’t believe there was such a thing.

You mentioned at the famous dance where it was all washed out and your friend was drunk and everything, you said you were dancing illicitly with your

23:00 **English friend there, what do you mean by that?**

Well, because we always were very good little children but if you danced with someone all night, well, the whole evening, without changing partners, that was considered to be quite special and that was the first time I

23:30 danced with him and just with him for the whole evening.

So that was quite a scandalous thing, to monopolise?

It was quite a scandalous thing to do.

I guess even more so in that he was married?

Yes, he was married. That was why it was scandalous.

Did that cause an increasing gossip traffic?

I don’t think so. I don’t think anyone cared, really.

Was there an atmosphere of, you know,

24:00 **eell, the war’s on, it doesn’t matter?**

No. It was all right to be friends with people, and actually we usually operated in a trio. There were two men and me, and we were all good friends. This was the first time that I spent the evening with, Tony and also the lights went off in the middle of it all.

How convenient.

That’s right.

24:30 But we were very circumspect. It was just that…

But there obviously was some sort of, more than friendship, emotional attachment?

Yes, there was an emotional attachment which we never acknowledged.

You’ve mentioned that since seeing documentaries recently you’ve formed certain opinions about the political leadership of

25:00 **Australia at the time, but when you were back in that time what did you think about our political leadership?**

I wasn’t critical at all. And I just took it as it came. I didn’t have any sort of critical view of politics at all. It’s only recently, reading about what happened, about reading a biography of Curtin really, that made me realise

25:30 just how unguarded we were, how vulnerable, because we’d sent all our troops away and Menzies was so besotted with the Brits that he, in the beginning of the war, and even when he knew that the Japanese were likely to do something in Asia

26:00 he was contemplating and wishing to go to England. There was talk of his replacing Churchill as leader of the armed forces in England. I don’t think Churchill would have liked that. Then, of course, during the war, when things looked increasingly bad for us, Curtin tried to get the troops back from the Middle East. He succeeded in getting the 7th Division, but he was

26:30 also trying to get the 6th and the 9th or part of them.

But you would have obviously been completely unaware of this?

Absolutely.

So what sort of news did you see from the front? Would you describe it as propaganda?

Well, I don’t think they lied to us but I think they left bits out. They seemed…we heard about that Darwin was bombed, but only once, and we didn’t know of the extent of the damage

27:00 by any means.

Did you ever see wounded or sick Australians in Brisbane back from the Pacific?

Not till after the war when the prisoners of war came back.

Do you remember seeing them?

Yes. Coming off the ships.

27:30 **What do you recall of that?**

Well, I didn't actually know anybody who was taken prisoner. I remember how dreadful they looked. I think they brought them home over a period and not instantly, and they'd had a little bit of time to get something to eat

28:00 and rest up a bit.

You were obviously shocked by it.

We were all shocked by that. But even then the impression that that made on me visually was not nearly as severe as reading about it and getting the extent of the atrocities that were done.

28:30 **How do you feel about the fact that the European theatre, as far as code breaking goes, has been much more glamorised and written about than the Pacific?**

I think it's a pity, because the codes that were used by the Japanese were simpler than the Enigma code. They're easier to understand,

29:00 and I think there's more interest in the code breaking out here because of that, and so it's a pity that it hasn't been discussed a lot. For me one of the most interesting things about the codes, as interesting if not more so than

29:30 the actual deciphering, is the way the information is used when you've got it. Because it's so important to avoid letting the enemy know that you're reading his codes, and so you have this important decision to make about how many people you're going to tell the information to, and all these

30:00 code breaking people are very possessive of the information that they get and they don't like spreading it too wide. It's my opinion that people did decode information about Pearl Harbour but they didn't spread it around because they didn't want to let the Japanese know what they were doing.

As somebody who's worked in a code breaking establishment you don't find that level of secrecy

30:30 **and pigeonholing hard to believe, about not disseminating?**

No, because it was so important that you had to safeguard the safety of your code. In this big sea battle thing I was told that they decoded the message to say that the invasion fleet was coming, and in order to disguise the fact that

31:00 they were doing so they sent up some reconnaissance plane to, by chance, fly near the fleet so that the Japanese would believe that it was the reconnaissance planes that gave the show away and not the code breaking. So you've got to, it's

31:30 possible and has been said that before Pearl Harbour people read a message about it, and it seems to me quite likely that they didn't spread the knowledge very widely, first of all because they weren't supposed to be trying to read Japanese stuff because they weren't at war, and secondly because they just didn't

32:00 want the Japanese to know.

So why do you think it is that the European, the Bletchley Park angle has so much more captured the public's imagination?

I don't know, because it's also true that there's much more documentary stuff and stories about the defence of Britain altogether. We are constantly seeing remakes of those films of

32:30 war in the air and landings here and there and they keep on doing it, and I'm not running them down at all, but I do think we should have much more publicity than we do about the war to the north, because those men lived and died in order that we should have a good life, and that's literally true.

33:00 **When you subsequently lived in England did you meet anybody who'd worked at Bletchley?**

Well, Tony worked at Bletchley, you see, before he came out to Australia. He didn't work on Enigma, he worked on a little Italian code.

What did he tell you about life at Bletchley?

Nothing much, except that he worked on this code and he managed to decode it. I don't know what sort

of code it was. He just worked by himself

33:30 and he broke the code and he was rather pleased.

Was he a mathematician as well?

No, he wasn't. His special ability is crossword puzzles, and they asked him did he do the Times crossword puzzle and he said, "Yes," and so they accepted him. He was an extraordinarily clever man.

34:00 When he was with me he used to compose crossword puzzles for the Listener, which is a magazine of the BBC in England, and they have these absolutely fiendish crosswords with extra little tricks in them,

34:30 which I suppose twenty people around the world compose and two hundred people around the world manage to do, and he used to compose them.

That's almost like an alphanumeric mathematical skill in a way, in that while you were working with numbers he was probably processing letters in the same way.

Yes, he has tremendous verbal skills.

35:00 **You mentioned there was some gap between the time that the war finished and you were actually demobilised?**

Yes. The war was over in, what, the end of August, wasn't it and I didn't get demobilised until January or February the next year.

How did you do to fill in that time?

Oh we used to have to go to Ascot every day, to the colonel's house.

35:30 We were supposed to be writing a history of Central Bureau, but what happened to it nobody knows, it's been lost. And I don't know that it was ever finished, actually, because I certainly was demobilised before it was finished.

It must have seemed a fairly pointless few months there, though.

Well, it was quite entertaining. There was no pressure

36:00 and we were all having a pretty good time.

You didn't resent having to carry on in uniform?

No

What ambitions did you have for yourself after the war?

Well, nothing very much really, except that Professor Room offered me a job in Sydney. He was looking for tutors, because they had such a huge influx of soldiers

36:30 and he wanted someone to correct the first year assignments. So I went down and did that.

How did you find that after your work in code breaking?

Well, I was very young and it was the first time I'd lived away from home, two or three of my best friends came down from Brisbane to do

37:00 various things like a library course and we shared a flat, we were all very excited.

Was there an atmosphere of optimism after the war?

I think so. Although what I mostly remember was the Cold War, actually. Which was quite

37:30 strange. In fact things had happened straight after the war in the Cold War were very similar to what's happening now with the Muslims. Menzies was talking about a preventive war, the Americans were talking about a preventive war. Menzies was talking about war in three years and,

38:00 you know, you had all the scandals about the Rosenbergs and Fuchs and people like that who helped to give the atomic secrets to the Russians and, you know if you, when Menzies was trying to pass his Communist

38:30 Party bill, which banned the Communist Party, he defined a communist as anyone who agreed with the Communist Party on any issue. If you walked down the street with a banner saying something about peace you were liable to be sent to jail, you could be sent to jail.

And you being involved in tertiary education, there would have been

39:00 **quite a lot of political activity on the campus?**

Not much, I don't think. My husband, when we were in Adelaide, my first husband that is, was a great actor and he belonged to New Theatre and there's a play called Reedy River which has been

39:30 re-staged a number of times since I've been living in Sydney actually. It was written by someone in Sydney, and it was the story of the shearers' strike in 1890, and it was sort of a bit of a love story woven around Australian ballads like 'Click Go The Shears' and all those things, which were newly discovered and were very popular.

40:00 And Eric produced Reedy River in Adelaide, and taking part in that play was seditious actually. You had to be quite courageous to take part in that play.

Sounds like a bit of a paranoid atmosphere in some respects?

It was quite paranoid. I just hope that ASIO's [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation] a bit more efficient than it was then. Although you lost your job if you belonged to the Communist Party, but I don't know of anybody who was actually penalised for being in Reedy River. People talked about it.

Tape 7

00:30 **Judith, one thing I didn't get to ask you last tape was about Anzac Day between the wars. What was it all about?**

Well, it was about Gallipoli, I guess and it was about the sacrifice of men and, as I said, I used to go and watch the parade with my family,

01:00 so that marching bands have always made me feel like crying. My mother had a brother who was killed at Gallipoli. My grandmother had a very sad life. There were good bits, but she had three brothers all of whom, wait a bit, that's right, she had three brothers who became alcoholics, all of them,

01:30 and three sons, all of whom died, one at Gallipoli. One died from typhoid and one was thrown from a horse. So boys didn't do as well as girls in those days.

How did you commemorate Anzac Day when you were a child?

Oh, we just used to go to the march, that's all.

02:00 **Where would the march happen?**

In Brisbane it went down Queen Street, the main street. We used to go and watch. My grandfather was a banker in the Union Bank, I think it was called, and we used to go to his rooms and watch the march from there.

What could you see?

Just the men and the bands, and they had cars for the wounded

02:30 and that sort of thing. Just like they have for an Anzac day march now. Very much the same.

After the war finished how did you adjust to civilian life again?

Well, it didn't make a huge amount of difference to me, because as I said I was at home and going to work, but it was

03:00 different for me because I went to live in Sydney with my friends in the flat, and I went to work at Sydney University, and until the end of 1947, in '47 a man called Freddy Chong, who'd been teaching in Armidale, New England University College, which was a college of Sydney University

03:30 was sent down to the staff of Sydney University itself, and they couldn't find a replacement so they sent the tutors up one term at a time to take his place in New England. I arrived there in the third term in 1947, at the same time as the man who was my

04:00 first husband arrived there.

Tell us about your romance with Eric.

It was rather fun actually, because it was a small university and it had been started with a gift from local big pastoralists who lived there

04:30 whose name I've forgotten now but will perhaps come back, who donated a big old house called Booloominba. One of them, they were sisters who owned a lot of property near Armidale, and they donated this big old property called Booloominba to the university, and also a sum equal to the selling price.

05:00 One sister bought the place from another and they donated both the selling price and the building and the property to start New England University. And so I went up there in the third term of 1947, and all the junior staff, all the students were residential and they lived in residential colleges in Armidale itself.

05:30 And the junior staff were appointed as wardens of the colleges and were supposed to look after the morals of the students, but we didn't really, we didn't bother. And we used to sleep in town and then drive out in buses to the university, which wasn't very far for breakfast. So when I first met Eric I had all my meals with him: breakfast, lunch and dinner,

06:00 and spent the evenings wandering about doing the few things there were to do in Armidale, which there weren't many. There was one picture show with a new picture each week. There was a dance on Thursdays. Apart from that we just wandered about. So after twelve months we decided to get married. That was very nice.

06:30 He was a very nice man, Eric. I was absolutely overcome, because he was such a marvellous speaker and he knew so much about literature and politics of which I knew nothing. It was the time when Chifley was talking about nationalising the banks, and he was an economist and he was

07:00 talking up the idea of nationalising the banks and he practised on me because I knew nothing, so he aimed his speeches at me to make sure that people understood. But he was a bloody good speaker and for me very exciting to be with because he knew about all these things I knew nothing of. We had good fun.

07:30 **Tell us more about your teaching work at the university. You were telling us about your teaching at Armidale University.**

How far did I get?

Just starting.

I talked about Eric, didn't I?

08:00 **You were talking about nationalisation of banks.**

That's right, he tried it out on me. We formed a little group to protest, to advocate the nationalisation of banks, and included in the group was a man who belonged to the local Communist Party,

08:30 who I never really got to know very well, and a man called Don Mackay, who was very much a middle class gentle sort of person, who was also a member of the Communist Party. The communists that I knew in these days were all without exception highly idealist and very gentle, and I can't see them

09:00 manning the, really, and for a while anyway they believed that there was a chance of peace on earth and goodwill to everybody if it was all organised the right way. They didn't stay in the Communist Party for a long time, but for a while it seemed as if that was the only answer. And also the Communist Party, a lot of people

09:30 joined the Communist Party because it was the only organised party that was opposing the fascists. The Labor Party didn't show much interest. Anyway, that was how I first got to know Eric. He really was an outstanding person, he was marvellous fun and we used to go to funny little dances

10:00 and go to the film and talk a lot. It was all good

What was life like as a teacher?

Mostly I just corrected the students' assignments. That was what we were employed to do.

10:30 At one stage one of the first year lecturers was unable to attend his lectures and so I was supposed to give the lectures instead of him. He wrote them out and I was supposed to deliver them. So I had this group of two hundred-odd engineering students,

11:00 and I had to write the lectures on the board for them to copy. I felt quite overwhelmed about it all, because nobody ever gave you any training to be a lecturer or teacher in those days. I found the students rather noisy but this, I was told afterwards, was merely because they couldn't hear what I said. I only did that once or twice. But to keep us all interested we were supposed to give lectures

11:30 to third-year students, which was crazy really because the course that I had studied in Queensland was not at as high a level as the Sydney course anyway and I had no idea how to give a lecture. Nobody had ever, all I had done was just copy down the

12:00 notes that were given to me in Queensland. Anyway, I did my best. When we went to Armidale I was supposed to lecture for the whole year, I think, on courses that were designed

12:30 by people in Sydney, and there was no coordination between the two universities and you know, if you have a course to teach in mathematics and you're given something in the syllabus book which tells you you have to learn about algebra or geometry or analysis or something like that

13:00 and they give you a sentence or two to say what it is, the ways of teaching that topic are manifold and there's no way really you can tell what another lecturer is going to do on the same topic unless you consult quite closely with him. In fact, I think mostly in lectures where two or three people are giving

the same course and the children all

13:30 sit for the same examination, these days they share lecture notes and make sure they all cover the same ground. So this was all pretty disastrous, I think. However, the students seemed to pass, so let's hope that someone was kind at the exam. There was no attempt to ensure that the teaching was appropriate

14:00 or that people worked as a team or anything like that. The poor old students were thrown to the lions. I think there were very few occasions where there were multiple teachers for the same course so there was no, except in this case, where New England was a college of Sydney,

14:30 and so they sat for the same exams, but no provision was made for the lecturers involved to work together with one another and make sure they presented the same material to the students. So I did what I could and got married quite quickly.

How did you juggle family life with working?

15:00 I didn't, you see, as soon as I got pregnant, actually. I got pregnant soon after we were married and finished that year and then resigned and had a baby.

To what degree do you think you became more politicised having married Eric?

Quite a lot, because I'd never even thought about it. My family were very conservative. But I was

15:30 always in favour of the underdog. I always felt protective of people who were downtrodden. And Eric, too, was very much in favour of, people that I knew were idealistic in those days in a way that, I don't know anybody

16:00 like that any more but it may be that I don't move in the right circles. They really wanted to make things better for other people. And this was a time when Freud and Marx both claimed to give solutions for very big problems. People thought that if you thought correctly and

16:30 carefully enough that you could find solutions to huge problems about personality or about the economy. Freud was claiming to give solutions to every personal problem and Marx claimed to give solutions for all economic problems. I must admit the economists are still doing that, only it's a different solution.

17:00 I don't think it's a very suitable one either. It seems to me a bit of, an all over solution for the economy is not as efficient as it might be if you were open to a lot of different types of solutions in different situations.

17:30 **Where did you go after your time in Armidale?**

Well, Eric got a job in Sydney. He was a lecturer. Because of his pacifist views he found it difficult to get a job. He got a job

18:00 as a lecturer in Armidale which he wouldn't normally have taken if he had a choice. He would have had a job in one of the big cities if he'd been able to. Then he got a job in Sydney, but only as a lecturer again. Then he was offered a job in Adelaide by a man called Peter Carmel, who went on to have a very important career in

18:30 education but was a fellow student of Eric's and he offered him a job as senior lecturer, so we went to Adelaide. And that, I think, was a very happy few years for him, because Peter and Eric had a wonderful department in Armidale. A very pleasant atmosphere and very bright people.

19:00 **How closely did you follow subsequent conflicts after the Second World War?**

We didn't, really. I can't remember how often

19:30 we used to walk down the street with placards, but it wasn't very often. The thing is that straight after the war Menzies was talking about, they were talking about pre-emptive strikes on Russia, and I think we opposed that sort of thing. It was only special

20:00 incidents that we thought it was important enough to walk down the street with a placard. I think we protested against the Vietnam War most of the time because we didn't really find the domino theory entirely convincing and

20:30 it didn't seem that much good was going to come out of it all.

Would you like to tell me about some of the protests?

I can't remember now. I imagine we did things like. I can't remember

21:00 demonstrating against LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson] when he came to Australia. I mean, actually going to where he was and holding up his car. We never did anything like that, it was always very dignified. The thing that we did with the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom mainly was information. We had lots of talks and people who talked about history and

21:30 the political situation. It gave us information about different places that wasn't available in the press.

You were talking to us off camera about being spied upon.

Yes, well, I don't know. I didn't find out about that until some years afterwards, I applied to get Eric's

22:00 records from ASIO if such a thing existed, and it did and I found it very inaccurate, which annoyed me but then I heard from my son whose friends had actually rented our house long after I'd left Adelaide. These friends rented

22:30 our house and spoke to the neighbours, who claimed that they'd climbed over the fence and listened in to meetings that were being held in our house and that they were paid by ASIO. But I think ASIO's informants must all have been as ill-equipped as this man next door, because they didn't know

23:00 much about what they were talking, which was rather annoying, but I hope ASIO's a bit more efficient now than it was then.

When was it that you went back to being a maths teacher again?

One of the things I did with Eric, which was absolutely marvellous was I went on study leave to the United Kingdom.

23:30 Every seven years he used to get sabbatical leave and have a year off and he was allowed to think. The idea was to go away and think for a year, which was a good idea. So we went in 1960 and then in 1967. In '67 we were short of cash and the children were a bit older. We didn't have so many children, we only had one. The others stayed behind at school. Also we were living in London

24:00 so I applied for a job as a teacher, and the first school that I went to was in a place called, I think it was in Tooting Beck, or something with a very funny name. A girls' school which was a beautiful school, very well run in the secondary modern system when the

24:30 English schooling was divided into two sets. There were secondary modern schools which were at the bottom of the list and there were grammar schools which took all the clever kids. Everybody sat for an exam at eleven and the top ones went to grammar schools and the bottom ones went to secondary modern schools. Because I had had no experience and didn't

25:00 really know Arthur from Martha they appointed me to teach H level, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H in the secondary modern school. So I had these marvellous black kids who were so nice and well looked after and

25:30 well behaved but who had no interest in mathematics whatsoever and were just waiting to turn fourteen so they could leave school. They just wanted someone to stand in front of them. That's when I started teaching. Because the head of maths in that school was very good and very helpful to me and because the

26:00 school itself was a very good school and very well run, and also because it was mainly black children, West Indian children, but they were children who'd been living in England for a while and they were established. The children were well, beautifully after, and they were lovely girls. And I survived.

26:30 After that I tried a school, what did they call them, they had some schools which were neither grammar schools or secondary modern, they were all together, what were they called, comprehensive schools. I had a comprehensive class which I didn't survive.

27:00 Collapsed into tears and left. I didn't teach again until I got back to Australia, and then I started teaching at Presbyterian Girls School in Adelaide. I started off in first year and they were teaching the New Maths, which was quite different from anything that I'd ever learnt. Fortunately I started at first year, and every time a teacher left

27:30 I moved up a grade, so I had time to learn the new course, which was just as well because, although the words were the same, the ideas were different, and it takes quite a long time to get used to a new mathematical idea. So that's how I did it. It's been a wonderful thing to do all my life.

28:00 **What changes have you seen in mathematics?**

Huge changes, actually. I'll give you one illustration that may or may not mean anything to you. In the old fashioned courses one of the main ideas is the idea of a function. When you consider two variables, x and y,

28:30 and the function is the rule which enables you to determine the value of y once you know what x is. So the function might be $3x^3$ and if x was 2 then y would be 24, wouldn't it? Well, that was the old-fashioned idea. In the new idea, which I took a long time to get used to,

29:00 a function is defined as a mapping between two sets. In this case the set that x belongs to is a set of real numbers which is all the numbers on the number line, and y, it has a domain which is the set that x belongs to and it's all the real numbers.

29:30 The domain of y is also all the real numbers, if we can take the same, sorry. The domain of x is a set of real numbers. The range of y is also the set of real numbers, and the function is defined as a mapping, which is a one to one correspondence between the domain of x, which is the real numbers, and the

30:00 range of y, which is also the set of real numbers. It's a more complicated idea. Everything in the new maths is defined in terms of sets and mappings between sets, correspondence between sets of numbers.

How have you handled the changes?

30:30 I found that when I first looked at the textbook I had to teach it took me quite a while to work it out and to think in a different way. But because I only did it one year at a time I managed to keep in front of the class and might well have taught it better because I wasn't used to it myself and I had to explain those ideas to the students. I was also

31:00 very excited by them, because they seemed to be very good ideas. They were ideas which allowed development in a way that the old fashioned ones didn't and also allow you to see comparisons between things which don't really, at first, seem to be very alike.

How much contact did you have with your Englishman?

31:30 We had this wonderful time when we went to stay with my parents on the island for two or three weeks. He was brought back from the islands, from the north to Brisbane, and he had to wait in Brisbane until he got a ship home, and for two or three weeks he came down to stay on the island with me

32:00 and my parents and we had this very strictly chaperoned reunion. And the thing is, if you are strictly chaperoned you could have a good time without worrying about anything, and so that's what we did. We went swimming and we went surfing and we sailed boats and I taught him to sail and it was all just good fun and there was no question of anything else. So it's a really sort of

32:30 Garden of Eden type memory to look back on.

Who was your chaperone?

My mother, she wasn't far away. You know, you were directed. If we went surfing and we didn't appear at the correct time I would expect my mother to come over the sand hills and find me.

33:00 She certainly did that at various times. When she suspected that all was not what it should be.

What was your second husband's name?

Carson.

What did you know of what he was up to in the years you that didn't see him?

I just vaguely knew what he was doing. We just kept in touch. We used to write letters now and then just to let each other know

33:30 where we were, that's all. Then I met these friends of his, came to live in Adelaide and they talked about him. So we were strictly polite until Eric died, and then he was trouble.

34:00 **What was it like when he turned up on your doorstep again?**

When you know someone when you're young and when they're young you always keep that image. So it was very powerful. Also, soon after someone's died is just the time when you're most vulnerable.

34:30 But he was good fun, in a different way.

During your marriage to Eric you said that he was very politically active and academic, is that right?

Well, he was politically

35:00 active in the beginning part, but once he got to Adelaide and was working in the department there for a little while he took part in the peace movement but he was very fed up because people would trust him and undertake to do something and then find themselves tricked into doing something they didn't understand by other people, and so he withdrew from the peace

35:30 movement, actually.

Could you give me an example of that?

No, I don't think so. You see, in the context of peace there are numbers of things that you might, the communists might ask you to support a number of different questions. I'll try and think of an example.

36:00 I'm not sure. This is not a proper example because it's not something I remember. This is not an example of this early part anyway, but

36:30 if Harold Holt [Johnson?] was coming to visit Australia there are a number of different things that you might do to say that you opposed the visit. One of them might be to stand with a placard where his car was going to drive by and another might be to throw yourself in front of a car, well, people did. And you might agree to hold up a placard, but you didn't really want to throw yourself in front of a car,

37:00 and somebody else might trick you, persuade you to do it in a way that you found very difficult to resist. That sort of thing. Eric was scrupulously honest about explaining to people exactly what they were agreeing to, but some other people were not and he got fed up and left the peace movement because of that. In fact he was scrupulously honest about everything, Eric,

37:30 he wouldn't trick you. Also, he didn't think it was right to imply that because he was an academic he knew more about politics than other people. He didn't think that being a professor gave you the right, that people should respect your political opinions just because you've got an academic post.

38:00 You were really using the university as a political weapon, but he didn't think you should do that.

To what extent did your attitude towards war change during this time when you were opposing wars?

Well, I think I came to think that war was a bad thing,

38:30 although I never opposed war as a blank cheque. You know, I would never have opposed war with Hitler or with the Japanese or war against an oppressor, a really cruel oppressor, I would never oppose,

39:00 you'd just have to do it, it's not a good idea. But I don't think I changed my views very much at all, I was just a natural, when I was a child I used to pick up all sorts of lost souls and protect them and I think I just went on doing that. The issue really was, after the war,

39:30 that the Americans had the bomb and the Russians didn't and the Americans were talking about a preventative war, of bombing the Russians before they could develop the bomb and I didn't agree with that, and in fact I think now that the Soviet Union was less of a threat than

40:00 what's risen to take its place. Well, not the Russians but the Taliban and the instability of the Middle East.

I take it that international relations is something you've followed closely?

40:30 Well I read the newspapers and a number of, and I watch the American news that you get at five o'clock on SBS, but I don't take a huge interest. My son has just given me a book by Richard Clarke. You know, the man who resigned? He was a bigwig in the Bush government, Clinton government.

41:00 So the whole thing is pretty relevant for all of us now

Tape 8

00:35 **You mentioned again going to Stradbroke Island later, after the war had finished with your friend there. Was the Stradbroke Island retreat something you did while you were in service as well?**

Yes. When I got holidays we used to go down there.

Who's we? Just your family?

My family, yes.

Did you ever take any colleagues?

01:00 Only Tony and a man called Clarrie Hermes after the war was over.

01:30 **So that Stradbroke retreat was obviously quite important to you?**

It was the whole centre of my life, really, and in fact if Eric had said to me, "Will you marry me and move to Adelaide," I would have said, "No, it's too far from the island." But what happened was I thought we were going to live in Armidale, which didn't seem too bad, we could still go there for holidays and my children could still go there. So it was all

02:00 a bit difficult when we went to Adelaide, but we used to go for Christmas holidays every year. We drove from Adelaide to Brisbane, these rather monumental car trips with…Eric used to believe in buying old cars, so in 1960 we bought a 1936 Dodge which was a great huge tank of a car. It did about twelve miles to the gallon.

02:30 It had a top speed of, it started to rattle at forty miles an hour and the carburettor was too close to the

engine, so that when the car stopped the petrol in the carburetor vaporised and she wouldn't start again. The first time we drove up to Queensland we decided

03:00 we'd camp on the way. You don't want to hear about that. It's not really relevant. It was wonderful anyway.

You mentioned on the last tape that you found out retrospectively that ASIO had been listening at your window, or their stooges had been. How do you feel about the fact that you served a country that had won a war against tyranny and yet here resources were being devoted to spying on people like you and your husband?

03:30 Well, I suppose that there was no way of telling who was going to throw a bomb and who wasn't. I'm not aware of anybody who was penalised because of ASIO reports. Although there may have been some. I still think that

04:00 the Soviet Union was a bit different from the present worry about bombs in that, well, certainly the communists that I knew were very gentle, non-violent, idealist people, and secondly the worst that was envisaged that they might do

04:30 was for the wharfies to stop, for people to go on strike and stop loading the trains or loading the wharves or doing that sort of thing, and there was never any question of deliberate violence. I suppose somebody might get knocked over in a fight or something with police, but never any deliberate violence campaign that I knew of.

05:00 **So do you think therefore that the surveillance was warranted?**

Well, no, I didn't know anybody who advocated violence at all. But I suppose they had to find out, didn't they? I don't bear them any malice for watching but I do bear them malice for the very inaccurate reports that they wrote.

Can you describe some of those inaccuracies?

05:30 It was just that they said that both Eric and I were communists, which was false. Certainly not Eric. I followed Eric, and he was very anti-communist. He really cared about the truth, and the thing that he held up against the communists most strongly was the fact that they didn't worry about the truth. If you attacked them on an issue they would just shift their position

06:00 a little bit. They were quite flexible in what they said, they didn't really inquire closely enough to decide what was true and what was false, and he really did care about that. So he never had anything to do with that, he was never a communist, and most communists didn't like him because he could match them with anything they said and nail them down.

What other sort of inaccuracies were there?

They said that I was the leader,

06:30 which was absolutely ridiculously false. That infuriated me.

It doesn't inspire much confidence in their intelligence.

No, it doesn't. I hope they're better at finding out things now.

It does seem ironic that in a country that had fought a war against fascism and tyranny that in some ways political and speech freedoms were being clamped down upon.

07:00 Well, as I recall it there was no danger to us in those days comparable with that might well exist now.

Was your son ever at risk of being drafted to Vietnam?

My boys, you know, they had that ballot and they drew

07:30 your name out of a hat, I think. It was something to do with the alphabet, wasn't it, no, date of birth, that's what it was. Don and Jack were both of an age to go, and Don wasn't drawn in the ballot but Jack was, but he was a medical student so he would only be drafted

08:00 after he'd graduated, and by that time the war was over. So it didn't really arise.

It must have been a little bit of a shock when his date came out of the hat, though.

Yes, it was a bit. Except that I think we knew. We were lucky, I suppose, that he was still studying,

08:30 but they needed doctors so he had to finish.

Do you think after so many sacrifices were made to win the Second World War that we've won the peace since then?

I think the Vietnam War was just terrible.

09:00 Although some people believe that the Vietnam War, even though it was such a fiasco, stopped China from moving down across Asia which, of course, that was the reason that was given. I don't know. It just seems that what we did to Vietnam was just so terrible. And what we did to our own soldiers.

09:30 We complain about biological warfare and chemical warfare, but it's what we used in Vietnam.

What role has Anzac Day played in your life?

Not a very great one, really, because

10:00 for a long time I was anti-military. Not an anti-militarist really, erase that. I think I didn't. I still feel that it's all very well,

10:30 that the men were marvellous and tremendously brave and in the second war anyway they really did make life pleasant for everybody else, but what the politicians did

11:00 is hard to accept.

Why didn't you get particularly involved in Anzac Day?

Well, I didn't feel strongly about it and there were other things I guess that I was doing, until recently. Until I read this book actually. Until recently, when I got interested in what happened in Singapore and after Singapore fell and I

11:30 realised that, and in New Guinea, I realised just how much what they all did was instrumental in giving me a good life. Except that they were willing to die, there was no way that I could have had the life I've had.

Have you ever marched on an Anzac Day?

12:00 Well, since I started thinking I might march I haven't been quite strong enough, but I'm intending to go next year. I have been sick actually for the last six months. I was going to go this year, but I didn't feel strong enough.

Have you been involved and in contact with any association from Central Bureau?

Well, I've just gone to meetings and seen these people over the last few years.

12:30 **Does that play an important part in your life?**

Well, it does now because I think that the few who run the organisation, I found that the men were extraordinarily courteous and pleasant and kind, which I hadn't really expected and the women are just marvellous people and I look forward to seeing them. Helen Kenny's a really nice woman

13:00 That's a great newsletter she puts out. Have you seen any copies?

Yes, I have.

They're very good, aren't they? All those little stories she gets. And she's really on the ball as far as this history of Central Bureau is concerned. I don't know if anything's going to come of it. Do you know anything about that?

No, I'm sorry, I don't.

Well, they're supposed to be writing a history of Central Bureau.

I believe so.

From the War Memorial too,

13:30 I believe but it seems to be taking a while to get off the ground. They've collected fifty thousand dollars, so they're going to have to do something, aren't they?

How do you feel about the fact that it took the RSL [Returned Services League] a long while to recognise women's service in the Second World War and allow women to march?

Really, I didn't know.

There you go, that answers that question. What opportunities or societal

14:00 **changes do you think the Second World War gave to women?**

Of course it meant women did a lot of jobs in the second war that they hadn't done before, but then they went back to being mums for quite some time before they decided they wanted to do something else.

So you don't think it made an immediate impact?

It didn't seem to, because it was some years after that.

When I was first married, which was just after the war there was no suggestion that women should do anything different from looking after their children.

Have you ever seen any movies that concerned code breaking or the sort of secret work that you've done, either based in the UK or here or America?

I've seen that movie

about the Enigma one.

What did you think of the way that portrayed the business of code breaking?

I didn't know much about Enigma. They got a bit dramatic about it all, didn't they, and had spies and things. It wasn't too bad, but it didn't really tell you much about what went on in the process of breaking the Enigma code, I don't think.

Do you read a lot of books about that sort of subject?

I haven't, really. Recently I've read a little bit about what was done. And there are a couple of books that I'd like to get hold of, but they may well be out of print now.

If someobody was watching this tape in fifty years or a hundred years even,

what message would you leave to them about serving your country?

Well, if we don't find out how to avoid wars I don't think there'll be anyone in fifty years' time, frankly. I think it may be hopeless, but I think the only hope I have about finding peace in the Middle East is that

people should try to solve a few problems about poverty and land usage and other things that cause so much anger and fear in the Middle East. I saw a documentary or story about

Lawrence of Arabia and it brought home to me how the Arabs were betrayed by the British and by Lawrence himself and how they've just gone on being betrayed. Somehow we've got to find a solution for things that are destroying people.

Somebody talked about talking softly and carry a big stick. That's probably what we've got to do. It's obviously not going to be a good idea just to accept all the opposition, but without some sort of justice there's not going to be a solution is there.

Judith, is there anything else you want to say, any stories or comments you want to make as we finish up today?

Goodness, we seem to have talked a lot. Well, it would be nice to think that getting

a bit more information about one's friends and enemies might urge politicians to find solutions to all our troubles instead of just blowing each other out of the sky. Nobody talks very much about Bosnia, is that the Balkan states? About the Balkans and how well they're doing. It's gone out of the papers, hasn't it?

And whether the interference in the Balkan States has had a good outcome. They're trying some of the leaders now, but how well it's all worked I don't know. I'd like to think it had worked well. There's not an easy solution.

Well then, maybe we'll end it there.

All right.

Thank you very much.

Thank you for listening to me all day. Goodness me.

INTERVIEW ENDS