Australians at War Film Archive

Beryl Blackburn - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

01:00 **We're rolling now. So thank you very much for doing this to start with. The archive wouldn't exist without you donating your time today. So glad you did it.**

It's my pleasure.

To begin with, as I just said, before we start the interview proper I just want a summary of your life. So perhaps you could start by introducing where you were born and grew up.

I was born in Crown Street, literally, but my mother died when I was young and I went to live with my Gran, who at that time lived in Maitland.

01:30 So really the first five years of my life were spent in Maitland. Then everybody decided the streets of gold were in Sydney so we came to Sydney and we lived mainly at Brookvale and Dee Why and later Manly. I was married at Manly. Met Harry at Ingleburn.

02:00 Worked prior to that of course. I won a scholarship to Fort Street Girls' High School which I attended for about a month but my grandmother couldn't afford one and eight pence a week for fares so I only stayed there for a short period. I worked during the Christmas holidays at Dee Why laundry. And I was 13

02:30 at that time, so since I was going to be 14 in May, I didn't go back to school again. I worked. I stayed at the laundry until the beginning of 1939 and after 1939 I went to the munition factory in Marrickville. Melville Carsons in Marrickville. And I worked there until '42 and then

03:00 I worked at Trilong Dry Cleaners in Crown Street, Sydney until '43 when the 9th Divvie [Division] came back, and Harry and I were married on 10th March 1943 after they came back.

That's great. What happened to you then? Where did you and Harry settle down?

We lived at Brookvale with

03:30 another friend of mine whose husband was also in the army, and we lived there together for a couple of years really. I had Robyn in 1944 at the Royal North Shore Hospital and my friend Alice had twins and then her husband came home so then Harry and I came out and lived on Rocky Point Road with his mum. We lived

04:00 there for a number of years until we saved up 500 pounds and bought this block of land which already had a temporary dwelling on it, which was a synonymous name for garages in those days. They were temporary dwellings. And we lived in that until we got enough money to build a house and we moved into the house on my daughter's ninth birthday, which made that '51.

04:30 We moved into this house in 1951. We've been here ever since. Damian, my grandson, was slightly slow-learning boy and didn't earn big money, so instead of affording a unit somewhere for him, we built up on top for Damian. Damian has his own unit upstairs. But his dad was in the army at that time.

05:00 From Duntroon to in the army and had been a linguist. He's been out of the country. Two years in Hong Kong, two years in Singapore – two years in Jakarta, two years in Hong Kong and two years back again, so Damian needed a steady stable place to live so he lived with us, with Mum.

So how many grandchildren do you have?

Six.

05:30 Five boys, one girl. And I have two proxy granddaughters over there because their grandma died – my sister-in-law died very young – and my niece, their mother, didn't want them not to have grandparents. So we became proxy grandparents, Harry and I, to Sarah and Emily. So literally I have eight with Sarah and Emily.

That's

06:00 **an excellent summary. We'll talk about all of that. We'll even talk about living in your temporary dwelling if we get to it because that's a very common post-war experience. But we'll come back to the very beginning as we said and we'll start talking about your childhood. Do you have any memories of Maitland?**

Not a great deal, no. I know we lived in a big old house that had an attic which was our playground. We used to play up in the attic, but I don't remember a lot about Maitland. I believe our house

06:30 is gone now. I believe it's one of the big new roads have taken that section of West Maitland. It was classified as West Maitland. But no, I don't remember. The river – I remember the river. I remember going shopping with one of my aunts one day and she dropped a couple of the cooking apples out of the bag and we had to scramble down the river bank to get the cooking apples, but I can't remember a great deal more than that about Maitland. I was only five when we

07:00 came back to Sydney and we lived in Pacific Parade, Dee Why then, which was good because it was close to the beach.

How had you come to live with your grandmother? Can you tell us what happened there?

Oh well, my mother died. Dad was – it was Depression and Dad was off wandering around the country looking for work and Granny was always there.

When you moved back to Sydney, did your dad come back to live with you then?

No, I never lived with Dad.

07:30 He went to Melbourne. I stayed in Sydney. My brother went to Melbourne, but I wouldn't go.

So essentially you were brought up by your grandmother on her own, is that right?

She was the matriarch, literally, but there was Uncle Dave, Uncle Roy, Uncle Jimmy. Aunty Biddy, Aunty Flora. Everybody was there that give you a good clout if you needed one. But Granny, yes, was the boss.

Can you tell us a little bit

08:00 **about her as a person? What kind of a matriarch was she?**

I don't remember when grandfather died. I think it was probably when we were still in Maitland, because I don't remember him being down here. But no, Gran was just there. She used to say – the lights used to be on, just a globe. "Is that you, Dave?" "Yes, Mum." "Don't turn the light out. Jimmy's not in yet. Is that you Jimmy?" "Yes, Mum." "Don't turn the light out, Roy's not in yet."

08:30 Uncle Roy, next one. "Yes, you can turn the light out. You're all in now." So I don't know whether she slept. But she knew when everybody came in. Always. She was just Granny. What can you say?

What about those uncles? What sort of role did they play in your life as a child?

They were just there. We were just all there all together in a little house.

09:00 Not a great deal. They didn't get a lot of work for a long time. Actually, the beginning of the war gave everybody work. A lot of people that weren't trained for anything – a couple of the older ones had been in the mines and the mines had closed down, so it was a matter of coming to Sydney and trying to find work. I honestly don't know what they actually did. The girls

09:30 went into domestic service, the older girls. I was the only lucky one that was able to stay at school for any length of time. And my brother and I both stayed at school. But as I say I got seven and sixpence a week at the laundry, which was a fair amount of money those days, and I just stayed cause then I went to school at night. I rode a bike into Manly to do the Intermediate

10:00 Certificate. I didn't get a Leaving Certificate, just Intermediate Certificate. Then I did a shorthand typing course but my fingers were never good. I could never type with any speed. My eyes'd be down the bottom of the page but the fingers'd still be up the top.

We'll come back to that in a minute. Pacific Street, Dee Why, could you tell us what that was like when you lived there as a girl? Pacific Road.

Pacific Street. I can't remember.

10:30 It was just ordinary everyday – it was fairly well settled. There were houses all the way down the street and we had a big old house with a big veranda. The boys used to sleep out on the veranda on single beds. I can't tell you – it was called Arcadia, I remember what it was called. Arcadia. Pacific Parade, Dee Why, it was. It's one of the main roads that start from Pittwater out and goes

11:00 right down to the beach.

And what sort of a place was Dee Why in those days?

Well, it certainly wasn't a hive of activity, but it had the best dance floor on the north shore. The Luana, the dance hall. It had a beautiful dance floor. We used to dance there. It's now Dee Why RSL [Returned and Services League] where the Luana was.

11:30 It had a dance hall down on the beach but we weren't allowed to go to that. The younger ones weren't allowed. The uncles, they all went to that one but we weren't allowed to go for I don't know what reason. Some mysterious reason. But Dee Why wasn't as busy as it is now of course. But it was reasonably settled and

12:00 it was a little township of its own and two shopping centres, one at the beach and one up on the main road, so you had the two shopping centres there, and you could walk across the hill and you were over at Curl Curl, so you were at Curl Curl beach from there. It was a good place actually to grow up, especially when nobody had any money in those days, so your entertainment was mostly going to the beach and playing

12:30 at the beaches and all that kind of thing. I don't know how you would classify it. It was just a suburb.

Tell us a bit more about that house. Can you describe the sort of house it was?

Arcadia? Weatherboard. Fairly old. The little hearth around the house itself was I think it was

13:00 fibro. And the rooms were not real big. But the girls had – the older girls had two single beds. I slept on the lounge, actually, and Harold slept in with the boys somewhere. There was only my brother and I that were the two, we were the younger ones. But since my dad was 20 years older than Aunty Biddy, we sort of fitted into the slots. There were – we came on

13:30 just like two more younger members of the family. As I said, you got a clout if you needed it. And that's the way you were. You didn't do it again. I won't say the rest.

What did you get a clout for? What sort of things did you get into trouble for?

Anything that they considered to be a bit out of line. You don't do that kind of thing.

14:00 You get a clout.

Were you a naughty girl? Did you get in trouble a lot?

Possibly the worst one was not getting home in time when you should have been home at a certain time. You had to be home at a certain time. No. We didn't get in – if the boys were in a bad mood you'd get a clout if you stepped in their way. You didn't.

14:30 You didn't want to be clouted. You just didn't do it again.

Who was in charge of that discipline in the house?

Granny.

How would she be in charge of it?

She'd just tell you. It was verbal. She'd say, "You don't do that and you behave yourself." And you did in those days. We weren't as recalcitrant as some of the young people are now. But no, Granny was always the boss. They uncles were there to

15:00 back her up.

And she probably had to discipline them as well by the sound of it.

She probably…they didn't seem to get into much trouble. We didn't. We used to just have a long table with a long stool and we all used to sit down and eat together, and the fireplace was there and there was always a big black kettle hanging over the fireplace. You could have a cup of tea at any

15:30 time of day or night if you came in. The fire was always banked up overnight and you just – but we I suppose had – I can't remember – their own personal arguments and things, but it didn't have any lasting effect. I didn't feel threatened at any time. I can't remember being threatened. But,

16:00 oh, threatened if you dared to think of doing anything, you'd be threatened. But the living wasn't threatening. We weren't in any fear of anything happening. I remember when there was some vague murder and the person was out in Frenchs Forest, which was I don't know how many miles away, and we didn't have cars or anything but we weren't allowed to go up the street alone for several weeks

16:30 until that person was caught. Don't ask me who it was, I can't remember. But we weren't allowed to go up the street or anything until that person was caught – not alone. We never had any money but we had a pretty reasonably good happy life. As I say, the older girls went out and did domestic work, cleaning.

17:00 **Who were you closest to? Was your brother, Harold, your best…?**

Yes. Harold and I were good mates, yes. And we both had bikes and we belonged to the League of Wheelmen. But that was when we came to Brooky [Brookvale], not when we came to Dee Why?

Is he younger or older?

He's older. He's 84, I think.

What would you do together?

We rode bikes. We belonged to the League of Wheelmen.

17:30 And then we would ride our bikes to the beach and if the older boys were fishing, we'd take their lunch down and climb around the rocks and give them their lunch. You could climb right around the rocks in those days from Dee Why to Curl Curl. There was only one dangerous bit which was called the donkey track, and you used to have to be very careful on the donkey track. But the rest of it

18:00 you could go the whole way round. So it didn't matter where they were fishing. You could find them on the rocks and we used to ride down and you could safely leave your bikes in those days. Nobody pinched them. They weren't very good bikes anyway. And he used to ride out to Oxford Falls and deliver mail out there and I'd ride with him.

18:30 And then the kids opposite, the Riddle family, we used to play with them, Cocky Laura, and Run Sheep Run and all those games. Just played. There was a dairy further down. We were allowed to go and get our milk from the dairy. Chinese gardens a bit further down. This was Brookvale, not Dee Why.

How old were you when you moved to Brookvale?

Probably would have been about…

19:00 I was at Brookvale Public School in fourth class so I was probably about eight, I suppose. I was dux of the school in 1935. I was 12 then. So I was at Brookvale then.

Before you talk a bit more about Brookvale, those games in the street, what sort of games were they? I've never heard of those names.

Cocky Laura? You form two barriers and somebody had to try and get through.

19:30 There was two in the middle to stop them getting, stop the one person from running, try to get through the barrier to the other side kind of thing. And Run Sheep Run, much the thing, if you run and you got tapped you had to stop and go back. They were all busy running games. And we all used to go as a great clump of people and walk out to Oxford Falls. Take a sausage or two and burn it over a fire. And then we'd –

20:00 there were what we call monkey vines and we used to swing around like Tarzan on the trees. We just did things, active things. I was a reader – I've always read. And the girls used to say, "Make her read that page again, Mum, she couldn't have possibly read it that quickly." And I used to read to Gran because she couldn't read – she could neither read nor write. The only thing she could do was sign her own name. That was

20:30 all she could write. But I used to have to search through the paper and find some little piece with a dreadful thing happening in South America or China or something, because we didn't have much bad news in those days. So I used to read the papers to Gran. The boys'd bring a paper home from somewhere and I used to read to her. But I was always a reader. My brother is a – I don't know whether he still is, but he used to read a lot then.

21:00 **Do you remember any books that stood out to you as your particular favourites?**

Oh yes. The Ann books. The Ann of Green Gables, Ann of Avonlea, Ann of Montgomery. All the Ann books. Gillian Montgomery books. And yes they were definitely my favourites. And always – I'm still an Agatha Christie fan. I used to like Agatha. I used to read a bit to Granny, so she'd be horrified and say, "Why are you reading that kind of rubbish?"

21:30 The Ann books and I don't know, I just read anything that came into the house, good, bad or indifferent. I got into trouble for asking what some rude words were sometimes. I didn't know what they were. But there you are.

Where did they come from, the books in your house?

Mostly – you could get the books for a penny

22:00 at the school stores, books that people discarded – mostly only paperbacks. You've seen my books. Yeah, well.

Nobody in the archive's seen them though, so yeah.

You could always finish up with some sort of a book, some sort of reading, if you wanted reading. And at school they would let you take them home as long as you were careful and took them back again. That was Brookvale Public School.

22:30 You could always ask your teacher if you could have a book. You'd have to, on pain of death, return it in good order and condition. You could always get a book.

Was there a public library?

There probably was at Manly but we didn't have one at Brookvale, and of course to go to Manly it was a penny on the bus. Oh, that's what my brother and I used to do. We used to get up at four o'clock in the morning and pick half a kerosene tin of blackberries from down at the paddock out the back.

23:00 And then we'd pay a penny and go on the bus and then we used to sell them for threepence a quart at the flats along Manly Beach. That was our best selling area. We got to the stage of having one pound nine shillings in the bank at one stage of the game. But there some household emergency arose and we had to draw it out and give it to Granny because there was some emergency. But we only picked

23:30 half a bucket of berries, because if you picked a whole bucket they'd squash. So you picked half a bucket of berries and it wasn't easy.

How old were you then?

Twelve, 13 kind of age.

How did money come into the household?

I think Granny's pension was the only money that was in the house. I think she may have received something for Harold and I

24:00 because we were – I don't know what you would call us. Although we were grandchildren we weren't immediate family. I think she would have been on a welfare kind of thing for Harold and I. I can't say that was a fact, but I think it could have been a fact. And the boys were always out trying to get casual work and they got casual work on buildings and things like that. But none of them were ever trained. As I say, the older ones were in the mines.

24:30 They were never trained for anything greatly. I can talk about them. They're all dead. But they were good. Uncle Dave and his wife were beautiful dancers. They won all the dancing competitions in those days. I don't know. We just lived. It was a dreadful time as far as – when I was dux of the school

25:00 and I then won a scholarship to Fort Street Girls' High School, well, I was only able to go – I went a couple of months I think, but with the price of the uniform and the one and eight pence a week fares it just wasn't affordable. I just couldn't go to it. So I used to ride my bike into Manly at night then to do the Intermediate.

25:30 Then I fell of my bike and broke a collarbone and then I went to hospital.

We'll come back and talk about all those things. I just want to go one at a time, so not too much.

Well, you're telling me to remember.

No, no. You're doing a great job. About the money, though, it must have been difficult to put food on the table for all those people.

Yes. And Granny could make steak and kidney stew stretch a long way. If things were looking up

26:00 and the boys had got some work or something then you'd get half a saveloy for Saturday lunch. Half. For Saturday lunch with your bread. Granny was a great cook. Always lovely hot scones. You could – and when you'd come home and you'd pick mushrooms on your way home from school. I went to Harbord Catholic School. And we'd pick mushrooms on the way home and she'd just put them on the front of the stove and cook them along the stove for us

26:30 when we got in. I don't know. We grew a lot. We had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and we had a walnut tree and we had a loquat tree. We used to jokingly call it the cicada tree, but the loquat tree. And we had plum trees. We grew a lot of our own food, vegetable patch and everything. Don't forget the toilets were lavatories in those days. You had a lot of home-grown compost.

27:00 **What was the toilet like?**

Just a little shack out the back with the can around it. We had it here when we first started.

And how was that emptied or what happened?

They boys had to do that because there was so many of us in the house you couldn't wait for the sanitary man to come. He only came once a week. But the boys used to have to empty that. And that was always in a pit and dug in and then it was used as compost. The best blackberries out the back you ever saw.

27:30 **You mentioned steak and kidney stew. What sort of dishes would your grandmother cook?**

Always dishes that could – but oh, she made delicious apple pies. Kids always used to sit out the front on Sunday, and when you bought your apples in those days they always had a little piece of tissue paper round them. And we'd all have our little piece of tissue paper and when Granny'd peel the apples we'd all get our skins and cores.

28:00 We'd all run out the front and eat the skins and the cores. That was a real treat. Sunday apple skins. And Granny'd always make apple pie. There was always apple pie on the weekend, and curried sausages were a good one, and then she'd go up and from the butcher she'd get all the necessities – I don't know what it consisted of – to make the most beautiful brawn. And she used to set it in the ice chest and sit it right on the ice block

28:30 and set the brawn. I don't know how she coped, but she always coped. There was always hot food there. And there was a little window behind the side of the stove, and when I started going with Harry and he used to come on a Saturday morning one of the girls would look out and say, "Here he comes, Mum. He's got it with him." And he'd always bring Granny a cake. He'd have a cake sitting on his hand. He'd always bring a cake.

29:00 **Were there any interesting ways she had of making ends meet, of making things go further?**

I truly honestly can't say because Granny used to do all that. I never had anything to do with the cooking or anything. I used to have to help with the polishing the floors. You know how we polished the floors? We used to put the polish down and then we'd put a record on the old gramophone and then Uncle Dave'd

29:30 teach us to dance with our socks on, with old socks on, and we'd polish the floor and we'd dance all around that floor. You never saw such well polished floors. And, no, but Granny always used to deal with it. I never had anything to do with that. I used to bring home my seven and six a week and I'd get a shilling back. So if I was allowed a shilling then we must have been all right. It was seven and six a week I got at the laundry, and then, as I say, I went to

30:00 the munitions in late 1939 and I was there till '42. I was allowed to leave. The only reason I was allowed to leave was I'd go into a dry cleaners that was doing all the American cleaning, and since it was still classified as semi-war oriented I could leave and go there, and then -

30:30 the boys were very upset about this – I was getting five pounds four shillings a week and can I tell you what they said? Is it allowed? "Bloody chit of a girl getting that kind of money!" That was there response to me. Five pounds four shillings in the dry cleaning. That was a lot of money.

Before you started working though at the laundry, what other chores did you have around the house?

The hateful chore of picking up the chips for the fire.

31:00 I hated picking up the chips for the fire. When the boys would chop the wood, all the chips then would be gathered into a bucket to go and start the fire. And the messages. I was the messenger girl. I had to walk up the street for any little message. And you didn't pay. You paid a weekly account in those days. When you paid your weekly account you got a big bag of boiled lollies always. The grocer gave Granny a big bag of

31:30 boiled lollies for us when she paid the bill. And she'd pay the bill after she got her pension and that was how. But I had to help in the yard. I used to have to help weed. And as I say, we had plenty of fruit. That's probably why I'm so healthy. Not a lot of sweets but plenty of fruits.

How did that fire work that you gathered the wood for...?

Oh just an oven. It was just an oven. A black

32:00 oven and it had a fair sized oven. Granny could always get two big pies in there. And we had – apart from steak and kidney and potatoes, we often had a steak and kidney pie. We were pretty well fed, actually, I think. It was plain food, nothing fancy. But I don't remember being hungry. We used to have Uncle Toby's oats always for breakfast, rolled oats. And syrup.

32:30 We used to make a pattern with the syrup on top. Get into trouble for that.

What about clothing? What were you wearing?

Oh, don't ask about clothing. I never had a new garment until I was nearly 15. Granny used to make cut-me-downs from the girls. I don't know what, where the girls got their clothing from. Not often, but they would get a new dress and when they got a new dress then I'd have a cut me down from the girls.

33:00 My first new dress when I was 15, I got a new dress. And that was the first new dress I had. Was navy blue with little spots and a white collar. I remember.

Would you always have shoes?

Sandshoes mainly. Didn't have many shoes. I think we got shoes once. It was a welfare thing and they came

33:30 to Brookvale Showground in the hall and we got fitted for a pair of shoes then. I got a pair of shoes then. But I never had a bought pair of shoes.

Were there other welfare available for people in those times? What would you do?

I couldn't say. I honestly don't know. I wouldn't like to answer that because I would be only using my imagination. I don't really know. I don't really know how Granny coped. The little old lady that owned our house

34:00 lived at Kings Cross. She was one of those funny little old ladies with old coats and hats. Seemed to wear a lot of clothes. She'd come out every fortnight to get Granny's – supposed to be 10 shillings a week, but if Granny only had eight shillings a week she'd take that. She never bothered whether it was eight or 10 or whatever. And Granny always used to make a batch of scones and a cup of tea. And she'd come all the way out from Kings Cross.

34:30 I think she enjoyed Granny's company really. And then she'd trot off and go back to Kings Cross again and come out the next fortnight. I'm quite sure that – I don't know what properties she owned otherwise. She was quite happy if Granny didn't have 10 shillings – two 10 shillings – she'd take eight or whatever Granny had at the time. There was never any problem with her with that. There didn't appear to be.

35:00 Not to me anyway.

What sort of occasions would bring the whole family together in the house at Brookvale?

We mostly lived together. There wouldn't be any special occasions. You didn't have any special occasions for birthdays or anything. They just came and went. I was married and pregnant when I was 21.

35:30 I was living in Manly then. And I don't know what brought the families together. We always seemed to be there. There was always somebody there. We didn't have rellies that were far afield. I don't have any rellies left except my brother in my generation. All the others have gone. But Uncle Dave and Aunty Flo, they just lived up the street in Winbourne Road Brookvale. They lived up the street in Aunty Flo's

36:00 father and mother's place. Which was a couple of hundred yards away. Aunty Florrie lived in West Street. She moved around to West Street when she got married. Then there was Aunty Dolly, she finally lived in Collaroy but I don't know what circumstances she moved under. Can't remember.

Would you eat together?

Mostly.

36:30 Of course there was always the girls. Being the youngest I didn't have much to do with the household cooking or all that apart from polishing the floor in a great pleasurable fashion. But yes, there were mostly, unless the boys were away working or anything like that, the girls, as I say, did only domestic work and they'd be home

37:00 to help Granny with the evening meal. I don't know. I'm going again.

Was Sunday dinner a big event?

Always a baked dinner. Every Sunday was a baked dinner, and of course we had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. So for Easter and approaching Christmas we always had WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. There's nothing funnier than a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK running around with its head off. Not supposed to say those things.

What happens when a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK runs around with its head off?

37:30 They chop the head off and the poor old WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK 's reflexes keep it going and it runs around with its head off. And in those days – I'd probably think it was horrible now, but I thought it was funny in those days.

Who was in charge of slaughtering the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s?

One of the boys had to do that. I didn't have anything to do with the actual – I had to help put the washing on the line. Now that, that was a chore because we had big lines with clothes props propping the lines up.

38:00 And you had to put them up in relays and our copper – our copper and laundry was a separate building to the house. It had a bath and a shower. Cold. And a copper and two tubs. That was separate to the house. When washing was being done, it was boiled. The linen was always boiled and then it was rinsed through two tubs and then it was out.

38:30 But I hated the washing days because you had these wet sheets slapping at you, and if it was windy and you had to get them all on the line and had it a certain height so they wouldn't hit the ground and then prop them up, and I used to – the girls used to, when the washing was over and there was just a small amount of water left in that hot copper, Granny'd let me have a bath in that.

39:00 The girls would say, "You're spoiling her letting her get in that nice hot copper." Where they had to have that cold bath or carry the water across from the copper. But I was allowed to get in the copper when I was small.

What was the usual routine for bathing?

You had to either have a cold shower or heat the copper and carry the water into the bath. That was just the thing. You normally just heated the copper and

39:30 poured it into the bath and had your bath. Outside the house. There was no bathroom in the house.

Would you do that every day?

Most days, yes. Especially if the boys were working and they got dirty. But they used to have a cold shower a lot of the time, the boys. They couldn't be bothered heating the copper and carting it across. But the girls liked a hot bath so they'd cart. They'd heat the copper and cart it across. When I say cart it across, it was only from there to there.

40:00 Two tubs. A copper, two tubs and a bath. That was the laundry outside. No, the girls'd mostly heat the copper. That's how I got into trouble – I didn't get into trouble, but they used to say I was spoilt.

Tape 2

00:40 **You mentioned that in Dee Why the beach was the main centre of entertainment. Can you tell us about the beach in those days? What would people do down there?**

Just the usual. We'd play rounders or

01:00 a short game of cricket or climb round the rocks. There was a nice fairly natural swimming pool as well as the surf. Surf was great. We used to do a lot of surfing – body surfing I'm speaking of. If you could borrow somebody else's surfer plane that was an extra treat, but not often.

What was that?

One of those things that they've got back again now. They've got inflated surfer plane things. They're back. The kids have them again now.

01:30 Not a surf board. A rubber air-filled one. Mostly we body surfed. And as I say, we played rounders or cricket or we just sat in a clump on the beach talking. Just busy doing nothing.

What sort of costumes would you wear?

I've got picture in my costume if you want to see it. One-piece bathers we had mostly in those days. Just

02:00 whatever you could scrounge. If you needed a bather and you were going first you took the best bather.

What were they made from?

But the girls didn't swim as much as I did. They were a woolly sort of bather, sort of a woollen thing. Just the one-piece bather.

Would they get heavy and uncomfortable when they'd get wet?

Never thought about it. If you got too sunburnt

02:30 when you got home again Granny used to cut a green tomato and rub it all over you. That was the salve in those days – her salve, I don't say everybody did that.

Where did you first go to school?

It would have been – I went for a little while to Dee Why Catholic School when we lived at Dee Why,

03:00 and don't remember a great deal about that except when nits got in, and there are nits about now I believe. When the nits came you used to have to go through – the girls used to have to go through that side and put their head in sister's lap while she nitted them, and then the boys used to have to go through that side. I don't know whether it was a nun or who took the boys, but we weren't allowed to go together. We used to always go through

03:30 that little room on that side and that little room on that side. And then sister would de-nit you – I don't remember a lot about Dee Why because I was only small then.

How did the de-nitting take place?

She used to go through your hair with a fine toothed comb, and comb and comb and she'd have you covered with a sort of a sheety thing or something. We used to call it a shroud, which of course we got into trouble with. But they used to go through your hair with a fine tooth comb. We didn't –

04:00 we were lucky, we didn't get nits. But Granny was a pretty stringent as far as being clean was concerned. I think we had nits once, I think. I might have had nits. I don't think the girls ever got nits – the older ones that weren't at school. But I think I got them once and I had my hair cut real short then and de-nitted.

04:30 But I don't remember a lot about Dee Why Catholic School because we moved to Brooky then, and I must have been in third class at Brookvale I think. I know I was in fourth class and I was the worst sewer in the class so I used to sit there and read to the class while they sewed. She held up one of my darns and she held it up like a knot at the end.

05:00 You never darn with a knot, but I did 'cause it was the only way I could stop the wool from going through. But I used to be allowed to read to the class. Miss Cusack used to allow me to read to the class while they stitched happily. And I was the only person in the class, in any class I attended, whose writing never went on the wall at the Brookvale Show, unless they wanted to put the

05:30 worst writer in the class on, that'd be me. I was the worst writer then. I'm a bad writer now. I've never been able to be a good writer. I think too quickly to write well.

What was the problem with your writing?

I was just a bad writer. It never looked neat and tidy. I could write. I could write great compositions, and Miss Cusack used to love the compositions I wrote.

06:00 But the bad writing wouldn't permit them to be on the wall.

What was your favourite thing at school?

English. I love English. I'm still interested in English. And luckily I have Damian because if he comes home with a new word that he doesn't know or understand the meaning of we get the dictionary out and we look it up. He knows the real meaning of fantastic

06:30 and terrific and I keep telling him he's not allowed to say that to the other young people because they'd take offence if they were told that they were using the incorrect word in the incorrect way. But we still check every word that he comes home with if he comes home with a new word.

You went to a Catholic primary school. How important was the church or religion in your family?

I always went to church.

07:00 We always went to – well I did. My brother and I mostly. We even went back to church at Dee Why. Then after I was at Brookvale Public School, I went to Harbord Catholic School then to do a bit of shorthand and typing then. But that's where I was at Harbord Catholic School, when I didn't got back to school again after the Christmas. I worked at Dee Why Laundry and I stayed at Dee Why Laundry then. That was about

07:30 1936 till 1939 when the war started, and I suppose I didn't exactly leave right zoomp in the very beginning, but later on. I was at Malleable Castings. I've got it written on the back of the picture there – '40 to '42. So that'd be 1940, I'd have been 17.

08:00 **So where did you go to church?**

When I went to Harbord Catholic School I went to Harbord Church, and that was a pretty long walk from Brookvale. We used to walk through the paddocks and we used to baggy our patches of mushrooms so we could pick them when we came back home again. So I went to Harbord when I went to Harbord Catholic School to do the basically shorthand and typing – at which I was very bad.

08:30 **What sort of mushrooms would you get on the way?**

Yummy. Any kind of mushrooms. Small or large, little pink ones, big fat brown ones that had been opened out. They open out during the day, mushrooms. And we'd make sure we could carry them somewhere under a jumper or somewhere and we'd get them home and Granny'd allow us to have just one then, but if she wanted the rest she'd save them for cooking.

09:00 Put them into the cooking. Oh yes, we used to get our mushies and blackberries. We had the blackberry bushes out the back. And Chinese gardens. We used to go down the Chinese gardens. If we did a bit of weeding for them, they'd always give us a big caulie or a big cabbage or something we didn't grow. Spinach and things Granny always grew. Then they'd always give me a little bunch of watercress because they knew Granny liked watercress.

09:30 We always kept busy.

What was at the Chinese gardens? Can you describe that to us?

Everything at the Chinese gardens. They had rows and rows of cabbages, cauliflower, climbing beans up one end of them. I didn't get around to the climbing beans, but they grew anything – beetroot – anything in the vegetable line you could get from the Chinese gardens.

10:00 Then down the bottom of our street on the corner of Harbord Road, there's some Yugoslavians. They started gardens, too. So we had lots of gardens around us where you could go and offer your services and get paid in kind.

And what sort of chores would you do for them?

Only a little bit of weeding. Nothing terribly strenuous, didn't do hard work.

What about the dairy you mentioned?

Oh well, we didn't have anything to do

10:30 with the dairy, but one of the men in the dairy was a very big man, a big tall man. When you danced with him your arms were around his waist he was so tall. And he used to be called Camel Williams. Williams was the dairy's name. They were really nice and we always got our milk from the diary. We'd go across with a bucket and get a bucket of milk – two pints or whatever Granny needed. They had their cows in the paddock

11:00 there. Brookvale – Winbourne Road was only a few houses. There's one picture that I have there with a little bit of the house next door to us. You can't see our little old house, but you can see a little of the house next door. There was nothing beyond – I can't think of the name, I was going to say it and it went – nothing beyond her house except a paddock and then the Chinese gardens. And then there were a couple of more paddocks.

11:30 And the Yugoslavians started a garden down on the corner of Harbord Road and Winbourne Road.

Were there very many different nationalities around at that time?

No, not a lot. The Yugoslavs were sort of a new thing. They were nice. I've got – I didn't bring it out, I didn't think it'd be interesting. I have pictures of myself at the beach with two of the Yugoslavian girls. But I didn't get that one out.

12:00 The girls were around about my age at that time. But they always worked hard.

Who were your best friends as a young girl?

As a young girl? I don't think I had any real best friends. We were all friends. Pauline and Joycie Tasker. We used to be friends with at school. And Jeanne Rittle.

12:30 Jeanne Rittle was one. She lived opposite. Then we had a Scotsman a couple of houses down there and they always wondered whether he really did wear pants under his kilts, because the old rumour was that they never wore pants, so then one day he must have known about the rumour because there were about eight pairs of black pants hanging out – underpants – so we guessed that he did wear underpants under his kilt.

13:00 But we didn't know him very well. He was just somebody you said hello to and that's all. And the Rittles were there and next to the Rittles was one of the older girls that got married. Can't think what her surname was, but she was still one of the Rittles. They were next door. Then that was the creek. There was a creek next door to us there. And the pipes were big pipes. We used to leave school and come home through the pipes right down

13:30 to the creek. Didn't matter if there was a bit of water in it. You just took your shoes off and sloshed.

Would you be able to play with the boys as well?

Oh yes. We played with boys. We played – I was good at marbles. I could beat some of the boys at marbles. Yes, we used to play with the boys. Not at school, we didn't play with the boys, no. But at home we did. There were plenty of Rittle boys. There was Rittle boys there.

14:00 Alan Rittle, Bobby Rittle, Freddy Rittle, and we had for a while when Aunty Florrie was still at home we had young Bill and Eric, they were our cousins. We had lots of boys. We mixed, yes. And the early evening when we used to play on the road, that was always a mixture of girls and boys.

What were

14:30 **your particular interests? You've mentioned a few things.**

Just general living and the beach and reading.

Tell us about the League of Wheelmen, how did you get into that?

Oh yes. My brother and I both rode with the League of Wheelmen. He was the instigator of joining them.

15:00 I think the headquarters of them were in North Sydney but we used to ride to Palm Beach, have a picnic out at Palm Beach and ride back, a group of about a dozen or more would be in the group. We used to put the bikes on the train and go down to National Park and ride down there. Coming up was a killer because it's such a steep hill. But we used to do all that kind of thing

15:30 with the bikes. That didn't mean every day, that might have been once a month or something like that we'd do the big ride. But as I say, my brother rode the bike to go to Oxford Falls and deliver the mail, because Oxford Falls was not like it is now, it was just a little old post office and perhaps two houses. It's a big area now, Oxford Falls. Not as it was. It wasn't anything then. In those days you could just go

16:00 and wander round the bush, and as I say, we'd go for picnics there, but I don't know, the time just seemed to go. You went to school, you did your homework.

What was the League all about though? Did you have meetings or just go on excursions together?

I think Harold did attend some meetings, but I didn't. I just was one of those female creatures that didn't matter very much

16:30 and tag along with a brother. They used to go out to Frenchs Forest, Sorley's Village. There was a place there called Sorley's Village. Sorley was an old singer, I believe, and he tried to start a village there but it didn't come to anything. But the boys used to race out there on the bikes. I didn't race. I used to get into trouble if I left him with the – we had a – what's that two in one bicycle called?

17:00 **Tandem.**

We had a tandem, Harold and I. And if I left him with the tandem and went home with one of the other boys on the motor bike I used to get into trouble. Had to ride the tandem on his own or get one of the other kids to get on the back with him.

How much did you hear from your father?

I never heard from my father very much. He turned up when I was – he turned up when I was in hospital with my broken collarbone after I got

17:30 caught on the tram tracks with my bike. He turned up then. He had another wife then. My mother was well and truly dead, of course, many years ago. So he's quite entitled to have another wife. He stayed with us for a while then. Only a week or so. Her name was Doreen, and she used to play Patience and she used to sit playing Patience all the time she was there. She didn't say much.

18:00 He had two children actually with that wife, but I don't know them. He lived in Melbourne. He was in hospital once and I went down while he was in hospital, but I didn't have a lot to do with my father, no, not much.

What had happened to you with the collarbone? Can you tell us that story?

I was riding home from Manly and it had been raining and the road was slippery and I got caught in the

18:30 tram tracks. The bike wheel got caught in the tram tracks and threw me off. I was lucky the tram driver – that was North Manly and the tram driver let me get on the tram with my battered bike in the back and took me to Brookvale. So of course then I just walked down Winbourne Road to home and reported the fact that I'd fallen off the bike. Got into trouble for that actually – apart from the fact that I had a broken collarbone.

19:00 I was in hospital then for about – I don't know – probably a week or so I suppose. I don't remember how long.

What did they do for you in hospital?

They strapped it with big wide elastic and then I went up to get it looked at and they tore all that elastic off. Elasticised bandage I mean. But they just pulled it off. The didn't bother

19:30 easing it off in any way. But that was all. It wasn't serious.

Did that change your riding habits, that accident?

No, not at all. It was the only way you could get anywhere. Apart from walking. And then of course if there was a group, we walked. If there was a group and the others didn't have bikes we all walked between Brooky and Dee Why to go to the beach, and Curl Curl. We might go to Curl Curl. We might go to Dee Why. Decide where we'd go,

20:00 and then we'd all walk, and we'd sing.

What would you sing?

We'd sing whatever song was popular at the time you'd sing. Don't ask me what they are now.

Just on the subject of getting around, you mentioned the trams. Where did the trams run to in those days?

Narrabeen. They ran from Manly to Narrabeen. They finished at Narrabeen right near the Narrabeen Lakes area. Short of the Narrabeen Lakes area the trams went to.

20:30 **What sort of trams were they? Can you describe them?**

They were just trams. I don't know how you'd describe them.

They different to buses today.

Oh yes, they're different to buses.

Toast-rack type?

Oh yes. The toast rack kind of trams, but you just got in all the carriages. The first and the last were usually the open carriages, you didn't like to get in there if it was cold. For the rest of it –

21:00 most of them had a running board, and the fare man used to walk along the running board and take your penny or whatever it was for the trams, yeah.

You mentioned music. Did you have a gramophone at home?

An old gramophone that the boys found on a tip and they fixed it up. And we also had an old open radio with those globes on it that they used to sit up half the night listening to the cricket.

21:30 The boys used to sit up half the night listening to the cricket. But we had an old high tall gramophone. Probably worth a fortune if we still had it – which we don't. And records. There was always records. I've got a batch of records out there that I still play on, an old wind up gramophone if I want to hear something specific. I have an old record that is called Harriet Ware's Boat Song and it's the prettiest thing.

22:00 It's not a 78 or anything. It's an old record. And sometimes if I'm in the mood I get the old gramophone out, which I have, and wind it up and play Harriet Ware's Boat Song for myself.

Where did you records come from?

Don't ask me, I couldn't tell you. They were there. The bigger ones must have got them from somewhere. But we had records. I don't know where we got them from though. I have no idea

22:30 where they arrived from. The boys'd get them or Aunty Florrie or Aunty Dolly might be given them where they worked, where they did domestic work. I honestly don't know. Can't tell you that. But we danced to records, and Uncle Dave was such a beautiful dancer. It's fun to polish floors when you can dance on them.

What sort of dances did he teach you?

We did the Pride of Erin, the Old Time Waltz, the Quick Step,

23:00 the Fox Trot. We could dance. We really liked to dance and we went to Luana at Dee Why and the barn dance was a very popular one. And there was a really old gentleman there called Mr Fish and when I was about 15 Mr Fish was about 80 and he always wore white tie and tails, and if Mr Fish asked you to dance with him, that was an honour. He only asked certain

23:30 people to dance with him. And if you got to dance with Mr Fish, even if he was 80, it didn't matter because he was a gentleman and you danced with him. Mr Fish. I'd forgotten about Mr Fish. We used to have dancing lessons at the Luana and do a barn dance type of thing and then you'd dance with that partner for that certain type of dance you were doing, and then you would move back one, the boys'd move forward and you'd move back, and then you'd dance

24:00 with the next one. So you learnt to dance with everybody. You could dance with anybody, whatever kind. And we used to do the Lancers and we used to do a bit of square dancing. The Lancers was the main. I can't think of the other – there was another one we did. But it was – you went in for a shilling and it was such a lot of fun, it was well worth it. Even after I was married and had Robyn, Harry and I used to wheel her over to Dee Why and

24:30 the boys'd help him carry the pram up into the ladies' section and she'd sleep up there all night. They used to keep their beer under her pillow so that nobody else'd touch it. We just went over to the Lu and danced and had a very inexpensive entertainment. Entertainment wasn't expensive in those days.

How old were you when you first started learning to dance?

Oh, I could dance when I was young, from just

25:00 at home, but I was about 15 when we used to go to Luana. But of course Granny used to come, too. Granny was always sitting there. You never did anything untoward. All the older ladies used to come and sit and chat while the young ones all got up and swung themselves about.

We'll come back to that in a minute. You managed to win a scholarship

25:30 **to Fort Street. Can you tell us how that came about?**

Yeah. I don't really know – the teachers, Mr Sheppard was our teacher and I became dux of the school. He arranged whatever had to be done in those days. Granny wouldn't have known what to have done. But Mr Sheppard was our headmaster at Brookvale Public School and he arranged it, and I got a scholarship to go to Fort Street, but as I say,

26:00 everything was too – I did get a uniform but it was a uniform that – they had a rack of second-hand uniforms of people that left the school. I had a uniform and a hat. But it was the one and eight a week

that was the killer. Every week you didn't have one and eight.

So you managed to become dux of Brookvale despite your messy writing and your bad sewing.

Yes. I did. Got the book – proof.

26:30 **You were good at all the other things then?**

Yes. Very quick. I can still if you wanted to hear the dates of history I can still quote them for you.

What dates of history are they?

55BC Julius Caesar invaded Britain. 597 Christianity in Britain. 871 King Alfred defeated the Danes. 1066 William Duke of Normandy becomes King of England. 1170 Thomas A'Beckett, Archbishop, was murdered.

27:00 But our teacher didn't just have you do that parrot fashion. You would get that date, 55BC and he would pull the blind down – like a Holland blind type of thing – and then you used to do the whole lesson. You didn't just learn them off by rote as people think. You had the lesson, the full lesson of how they were invaded and what happened during that period. But rote learning was something that has been wiped out of fashion

27:30 and it isn't done any more. But you can't tell me that rote learning wasn't good. It was good. We were taught. There was no Australian history at that time. Only about Leichhardt and all of them going into and trying to get from Adelaide up to Darwin. That was more or less geography more than history. We didn't have much Australian history except the great war in those days. The Second World War hadn't

28:00 started, of course, so we had mostly English history. Because that's what it was in those days.

What did you know about the Great War?

Not a great deal. Dad was in the Great War. He was also in the Second World War. I've got pictures of him in the Second World War. But Dad married again for a third time after Doreen died, his second wife.

28:30 And he lived in Queensland then. And when he died and we got on very well with his third wife, Marge, afterwards – I didn't do it immediately – I said I'd like some of Dad's old paperwork – photos and things and she said, "Oh I burnt all of that rubbish."

29:00 So there was nothing left of Dad's. I've got nothing of Dad's at all. They tell me I could go to the archives in Canberra and get his medals if I wanted them, but it's not an important thing. I'm not going to bother about that. But I was a bit disappointed that she'd burnt all that 'rubbish' because I would have been interested in having some of it. As you can see, I'm a hoarder.

What did you know about what your dad did in the First World War?

Not a great deal.

29:30 He didn't talk about it. Not – I didn't see him that much. In my presence it wasn't talked about. I really didn't know. Uncle Roy was over there too – no, Uncle Roy was over there in the Second World War, he wasn't in the First World War.

Were there any relatives that had fought in the First World War that you can think of?

No, only Dad that I'm aware of.

Was he the eldest of these brothers?

He was the eldest, yes.

30:00 Dad was 40 when Aunty Biddy was born – no, not 40, 20 when Aunty Biddy was born. He was 20 years older than Aunty Biddy. So he was the oldest and she was the youngest.

And the others all fitted in between.

Yes.

So you went to Fort Street for a few weeks. How long did that last?

A couple of months I actually

30:30 went for.

And what did you think of it?

I quite liked it. It was – well I just liked school. I didn't really want to leave school. I liked going to school. The Latin teacher was a bit brusque. But, and we still had the same kind of naughty

31:00 children. One little girl had the most beautiful blonde plaits. We had inkwells of course. Well the other one behind her took great delight in putting her plaits in the ink well. She got into trouble for that. But

no, it was just a school, just education, it was another school. But that was up on the Bradfield Highway then. That wasn't Fort Street Boys' High School.

31:30 That was Fort Street Girls' High School. That was up on Bradfield Highway near the bridge at that time. I marched across the bridge.

How did you get there?

I went by bus to Manly and boat to Circular Quay and walked up. That was tuppence and four pence a day, you see.

When did you march across the bridge? When it was opened?

When it was opened, yes. I was nine when the bridge opened.

What was that occasion like? Can you describe it?

That was great.

32:00 We had lots of fun. Lots of schoolkids marched across the bridge. And you'd look down very warily to see and the cars looked about that big down at the side, down beside the bridge pylons and those areas. We marched across the bridge. I don't remember the fellow riding up and cutting the ribbon. We must have been much more ahead of it or much more behind it because I don't remember him doing that. I was

32:30 most surprised when they told me that's what happened while we were there on the bridge.

What were your impressions of the bridge?

It was magnificent. Yes. It was the wonder of the world.

Did it change the lives of the people in Sydney at that time?

It didn't have any change on our lives because we didn't have vehicles or anything else like that. We still went across on the Manly Ferry. I still got sick if the water was rough.

33:00 No, it didn't change our lives to any degree. We knew it was there and we were very proud of the fact it was there. We didn't have any vehicles – except our bikes. I suppose we could have ridden our bikes across but we didn't. We went to National Park on the boat. Rode to Manly and took our bikes on the boat and rode from there. From Circular Quay.

What was

33:30 **the Manly Ferry like?**

Great. The ferry's good. I like the ferry. You know that old song, I Love To Ride A Ferry.

Was it a steam ferry?

No, they were the ferries – most of the time – I don't know, they probably were. We were on the ferry, my girlfriend and I – Olga – the night the Japanese bombed the Rose Bay area and that. We were coming home. We were at the theatre with a couple of boys and the

34:00 sirens went right through the theatre and they had to go back to camp. They were gentlemen in those days. They did escort us to Circular Quay. They couldn't take us to Manly, of course, because they had to report back.

We'll come back and we'll talk all about that when we get to it, but we just won't skip forward to it just yet. Fort Street. When you were told you couldn't go there any more, what was your reaction to that?

I was a bit unhappy about that. Well I didn't

34:30 go back to school at all, you see. I went back to do shorthand typing and things like that, but I never went back to school as a pupil fully again. Although I was a good scholar there was nothing you could do. But what could you do? You just did what you could do and I suppose the disappointment was there to start off with.

35:00 But you became accustomed to what you were doing. I worked in the laundry and we had quite a good rapport with the girls in what we were doing. I was on a mangle to start off with and then I became a shirt and collar machinist. That was a little step up. And I don't know, I didn't – I don't remember being too terribly unhappy for any reason. You had your moments of unhappiness, and your times of unhappiness

35:30 but they become not real unpleasant memories as time goes by. They all seem to fit into their own slot. The just become a nostalgia more than an unhappiness I think.

How did the job at the laundry come up?

You just applied. Just went in and said did they want anybody. One of my – Pauline Tasker, I mentioned

Pauline earlier – she and I both

36:00 went down there and you know there was a – you wouldn't remember the old bakers' carts, but there was a bakers' cart that had a flat top on it and you went up about three steps to the flat top and he used to pick us up and give us a ride sometimes when he saw us walking. We used to be sitting on top of the bakers' cart. And we were working there when the very first motor bike courier from the army that we ever saw. And there was a barracks out

36:30 towards Narrabeen somewhere and he used to ride past. We used to all wave to the army officers there right at the beginning of the war, and we were there when Coca Cola first came into Australia and they dropped us off a box of Coca Cola at the factory. They gave us a box of Coca Cola to try out there. That was at Dee Why. What was his name? Arthur somebody,

37:00 our boss's name. I can't remember his surname.

Tell us a bit about what was inside the laundry?

It was a huge big building. One big building. Our lunch room was a little tiny bit separate. We had two big mangles, really big mangles. The blisters you used to get – the table cloths. The sheet were all right. They cooled

37:30 much more quickly, but the table cloths were always hot. And you used to have to fold them and fold them neatly. They were stored and stacked on a special trestle table. Then as you went further down past the mangles then there was the shirt and collar machine. That used to run back and forth and had a revolving wheel, and you used to have all those lovely starched collars in those days and the

38:00 shirt and collar machine was a good job. Then past the shirt and collar machine when you went back to the actual cleaning area, the washing machines and things like that, and we had an English father and daughter – he was our person who did that actual washing of the clothing and things. He and his daughter came out

38:30 from England and they left all their warm gear in England because they thought Australia was hot all the time and they had to start again and buy things. And that's where you did get some clothing – unclaimed things. If they're not claimed within three months we could have our pick and then they were sent to the Sals [Salvation Army]. So you got a garment or two

39:00 occasionally that was to your liking and your size. But mostly it was sent to the Sals. Anything that wasn't claimed at all. But they had to start off afresh and get warm gear when they ran into an Australian winter because they didn't think we had any. That was a shock to their system. I can't think of their names.

How were the clothes dried?

They had more or less

39:30 big airing room kinds of things. They used to hang, and they were much better that way. Of course the fabrics weren't the fabrics that they are now, but they never got all badly crushed, and over on that side there were four ironing tables. I didn't do any ironing. They used to be – lots of things were ironed damp and then hung because that made ironing easier,

40:00 if the garments a little bit damp it'll iron more easily. It was all done there. We had a good group there. We had four or five of us in the mangle section. They used to have a shot at me when I became the shirt and collar machinist.

Cause it was easier than the mangle?

Much easier than the mangle. Much better on the hands.

What did you have to do to operate the mangle?

I don't know who

40:30 operated it. We didn't operate them. The girls would feed the garments through and it'd go through the first big mangle and then it'd roll up and come back up into the next one and then you have to take it off and then either two of you or four of you depending on size and then they'd fold them. Meticulously folded. Then they were stacked on the thing and then the boys'd put them into the trucks ready to deliver. But table linen –

41:00 and of course in those days everybody had white table linen. Linen. Oh yes. Very hot on the fingers. But you got used to it.

Tape 3

00:40 **You shared with Chris growing up not really buying your own clothes until you were about 15,**

but the fashion during your teenage years, was that a big thing? Hair?

Fashion. The new fashions that they're wearing now are fashions. Just right back there –

01:00 different lengths of course. But the gowns that the girls are wearing now these days – a large number, not the extreme ones I don't mean, not the ones that are half naked – but the ordinary fashions are very similar to what the girls were wearing in those days. Especially business suits and things like that. They're quite much the same. They haven't altered. They've gone through different

01:30 phases, but they're back again to what they were, a lot of them. You look at the girl walking up the street now, especially in the summer, in a brief – that's the kind of things that we were wearing in those days. Even though we didn't get new ones all the time, you contrived with the ones that you did have to be wearing much the same as others.

So during around '35 and onwards, were there different

02:00 **fashions each year or popular things to wear?**

I suppose there were. It would depend on what Kay Francis and Jean Harlow and all the film stars were wearing. That of course had a lot to do with the fashion that girls wanted to wear in those days. But yes, I suppose it just didn't come into your lifestyle. You just

02:30 wore as close as you could to what your girlfriend was going to wear. You know. You didn't dress as twins, but you dressed in a similar fashion. I suppose fashions were coming and going just as they are now. They didn't get as much publicity as they do now. We had the long line look and you wore something right down to your ankle for a while. And then there was the look where you had a skirt with about eight big underskirts underneath,

03:00 petticoats underneath. There was different fashions. What did they call them? The called the skirts something. But you'd have a skirt and they'd be flounced out with half a dozen different petticoats, bigger petticoats. But yes, there were fashions and the fashions changed and you changed with them in an automatic fashion really. You tried to emulate what everybody else was wearing.

Was there

03:30 **anything that was considered old – such as a girdle-type thing in respect of fashion?**

Well a lot of people did wear girdles and things. What they call them? Step-ins and things like that. But I'm afraid I was always a bit lazy like that. I didn't bother with things like that. And they were always more expensive. If you wanted that kind of underwear you had to pay for it. So of course

04:00 you frequently didn't get it for that reason as much as anything else. Pair of stockings was a luxury. A lot of the legs were painted legs in those days. You used to do the leg make-up and put a line up the back.

Really?

Yes.

So what would you do?

You could – you had to be a model of proper make-up application, and I

04:30 didn't say I did it, but it was very popular for people when you couldn't afford stockings. And then there was a girl opposite us for a long time that used to mend stockings. She'd pick up a ladder in the stocking and take hours and mend the stocking for you. Used to pay her two shillings if you had two shillings. Pay her a shilling if you only had a shilling. She'd mend your stockings though.

So how much were stockings though in

05:00 **comparison to...?**

I can't remember. I was trying to think of that as I – I knew that would be one of your next questions. I honestly can't remember how much they were. I don't know. I can't remember how much stockings were. If you were lucky one of the uncles'd buy you a pair of stockings for your birthday or something on an occasion. Or Christmas more than birthdays. Birthdays just came and went we had so many, but for Christmas you might be lucky enough to get a pair of stockings.

What other

05:30 **items of clothing or underwear were expensive like stockings?**

I don't know. If I wanted anything badly enough I'd always have to say to Granny that I wanted what I wanted. That was before I started work. Even when I started work I only got a shilling a week off the first lot of wages I had. I suppose by the time I went to work in the munitions

06:00 factory I know I was very embarrassed when I fell off the bike because I had navy blue bloomers on. Navy blue bloomers weren't worn in those days. Only from school time. Anyway I don't remember what

they were to be truthful with you. I can't honestly say what they were.

Did teenage girls where make-up and lipstick and all that stuff?

Not so much

06:30 make up. Lipstick always. And sometimes eye shadow. But not a lot of make-up, not heavy make-up. Your hair was more important in those days. And I was lucky. I had long fair shoulder-length hair, but it always had a kink in it. I didn't ever have to have a perm, and if I really wanted something nice for like a page boy or something I'd just roll it up with a piece of electric light wire and tuck it under.

07:00 Then when you took that out and combed it down it fell nicely into a page boy. I was lucky with hair. I've never had a perm. Not in my whole life I've never had a hair perm or anything like that.

You mentioned perm, but what were some of the styles that women had for their hair?

Well of course you went through the beehive style when people had hair all up there. I didn't do that. I didn't do that because I couldn't do it successfully.

07:30 And yes, I had the bouffant, what they call bouffant, and the French roll comb in, you had the French roll. Yes there were always lots of different hairstyles. And then there was the – I can't think of the word I'm thinking of, it'll come back to me in a minute. It was the real short cut, they had the real short cut there for a while. The Widgie look. Bodgies

08:00 and Widgies [trendsetters in the 1950s – girls and guys], yes. The Widgie look. The Widgie was a short. I knew I'd get the word if I tried long enough.

So the Widgie look was what?

Short. Sculptured kind of short. Not just short-short like mine's short-short now, but it was a sculptured cut and it was quite nice. That's Widgie.

And what was the other one you mentioned?

Bodgies were the boys. Bodgies.

08:30 That was they wore extreme jackets or extreme pants. Those pants'd that corrugated down the bottom. They were Bodgies and they wore loud jackets.

Could anyone shave their heads of have really short haircuts, like women, could they do that?

Not that I recall. I honestly don't think that happened. We always liked our hair.

09:00 **Earrings and jewellery?**

Always. Honestly I take them off just when I get into bed. I've always worn earrings. My ears are pierced. I had my ears pierced. "Barbaric," my grandmother said, "barbarism." And I've always worn earrings. It's always been part of my dress. I don't know about anybody else.

09:30 Ever since I've been old enough to get my ears pierced on my own I've worn earrings. Before that because I wore clip-ons, which these are.

So when did you get your ears pierced?

I must have been only about 17 when I had my ears pierced, which was not common in those days. But I was in a big shopping – it might have been David Jones and they had a trained nurse doing

10:00 it. And they only charged you a very small – I can't remember how much, it wasn't much. And I went and bravely had it done.

So what was the process of getting the ear pierced? What did the nurse actually do?

She pierced it with a needle. She sterilised everything. She had all the proper equipment. But that was it. The needle went through your ear and come back

10:30 out again and then you'd have a little pair of studs in there and you didn't take them out. You used to have to turn them around and you took them out after a day or so when the ear had healed correctly.

So your grandmother's saw this and she wasn't happy?

No. She wasn't a bit happy that I'd done that barbaric thing.

Did she wear earrings herself?

No. I don't think Granny had earrings. I've got a picture of

11:00 Granny over there. I don't think she wore earrings, no. Some of the aunties used to wear earrings.

The clip-ons.

The clip-ons, yeah, as opposed to pierced ears.

Why did your grandmother see it as barbaric, piercing your ear?

Getting a hole pierced in your ear for no real reason. Making a hole in yourself. It was barbaric, she said. But I didn't get into too much – I didn't get a clout.

11:30 I was too old for a clout in those days.

Underclothes that you'd wear under your normal clothes. What sort of things were there?

Bra and brief. I've never, I have never owned a singlet in my life. Never. I don't own a singlet. I don't own a spencer. I needed a spencer in England, it was cold.

12:00 I've never owned a singlet.

Were they popular though then?

Everybody had singlets. Most people had singlets. I didn't like them. I've never owned one. I don't own one now and I never owned one. But underwear was much the same. A petticoat with lace around it. Underwear hasn't changed greatly. It's different fabrics of course.

12:30 Some extreme designs do come out. But a petticoat has been a petticoat as long as I can remember. I've got petticoats in there that are probably 30 years old. They're just the same. They're not a great deal of difference in underwear. Cotton briefs. And a bra is a bra. What can you do with a bra?

Haven't worn one myself, so I'm not quite sure. When we finished off with Chris, we were

13:00 **discussing the laundry that you were doing. Linking in with the discussion of clothes, you spoke of linen. What other fabrics were there in respect to what you worked with?**

Mostly it was cotton. If you were lucky enough to get a good nice dress, even a hand-me-down made over then crepe de chine was really quite nice. And silk. But silk wasn't used much for dressing.

13:30 It was a luxury fabric, silk. And satin. A nice satin evening gown. Satin was used for evening gowns mainly. Cotton, linen, crepe de chine. There wasn't any denim. Denim came later. Just ordinary fabrics.

So in the laundry what would you have to do differently for the fabrics?

14:00 **Linen opposed to cotton?**

You see, the ironers and those girls, they had to handle those. I wouldn't be able to tell you anything about those. I was strictly on the mangle or strictly on the shirt and collar machine. The girls and the young woman who was the daughter of the English, the English girl, she would be in charge of seeing which fabric was cleaned and washed in which fashion.

14:30 She would make that decision, and then the girls ironing it would have to be very careful if it was a fabric that might burn or not burn. They'd have to take care of that. I would have nothing to do with garments. Strictly on that side of the building. But they, I can't remember them ever having any complaint about any garment

15:00 being ruined or spoilt or anything. If it happened – if it did occur it occurred very quietly because we didn't hear about it, we didn't hear about.

You mentioned a little bit about how the cinema, the movies would influence some of the styles of dress that you had. What are your memories of the movies and what you saw growing up?

Good memories of the movies. If we worked back – as you called worked back in those days – till nine

15:30 o'clock – and you walked up to Dee Why to the movie, the old usher used to usher us quietly in. And don't forget in those days where were two movies. You saw two full movies, so the first movie would be over but the second movie would be just starting and he'd just let us go in after interval with the rest of the crowd going back in. Never paid to go to the movies at nine o'clock. Paid if we went to the six-thirty section, but

16:00 never paid it at the nine o'clock one because he used to just let us in – just give us a nod.

How did you develop this relationship with him?

I don't know. Just general being there more than anything else. Just turning up on the doorstep kind of thing. But yes, we used to like – movies were a big part of your life when I was young. You used to really have to see

16:30 almost every new movie that came out. It was almost a crime if you missed out seeing one of the movies. It was only sixpence to go in. When you worked. When I was little you wouldn't go into movies because you wouldn't have the money. But when I started to get – Granny gave me a shilling, well I could go to the movies twice. For a shilling.

So before the war what were some of the popular movies?

Oh dear me. All the movies were

17:00 popular. What's his name, that fella, George Raft – and to see him dance the Bolero. Oh, he was really slick. He was some sort of South American or something. He wasn't just an ordinary…I think he was off South America or something, but oh, he could do the Bolero like nobody else could do the Bolero.

17:30 We had Jean Harlow – It Happened One Night with Claudette Colbert, and I think it was Clark Gable, I think. Anyway, they were good. Whatever they were they were pretty good.

What are we talking about at the movies, was it black and white, colour, silent?

Black and white. Before the war. I can't remember when colour did come in

18:00 but I don't think it was before the war. Not that I can recall. No. I think it was all black and white in those days. And everybody always smoked. Smoking was the suave thing to do. They always all smoked. I never smoked. I hated sitting on the Manly ferry next to my seat and I could always tell if somebody was smoking a cigar.

18:30 I'd say, "There's somebody smoking a cigar on this boat." And the girls'd say, "God, you're mad," but there you are. In films it was the suave thing. They all smoked. The ladies smoked and the men smoked and it used to look so sophisticated. But there you are.

Would you eat during the movies?

Not a lot. You could go out at interval and buy an icy pole or

19:00 something if you wanted to, but that was only at interval, but no, I never thought of eating through the film actually. Didn't occur. And I suppose some people may have done. I don't know. But I never did. We never did. Probably because we couldn't afford to buy too much and we were going to the pictures for the pleasure of the pictures more than anything.

Young men, young boyfriends, would they

19:30 **take you to the movies?**

Yes. It was only sixpence, you see. If they had enough – they wouldn't ask you if they couldn't pay for you, I'll put it to you that way. They'd suggest we went for a walk or went to the beach or something. But if they had a spare two shillings they'd say, "Let's go to the flicks," and we'd go to the pictures. Yes, the boys used to pay if they had the money.

20:00 **Otherwise what else would you do with boys growing up?**

We'd dance and go to the beach and the – we'd do all the usual things that kids do now I would think. But it depended on the person. A boy never went too far unless you let him go too far. And that was one of Granny's very strict rules. And if you were really going out with a boy

20:30 more than once or twice, then he had to come home, had to come home for Sunday night tea.

Is this so everyone could check him out?

Yes. If you went more than a few times and it began to look like anything he'd have to come home. If he didn't want to come home well then you didn't go out with him any more. Simple as that. He was always vetted.

Can you tell me about one of the times

21:00 **you bought a boy home?**

The boys were boys that were about until the war. And then we had lots of different boys, but they were usually people in our area that were vaguely known – because of the dancing and because Granny always went to the dances, as I said, she'd know by sight mostly

21:30 with whom you were going to be going out. Arthur Farley. I've got a picture of Arthur. He was one of the first strangers and she didn't like him. She didn't like the way his eyebrows grew too low. "Hasn't got good eyes," she'd say, "I don't think anything should come of this." But I did got with him for a while.

22:00 He wasn't highly approved of. But he used to come to the house. It didn't matter. Nobody'd make him feel uncomfortable or anything because his eyebrows weren't the right way. But anyway, he was about the only – I went out with lots of boys at the beginning of the war. I was only 16 when Harry went overseas. He wanted to get engaged but I said, "No. I'm not getting engaged at 16."

22:30 And I went out with lots – there were boys all over the place that you could go out with. And they weren't interested in it being a permanent thing either. They just wanted company for these occasions. But there were certainly lots. I've got pictures of some of the boys I went out with. If they're of any interest, I don't know, but it was at the beginning of the war. I got married in '43 so I didn't do

23:00 much going outing then after that.

So what was Granny's rules in respect to boys?

She said she always, like, we were instructed about not going too far. Always said, "If you go too far well then you get into trouble." Contraception wasn't a thing that was spoken of in those days.

23:30 She knew that she was – I mean, she had 15 children. She knew what could happen. So she would say, "It's up to you. If you go too far, well then, it's your fault. You have to be strong enough to know when it's time to stop." And that's it.

Did you know at that age what she meant by going too far?

Oh yes. We were instructed. Yes, she knew. I knew that you

24:00 could be pregnant if you went too far with a boy. Yes. And that would be the biggest sin, the biggest crime that you could commit in those days. You couldn't commit a worse crime than allow yourself to be pregnant. I didn't have any problems.

Just so the archives can get an understanding of the time, what was actually said to you about the subject of sex?

Well

24:30 you see it was very easy to know about sex because you see as the girls got older and got married and had children, well, they'd all be coming back to the house all the time and you couldn't not be unaware of the fact that marriage beget children and you were taught that's how you did get children, by getting married and doing it properly. Not just lurking off in the bush somewhere and getting yourself in trouble.

25:00 You were taught about sex but in the most basic fashion. There was no flowery phrases. You were told, "Don't have intercourse with anybody. It brings children." That was it. You were told the facts.

But no-one ever sat down with you and talked you through those?

No, they expected that you knew, I would imagine. I can't believe Granny would –

25:30 no, Granny would never bother sitting down telling you all that. If you didn't see it with your own two eyes, you should have, kind of thing.

Given that from a female's point of view that would be the worst thing in the world, to get pregnant …

At that time.

At that time.

The government wouldn't have paid you to have kids.

No, were there any friends that did get pregnant?

No, not of my immediate circle. We

26:00 knew of a girl up the street that did get pregnant and she was very frowned upon and you didn't bother talking to her anymore because she had this child. But it blew over when the child was a cute little lovely baby. You talked and it didn't make any difference. It wasn't a thing – it didn't mar you for life. It was an accident and you let yourself go too far and it was your fault.

26:30 You don't, they didn't scream rape or anything in those days. It was agreed more or less that it was one of those unfortunate things happened. But they didn't run around screaming rape as everybody does now. I don't think I heard the word rape actually when I was young. I honestly don't remember having it

27:00 spoken about in any conversation except when the murderer was on the loose up in Frenchs Forest then Granny wouldn't let us go out with anybody in case anything happened. But I don't think rape was even mentioned. Murder was the word that was mostly spoken of.

Again, before the war came, what were you hoping to do or become?

27:30 **Were you hoping to get married when you got older or do particular work or a career?**

I was, as I said, working in the laundry before then but I was still going to night school and I did start to do a shorthand typing course. I was useless. Shorthand, I can draw you as much shorthand as you want. But typing, my fingers were – I could never be a typist if I lived to be 100.

28:00 But I thought I could be some sort of clerk, do some sort of office work eventually. But it didn't come to anything because the war did come and I went in a different slant all together. But I don't know about ambitions. I would like to have been a writer and write some of the things that I read, but I don't know that I could have ever achieved anything there. I could do a good composition, but to write a book would be a different kettle of fish.

28:30 We did a lot of voluntary work during the war too. I used to work at the Manly Hospital doing all the menial tasks there, scouring the pans and doing all that kind of thing. We did voluntary work as well as I belonged to what they called the National Emergency Services. I had a picture of that. I can't find it. I don't know where I put it down, but I put it down somewhere in this house. It could be anywhere.

29:00 And we did what they call National Emergency Services. We did St Johns First Aid. We learned first aid. We learnt how to put our fires and incendiaries and we did that kind of thing when the war first started. But then, as I say, I went to work. Munitions work was hard work. We used to work seven a.m. to seven p.m.

29:30 It was really quite heavy work. We used to assemble tank tracks and all that kind of thing. That was heavy work. But before the war, I don't know. I know there was a Depression, but it didn't make us unhappy or sad. We didn't mournfully walk around. We walked around singing and smiling and greeting one another. I don't remember any -

30:00 the boys'd have a row and yell at one another or the girls'd argue about who was going to where which garment, but trivial things. Nothing major. Nothing major in our lives.

Just one more question before we actually start discussing the war. What were the expectations of the type of man you would marry? Did he have to come from a good family or be rich?

Never thought about it at all.

Did your Gran have any expectations for you?

30:30 No, don't think so. She'd tell you whether she liked a person or not. I don't think she expected you to marry into money or anything though. She never said.

So long as he didn't have a big eyebrow you were right?

Yeah. It hung right down over his eyes and she didn't like his eyes or his eyebrows.

In the years leading up to 1939, did you have much

31:00 **understanding of what was going on at Europe?**

No, none at all. It was some foreign place where some people travelled to and the boat used to take six weeks to get there. I wouldn't get on a boat. It was bad enough getting on the Manly ferry 'cause if the swell was at the heads, I'd get sick. When I was pregnant and I used to go on the ferry, the boy at the milk bar on the wharf there would be waiting, and he'd see me getting off

31:30 the boat and he'd have the milk all ready in a glass and he'd come and pour soda water into it and give it to me to drink. He knew I'd be coming and he knew I'd be sick. I was always sick on the Manly ferry.

Milk and soda water was…?

It settled the tummy. And to think of even going to Europe on a boat, that'd be the last thing in the world. I've been to Europe, but I've been in a plane. I didn't go by boat.

32:00 I would never have gone on a boat. No, I don't think we even talked about Europe. We just knew it was there. Britain. We used to talk about Britain more than anywhere. I'm a real Monarchist. I assure you I'm not looking for a Nationalist party or anything. I'm a Monarchist as far as that goes. I can't think of any country in the world that has deposed their monarchy that have ever achieved anything by it.

32:30 None of the countries that have deposed their monarchy have gone on to bigger and better things. None of them. Look at the little girl that married a prince. Look at that lovely little Denmark up there, all with their prince and their king and their queen still there. A lovely country.

So growing up, British Empire Day, was that important?

Oh yes. 24th of May. Yes. Bonfire Night and British Empire Day. School holiday.

What would you do on it?

33:00 You used to ramble around and get all your bonfires ready. Build your bonfire. We had lovely spare paddocks. We could build a big bonfire and it would be all ready for bonfire night. And Granny used to – we used to always have a long stool and Granny and the other older ladies would sit on the stool and they'd be all wrapped up, and they've have a billy can and we'd boil the billy and they'd make tea. Oh bonfire night was a great night. Queen Victoria's birthday it was.

Did you see yourselves

33:30 **as British or Australian?**

Oh no. We were Aussies. Never saw ourselves as British, but most of everything we were taught was about England's life. As I said, we had no real Australian history taught in those days in my day at school. We had very little. Only the explorers that came – Captain Cook, who was only a lieutenant

nowadays they tell me. And we knew about his

34:00 landings. We knew about the Tasmania of course and the natives being killed in Tasmania, which we were horrified to learn. Even at that age we didn't like to think of that. And then about the – who were they? That crossed the Great Dividing Range first? The three explorers.

34:30 Lawson, Wentworth and whatever. There were three of them. We learnt all of those kinds of things. But we didn't learn. We didn't have any history to any great degree. Only the fact that we had become a nation and some of our soldiers fought in the Boer War. That was the kind of things we learnt. About Australian's history. But there wasn't a great deal of Australian history to learn.

35:00 **When war was declared, do you remember where you were?**

Yes, in the laundry when war was declared.

How did you receive the news?

We were just wondering what it meant really. What did it mean? We thought, "What does it mean to us that war's declared?" We didn't realise that we would become so involved. It wasn't

35:30 when you're 15, 16, not a thing you think seriously about, is it? We just when the little rider used to go past we all used to wave to him. It was that kind of a thing. Where, "Oh," you know, "there's a soldier going past," kind of thing. But then of course Harry had been in what they called the Chockos ['chocolate soldiers' – militia] before the war. He was only 17 when

36:00 he joined. He put his age up to join. He sailed on the Queen Mary. He went in October of '40. They did the march to Bathurst. I've got a torn tattered bit of paper there with the march to Bathurst on in

36:30 1940, and he went in October 1940, he sailed off in the Queen Mary. He sailed in the Queen Mary before she was dismantled. He said it was quite luxurious when he went. Of course they dismantled it afterwards and she only had the bare necessities left.

So the news, did someone tell you that war was declared or did you hear on the wireless?

I think the boss came out and told us. Got a feeling he came out and said, "We're at war," and we

37:00 looked at him and said, "Why?" He said, "Don't ask me why, but we're at war. Germany has declared war on Britain. Of course we go with Britain." Something like that. I can't remember exactly how it was said, but I know I think the boss came out and told us that war had been declared.

So how did this declaration affect society and the people around you?

37:30 Actually it had a good effect on a large number of people because they all could get work. And work was readily available in varying areas of other places that were closed to just ordinary skilled people became open and a lot of people – we were all much better off after the war that we were before

38:00 the war. Before the war people in our situation never thought of buying a house, of owning a house, it was something you didn't even think about. You didn't own it, you rented it. I don't know. I think people didn't have anybody

38:30 going were feeling better than people that had people that were able to go. My brother went. He was up in New Guinea and Thursday Island. He was on Thursday Island for a long time. So he'd gone and then Uncle Roy went. And Dad had gone. No, Dad didn't go till later. Dad was here when I got married. He was in camp out at

39:00 Randwick and we had to go there because I had to get permission. I wasn't 21. I was only 19 so I had to get permission to get married. Granny had gone. No, Granny hadn't gone. She didn't go till Robyn was born. Anyway she couldn't when Dad was still available to give me permission to get married. So I don't know.

39:30 Generally speaking for the first year of the war it was more or less something that was going on. Harry went in '40. I don't now. He was the 7th Divvie. I don't know when the 6th Divvie went, but the 6th Divvie went first.

So do you remember the recruitment drive of what was being said in the streets and what signs went up?

Oh yes.

40:00 You were expected to join up. It was the thing that you did. You joined up because that was what was expected of you. The older boys didn't. Uncle Jimmy and Uncle Dave, they didn't join up. But Uncle Roy was the youngest of Granny's and he joined up immediately. He was in the Middle East. And he came back. He died later on from effects of the war.

40:30 He wasn't a well man when he came back. But yes. there was always all those, there were posters everywhere telling you to join up and to do this and to do that. And then of course you felt you were being patriotic if you went to work in a munitions factory, so I went to work in a munitions factory. Yes,

there was always a lot of talk about it and everything.

41:00 But what I thought was – I've always found unions unreasonable. You had to join a union and then they'd come around and they'd say, "Don't come in Monday. You're on strike." And you'd say, "What are we on strike for?" "Nothing to do with you. You're just in sympathy with the welders or something else." So then of course I couldn't afford to be on strike for a couple of days even so I'd go and get another job. I'd go and work in the nearest laundry.

Tape 4

01:10 **What haven't we mentioned?**

We haven't mentioned coupons. Restrictions. I couldn't buy a full wedding dress even if I had the money because I didn't have any coupons.

We'll get to the coupons. Let me first ask you…

01:30 That's before the war, like early in the piece. You were restricted to the amount of coupons you had. It was wartime I suppose, but it was quite early in the war we got coupons.

Okay. Firstly, your brother joined up. When did he join up?

Yes. Oh dear. Well he joined up fairly early.

02:00 Wouldn't be early enough – he didn't go to Singapore. He went to New Guinea so it must have been later. I just don't remember when Harold joined up. He lived in Melbourne you see. I don't remember exactly when he joined up.

Well, when did you meet soon to be your husband, Harry?

I met Harry – one of my girlfriend's brothers was out at Ingleburn and we

02:30 went out to see Tom. And Harry was in the same hut and he actually was so eager to meet me he fell down the steps of the hut.

Had he seen you or spoken to you?

No. But Tom said, "One of you blokes want to come out and walk around with Beryl?" and yes, he came clanking out in his army boots and fell down the steps. Fell at my feet. Literally.

Can you

03:00 **talk us through the story of going out and meeting Tom?**

Tom was my girlfriend's brother. Tom was – Olga and I were going out to see Tom and then Tom said did any of the fellas want to come walk around with us while we strolled around Ingleburn. Nothing much to do at Ingleburn. So that's where I met Harry. Harry fell at my feet and he was the one that escorted us around or went around with us

03:30 on that particular day. Then he made arrangements to meet me on the next Saturday night in town and we went out to see a film which was called My Son, My Son. I remember the name of the film. Don't ask me who acted in it, I couldn't tell you. It started there and we got together. I was only young. But I think – they did the march to Bathurst, 2nd 13th battalion lead the march to Bathurst.

04:00 After they came back then they sailed out in October of that year, which was '40, which meant I was 17. He wanted to get engaged and I said, "No. I wasn't going to get engaged at that young age," and of course I went out with tons of other boys in the meantime, but I never found anybody that I liked as much. I thought Harry was the one so when he came back and said, "Will we get married?"

04:30 I said, "Why not?" and we did, '43.

So how did you get out to Ingleburn in the first place?

The train. No cars. You just hopped on the train and went as far as it went and then you got the little bus that took you into Ingleburn barracks.

And was it love at first sight when you met?

I don't know about love at first sight, but he was a nice young man and Granny approved of him. He used to bring

05:00 her a cake every Saturday. No, I don't know about love at first sight. I don't know that I can believe in love at first sight. But we went out for several months before he went away and he was the only one that I'd ever bothered going out with more than once or twice. And he fitted in the niche in the family. He just moved up on the stool and he sat

05:30 there. It was a comfortable arrangement. And as I say I went out with tons of other boys in the meantime between ‘40 and ‘43 and I didn’t meet anybody that I liked as much. Didn’t make the impression that Harry had made.

When you went out to Ingleburn, what were your impressions when you saw the army barracks there?

06:00 I thought, “Fancy living here.” Not only because of the army barracks, but in such an isolated faraway area – far away from where we lived. And I thought, “Fancy having to be here.” I don’t think the army barracks made any great impression on me. Just a lot of huts where boys – I was used to men doing things that women didn’t do, and I thought if men lived in them

06:30 that’d be all right. I suppose there were a few women in those days. I don’t know. I tried to join the WAAAF [Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force] but they wouldn’t take me from the munitions factory. Not allowed to leave once you’d started working in munitions. The government made you stay there.

Just talking a little bit more about Harry. He took you to the movies. What other things did you do together?

Not a lot. Apart from coming to the house.

07:00 He came home and we’d spend the weekend there doing the usual walk to the beach kind of thing. But there wasn’t time. He was in camp and then they marched to Bathurst and he was away then for that period of time, and then by the time they got back he went off in October. But we just milled about. Didn’t do anything real special. Pictures, beach,

07:30 home. Chitty Chitty Bang Bang at home. I don’t think we did anything important. Nothing that I could say was remarkable, to be remarked upon, because I don’t know I suppose it sounds rather futile but really it was just that, it was just living.

So when he actually did go out

08:00 **just to Bathurst and stuff what how did you keep in touch? Phone calls? Letter?**

He’d ring. We didn’t have a phone at our house. We didn’t own a phone. But if I wanted to ring him, he’d ring his mother and one of his sisters’d tell me. I’d met his sisters by then. And his sisters’d say, “Harry rang. Everything’s okay.” But nothing really important. His mother and his sisters only lived at Penshurst up here.

08:30 We weren’t here of course at that time, but it would be notes, just a short note. “Flat out. Been on bivouac and haven’t got time to do anything.” Just a short note or two. Got a couple of letters. Letters back.

Given your poor handwriting could he read your letters?

Oh yes. His is nearly as bad anyway.

So when did you start to think of getting involved in the war effort?

09:00 Straight away. I was, as I say, working in the laundry and I’d been in the laundry for a couple of years. But then the talk was, “Oh we’ll go and find a job doing something for the war.” We all – I don’t know how many poor old Arthur was left with but the three of us left at the same time. One of them came to Malleable Castings with me. I’ve got pictures of Millie Kelly. Millie Kelly – that’s an Irish name.

09:30 Millie came and we both worked at the munitions factory, Millie Kelly and I.

Before we actually talk about the munitions factory, what happened to your family in respect of their involvement in the war? Did Gran do anything?

No, not my Gran. She didn’t do anything. Only looked after people. Tommy Trudgeon. He used to come. He used to come and stay with us. I don’t know how Tommy Trudgeon

10:00 fitted in. He was a friend of Aunty Muriel’s but how he fitted into the family scene I don’t know. But he kept on turning up. And Granny’d take care and feed anybody that came to the house. It wouldn’t matter who they were.

So what uncle joined up?

Uncle Roy joined up. Uncle Dave I don’t know what kind of work Uncle Dave did. Uncle Jimmy

10:30 was one of the older ones. He was one of the ones that had worked in the mines. I don’t know what the boys did but they all worked. So it was all something to do with the war or they wouldn’t have been working because they couldn’t get work beforehand. Not permanent work. They did a lot of casual work. I honestly don’t know. Uncle Dave joined up. Uncle Dave and Uncle Roy both joined up. I’ve got a picture of them somewhere.

11:00 But I know Uncle Jimmy didn’t and Uncle Billy didn’t. Uncle Billy was too old then.

So why did you choose to join the munitions factory?

The WAAAF wouldn't have me. After I went to the munitions factory then I thought well I should have gone into one of the services. I'd been there a few months and then you couldn't escape then. You were kept there. You had to stay there. I don't know. I thought the munitions factory sounded interesting. Didn't know what you were going to have to do

11:30 of course. The first few months was heavy work. Very heavy work. But then we were given breaks and we were given lighter work – the drilling and the tapping and the filing and things that were a bit lighter.

What was required to join the munitions factory?

Nothing. You just applied. No qualifications whatsoever. Fairly strong.

And did they give you a uniform?

No. We just wore overalls. We wore our own overalls. You can see the picture.

12:00 Did you look?

We'll see it later. But let's describe it first.

You see, we just wore overalls and whatever underneath. A jumper if it was cold and a shirt if it was hot. And you weren't allowed to – this is a photo at the factory door. You certainly weren't allowed to take photos inside the factory. You wouldn't dare take a camera inside, you'd be arrested as a spy. But we had one – only the one – I told the girls only the one photo outside the factory –

12:30 the women that were inside the factory. We were in what was called the machine shop. But I don't know, it was just one of those – not impulsive because I said to Gran, "I think I might," and she said, "Consider what you have to do." I had to go to Manly. I had to get a boat. I had to get a tram and go the other side of Marrickville. It wasn't a quick run down. It was a long tedious trip each morning and each evening.

13:00 I used to go to sleep on the ferry.

So you wore the overalls. Did you wear any shoes or boots of a particular type?

We'd have had ordinary black like a flat shoe. It wasn't actually a boot, but it was a heavy shoe. And we wore those. We weren't in any areas in the machine shop that we were in where your feet were going to be like

13:30 important like in the welding area where there's soft areas then falling. We weren't involved in that kind of work. We only had to go out on strike with them when they went on strike.

And what about your hair, was their hairnets?

Oh yes, we had hairnets. I had long hair in those days and you did wear a hair net, yes. Especially near the drilling and tapping machines we always had the hairnet on.

Was that for the sake of your hair, or for what you were working on?

My

14:00 hair. To save your hair getting caught in any of the machines. That's what it was for. Especially with long hair, cause I always wore long hair. That was to keep your hair well away from the machinery. I took it off to have the photo taken.

Could you describe for the archive what the factory looked like from walking in? How big was it?

Very busy. I don't think it was one of the biggest factories

14:30 involved in munitions work, but it was to me a big factory, very big. Half an acre of machinery all working, all going all the time. They had the small drilling and tapping machines were up there. Where we assembled the tank tracks was a big area out here. You had to hammer – I don't know how many it was –

15:00 but you rolled them then and then you had to lift them and stack them on and that was the heaviest part of it. Then they had another big area where they bashed out tin plates. I don't know what they were for. But that was another big noisy area over there. Oh, it was a big single storey on the floor. Everything was on the floor of the factory. There was no up or anything.

15:30 They had all lights like shades of windows in the roof for lighting so that you'd get natural lighting and not be using electricity all the time for lighting.

Was it just one structure, the factory itself, or were there several?

It did appear to me to be one big structure, yes. That's where we were in the machine shop. I have no idea where the welders and those

16:00 other people were. I have no idea. Never went into any of that area. I wouldn't know. I only know where I was in the machine shop. You weren't allowed to roam around very far from where you worked. If you were roaming around they'd want to know what you were sticky-beaking about and you just didn't do it. So you just worked where you worked and you did what you had to do.

16:30 **Coming to work and leaving, would you just come to work in your overalls?**

No.

What was the process of clocking on?

You just clock on one of those machines that they had on the wall as you walked in the door. You clocked on there. And the old timekeeper got in our picture and he wasn't supposed to be in it. We were only supposed to be ladies but the timekeeper got in the picture too. He got into trouble for that. We went mad at him.

17:00 No, you changed into your overalls when you got to work. You wouldn't have travelled in overalls in those days. No.

So just explain for the archive, you arrived, you clocked on, just the process of where did you get changed ….?

Yeah. And you went into your ladies' little room where you slipped out of whatever decent thing you wore to work and then you got into your overalls

17:30 there and then you went out and the foreman would say, "I won't put you on the tracks today. You can have a change. You can do some drilling and tapping for me." It was all fairly civilised. But you did what you were told, what you were asked to do. You didn't quibble and say, "No. I want to do this or I want to do that." Mind you, the drilling and tapping was the easiest job in the place. You could drill and tap all day and you're sitting there.

18:00 It's just a small machine and you're manipulating the drill or the tap as the case may be.

And clocking off? What would be the process there?

Same process. You'd clock off at the end of the shift and you'd walk down into Marrickville. Not into Marrickville but into the main road where the tram went and hop on the tram and start on your way back home again.

Would you have a shower?

Not usually there. Soon as you got home you'd have a shower.

18:30 **Why wouldn't you shower there?**

Because the facilities just weren't, you know, if you had half a dozen women trying to shower at once in one shower you wouldn't have gotten home for another hour, would you? You'd still be there. No. So you'd just dust off what you could dust off and wash your hands well and put a bit of lippy on and away.

And your overalls, what would happen to them? Did they have to be washed?

We had to do those. We wash our own overalls. I took my overalls home every couple of days

19:00 because they did get dirty. They were black. And you just wore your oldest shirt or whatever blouse you wore. You'd have to take them home every couple of days and wash them. I had two. You didn't only have one overall. You could change. They let you change.

And lunchtime? Would you get a lunch break during the day?

Yes. We always had an hour for lunch. There was one of those little corner shops around the corner.

19:30 I went there one day just to get a bottle of soft drink and I thought I'd shout myself a cream bun. So she got me out a cream bun with a lot of icing sugar on the top and I said, "Oh could I have on with not so much icing sugar on?" And she said, "Oh yes. Phoo." I said, "I won't have that one thanks. She blew it off. I said, "Just shake it off another one."

20:00 Yes, you had your lunch break. And then you walked down the street and the boys whistled you and you thought, "They think I'm all right." A whistle was a good thing in my day. Now you get sued for it.

So lunch, would you normally buy lunch from this…?

No. Take sandwiches for lunch. Granny always packed a lunch for me. You'd only go down if you want a soft drink or a cake that you didn't have or you might buy a lolly or something. But no, Granny

20:30 always packed a lunch. I always pack Damian's lunch. I pack Damian's lunch every day. It's habit, ingrained habit. No, Granny always packed a lunch. And she'd pack the boys lunch, too, if they wanted it. They would let her know what they were doing whether they wanted her to lunch. I don't know what the boys were doing actually. I truly don't know. Uncle Dave and Uncle Roy were both in the army and Uncle Roy – I don't know where Uncle Dave went – went to the Middle East.

21:00 **So coming back to the factory, when you had lunch, would the factory stop for the hour or would lunch be broken up?**

No. The lunches were scattered. The factory didn't stop. Twenty-four hours a day the factories worked. And we weren't asked very often, but sometimes we were asked would we do a night shift and that would be seven till seven. But not frequently though. They didn't ask the young girls to do that frequently. They asked the men

21:30 to do most of that time. But we did work seven till seven on an occasion when they were wanting to get something out. They would ask us to do it.

So your shifts were during the day from seven a.m. to…?

Seven a.m. was the official starting time, but when we were coming from a distance, if we got there at eight we were allowed to get there a bit later because we had the distance we travelled. And the

22:00 time it involved.

And knock off time?

Same time. Seven. The shift finished at seven.

Sick days? Could you get sick days?

Oh yes. I think you only got about three a year though. It wasn't a lot. You didn't take time off indiscriminately. If you did, you didn't get paid for it. That was it. You weren't there, you didn't get paid.

What was

22:30 **the first job you started to do when you joined the munitions factory?**

Assemble the tank tracks. That was the very first job. There where we assembled the tank tracks.

Now for someone today, or even 50 years' time, that wouldn't make much sense. What was required in actually assembling a tank track?

Tank tracks are a certain length. I suppose about a foot. I couldn't swear to the exact size. And you had

23:00 to, with a big hammer, hammer the necessary bolt into place that held those two tracks together and then you'd move them along and do another one until you did – I don't know whether we did 10 or 12, but you did a number and then you'd roll them – not rolling them small of course, a bit roll – and then you'd lift them and go and stack them. But it necessitates quite heavy work it was,

23:30 the assembling of the tank tracks.

You had to be physically strong?

Yes.

Given most women like their hands and their fingernails…?

No. I never…Look, I always had – they're not soft hands and they never have been and they never will be. They've always been hands that could do things. Not gentle things, not writing and shorthand and typing, but rougher work, heavier

24:00 work I could always cope with. Look at that, there's no arthritis in my hands and I'm 81. If you work with them and make them work, they will work.

So assembling these tank tracks you sometimes hit your hand?

Oh no, I never hit my hand. They're on the thing and you hold them here and you're hitting there. You're hitting about nine inches away from where you're actually holding. No, I never hit my hand. Or I would have cried if

24:30 I'd hit my hand I think.

And heavy work, was there anything to help you carry these?

No, we carried them and stacked them and when they got to a height that we couldn't reach to stack any more we'd start another stack. And if the men wanted them higher, well then they'd have to come and lift them higher. We didn't go that far. I'm not saying we walked a long way with them. We were on a bench here and we

25:00 stacked them there only a couple of metres away from where we were actually working with them. But yes, it was heavy work. That was the heaviest work we did.

Do you know what tanks you were actually making the tracks for?

No. Would never have known anything like that. None of the details were ever passed on to us about

what they were or where they were going and you didn't ask because you knew it wasn't a thing that you were supposed to be told. So you didn't bother

25:30 asking. You just knew that it was something that you were doing and that you volunteered to do, you didn't have to do it, but you volunteered for that job. Everything was very secret. You didn't even talk about it much with ones that weren't working there. You just said, "I'm working at Marrickville now," "What on earth are you doing at Marrickville for god's sake?" Something like that. But nothing – no

26:00 details. You didn't give anybody details of what you were doing physically.

And after putting together these tracks, what did you do next?

You do the tank tracks or then you'd have a go on the drilling and tapping machines. But then a little bit of light filing. You weren't allowed to do the heavy filing because that was dangerous and you had to be a skilled person to do – when I'm saying filing I mean the blades that go around very rapidly and you've got to file whatever you're filing with this moving blade. They didn't

26:30 put us on that to any great extent. Mostly it was just drilling and tapping or assembling the tank track was mostly the work that I actually did.

Just to look at each of those – the drilling and tapping, what were you actually drilling and tapping on? Tank tracks or…?

Just the nuts. The little nuts. We would be drilling and clearing holes or we would be drilling and tapping holes in them. They were just the little nuts.

27:00 Thousands of little nuts.

So what would you do?

You'd just sit them into the machine and pull the drill down accordingly. And that one and then that one. And then you'd just go back again and do it again. Very repetitious, boring work after a while. But we just sang or passed the time away.

And the filing?

Well the filing, I must say that

27:30 we didn't get to do much of the filing. It was a dangerous job and I think they thought that the men would be better at that. The girls didn't do much of the filing. They'd show you how to do it and give you a few little bits of things to do but I couldn't honestly say with any honesty that we actually did a lot of the filing. Although it was just right near us, we certainly didn't do a lot of it unless one of the girls was taller and stronger.

28:00 She might get a bit of it. But I didn't do a lot of it. I did mostly the tank tracks or the drilling and tapping.

Just with respect to the filing, what things were you actually filing down?

It was only pieces of metal that needed different shaping. I couldn't honestly say what they were even going to fit into because they just looked like a piece of something but what it was going to be eventually by

28:30 the time it was finished being shaped, I wouldn't be able to tell you what it was. Because you weren't – you didn't ask. "Finish that if you can for me." And you'd do that. But you didn't ask where it was going or what it was going to be. If you showed too much curiosity they'd want to know what you want to know for. So you didn't. You curbed your curiosity.

So were there other jobs that you did in the munitions

29:00 **factory?**

No. That was it.

Those three.

Those three, yes, nothing else.

So what would you do? You mentioned that they were sometimes quite boring. What would you do to keep yourself interested or focused?

Just keep on doing it. Keep on keeping on. There was nothing – we'd sing. We used to sing. Somebody'd start over the other side, start up a song, and we'd all pick it up and sing. Even the ones on the files making the noises would

29:30 still sing with you. You just did what you had to do.

What sort of songs would you sing?

All the ones that were popular at the time. Pack Up Your Troubles. From the First World War. And then whatever was coming out next in the songs, whatever, mostly bright cheerful songs. Not mournful love

30:00 songs or anything. Something that had to carry right across the factory and everybody could hear it. I can't think of the names of any of the old songs we sang off the top of my head. I know millions of songs. I could sing any songs to you that you like to mention from the olden days, but I can't think of the ones we used to sing in the factory.

One of the areas the archive's interested in is music,

30:30 **songs and tunes that we used to sing at that time. Can you give us the tune for Pack Up Your Troubles?**

Yes. I know the tune. You want me to actually sing it?

Yeah.

Pack up your troubles in your old kitbag and smile, smile, smile. Pack up your troubles in the old kitbag, smile boys,

31:00 that's the style. What's the use of worrying? It never was worthwhile. So pack up your troubles in the old kitbag and smile, smile, smile. There's a boy rushing in.

Thank you for sharing that.

That's all right.

And nothing else comes to mind just in respect to what you might sing?

It's a long

31:30 way to Tipperary. It's a long way to go. It's a long way to Tipperary to the sweetest girl I know. Goodbye Piccadilly, farewell Leicester Square. It's a long, long way to Tipperary, but my heart's right there.

32:00 **Wow. Thank you so much. You've got a lovely voice.**

I still have the audacity to sing. I sing with a group. We sing around the nursing homes and retirement villages. I have the audacity to stand up there and sing at people. With a group.

So again just on the subject of music, was there a popular songs during the '40s?

Oh there was always a new popular song, but I'd have to get a songbook out to tell –

32:30 I can get a songbook out and tell you what they were. Next break I'll get you out a songbook.

But nothing else comes to mind what you would sing?

San Francisco. San Francisco, open your golden gates, you'll let no stranger wait, outside your door. San Francisco was one. I know a thousand songs. I can sing a thousand

33:00 songs, but do you think they're going to come into my mind now? They're not.

Just while you're thinking on music and stuff, while working in the factory, was there at all a wireless going, a radio, so you could listen to songs?

Yes. I think there was some recorded music piped through. Not all day though. They didn't do it all day. They'd probably do it for an hour or so and off it would go.

33:30 Because there was so much noise in the factory that a lot of it would be lost anyway. I can't think of any.

Did you have because of the noise and all that any ear protection?

34:00 Nuh. I think the filers often, the boys often had earmuffs on, but we didn't. I didn't.

And gloves for you hands?

I always wore gloves for the heavy work, yes. Wore gloves for the assembly of things, but you couldn't wear gloves for the drilling and tapping machine. But any of the ones that were doing the heavier work did wear gloves.

We spoke of a lunchtime break. You got an hour off.

34:30 **Did you have any other breaks during the day?**

I don't know whether we had a 10 minute break for morning tea or not. Yes, the one, especially if they did start at the seven o'clock and we weren't able to get there, ones that started, if they'd go off, we'd go off too and have the 10-minute break. Not, yes, that's about all. A 10-minute break perhaps in the morning tea break.

35:00 About 10 o'clock or something like that. I don't think there was any afternoon break that I can recall.

Accidents. Was there accidents there?

Not that I'm aware of. I don't remember anybody getting into any real bother with anything. Not in the machine shop. You could have had it in the heavier machinery where the heavier work went on. you could have had. That might have been why we were on strike with something. They wanted something

35:30 fixed up in the welding or the other sections. But you were never told why you were on strike. You were just told that you were in sympathy with somebody else and that you were on strike anyway.

Just with accidents, were there safety procedures you had to go through?

Yes. They always made sure that there was nothing, there was never anything lying about or anything that anybody could trip over. You weren't allowed to leave any kind of instrument or

36:00 tool lying and there were no – wherever our electricity came from it certainly wasn't visible. It was either up or down or whatever. But there was nothing that you could – if you fell over it would have to be something that you were clumsy on your feet or something because they were very aware of the danger of anybody being injured. I think that's why they

36:30 didn't allow us to do the filing to any great extent because they knew possibly that it was more dangerous. Because there's nothing guarding a file if you're filing, the file is whizzing around there and there's nothing guarding it. You're just working with it. So that's why I think they didn't let us do any of that because they probably thought we wouldn't be good at it. And we could have an accident with it perhaps. And it

37:00 would have to be a serious accident because you'd probably cut half your hand off or something if you went the wrong way to a file. So, no, they – my old timekeeper used to say, "Your girls watch yourselves out there and don't be getting into any situation that you can't handle." Yes, they always let you be aware of your own safety. You were responsible for your own safety, really.

37:30 In as much as you didn't do anything stupid about where you were actually working.

Were you aware that there was a first aid area?

Oh yes. The first aid was there for anything that happened. There was the first aid area there. And across the road from where we worked there was a medical area there in case of accidents. I would imagine they probably got a few that we weren't aware of.

38:00 But there was nothing that I actually was aware of. I didn't have any injuries and none of the girls with whom I worked had anything the matter with us. But if any of the boys did have anything we wouldn't have taken any notice. We wouldn't have known where they were going.

You mentioned the timekeeper a couple of times. Once, jumping into your photo and another time wishing you well for the day. What was he like as a person?

Yes. He did. Oh he was quite a nice old bloke. He was an older man than us.

38:30 He's in the photo. But, no, he seemed to be a nice old fella. He was quite aware that it wasn't the kind of work that as far as he was concerned I think that girls usually did. Although a couple of the older girls I think had been involved in some kind of work like that. You can have a look at them and see some of them could have been

39:00 more experienced in that kind of thing than we were although we were – I mean, mangle work's not easy work. And we were used to working. Didn't think anything of working in those days. The kids'd die if you asked them to do some of the stuff we did. Girls particularly. Too busy climbing up the ladder to that glass ceiling that everybody talks about.

Just on the subject of working with men,

39:30 **these days the term sexual harassment's used. Was there anything like that working with the men?**

No. I think everybody worked too hard to be bothered worrying about sexual harassment. We didn't have a lot to do with the – we only would say, "Hi," to the boys within cooee of us. But it was a big area. I think we talked more to the boys from the other factories outside who whistled us than we did

40:00 to the ones inside the factory, to be truthful with you. I knew one of the boys on the filing that was teaching me how to do it. I don't think I spoke much to any of the boys in the factory really. You worked pretty continuously. And when you did get out of the factory you were glad to get out of it for a while. I think they probably staggered our lunch breaks so that we weren't

40:30 going to get involved with the boys. I don't remember seeing any of the boys coming out at the same time as we came out. Except the other ones down the street.

Tape 5

00:40 **Beryl, we were just before lunch talking about the workings of the factory in Marrickville, who did you**

01:00 **work with? Can you tell us a little bit about the girls that were in the factory with you?**

I worked with all of those girls in one way or another. I can't tell you a lot about them because it was 60 years ago and I just can't remember everything that went on. They were a reasonable, some of them we might have called a bit rougher than others, but they were all friendly. We didn't

01:30 have any working problems unless it had something to do with orders and staff getting orders or superiors. But the girls themselves came – a couple of them were married and had families and were happy to get the work to help keep the families going. They had rellies minding children for them in those days. There weren't many crèches about then.

02:00 I can't tell you a lot. No. Millie and I both came from the same area and we knew the same people and we did the same things. We spent a fair amount of our talking time together. But the rest of the girls, no, I'm sorry I'm not going to be very helpful there. They were just a nice bunch of girls and you've got their pictures but that's about it.

Tell us a bit more about Millie?

She was one of the Kelly kids. She lived in Dee Why and

02:30 she had three or four brothers – quite Irish. They were of Irish background although they weren't literally of the Irish generation. They still had the way of Irish thinking. They sounded when they said things, it was things that sounded Irish to you. Don't ask me specifics. But no, Millie was a year or two older than me and she was already going with a boy.

03:00 But they were saving up to try and get some sort of home together and she was glad of the time to work so that they could save up and get a dwelling of some sort. Renting or buying. Didn't think much of buying in those days because it never occurred to us that we could afford to buy. But anyway, no, Mill, she was nice. As I say we travelled to and from and gabbled on about everything in

03:30 the process – families and home and who was at the dance last night. All that kind of usual thing for those days.

Was she your friend before you went to work at the factory? Or did you meet her through doing that?

No. I knew Mill before 'cause I told her that I was going and she said that she would go to – when I was going. I knew Mill from just general going to the dance I suppose. I don't know how I knew the Kellys.

04:00 But they lived in Dee Why and we had lived in Dee Why and – mind you, that was years before. I knew Mill, but not real closely. We became more closely aligned when we worked together.

How did you select this particular factory as the one that you would go to work in? Do you remember seeing an ad?

Yes. It must have been something like that. Malleable Castings. I know what happened.

04:30 One of the girls whom I knew was working in a biscuit factory I knew. There a biscuit factory in Marrickville somewhere there and she said, "They're looking for people down at Malleable Castings," and she said, "I don't want to go there and do heavy work. I'd rather stay where I am." And that's what started it off. I went and Mill went and we both got put on and we both started.

Was there an interview process?

Oh yes. You had to be interviewed

05:00 by somebody and they had to then point out to you that once you started you couldn't leave because it was a protected industry. So that was pointed out to us. If there was any illness or anything, that was the only thing that would get you out of the place.

What about marriage? Were married women working there as well?

Yes. Several of those ladies were married ladies there in the picture.

Who was your boss?

Don't know.

05:30 Only had a timekeeper. Don't know who my boss was.

What about supervisors or people who told you what to do? Who were they?

Yes. They came round. But there was never just one. There'd be two or three different ones. But I really

couldn’t tell you. Apart from a Tom or a Harry or something like that I can’t tell you any personalities or any personal details about this people. There were a number of people that came and told. They’d bring a load of work down to you and say, “We’d like this done

06:00 by about two,” or something, “If you can get it done.” That kind of thing. But not any specific person. There may have been one but I can’t recall.

What was the training that they gave you when you first started doing these jobs?

Very little. How to hold a hammer correctly for the tank tracks and doing the drilling and tapping, that’s really not a difficult task. Anybody could do that once you’re shown. That’s very simple. But they did

06:30 show you how to do these things.

Was it ever difficult at first to get a particular job right?

No. Perhaps we weren’t the speediest track assemblers to start off with, but we soon picked up momentum when we got the real hang of it. But I don’t think there’s much you could do with drilling and tapping. The machine runs itself from the different areas of the drill.

07:00 You just lever it and if you’re doing tapping you just put the different drill in – another piece in it, not another drill of course. But no there wasn’t – I can’t say it was difficult. Boring but not difficult.

So there were no big mistakes you could make?

You’d have had to have been a bit stupid to make a mistake in that kind of task.

07:30 There might have been more difficult tasks elsewhere in the factory, but ours, both of it wasn’t really difficult. None of the other younger girls had ever done anything like that. I don’t quite know how much the older women – one of those ladies with a bag around her waist, she looked as if she’d been in a factory of sorts – that sort of factory, because she came armed with a sugar bag.

08:00 When she first started she had the sugar bag to tie around her waist, so I feel she might have been involved in something like that beforehand. I don’t honestly know.

What was the sugar bag for?

To protect the clothing.

Like an apron?

Yes. Like an apron. And she came armed already with a sugar bag which indicated she had been used to doing something like this and she was ready for it. But she was nice. She was as rough as her old sugar bag.

08:30 But she was real nice. She wasn’t nasty rough. She was just a bit rougher than we were used to.

How dirty would you get?

Oh yes you’d get pretty dirty. You could really get dirty. You really needed to clean yourself to where you could see before you went home again and you took the overalls off and the shoes and you left them hanging until you were taking them home to wash.

09:00 Nobody’d want to take your grotty old shoes with them because they weren’t worth a razoo. So you’d just leave them on your own hook in your own section and then you’d take them home and wash in between time.

What kind of dirt would get into them?

The dust from the metal. Metallic dirt most of the time it was. Most of the fine metallic dust would be flying, especially

09:30 drilling and tapping you’d lose a fair amount of it. There was a receptacle to catch it of course at the base of the machine. But there was still a certain amount that escaped. There was always – with drilling and filing going on all around you there was always dust and dirty about. Nothing that would be a nuisance unless you slipped on it, literally, which I never did. But there was always – I don’t think there’s any machine shop you would go into that didn’t have

10:00 some dirt and dust about.

Would it be a problem if you breathed it in?

I suppose it could have been for some people who had a tendency to breathing problems perhaps. It never occurred to me. It never affected my personal breathing. No, I don’t know that it was vaporised enough to do that kind of inhaling.

Were there any injuries that your job

10:30 **could land you with?**

The particular work I did?

Yeah. Back injuries or arms?

No. Nothing – your arms certainly got tired when you were assembling the tank tracks but that didn't last. Didn't lat overnight. You were ready to go back and have another whack the next day. It was hard work. I'm not denying that bit was the hardest bit. But it wasn't, unless

11:00 you actually dropped the thing on your foot or something – I suppose you could have done that. We never did, the ones with whom I was working and I. That could have perhaps given you a pretty rotten-looking foot. But we didn't do that. With drilling and tapping, I can't think of anything. Unless you let the drill into your finger, but you'd certainly have to do it almost deliberately to have it happen.

11:30 **What pressure was there on you to work at a certain speed, I mean, if you were working to slow?**

They liked you to work at a steady pace. They gave you what they classified as the amount of work you could cope with and if you didn't cope well then perhaps a question might have been asked. But I can't recollect that anybody was ever hauled over the coals for not getting the amount done that was required of them. But no, they didn't –

12:00 you worked hard and you worked steady, but you didn't do impossibilities. It wasn't a system that expected impossibilities, especially from young women. I think they probably gave us those easier tasks because we were young women.

You mentioned there were men in the factory. What sort of jobs did the men have?

Oh yeah. I honestly can't tell you what kind of assembling and – you could always hear the clinkety-clank of

12:30 metal. You were told that wasn't your area and in those days I suppose we weren't inquisitive enough to go and see. We used to say hello to the boys if they walked past or we saw them out getting lunch, but we never had much to do with them. I honestly couldn't tell you what they were doing there. As I said earlier, you certainly wouldn't have taken a camera into the factory. We didn't even take that. I don't know, somebody came and took that photo. I don't know

13:00 who it was. But apart from the grinding which was a line of grinders close by – and that I classified as steady, hard work, the grinders because it was so meticulous, it had to be done properly. But what those fellas did over there on those other machines I couldn't tell you. I don't know. I had no experience with them whatsoever. I'm a failure.

You said some of the girls were a bit rough. What

13:30 **do you mean by that?**

The conversation and outlook was – can't think of the modern word, what word they would use these days. It was classified as rough when I was young and a bit coarse. A few swear words weren't amiss. Not nasty.

14:00 Just an expression if they did bump themselves or do the wrong thing. Just a bit rough. Haven't you hear the term used in that context?

I get an idea of what you mean. I just wondered if that was where they came from or…?

Oh yes. It could have had something to do with their upbringing. They mightn't have had a Gran to tell them you don't do that or you don't this. I don't know.

14:30 I know nothing of their backgrounds. They were just what we called, "Oh she's a roughie," but that was it. Didn't make any difference to our companionship. We still had that.

Outside the factory when you were doing whatever else you did during the rest of the time, did you get people giving you strange looks because you were working in a munitions factory? What was the reputation of people?

No. They thought we were lucky to have a good job

15:00 and good money. We more or less congratulated that we decided to do that. Some people said, "Why didn't you go into the forces?" and all that kind of thing. Well, I did try to go into the forces, into the WAAAF, but after I had started at Malleable Casting and I was old enough. But they wouldn't take me cause I was in a protected industry so I couldn't do that.

What did you try and do? What was the process for trying?

15:30 Just have to apply to go. You got the form and you filled it out and you sent it and they sent a letter back saying come in for an interview or don't come in. So I got – I have it somewhere, but don't ask me where it is. I really couldn't say. I've got so much rubbish here and in the shed and I don't know where it is. But I did get a letter back saying I wasn't accepted because of my working in protected industry.

What was your feeling about that? Were you upset about it?

16:00 I suppose I was a bit cross at the time. It didn't seem to go to extreme feelings in those days. There are no real extremities. If you knew you couldn't do it, it didn't worry you much. You couldn't do it, so why bother worrying about it? I felt disappointed. I'll put it to you that way. I was disappointed that I couldn't join the WAAAF.

16:30 I'd practised my Morse code and everything for weeks before and did everything I thought was the right thing to do to get into the WAAAF. But I wasn't, so I didn't, and that was it.

What were your reasons for wanting to join the services rather than contribute to the war effort the way you already were?

I don't know. Possibly thought it was a step up or something perhaps. I don't honestly know. Probably think. "Oh the WAAAFs'd be nice." Whatever it was, it didn't happen.

17:00 **Was there a sense of patriotism and that you were doing it for the war effort in the factory itself?**

Oh yes. We all thought we were achieving something – small though it may have been to the ordinary onlooker – but we felt we were doing something. Achieving something. Especially assembling the heavy work. They're going to go somewhere and do something. We felt we were achieving

17:30 some slight help to the war effort.

Did they ever try to show you a bit about where your work was going and what the end product was?

No. Nothing like that.

There was no curiosity on your part to try and have a look for that?

No. I must be one of those dull, accepting people.

I think as you say, it was a different time, it wasn't yours to question why, just to do.

18:00 If you did ask questions, any type of questions, apart from what you were actually involved in people would look at you strangely and you could practically hear them saying to one another, "What's she want to know all about that for? Is she just dinky-di or is she?" That would be the attitude. Why were you asking leading questions. Were you trying to find out more than you needed to know what for. So, no, you didn't. You just didn't do it.

18:30 **Was there advertising in posters or some sort of campaign to tell you to make sure everything was kept secret?**

'Sealed Lips Save Ships'. Yes. They were all about, yes.

And what did they mean?

That means you don't talk to anybody about what you're doing.

And did you follow that advice?

Mainly. Although the family knew I was in a munitions factory. Most people knew where

19:00 we were, but, "What are you doing?" and you just say, "Oh no, pretty dull. Can be hard, but pretty dull." Don't enlarge in any way. People's curiosities were easily satisfied with some sort of glib answer.

During the first couple of years of the war Australia wasn't directly involved, but then the Japanese came into the war. Can you remember that event and how it changed things in Sydney?

We were involved

19:30 in the war before the Japanese came into it. They didn't bomb Pearl Harbour until 1942, but we were well and truly in, in 1939.

Wasn't suggesting we weren't in the war, but there was no threat to the home front in Australia until the Japanese came into the war. Did things change around here when that happened?

Yes. I would think they changed a bit, in as much as one of Harry's mates wanted to go with him and his parents wouldn't allow him

20:00 to go – cause Harry was only 17, as I said. And then later on when they were coming down through Singapore and all that, when Singapore was wide open, then he went and of course he was killed wasn't he? And his parents rang me up to tell me that Bob had gone and how sorry they were they didn't let him go with Harry. And that kind of, yes, those kind of things happened. Then somebody

20:30 escaped and got home on a boat. I forget his name. He was – I forget his name – he'd be in the archives I would think. He was called a traitor and then another one who was a big high officer and two others came home on boats and they were hailed as heroes. But the poor old kid that got himself out on his own bat, he was called a traitor. That's some of the things that we did talk about, the difference in the stories as they came out.

21:00 **Were you scared the Japanese advance wouldn't be stopped when Singapore fell?**

Yes. I think we all felt a little bit worried about that. Especially when whoever – who was it? Who was that prime minister that everybody thought he was great, and he was in for about 12 years. When he put the cut off line up there on the Tropic of Capricorn or somewhere and said

21:30 we'd take control of the war up till there and then we wouldn't bother about the rest of Australia – Menzies. He was the one.

And the Brisbane Line?

That's right. The Brisbane Line. That's him. Well, we were really upset about that bit, too. That was a great thorn in the side of us. What about the rest of Australia? Once they get their foot into that part they'll be all over us like ants and all that kind of thing.

22:00 Yes, we were concerned in those instances.

What did you hear about the Japanese? What did you know about this new enemy?

We just knew that there were thousands of them and they were quite ready to be dead rather than alive if it was for the honour of their country and they were quite happy to be used as targets – the first lot – so the next lot could get through. We were told that – well, they were rather fanatical, weren't they? And

22:30 yes we were told all of that kind of thing. I have to correct something that I've told you earlier too, and I showed you the picture of North Head Barracks. My brother was in North Head Barracks as a civilian soldier before the war started. I told you I couldn't remember when he joined up. But he was already in the army, but he was in the permanent army at that time and he just went over to AIF [Australian Imperial Forces]

23:00 afterwards. So that's a little bit wrong there.

So when did he go into AIF?

Whether he did get into the AIF or not, they transferred him up to New Guinea and Thursday Island, but he was before the war in North Head Barracks. I looked at that picture of North Head Barracks, and I said, "You stupid thing, Harold was there already. That's why you've got that picture." He was in the

23:30 permanent army before the war.

Alright, we'll just come back to the Japanese in a moment. But your boyfriend, or fiancé to be…

Which one?

Harry. What were you hearing from him over in the Middle East?

Oh Harry. Well, I'd have to re-read. I've got a mile of letters there, but he mostly he didn't tell you a great deal. He told me in one letter that one of the

24:00 boys we knew was killed and that was all cut out. So I didn't know what that was. But his letters were very general because he knew they were being censored. They were mostly love letters. Didn't say a lot. Just say, "We went up to Tel Aviv," or, "We went into Egypt." He'd just say generalities, he didn't say a lot. But if you want to look at a letter, you can…

How were they censored? Can you describe what they looked like when they got to you?

The

24:30 way they were censored. I don't know that there's anything on them if they were allowed through. But if they were censored the bit was cut out that was censored. But there's possibly some sort of sign and signature or something on it. I don't know I never looked.

And would you be sending a letter to him in the same way that he wrote to you?

Oh yes. I wrote to him quite steadily. But I did tell him I was going out with other boys, but he was

25:00 going out with a couple of British hats over there so it wasn't – I mean, at 17 and 18, you weren't going to be putting on the nun's habit and staying at home. He knew that, and I knew that with him. It didn't make any difference to our own personal feelings for one another.

I've head some people suggest that sort of wartime letter-writing relationship could be quite strong or could strengthen a relationship in some ways?

25:30 Yes, that's true. In one of those letters there he said, "I've got a letter from Granny and Biddy, but none from you." So Granny and Aunty Biddy kept him in touch too.

Would you send other things apart from just letters?

There wasn't much you could send, no. I don't remember sending anything in particular. I think we got together at one of the Christmases and sent a parcel, but he didn't get it. Said he

26:00 hadn't received a parcel. So we didn't bother with anything. I think it went in October and I think the first Christmas we sent something over, but he said he didn't get it. He said not to waste time and money. I did get – he sent me something from India when they stopped in India on the way over. He sent me a pair of pyjamas. Oriental-looking pyjamas. I don't still have them. Can't show you those.

26:30 **Were there efforts at the time to make things for soldiers and to send packages to soldiers?**

Oh yeah. A lot of people who knitted were always making things. Not only for soldiers, too. We used to send them to England. I used to help Granny make the fruit cakes and we used to send two or three fruitcakes at a time over to England. Not only to soldiers, but England. I don't know, but England was always important in our minds at that time.

27:00 But I never knitted. I'm not a knitted. I never knitted socks. Took me four years to knit Harry a jumper when he was alive. That was the biggest effort I ever made. Only took four years. But one of my aunts always knitted and the other one always used to get her to turn the heel. I don't know what turn the heel meant, but she used to get the other one to turn the heel. But they knitted socks and things and sent them in, yes, but not me.

27:30 **Just getting back to the Japanese coming into the war. Was there a threat of air raids? Were there things going on?**

We did worry about that. The air raids that they did have in Darwin, they were very under-printed. You didn't hear a lot about them. You just heard that a Japanese plane had flown over. We didn't know how much bombing was done there until well after the war, long time after the war. We didn't know about the amount of bombing that had taken place at Darwin. So

28:00 when we even heard that a plane had gone across we thought, "Oh cheeky things. What do they think they're up to? But our boys'll get them." We didn't even have the flying power that they had at that time. But that didn't occur to us. But I don't know. Yes, there was a lot of concern about them getting too close. Especially after he made the Brisbane line. I keep going to say the Maginot

28:30 Line and I know that's the other one in Europe. But yes, there was a lot of concern about at that time and people did get all worried about things, especially people that had lots of things and especially after the Japs came into the Harbour. You could have bought a block of land at Rose Bay for 10 quid – if you had 10 quid! But we didn't have 10 quid, did we? And who wanted to live at Rose Bay, anyway, when you lived at Manly.

At the time, no-one wanted to live at Rose Bay.

29:00 **They were all scared.**

No, that's right. We were on the boat. I told you that.

We'll come back to that in just a minute. Just a few more questions about the possibility of an air raid. What preparations were made around Sydney in case?

There were lots of places where people dug holes and had underground bits of shelter that they were going to go into. There were – we didn't do anything because – I was living with Harry's mother at that time

29:30 when the bombing was mooted, '43. I went out to – we lived out here on Rocky Point Road, and Harry dug a hole down in the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK pen and put all sheets of corrugated iron across it. But it wouldn't have been deep enough to get two of us in, let alone all of us. Because he wasn't the most energetic digger.

30:00 But we didn't do a lot. A few people did. And a lot of people with money moved out of the city and moved to the country right outside of the city. But you had to have money to do that, so we didn't do that.

What about blackouts?

Oh yes, we had blackouts.

Can you tell us about those?

You just had to have everything – all the windows had to be blacked out and you couldn't light anything in the night time at all unless you made sure the

30:30 blackout curtains were down. Yes. We all had blackout. It was all blackout.

What did you use to blackout your windows?

Something like he's hung up there. Big, heavy old curtains and things. And they were very effective because your windows are only that wide and your curtains would go further. You'd have a window there and window there and another bit out, a kitchen window. You didn't have – there wasn't that much you had to blackout, but you did have to blackout.

31:00 **How was that policed?**

I suppose they had those night wardens either running round on the bicycles or in darkened cars or something. I don't know. We didn't have any, but we have heard of people being called, hauled over the coals to use their own phrase. "We were hauled over the coals because we had a chink of light showing." Just people lived down the street or up the street.

31:30 It was pretty strongly policed. And yet they were aware if you didn't have your blackout curtains.

What about cars and buses and trams? Were they lit up?

No. They were all dark and they had hoody things over their lights as far as I can recall, because we still didn't have a vehicle and we didn't have to worry about a vehicle. We still

32:00 didn't have a vehicle. I used to ride a bike that had a baby seat on the front and a baby seat on the back and the little bloke used to sit on the front and the bigger one at the back. So I still rode a bicycle until Freda was about four, I suppose I was still riding a bike. We didn't worry about anything other than the house because we had no other part of it to worry about. But I feel sure something had been done.

32:30 I can't give you details. I'd only be imagining things and that's not good.

On your way to and from Marrickville you would have caught the ferry and the tram. How was the ferry? Was it lit up?

Yeah. The ferry wasn't lit up. They were quite dark. We used to sleep on the ferry. The fellow that threw the ropes out used to give us a nudge when we got to Manly. Then we went in the daytime of course for the other shift. But for coming home we'd

33:00 be in the dark. They must have been blacked out.

It seems very dangerous to be on a boat with no lights.

Yeah. We were on the ferry when the – before, of course. It was half past 10. But they didn't get into the harbour until the early hours of the morning I believe. I don't know for sure. But we went back home to Manly from the city that night. On the boat.

33:30 I think we had some half lights on. I don't think it was a real black, blackout. I think it was dull, dull kind of look. Strange you should say that. You don't think about those things, you see.

Certainly would have been different to the city lights today?

The way it is today, indeed, yes.

People must have fallen down into holes, and dangerous things happen.

Very likely. Like that boatload

34:00 the got swamped when one of the boats were going out. We went on the harbour when Harry was going out on the Queen Mary, but there was another boat going out and there was a small ferry and they all rushed over to the side and a lot of them drowned. That was a big news item. Can't remember when it was. But it was one of the big vessels that were going and they all rushed over to one side and the ferry overturned and they lost a number of people in that accident. I don't remember when it was though.

34:30 **A troop ship on its way out to the war?**

I don't know what it was now. Can't remember. Can't remember the time of that one.

What about the factory where you worked? A munitions factory's a pretty good target for an air raid. Were there any preparations made there?

No, not that I'm aware of. Marrickville's got a lot of factories, or had a lot of factories in those days. The biscuit factory would look just the same as the munitions factory to some extent.

35:00 They wouldn't know which was which I wouldn't think unless somebody had told them this was a particular munitions factory. We never thought of it. Never thought of anything landing on top of us. Never. Not once.

There were no trenches dug there?

No.

What about other changes that the war brought to Sydney? How did you know a war was on. You've got the blackout curtains for one.

35:30 How did you know there was a war on? Everything was busier than usual. Everything was the height of industry everywhere because everybody had work. Everybody did things. Because of the restrictions on the amount – you know, you could only buy a quarter of a pound of butter, the restrictions on food were pretty intense especially if you didn't live where you had things growing.

36:00 There were lots of little things that you didn't do because there was a war on, but I can't specify. You just, your freedom was – you weren't quite so free in whatever you did because the restriction of the fact there was a war on stopped you, slowed you down to some extent from doing – like, I wouldn't dream of going

36:30 to Katoomba while the war was on, whereas we would have gone to Katoomba, three or four of us on the train, just for a trip up and a trip back. You wouldn't do things like that any more, smaller things that are not important. But incidental things. Looking for incidentals. It was just little things that you wouldn't do. You weren't quite as free feeling

37:00 as you were before the war. Everybody went mad when the war was finished as you no doubt know. It was such a feeling of relief when it was finally all over. I only had Robyn at that time, but you felt that you could nick out and run up and down the street and wheel her wherever you wanted to go and you didn't have to worry any more.

37:30 It was a feeling of great relief, the end of the war. And there were just the – there were little rules and regulations. I can't specify them actually. But there were rules and regulations that you automatically obeyed because that was what you weren't supposed to do at that particular area or time. We used to swim down below the North

38:00 Head there. We used to swim on that little beach down there. You weren't allowed to go down there any more in case stray boats came in with bombs to blow it up. There were areas you weren't allowed to move about freely in. There were restrictions in that shape that you weren't allowed to go into some of these areas that were more classified as part of the war scene.

Did people look different?

38:30 **There must have been a lot more people in uniform, for example?**

Oh yes. There were lots of people in uniform. Most of the young fellows were in uniform in those days. There weren't many young men that hadn't joined up. The ones that hadn't joined up, you realised they must be in some form of the kind of work we were in and they weren't allowed to join up because of the fact that they were doing war work in factories. You had to have people in factories.

39:00 Girls couldn't possibly take the place of all of the men, so you would know that these boys that were still in civvies would be the ones that were doing the work. You would understand that yourself.

I heard stories about people being given white feathers and that kind of thing?

Yes, that didn't happen much in the Second World War. That's a First World War thing, the white feather bit. I don't remember anybody getting a white feather in the Second World War. But the First World War they were. Don't ask me,

39:30 I wasn't there. But there were. That was a First World War thing. I don't think you'll find much of that went on in the Second World War. There's always a fanatic that will do that kind of thing. Some person that doesn't stop to think, "Why is this person here in civvies?" There's got to be a reason for it. You don't willy-nilly dash up and give somebody a white feather unless you are rather fanatical, I don't think.

40:00 **Were you keen to get your girlfriends involved in the war effort?**

The ones that I worked with were involved in the war effort. And the ones that were a little bit older and knew that they couldn't really cope, they didn't. No, you didn't. No, I didn't try to talk anybody into doing anything that I was doing. A number of my girlfriends around here – she was in the WAAAF. As I said, I would have liked to join the -

40:30 no, she wasn't in the WAAAF, she was in the army, whatever the girls were called in the army. Women's Australian Army. Yeah, WAAAF. And another one that lives out there, she was a land army girl, Ethel. She was land army and she worked in the land army. So they all did what they felt that they could cope with.

Tape 6

00:30 **Chris earlier asked you the effect the Japanese had on Sydney and what everybody did. Do you remember though the time that the Japanese subs came into the harbour?**

I was on the harbour.

So can you talk us through what happened?

We were in the theatre. The boys.

01:00 And then the siren sounded right through the theatre and they were informed in a loud voice to go back to camp, their own respective camps wherever they were, and they escorted us to Circular Quay. And we got on the boat as usual. We had no idea what it was all about and neither did they. And I don't know whether it was too early, I don't think the subs were in the harbour as early as that which would have only been about 10:30, 11:00, towards

01:30 the end of a theatre show. And we came – they had the space in the net for us to come through of course because that's where the ferries were on the Middle Head side of the harbour. We did say to one another, "Boy we're going slowly tonight," and we were going very slowly and in the, not full blackout though, I can't believe it was full blackout. But it was dull, think

02:00 probably the lights were dimmer or something. But we got the shock of our life when we found out next morning there'd been submarines in the harbour and we were on the boat going across. That was 1942, I think, when the subs came into the harbour. But apart from the fact that I don't know – one of them was tangled up in the net, of course, they didn't get away. But there was nothing untoward happened on our trip across the harbour. It was too early

02:30 I think. But we did get a terrible shock when we found out that there'd been subs in the harbour cause we assumed that they had been there. You know what the word 'assumed' means, don't you?

But had the subs actually fired torpedoes at this?

No. It was later. It was almost early hours of the morning that they actually fired the things. You don't know what assumed

03:00 means, do you?

Why do you say that?

It means, 'don't make an ass out of you and me'.

Then no, I don't know what assumed means.

Yes.

I just assumed I knew what assumed means.

No, I don't really feel that they were actually in the harbour. We just felt important that we'd been on the ferry on that night that they went in. They could have

03:30 been coming into the harbour. But if they were coming inn why didn't they just blow up the ferry. They wouldn't, see they'd have known by the vibrations that there was a ferry, wouldn't they? You would think. Anyway we were on the harbour that important night. I'm not quite sure because I haven't read it for many years, but I think it was about one or one thirty in the morning or something when they actually bombed Rose Bay, the bit that they bombed.

04:00 One of them had become tangled up in the net so it didn't get through. The others – I don't know how – because they were small they could probably go right under the net. That's probably how they got passed the net because the break for the net was on the other side, Middle Head side.

But there was a ferry if I understand correctly that was actually hit at Garden Island, is that right, when the torpedo went under the Chicago?

Was that that night?

04:30 **The night that the Japanese subs came in.**

Oh really? I didn't realise that they did a vessel over that far. Garden Island. I thought they were mainly in the – I don't know. I don't know anything about that one. I'd only be addressing something I've read or something.

So how did things change in Sydney after the submarines had come in?

There was a lot of awareness about people getting on the Manly ferry.

05:00 They debated. They had to be reinsured by people telling you I know the ferries are quite safe and all that kind of thing. Well of course we were going to business and kids were going to school and the ferries were a really vital part of the harbour traffic. But we went, we kept on going. You didn't think it could happen every day.

What about Sydney

05:30 **at a broader level outside the ferries?**

Yes, well, it's hard to know isn't it? As I say people left Rose Bay. But outside the ferries I don't know

that we thought about it. Seeing we were more aware of perhaps planes coming across rather than submarines coming up the harbour. We always felt very safe with the boom net there as it was and the fact that they were miniature subs.

06:00 I didn't know that. I know the Kuttabul went down. But truly I didn't connect it to the subs. I really thought it was over there and on Rose Bay. But yeah I do remember the Kuttabul going down. But, no, I don't know any more about it than the fact that it went down.

Were you still at the munitions factory at this point?

No. I'd gone into –

06:30 I had to get special permission to leave the factory, but the fact that I was going into an area where they were still handling American Army gear, I was allowed to go. And I went to Trylon Drycleaners in Crown Street, Sydney. And that would have been towards the middle of '42. Yes.

07:00 About the middle of '42 because I was still working there when Harry came home in '43. I was still in the dry cleaning.

So how long were you at the munitions factory for?

I'd have been about two years, two to two and a half years. Straight after '39, the beginning of '40 and then I left '42 in the middle of the year.

Before we go on to the laundry stuff, you mentioned that some of the girls

07:30 **were quite rough.**

At the factory. Yeah. Not quite rough, but we thought they were a bit rough.

Just in respect to relationships with men and stuff like that, did you know, did girls discuss the extent of their relationships with some of the soldiers and what was going on?

Well some of the older ones might have. But we, the three or four of us that were that little bit younger, we

08:00 talked in our little niche and they talked in theirs. You'd say, "Oh, I met a new bloke last night." "Yeah, he was nice." "No, he came on a bit, I don't think I'll see him again." That kind of conversation. Is that what you mean? Yes. Yes, well that kind of conversation did take place, yes.

What about gossip that girls had gone too far with them?

I only know the one up our local street.

08:30 But no I can't – I don't know. I won't say that it didn't or couldn't. But it's nothing that impressed upon my mind enough to stay there. I can't recall any specifics. They'd say the type of thing that I said, "He came on a bit. I wouldn't go out with him again." And that kind of

09:00 conversation we had. But I don't honestly remember anybody saying what they say now all the time. "He's a good lay," or something. I don't think they would have said it in front of us. I don't think the older girls would have said that in front of we younger ones. They might have said it to one another, but they didn't certainly say it to us. So I can't help you there.

That's all right. I mean, tread carefully with this question,

09:30 **but you didn't know obviously any girls that got caught up in the side of prostitution and all those sorts of things.**

No. Know that old joke about, 'Here 'tis [Here it is]'?

What's the old joke?

Well, the girl's walking her dog around down Oxford Street. And as she's walking and the dog moves, so her coat flies open. And she says, "Here 'Tis. Here 'Tis." And the policeman says, "What do you think you're doing?'

10:00 She says, "I'm just walking my dog, 'Tis."

Was that a joke at the time?

Yes. Good one.

Are there any other jokes of the time?

I don't know. That one just came to me.

You mentioned also earlier you did a bit of voluntary work at Manly hospital.

10:30 Yes, we did. Belonged to what we called, bravely, the National Emergency Services. And they had a nice picture of me in my forage cap and everything, but I don't know what I did with it. You just did

voluntary work. You just went up and said you could give them, say, Monday or something on that week, and they'd say, "Oh good, if you can." So we did. We just did nothing much other than picking up, putting down, or washing the pans and making sure the

11:00 pan room was tidy and that kind of thing. We didn't do anything, nothing to do with nursing, although we did do the course of the St Johns First Aid Certificate. I've got that somewhere too. Don't ask me where. But we did that kind of thing. When you had any spare time you gave a little bit too them.

Firstly, what sort of things did you learn in the St Johns' Ambulance course?

We knew how to bandage, we knew how to put

11:30 them in – not exactly in plaster, but when you could do it with just ordinary bandages and bandage them up and put them in slings. All just the general first aid which is just ordinary almost common knowledge these days. Most people can do it anyway. But at that time not so many people were involved in that kind of thing and we learnt all about that and we met every one night a week we met in Manly at the hall.

12:00 **You were sharing with us the training. Where did you do the training for the Red Cross?**

Was a street up in Manly there. I don't know, I can't remember the name of the street, but there was a hall there. A commemorative hall of some sort there just past the – do you know Manly? Just past where they play cricket and football and then that street goes up the hill. Then there's a hall

12:30 there, there was a hall there and we went up there every Tuesday evening, when you could afford the Tuesday evening and you had it…and they lit little fires and we put them out. We did all little – national emergency services we were. The only picture of it now is in Harry's album. The uniform I mean. We wore a uniform.

So how long was this training over how many weeks?

13:00 You could stay as long as you like. Or leave when you wanted to. There was no – the kudos of it was that you were able to wear a uniform up the street and down the street and look as good as everybody else.

What was the uniform? What did it look like?

It was quite nice. It was a blue shirt and a – don't ask me what the tie was – and then we wore a navy blue forage cap and that was – and a navy blue skirt.

13:30 **Was this a St Johns' uniform or Manly Hospital.**

No. It was just the National Emergency Services that they made for us, that we had, that was designated for the National Emergency Services.

So would you have a dress or slacks?

No, a skirt.

Okay, and that was all provided?

Yes, that was provided.

Was it important back then to have a uniform, to be identified with something?

14:00 Not important that you had it all the time. But it was nice that you had it and you could wear it on the occasion of – which we did. I had a photo taken in it I was so taken with myself. But no, I didn't feel that I needed to be in uniform all the time, but it was nice to be able to wear it when we were doing the job we were doing and people knew we were volunteers and

14:30 volunteering to do something. And then that was I suppose you'd consider that a little bit important, that they were aware that we were doing something. They didn't know we worked in a munitions factory, but we were doing something and they could see we were doing something.

What did you enjoy during the St Johns' training? Was there a particular thing you enjoyed doing such as the bandaging or the putting out of fires?

No,

15:00 just did it because that's what they wanted us to do and we did it to the best of our ability. I wouldn't say that I enjoyed any part of it more than the other because it was all interesting. We found it all quite interesting. And we felt good about ourselves, being able, we felt, we could do it if we had to. We didn't ever have to. But we had the feeling that if we did have to, if we were bombed or invaded we would be able to do that. And

15:30 it was all important, even the minor bits of it like putting the little fire out in the middle of the hall. We used to feel that was going a bit far, but no.

How were you treated at the hospital given that you were volunteers rather than paid staff?

Yes, you were looked down upon a little and you were very menial. You only got the menial tasks so yes, you were a menial person there, but the nurses

16:00 appreciated you being there because it did save them doing those menial tasks because we weren't there doing them they still had to do them themselves. So yes we were menials, but appreciated menials shall we say? Because they used to like to see, "Oh you're going to come in today to help?" "Yes." And it was quite, you were quite welcome, even as a menial.

What sort of patients did they have?

They had all sorts of patients at Manly,

16:30 but of course in those days the patients were all ladies in that ward and all men in that ward. You couldn't trip over some man's feet as you went in to see your sister-in-law as I did on Saturday. Big man's feet under a curtain there and I fell over his feet almost. But they did, I was in there for weeks with my broken collarbone in Manly Hospital. They treated everything there. It was a general hospital. It wasn't a specialised

17:00 hospital doing just this, it treated all sorts of people.

But no men recovering from either training during in the services?

Oh no, not that I was aware of, no. I wasn't aware of any of that. Well, mostly the military hospitals handled most of those, didn't they? I can't think of any that would have been in Manly Hospital for that. That kind of thing. No, not that I'm aware of.

Okay.

17:30 **Did you have any dealings with the patients?**

Not unless it was just a call to get a glass of water or some small thing like that. You couldn't take them a pan or anything. The nurses had to do that because they had to be carefully lifted and although you had your St Johns Ambulance Certificate, that didn't qualify at Manly Hospital. That didn't give you any rights.

Just back with the munitions factory, you mentioned the unions and you weren't

18:00 **very happy with the unions.**

No. I wouldn't join a union ever again. I never joined another union.

What was required to join the union?

Nothing. You worked there and you had to pay your dues and become a union member. You weren't allowed not to. You wouldn't have been allowed in the factory if you hadn't become a member of the Metal Workers Union I think it was. Iron and Metal Workers. Something like that anyway. Your foot wouldn't have been allowed in the door

18:30 unless you were a member of that union. And then as I say they'd come and say, "They're out on strike." "Can't afford to be on strike." "What are we on strike for?" "Nothing to do with you. You're in sympathy with the welders," or with somebody else somewhere else. And you'd be out on strike for two or three days. It used to bug me to death, that. Working in the munitions factory to try and do some good and then they shove you out on strike for nothing you're aware of. But that went on.

19:00 **So the factory shut down for that period.**

I don't know what they did because we didn't go. I went and got myself a job somewhere else for three days. And I was always honest enough to tell them that my factory was on strike, could they use me? And it was mostly a laundry because I'd done laundry work earlier as I've told you. They were very happy to get me in the laundry for a couple of days, and I got good money for that. Better money than I got from the factory for just casual work. But I used to go and get another job.

19:30 I couldn't afford to be out of work for three days.

You left the factory and went to a laundry.

Dry cleaners.

Dry cleaners. Can you just explain how you got to the dry cleaners, how there opportunity came?

How did I get to the dry cleaners. I must have known someone. It might have been Rex. Rex was working there I think. Somebody was working there that I knew and they said, "We need people on the presses," and I said, "I've never pressed."

20:00 They said, "Well it's not hard. You can come and find out." And that's what I did and I worked at Trylon. It was Trylon in Crown Street. It was five pounds four a week. That was good money in those days. It was better than the basic wage. Granny was real proud of me, I was getting five pounds four. Wouldn't

matter if I was doing somersaults or standing on my head to get five pound four a week, that was something.

20:30 The fabric in the American clothes was so much better quality than ours. If we got our army uniforms in it'd take us ages to get the creases in. But with the American, and I'm not telling a fib, you could put the trousers on two legs at a time and press them. Fabric was so good that the press would come out. The whole trouble with the Americans, I hated to get their shirts if I got a batch

21:00 of shirts cause they had three different running creases down their back. You had to do the crease that way and then turn it inside out and then do the crease that way and then turn it back and do the crease that way again. They had different running creases down the back of their shirts in the American shirts. All the American shirts, not just special ones. So then I was still working there when Harry came home and I was still working there well and truly after Harry came home. I was working there till after Robyn was

21:30 born. My boss used to say, "It's just like shelling peas. You'll be back in a week or so." I thought, 'I won't be able to press much longer. My stomach's too far away from the press, I can't reach it." But there you are.

So just with the uniforms that you pressed, there are the American and Australian uniforms. Anyone else's?

No. We did ordinary civilian work in between times. Your dry cleaning or anybody's. cleaning. Who was that fella

22:00 that sang? There used to be a fella that sang in those days and he'd come and sit there in his underwear while we pressed his suits. Normie Erskine. He used to be a singer around the Sydney nightclubs and things. And he used to come and sit there while we pressed his suits. Never forget Normie Erskine. I'll never forget Normie Erskine because he was singing at Martin Place where we had our small wedding reception there

22:30 and he sang, "Oh How We Danced On The Night We Were Wed. We Danced Round And Round Till We Fell Into Bed." I never forgave him for that.

Why's that?

Well it's not the words of the song. It's his own words. We didn't fall into bed. "Oh how we danced on the night we were wed." We didn't fall into bed. But Normie Erskine fell us into bed. So there you are.

And what did he look like sitting in the

23:00 **shop with his undies on?**

Well he used to sit in Mr – I said his name earlier, I've forgotten it again. He used to say, "You can sit around there in that," and he always had that – you know those underwear that have got a sleeve in them. He always had decent underwear on, but he used to sit there and smoke and read the paper until we put his suit through quickly and pressed it. He only had the one suit.

Now just looking at fabrics,

23:30 **you mentioned the Americans' pants, the quality was there, but what material were they made out of?**

The quality. Oh gee, it was softer than ours. Wasn't like our poor old khakis. It was a softer fabric and once you put those creases in they stayed there forever. You couldn't say that about ours, because once you pressed them once and you wore them out three times they'd have to be repressed again before you could go in. I do know because Harry had his longer after

24:00 the war was over. But they had a softer fabric. I don't know what it was. Might have been the beginning of synthetics perhaps. I really don't know. But I could go through 500 pairs of pants a day with the Americans. Couldn't do that with the Australians. If you got 100 you'd be lucky.

Do you know what fabric the Australians' was made out of?

Dungaree wasn't it? They were awful. Awful hard khaki, rough, it was a wool

24:30 of some sort but I don't know quite what.

Did you also press other service uniforms – navy, air force?

No. We didn't get the navy or the air force, no. It was strictly army with us, and as I say, some civilian work too. But mostly army.

What about coats? Did you do coats?

The jackets? Oh yes, you had to do the jackets too.

Anything difficult about pressing them?

25:00 They take more laying. But just towards the end of it all we got an upright machine that you could put the coats on and the steam would blow through them so then you only had to make sure the creases were nicely in. They made it – whoever invented that machine made it a great deal easier. And you could do a lot more work. Because they had one person putting them all on and blowing through, you could have two or three pressers doing finishing, the finishing touches.

So what did you do before that machine

25:30 **came along?**

You used to have to lay the sleeves and lay the first part of the coat and then half the back and then the next half of the back and then the other half of the coat and bring them all back off and make sure that the pockets were sitting down. It was much harder before that machine was brought into the factory. Not harder, in as much as harder, but slower. You could work far more quickly with that machine.

If you could just explain for the archive the machines you actually

26:00 **did use, how they actually operated?**

The presses. The presses were about that body length long and steam and they were well padded. When you had to what you call dress the press and take everything off, if the padding underneath got too flat then you weren't getting an effective press so you'd pad it with the material that they brought, and don't ask me what it was, it was some sort of

26:30 padding. And then you'd dress that first and then you'd put your sheet back over it which was a – I'd say it was almost nylon. I don't know when nylon was invented, but it was a sheet that you could use and reuse many times. You had the ordinary stretchy things – hooks and things to stretch across and pin them into that side, the other side. And then the steam came out of the head of the

27:00 machine as well. But you didn't turn the steam on the head till you put it down. When you locked the machine down then you would press the steam buttons and then you would press the drying button with your foot – the drying part to dry the steam away before you let the head back up again. They're still the same. You look in any dry cleaners now they're still using the same kind of machine. They may have a little more refinement –

27:30 I don't know. But they are basically – when I go to the dry cleaners with anything of Damian's, I could go in there and press that garment. It wouldn't take me 30 seconds because I know I could use the machine. But unless there's any other refinements that I'm not aware of. But that press there in our dry cleaners there looks exactly the same as the press I worked on 50 years ago.

Did you have to be careful you didn't burn yourself?

Yes. You could easily get a, often get a

28:00 good burn if you weren't careful. That was just part of it though. You didn't take any notice of that. I didn't run around looking for compensation. It was your own fault if you got burnt.

How would you get burnt?

You could release the head too soon before the steam had…or you could put it down and haven't clicked it in properly and the steam would burst out at you. You could have easily had you not been aware of what you were doing properly. But I never did.

28:30 I didn't get any nasty burns or anything. And it's all very hot. The whole machine is hot. You wouldn't lean on it. Unless you'd just finished a garment and it was winter and you thought you'd get a bit warm, then you'd lay your arms on it and get warm. But yes.

Did you ever find anything in people's pockets?

Often. We had a place where things from pockets went into a basket. It was literally a basket. And that used to

29:00 go there and stay there. Basically money and that. If there were objects like a wallet, that could – that went into the boss's and you didn't touch that. That went straight to the boss's office. That money mounted up over three months and nobody came in then it would be divided around the whole factory. You all got some of it. It's the same as tips in a restaurant. Tips are usually shared, aren't they? Well that was the same with that basket. Particularly with the Yanks.

29:30 You could get about half a dozen coins out of a Yank's pocket and throw it in the basket, but it all went into the basket. I never found out if anybody kept any. They didn't tell me and I certainly didn't know. But mostly it went into the basket and we all got a fair share of it over three-month's period.

So if someone came in and said, "I left a 50 in my pocket," and, "Someone found a fifty?"?

They'd say, "Oh yes, Mr Smith, the

30:00 girl handed that in, I've got it here," and it would be given back. Mightn't be his 50. If there was a 50. Did we have a 50 then? Yes, we did. But yes, that had happened, and especially with notes. If you ever

got a note, that didn't go in the basket. That went in to the boss with the wallet. And if there was ever a note or anything claimed well then it was, "Oh yes Mr Smith, Mr

30:30 whatever his name was is minding that in his office so I'll get it for you." Oh yes, it happened. People did remember they left something somewhere.

Was anything said to you about pocketing the money yourself?

No, we weren't supposed to. You just knew that you weren't supposed to. You knew that the basket was there and you knew you'd get a share of it. And say you kept 50 cents or even a dollar, it's only meant that everybody'd get less

31:00 later on. I don't know that anybody did. They may have. I couldn't tell you. But mostly I think that it went into the basket. You're all pocketing together. You're not, he's not over there pocketing and you're down there – you're all in a circle here, there's a heap of clothes in the middle of you and you're just pocket. That one you pocket gets thrown over there. So you'd have to be pretty quick on the trigger to be able to keep some of it.

31:30 I don't know that anybody – they may, I don't know. But not that I'm aware of.

I respect to those who brought clothes in, was it individuals who brought their uniforms in?

No. Came in, in a load. An army truck with a load of uniforms. Never – unless somebody individual had a couple of days off

32:00 and wanted to get spruced up while he was in civvies for a couple of days and brought his whole uniform in, that happened of course, but not generally speaking. It was loads of work brought in from wherever they were in barracks.

And these uniforms have names on them, did you notice?

Some of them had a name tag in the neck but not all. A lot of them had numbers. But no,

32:30 not a lot of names as such. They must have an individual way of finding a uniform because we never had any complaints that somebody got the wrong uniform back, so there must have been some form of identification. Probably the numbers that were on the neckpiece were the identification.

Did the dry cleaners also do repairs?

Yes, we had a little lady that did repairs.

What sort of problems would come in with clothing?

33:00 With uniforms it was mostly like a seam coming undone or there could be a tear that somebody's caught on something, a three corner tear. She used to do all the – she had the machines of course – a lot of hand sewing because she was such a good little sewer. Her hand sewing looked better than the obvious machine sewing. But, yes, we had – I can't remember her name.

33:30 \ Vera. It might have been Vera. She used to do any repairs that were necessary. You weren't supposed to repair the army gear unless it was specified, because if you repaired it, you charged for it. And if they came in a group of 50 at say five shillings each, well if you're going to put a repair in and it's going to cost 10

34:00 shillings, well, that's going to go on the account. So you had to wait until a repair was specified to be done. The army was supposed to report that this war torn or that was torn so that you would know that some repairing had to be done. Buttons sewed on, that was one of the major ones.

Did they provide the buttons?

Oh yes. You'd have to have the army buttons provided. They'd bring a little bag of buttons, little something with buttons in.

34:30 **What about adjustments when pants are too long or coats are too long?**

I don't know that she did that. She may have done. That could have been specified in the instruction sheet that was sent in with the garments. But if she did we'd have to then repress it afterwards or she'd do it first so that we could press the seam back down again. So if that had been

35:00 wanted she would do it.

Did you charge the Americans the same as the Australians for the pressing of uniforms?

I honestly don't know whether they charged more or not. I had nothing to do with pricing so I couldn't say. They really shouldn't have if they did because the work was so much even more easily handled and you could get through so much more. It was such good fabric.

What were their shirts made out of?

35:30 It was sort of a poplin. Very strong poplin sort of shirt. Very firm fabric, and once the creases were in it, if you missed and got a double crease in, your name was mud. You couldn't – that's why they were such a nuisance because one this crease went that way and so did that crease go that way, but you couldn't do them together because you'd have got a double crease somehow.

36:00 And then the third one came out this way. It was folded out this way. So they were a real nuisance, but the fabric was lovely. It was a poplin kind of fabric and it was very strong and it was their colour for khaki, which was more browny-coloured khaki than ours.

You mentioned that when you weren't doing the service uniforms, civilians could bring in their gear and you'd do that?

Yes. Just walk in and put their own dry cleaning in.

36:30 **What sort of gear was coming in through the general public?**

Oh you'd get a man with a navy blue suit and you'd get Normie Erskine with a black one and then you'd get some ladies with heavy pleated skirts and things that you couldn't wash. Just general everyday wearing apparel. Nothing terribly special. Ladies' pleated skirts, of course they didn't have the –

37:00 until later they didn't have the permanent pleating as much then as they do now. I can wash my uniform, hang it on the line and put it back on there. It's pleated all the way around. But you couldn't do that in those days. It had to be pressed. And firmly pressed. You'd put a pin in there and you'd get all those pleats on the board, as many as you could, and flatten them down, bring the head down and then you'd take that pin out that you put there and move it right around.

37:30 So those kind of things were always in for pressing. Ladies' pleated skirts and men's suits. Generally men's suits. We had a laundry section, but that was on the next floor down so I don't know what we got in shirts. The army shirts came to us because they were the army fabrics. But ordinary white business shirts and things they could have gone down into the laundry. I don't know what they would have done down in the laundry. I never went to the laundry.

38:00 **How many people worked with you in this dry cleaning section?**

Trylon? We worked at one, two, three, four, five, six – we had eight presses going on the top floor. And we had – what was that little machine that we had over there? Don't know what they did on that little machine. There was some little machine over there that they did something on. I don't know what that was for. Used to be mostly steam. Might have been their caps or their hats. Might have been something like that.

38:30 But mostly the shirts, the coats and pants all came to us. And if there were any other ordinary business shirts they would have gone downstairs into the laundry. We didn't go into the laundry.

And did you yourself, were you involved in the dry cleaning of hats?

Not personally, no. You see, after that I – when was Robyn born? 1944.

39:00 Oh, I was there for over a year. No, I was pressing, strictly pressing. And then when I got too noticeable, then I knocked off.

And what were the working hours?

The hours were reasonable. Actually, you could choose to work your hours to some extent. I used to work nine to four

39:30 actually, or sometimes eight till four if they were busy, because that gave me plenty of time to get across from Manly where I lived and then home in a reasonable time to get an evening meal. Because I was married by then.

Was there any shift work involved?

No, not real shift work, not as such, no. Just general day work.

40:00 I can't remember any night work taking place.

Tape 7

00:50 **You mentioned that you didn't have a new dress until you were 16. Can you tell me about that first dress?**

Yes.

01:00 Yes, it was beautiful. It was for my birthday and I think everybody helped Granny to get it. I don't know how much it would have cost. It wouldn't have been terribly expensive, but to me it was the most

beautiful frock I'd ever seen. Navy blue with a white pin spot and a white collar and a little red blow. I felt like Marilyn Monroe or somebody in my new frock. Otherwise

01:30 I had hand-me-downs always. And they looked nice. Don't think I was running around like Annie Rooney with nothing much on. Granny was a very good seamstress. Hand sewing, she did. They always fitted me and they always looked nice so I'm not complaining bitterly, but I really thought that new dress was lovely.

What did you do in your new pin spot dress?

Went into Manly so everybody could see me.

02:00 Walked up and down The Corso. That was our happy hunting ground, up and down The Corso. You went one down that side and up the other and then down that side and then back up there other.

What would you hunt there?

You'd just look at everything and everybody and smile and go on. Was just nice. On Sunday night everybody walked up and down The Corso at Manly on Sunday night. You'd be bumping into people you knew

02:30 all the way along. I don't know what happens now. I haven't been to Manly for years.

Just promenading?

Promenading. Yes.

Without window shopping, or just the social occasion?

No. A lot of window shopping, yes. You used to window shop. There was on old firm on the middle of The Corso called Coopers and I had an aunt who worked in Coopers. I always had an excuse to go in and say hello in Coopers because Aunty Flo worked there. But you didn't have

03:00 to buy. You weren't pursued by eager saleswomen. Well, they weren't there on Sunday night anyway, but they knew through the week if you were walking and you were walking in just to have a look around. Four times out of five you couldn't afford to buy anyway, but they knew who you were. Generally speaking they knew. And they knew who I was because Aunty Flo worked there, you see.

When you first started working

03:30 **you said you gave most of your money back to your Gran but you kept a shilling for yourself. What did you used to spend that shilling on?**

To go to the pictures before we were allowed to go in free. You'd spend it to go to the pictures or you might lay by something that was going to cost about 10 shillings and you only had the one shilling. They'd accept the one shilling and wait

04:00 till you'd saved up a bit to get an up and down payment and then you'd get out whatever you had looked at. Perhaps it was a blouse. And then if Granny was all right for that particular time she'd say, "I can help you get that lay-by out," and that's the kind of thing you did. You all worked together.

Any laid by purchases that stand out in your mind?

No, not specifically.

04:30 It was just a general thing that you did if you really wanted something. Could have been a garment, a blouse. Could have been a pair of shoes. Shoes were always a fairly big item to buy and you might have lay-byed a pair of shoes. I can't think of anything I specifically had to have.

When you started working at the factory, did you have more money to spend yourself?

At the munitions factory? Oh yes, I had more money then to spend. I forget what my wages were there.

05:00 But I think were around about the four pounds a week or something which was a really goodly sum in those days. Especially for a girl. And I had enough to then give Granny three pounds and I could have a pound. But she paid my fares. And I had a pound. And I had my lunches. So it was good money. A pound was, really a pound in your pocket was something.

05:30 It was more when you changed it into 10 shillings, and 10 single shillings…

When you were then a bit wealthier, what did you do with this new wealth?

I probably just frittered it away at whatever. I don't know what. Probably a pair of stockings here or a new blouse there or – I had a small amount in the bank, not a lot of money in the bank.

06:00 You'd put a shilling into your bank account. But I never had a lot of money in the bank. Never ever. I was always too busy spending what I had. You didn't have it for such a long time that when you got it you spent it.

How did they pay you?

It was in money, cash, and it was in a little brownie envelope with your name on the front. And the

06:30 hours you'd worked and the amount you'd earned. I haven't got any. I didn't keep any of them. They'd have been handy, wouldn't they?

Was it always the right amount in the envelope?

Never knew. Was just happy to get whatever they were giving me. I never argued with them about what they gave me. I always thought it was right.

So what was the routine for collecting these envelopes on Friday?

The paymaster would come around and stand at the door as you were going out and as you timed yourself out

07:00 he'd hand you your pay.

Were there any payday rituals? Did you ever go and buy something special on your way home?

If you wanted to you could have but Millie and I usually hopped on the tram and came back to Circular Quay and hopped on the boat and then got back to Manly. Now, if we wanted anything then we'd have stopped in Manly, either she or I, and we'd have bought it in Manly. I don't think we'd have stopped in the

07:30 city because we didn't know the city very well. I don't think – I can't recall ever having to have anything specific. I'd be more of an impulse buyer rather than a – and don't forget we had a Coles down the end of Manly and there was nothing over two and six in those days. You could buy madly in Coles with 10 shillings, get three or four different things.

08:00 That the kind of impulse buying you used to do rather than getting your eye on something. If I needed an evening gown or anything like that I'd just borrow one of the aunties. I didn't buy an evening gown. I never had my own evening gown. But I'd just wear Aunty Biddy's or Aunty Florrie's because we were all much of a size. They were a tiny bit bigger than me, but it didn't matter in an evening gown. You weren't worrying. So I never had to buy anything

08:30 really expensive. Never bought anything really expensive. I'm still a mean shopper actually. I think it's ingrained.

What occasion would you go into the city then if you didn't like so much in there?

I went into the city more after I started working at Trylon in Crown Street because it was easy to stroll across to the city. You'd walk round the back way and walk into the city into David Jones there and that was really easy.

09:00 Then you'd shop there and you'd be horrified at the prices so then you'd get on the tram and go down to the quay and go down to Manly. Because it was always – David Jones, and it was Farmers then up the other end – they were always so dear. To my eyes they were very expensive places to shop so we didn't. We'd look, there's no doubt about that. But not shopping. But Millie wasn't with me.

09:30 She didn't come into dry cleaning. Millie knocked off work all together. I think her boyfriend came home and they got married and then she didn't go back to work. But I went back to work until Robyn was born.

Just while we're talking about shopping, you mentioned when I asked you how the war changed things in Sydney, you said there was rationing was the biggest change you could think of?

Yes, well, rationing was with food as well as – you had coupons for everything. And

10:00 you could only get each like my quarter of a pound of butter and Granny's quarter of a pound of butter would make half a pound of butter we could have on your coupons. And for clothing you had coupons also. I was married in a street dress because I only had enough coupons – I only had enough coupons because my brother came home from Thursday Island and got coupons, so I got his coupons and I got that dress.

So where did the coupons come from and

10:30 **how were they issued to you?**

The government. I think you just went up to an outlet and you got your coupons for the week or the fortnight – I'm not sure whether it was weekly or fortnightly – but you got your coupons and you could only buy the amount of those specified. Butter was one of them. What was another one? Sugar probably. You could only buy that amount in the fortnight

11:00 or something that your coupons were designated for. I know Granny used to grizzle and moan because she was trying to make the cakes to go to England and she'd never have enough brown sugar and the

kind of sugar she wanted to cook with – she had to struggle and borrow a cup. That's where the cup of sugar came from I think. Granny going for a cup of sugar. The old lady next door lived on her own and she was quite willing for Granny to have something

11:30 because Granny used to do a bit of cooking for her. So you used to borrow, beg, steal, but that was the – I'm surprised you didn't know about it. Did you know about coupons?

You've given me more information. I've often had people tell me about this. What about the coupons themselves, what did they look like?

Oh they just looked like a sheet – you know how you play bingo? Which we used to call something else. You know the little squares with the numbers on?

12:00 That's how they were. And that's where we'd have quarter pound of butter on it and you'd just tear that little perforated square off and take it in when you went to buy at the shop.

And could you trade them with each other or were they individually used?

Well see Granny did most of it and I used to just go along as the carrier and general so what she and whatever his name was discussed over the counter quietly I never

12:30 bothered listening. I feel sure that if she wanted more sugar for whatever, the cakes, if she said to him, "I'm trying to get these cakes cooked for England, could I not have this half pound of tea and have…" I'm quite sure he would have done it. I know it might not have been fully legal. But I know they're both dead and they can't go to jail. So that could have happened, yes. If she was desperate for sugar she'd have asked somebody.

13:00 And not only that, we had the most beautiful guava and she used to make guava jam. She'd take him up a jar of guava jam every now and again. Not for any real reason but because he was always a good grocer and always gave a tick until the weekend that the pension came and she'd give him a jar of guava jam which he loved. That kind of thing went on. We ourselves used to go

13:30 to the fruit shop and say, "Any specks today?" and you'd get the specks and Granny had get enough speck apples, cut the specks out to make a pie. You did that. That's the kind of thing you did. We weren't the only ones that did that.

What about clothing? How would the rations for clothes work?

Yes. I'm not sure how they worked, but I never had any coupons left. I'm not sure what I did with my coupons for clothes. But I never seemed to have enough coupons left to buy a new garment when I wanted it.

14:00 Especially when Harry got back and I wanted a wedding dress. That was very much a push and shove job. I still didn't get enough until Harold arrived down from Thursday Island and I took his.

What were the hardest things to get clothing wise?

I don't know. If you had the money and the coupons you could get just about anything. Can't think of anything you couldn't get.

You told us before the story about painting your stockings on.

Yes. Well stockings were very expensive.

14:30 As compared to other items of clothing stockings were always – most stocking in those were sheer silk stockings. And they were quite expensive. Yes, there was a jar of stuff you could buy and you used to paint it on your legs. And if you had stockings on and you went out, if you had a ladder, you would ignore it and somebody'd say, "Oh you've got a ladder in those," and I'd say, "Oh have I? For goodness sake."

15:00 You knew perfectly well the ladder was there but you weren't going to tell them that you knew the ladder. "Oh what a horrible thing to happen! We've got a ladder." Yes. I don't know what that stuff was called. I think they've got some now again. I see some of the ads on TV [television] and they seem to be rubbing a colour thing up their legs. But it's a very old fashioned one if you see anybody. You can tell them that's old hat.

15:30 **Would men that you went out with give you gifts of this kind?**

No, I don't think so. I mostly went out with army boys while they were here and after Harry had gone. And Harry used to buy Granny a cake and bring her down a cake. Not me. Not me. No, Harry would buy me I think possibly

16:00 a pair of stockings for a birthday or something like that. That could be a fact. I know he bought me a pair of pyjamas in Ceylon when they stopped over there on the way to the Middle East. And he sent those homes. But I didn't go out with boys – not long enough or no degree of permanence. If you go to a fella to the pictures once or twice you don't expect him to buy you

16:30 presents. So no I don't recall getting – you might get a block of chocolate at interval or something like

that, but not presents as such, no.

Were other things rationed as well as clothes and food?

No, don't think so. Clothes and food. What else could there be for example?

You didn't have a car, but what about petrol?

17:00 I don't know.

Did that change people's lives around here?

I don't know, but petrol could have been rationed. I would imagine it probably was. It's one of the main staples, isn't it? I would imagine it could have been. Yes. I'd say yes to that but not from personal experience. We never had a car.

Where would you go on these dates that you've talked about with the boys in the army?

Mostly to the dance or the pictures.

17:30 It was mostly dancing or the pictures. There was a dance hall in Manly which was called The Diggers. That was a good dance hall and that used to have Old Time, New Vogue, Gang Jazz. And Thursday nights there used to be from Brooky, one of the Little boys had a truck and we'd all pile onto the truck and we'd come across to the Trocadero. We'd dance at the Trocadero. Old Time, New Vogue. That was the kind of dancing

18:00 they mostly liked, the young people then. The Americans were here then too because this particular night everybody was ready to go home and Ollie was up there with a couple of American boys and they were doing all that – she was very good on her feet – razzamatazz, and they'd fling her from one to the other and we had to go up and extract Olga from these two so we could go back to Brooky or we never got home. Dancing or the theatre or the pictures. Not the theatre, just the pictures. I don't mean live theatre.

18:30 Unless there was a play on in Manly somewhere that we could get to. But no, that was basically mostly what we did. What else could we do?

I'm very interested in talking more about those things because they're not like they do today. The Americans coming into the dancing halls, did they bring new dances with them?

Yes, they did. The Hokey Pokey was an American one. The Hokey Pokey – we did the Hokey Pokey, this is after we were married and we were living at North Haven.

19:00 1944 or beginning of '45 and Bob Hope's plane came down in the Camden Haven River and Bob Hope and Frances Langford and Gerry Colona – you don't know any of those names I suppose, but they were all on the plane. They were entertaining in the Singapore area. It was free by then and our men were prisoners there. But they were still entertaining over there somewhere.

19:30 And they came down in the river and Bob Hope walked up to the or got lift up to the post office. My husband, Harry's aunty and uncle owned six cottages and six cabins at North Haven on the river and we were up there living and he was maintaining and care-taking the cottage. And Bob Hope walked up to the post office

20:00 and our post master up there was a big fat – can't think of his name unfortunately – casual man. He'd lean on the counter while he was serving you and talking to you. And Bob Hope came in and said, "I'm Bob Hope and our plane's just come down in the river and I really need to get in touch with America as quickly as I can." And old whatever his name was, "Oh that's right. And I'm Bing Crosby. And when does the dance music start?"

20:30 It took him a while to convince him that he was being honest. And they became very good friends and old Mr Whatever-it-is lost a leg with diabetes and he moved down and he lived at Newport and every time Bob Hope came out to Australia to entertain or whatever he always went out and saw him. Until he died, Bob Hope would go and see him out there. That's where we learnt the Hokey Pokey. Bob Hope and Gerry Colona – he was a comedian

21:00 with big eyes and Patsy Langford. There was no entertainment there. Only the school bus in Laurelton. We all went up – Aunty Olive was most disapproving that I'd go up with all the hoi polloi. We went up and had this big dance with Bob Hope and the crew and everybody and they taught us the Hokey Pokey. I don't know whether they still do the Hokey Pokey. They probably don't.

21:30 But there was a lot of equipment that was brought out of the plane went into one of uncle's big sheds on the property. Anyway, they came back a couple of months later to collect some of the equipment and there was a huge big black snake coiled up on top of it and they decided they could live without it. I don't know where it ever went to. I don't know what uncle did to dispose of it. But the fellas from the plane

22:00 didn't bother taking it. That was quite exciting when Bob Hope's plane came down.

It must have been. How do you do the Hokey Pokey?

Put your right foot in, you put your left foot out. You do the Hokey Pokey and you turn yourself about.

In a circle?

No. Just like a barn dance kind of thing. All around the room. You do the Hokey Pokey.

Any other American dances

22:30 **that you remember?**

No, we were pretty good dancers ourselves. We didn't really need American dances. I don't know what else they did. Olga was being tossed about with what was called – it wasn't called dancing, what was it called? Not jujitsu either. Looked a bit like it. But oh, you know, fancy steps.

Jitterbugging?

Jitterbugging. Yes. Olga was a great jitterbug. Yes. She was good.

23:00 I was never quick enough on my feet. I could dance. I could do a lovely ordinary dance, but Olga could Jitterbug. She was a jitterbug between two of them that particular night up at the Trocadero. But that was a good – see, we used to just – Jimmy'd say, "The truck's free, will we go?" "Yes." And we'd all pile in the back of the truck, about 20 of us, and away we'd go. Not when it was pouring with rain of course. The truck was open.

So for people in the future who have no idea what jitterbug means, what was that?

23:30 **How did it differ from normal dancing?**

It was more an individual thing with not one person, but with two people doing, and they'd hold the hand of the person and fling them that way and then come back and catch them. Do you ever watch ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] on? Well, you've seen them jitterbug.

I have. But for people in the future who don't know what it is. This is going to be kept for 100 years.

You better get a bit of

24:00 Hokey onto one of the videos out of the Saturday night. You've seen them Jitterbug there and fling one another about, under the legs and up and over and back and through, yes.

I've heard that this kind of dancing was frowned upon by people's parents?

Oh yes. It was not the way to dance in those days. See, we were young then, but the parents were old. No, you didn't do that kind of thing. You danced. Old Mr Fish who ….

24:30 **What did your Gran think?**

Gran didn't dance. I don't ever remember Granny doing a dance at all. I don't think she cared what we did as long as we did it on the dance floor and she could see us.

Was there much sneaking off to be in couples at dances?

I suppose there was. I would imagine yes, that there probably was. But I was always there with my brother and Gran

25:00 was always in the background there. But if we went into Manly to the Diggers I still went there with my brother. And he was a good dancer. I very rarely went actually unaccompanied anywhere really. If I wasn't – like the uncles were always there to frown or supervise if anything untoward was going on. You never would have been game to do anything. There were too many people

25:30 that would tell somebody else.

Was there alcohol at these dances?

Yes. Beer. They used to drink beer. And they used to put the beer under Robyn's – Harry used to put his two bottles of beer – it wasn't excessive drinking. It was a glass of beer or two. It was never – I can't believe any of them – I've never seen any of them fully inebriated at the ordinary Saturday night dance. They'd have a couple of beers, yes.

26:00 A couple of bottles of beer. And I don't know that anybody ever had anything at all to really create any problems. I think they really all enjoyed the dancing and they didn't really need the liquor. But yes they'd have beer. I'm talking about later now with Harry putting it under Robyn's pillow because that was 1944.

What about at places like the Trocadero? Would there be alcohol there?

There could have been. I don't know.

26:30 I didn't see any in the dancing that we were there for. They could have had liquor. They had two bands there. The band used to play there for so long and then it'd swing around and the next band'd be on the

next part of it. It was quite good. And a different kind of music for different kind of dancing. I don't know about liquor. My first glass of wine was when I was 44. I'd never had a lot of liquor.

27:00 Harry always liked a beer. I'm not making him out to be any painted angel, but we never had excessive liquor in our home in our home life and the women didn't drink at all. It was just the men that had a beer.

The Trocadero's a real institution in Sydney. Can you describe what it looked like?

Oh yes, it was wonderful. Yes, it was a long building and the band was right in the middle,

27:30 and as I say, in our day there were two bands and they used to rotate. Got pictures of the Trocadero but I didn't bring them out because I didn't think you'd be interested in the Trocadero. It was just really – I don't know how to describe it. It was a really big hall and a lovely big floor and

28:00 there were no little niches you could sneak into there. It was all walls except for where the band was. If you wanted to sneak you'd have to sneak out into George Street. There were little places that you could sit. They had the tables and the chairs there. I suppose if you had wanted a beer – I don't know whether you could take it in with you. I don't know whether

28:30 they had anywhere to buy it or not. I don't recall. I can't think of anything where you could buy it. No. I don't know. Never interested, see. And the crowd I was with weren't terribly interested either.

That's all right. Back to the description, the stage was in the middle of the hall?

Yes. You'd walk up the stairs and into the Troc and you'd be looking directly at the stage and then the hall extended

29:00 really long along a long hall. Can't estimate the approximate length. And the width – they always had good width. It was fairly wide. It was really – I don't know how you would describe it. It was just a dance hall. I don't know that there was anything particularly special. I can't remember any

29:30 particular decorations. It was probably decorated, but only with those ordinary kind of loopy things around the top of the wall. Nothing very spectacular. I don't even remember what the lighting was like. But no, I can't tell you a great deal about the Troc except it was a lovely big hall with a beautiful floor for good dancing on.

This stage, did it rotate? Can you describe that again? I don't understand how it works.

Yes. The stage was

30:00 there and they were all playing any number of musicians – eight or nine or whatever – and then at a certain part of the night that music'd stop and they'd play a last slow dance or something and the whole stage would rotate and that lot would vanish around the back and then the next lot would come out around the front. And then the next band would start playing out around the front.

30:30 A whole rotating band that was really quite striking.

Were there particular dance bands or orchestras that were famous in Sydney at that time?

There were a number of dance halls that were really well known that we could never get to because we no transport. I only know the Troc and the ones at Manly on my side of the water over there.

And they had their own musicians,

31:00 **and they would play at them all the time?**

Yes, they did at Manly. The Diggers was right in Manly and the Luana which was very popular that was down the other part, the other side of Dee Why as you drive out of Dee Why on the right. It's now the RSL Club. But it was the Luana in those days. It's funny when you're going back 60 years.

31:30 **I think it's great. I love the culture of the time. The other thing I'm interested in is how the dances worked. You would go with a partner, but you wouldn't dance with that partner all night?**

We didn't necessarily go with a partner to any of the dances. Very rarely went with a partner. I would go down to the Lu and Gordon would come and say, "Oh I'm glad you're here, will you save me the quick step, the foxtrot?" I'd say, "Okay." We didn't often go with

32:00 partners. We went with a group. We were a group of young people that were going to the dances all the time. We were a truck-full going to the Trocadero. But you'd dance with everybody. If somebody came up – a Yank or anybody came up and asked you nicely, "Would you care to have this dance?" Well you would get up and dance. It didn't matter who they were. You didn't know who they were and you wouldn't see them again. But if they were a good dancer you wouldn't care either. You'd go back and I'd say to Ol, "Oh he was a good dancer,

32:30 Ol, you'd like to dance with him if he asks you." But that was about the extent of it. I don't recall Olga

and I ever going to a dance with two specified people.

How formal was it then? Would people have to come and ask you before you got on the dance floor?

Yes. You were always asked, “Would you…?” Not with Gordon and I, who were regular dancers. He comes from Manly, too. He lives round there now. He would say, “If you’re coming to the Lu, will you

33:00 save me,” some special dance he liked to do. And I would say, “Okay.” You could pre-book a little there with somebody you know. But that doesn’t mean you had to go with them. I didn’t ever go with them. And that was just the way it was. But if you weren’t with them they would have to come and ask you. And let’s face it, four times out of five they’re coming up near Granny and, or Aunty,

33:30 or Olga’s Aunty Flo or somebody. They’re coming up amongst all the oldies to ask you to dance. That possibly made it a little more difficult. It would these days I should imagine. But in those days, that’s what was done.

Would you ever refuse an offer of a dance?

I don’t know. The person would have to be objectionable. I haven’t done so. But I’m aware – there was one boy we didn’t really like to dance with because he had such bad teeth.

34:00 And we used to hope he wouldn’t talk to us when he was dancing. But he was a beautiful dancer. But he had terrible teeth. I know his name, but I won’t say it.

How did you get on with the Yanks, and how did they get on with Australian men you went to dances with?

We didn’t have a lot to do with them. The Trocadero was about the only place that we ever were involved with

34:30 Americans. And we were with our own group. I don’t think we ever intermingled greatly with them at the dancing. I don’t recall seeing any of them at Dee Why. That was a long way out for a Yank to travel. Unless they were posted somewhere out there – Narrabeen or somewhere. But no, we didn’t get very highly involved with the Americans. And don’t forget

35:00 Harry was home in ’43 and we were married just then. They didn’t come out till ’42. So we didn’t have a great deal to do with them.

The common saying is that the Americans were very popular with the Australian women, but very unpopular with the Australian men – is there any truth to that?

Yeah. There could be a lot of truth with that. Because the girls knew that they had money to spend and it meant that if Joe Blow asked them here and an

35:30 American Peter Pan asked them over there, they’d know he had enough money to take them on a good night out. And they’d say, “Yes,” and, “No.” Yes, that happened quite a bit. Perfectly well aware of the fact that they had much more money to spend than we did. That was encouraged people to go out with them. It was, that was a well known fact that they were popular with the girls

36:00 and unpopular with the boys.

They also looked good. I mean, you knew all about their uniforms?

Oh yes. Their uniforms were a lot smarter than ours. They did look nice. And they were always beautifully groomed. I never saw an untidy American in all the time they were here. But any time I was out, as I said previously I think, while we were having a meal and one joined us to just sit down somewhere he was

36:30 bursting to tell you about his family and show you his photos of his family. Never found anybody that was offensive in any way or brash or forward. They always were – they sounded quite homesick, the ones with whom I came in contact. Even out with another man they were still quite happy to just sit and talk to two of you to have someone to talk to that they could talk about home about. I didn’t go out with any individually.

37:00 I haven’t been out with an American in my whole life. But I didn’t find them as brash as they have been painted over the years. And as the years go on the more lurid the colours become. With fading memories, brighter colours. But I didn’t find them offensive. But I didn’t have anything personal – it was always impersonal contact that I had.

I’m interested to know, you said before that

37:30 **Harry wasn’t necessarily your boyfriend, that you had other boyfriends during the war until he came back, but when he came back you got together.**

He was my boyfriend before he went and I said too that I wouldn’t become engaged, so we were boyfriend and girlfriend and he was serious enough to want an engagement and I said, “No,” and I said that, “I don’t want to be tied down and not to be able to go anywhere and do anything,” that kind of

thing. So of course I did go out with other

38:00 boys and had quite a lot of fun with other boys, but nobody had the same kind of spark that Harry had and when he came back and we were together for a couple of days and talking and all that and he said, “Do you think we might get married?” And I said, “Yes,” because there’d been nobody else, and I went out with large numbers of boys. I didn’t go with one and stay with him forever because none of them ever

38:30 had the same kind of personal feeling that I had for Harry. And then when he came back and he still wanted to get married, I said, yes, and we did. And we were 45 years together before poor old thing died on me.

What was the first news that you got that the 9th Division that Harry would be coming back? Or had he already arrived?

I didn’t know whether the 9th Divvie was – I think it came to Western Australia and then everybody in Western Australia knew,

39:00 so then New South Wales knew that the 9th Divvie was on the way back. We did know that they were coming and yes, we did greet them.

How did that news spread?

I think somebody in Western Australia knew people in New South Wales and phoned them and said the 9th Divvie’s been here and they’re on their way back around and it soon spread. We soon knew that the 9th Divvie was on the way. I

39:30 didn’t actually know for sure that Harry was in the 9th Divvie coming back until his mother was notified and then his mother told me because I had been to see his mother and his sisters a number of times over the years.

And you were able to go and meet them?

No, I didn’t meet Harry. A lot of people did meet the boats but I didn’t. I didn’t meet him until about two days after he was back and then he phoned and said he was coming over. So then he came over.

40:00 **What about those people who did go and meet the boats? How did they know where to go?**

I don’t – I think they were allowed a certain area of the wharf on which they could go, but they weren’t allowed to go right to the very gangplank. So I think they had to wait, partitioned off in a certain area and then they were allowed. But I didn’t go. I wasn’t sure what you would do anyway. And Granny said, “He’ll

40:30 get in touch with you if he wants to.” And he did. So there you are.

Tape 8

01:40 **Harry’s come back from overseas and he proposed to you. How did he propose?**

Said, “Well we talked about it a lot before I let, but how do you feel now? Do you still feel you want to marry me?” And I said, “Yes.”

Had he

02:00 **mentioned anything in his letters?**

Oh heavens, yes. You could look at those letters. He’s mentioned it all away along the line. We’re married with a family in those. Yes. He mentioned it in his letters a lot.

Had you responded in your letters?

Not in kind, no.

So he was out on a bit of wing was he?

Well, I think he was still hoping. And as I say,

02:30 I just – I didn’t know and when I saw him again and the same old click was there I thought, “Yes. That’s it.” And I went out with lots of other boys and none of them had the same kind of click, so there you are. That’s what happened.

So where was the actual wedding from the point of engagement?

There was no real engagement. They came back on the 29th of – must have been leap year – no, January

03:00 1943 the 9th Divvie got back and we were married on the tenth of March 1943. Married at Manly

Catholic Church and we had a small reception at Sammy Lee's in Martin Place. No. It wasn't Sammy Lee's. It was a place called the Dungowan at Martin Place.

Before the war did you have any idea of what you'd like to have as a wedding?

No.

03:30 Never expected a great deal of a wedding.

Were there many weddings going on during the war?

Not in my part of the world. There probably were. People were getting married before men went away. There were a number of weddings under those circumstances. Before they went they got married, a large number of them, but nobody that I knew personally.

What advice

04:00 **was given to you about married life from your Gran or from your family?**

Gran? Gran always said, "If you do the right thing, you will have the right marriage." We – let's not say anything stupid, we had our times when we had a good yell at one another, but we both believed in the old saying, 'don't let the sun go down on your anger'.

04:30 So we normally tried to make it up in time to go to bed. But I won't say we didn't have differences and squabbles and things like that. You wouldn't be normal if you didn't. But we – I was hoping to get to fifty, but we only got to 45.

Why'd you have to get your father's consent?

Because I was only 19 and they didn't accept Granny as my legal guardian, which she had been all those years,

05:00 and luckily my father was in Sydney at that time. He was in barracks at Randwick. He was in the First World War. But he went at 17 to the First World War, same as Harry went at 17 to this one. So Dad was very proud to sign for me because he was a very vain man, my father, and

05:30 he was an officer. He wanted his fellow officers to know he had a daughter old enough to get married and they could say to him, "Oh Mick, you can't be old enough to have a daughter to get married." Mick, his name. Wasn't his name. His names was Harold. But they called him Mick.

Did you enjoy your wedding day?

Yes. After Father scolded me I enjoyed it

06:00 for the rest of the time, yes, except when what's-his-name sang that song at us.

And why did the father scold you?

Because you got a wedding car to take you to the wedding and it was a lady driver for us and I knew we were early. Should have been half past five and it was only about 20 past five. And I said, "It's too early. You'll have to go round the block

06:30 again." And she said, "No, I can't waste the petrol. You'll have to get out now." So we were in the church porch about five minutes too early by the time the car pulled in and we got out and everything. So one of the boys went over and – don't know whether it was Uncle Roy or Harold, but somebody went over. Probably not Harold, because he was escorting me. Dad had gone by that time.

07:00 Father was not quite ready. So he came over and he said to me, "Half past five, Beryl." I said, "I know, Father." So then by the time he got himself down on the altar and set himself up we were ready to go.

So your own dad wasn't there?

No, Dad had gone. I don't know where they sent him to. He went north somewhere. But I don't know where he was. Haven't had a lot to do with my father over the years. Only a few times.

07:30 **Weddings these days are big occasions with plenty of food and guests and those sorts of things. What was the reception like?**

No, we had a small reception. It was only Granny and Aunty Biddy and Uncle Roy and Harry's mother and his father and mother were separated so it was Harry's mother and Uncle Fred and Pauline who was the bridesmaid.

08:00 And we had a very small – we just had light meal. It was called the Dungowan and it was downstairs in Martin Place in those days. I don't know what we had actually to eat. And then Harry and I were staying at the old Metropole. We were staying at the Metropole overnight and then in the morning we went up to North Haven and had our honeymoon up there. But no, there was no

08:30 big frilly wedding or anything. But a wedding. It was a nice wedding.

You mentioned I think off tape that Harry had come home with some injuries.

Harry was badly burned while he was over in Tobruk and they couldn't get him out so he was rolled in a sheet or something until they got him out to Alexandria. Well, by that time the bones had set in that position

09:00 and he was perfectly all right in as much as he had what was called in those days the underwater Sister Kenny treatment and he was perfectly all right. But his nerves were never good. I used to have to drag him across the main roads in the city. He wouldn't cross the roads ever. But like living out here – here worked at the PMG [Post Master General's Department] then.

09:30 Most of our married life he worked with the PMG but as he grew older the whole thing came against him. He developed a lot of arthritis. He was in a wheelchair eventually before he died. He really wasn't well. He was really wanting to go that year that he died. It was a really happy release for him. He was really bad.

How

10:00 **had he been burnt?**

He was a Bren gun carrier, a driver. And their Bren gun was blown up and he was burnt with that. So that should be in the archive.

When did you hear the news that he'd been injured overseas?

His mother was told that he'd been injured. And that picture of him where you can see the scars, she has the big one of

10:30 those when the scars were really bad. And Harry was a thick-set man and he went down to about six stone. He was about six stone when he was in the hospital at Alexandria, which was an unusual weight for him because he wasn't fat but he was thickset. He was a heavier kind of man.

So you visited him while he was in hospital at the time?

Here?

Oh, this is when he was in

11:00 **Alexandria? Okay.**

This was when he was in Alexandria. I spent half my life at Concord over the last few years before he died. He was in Concord pretty continuously over the last few years.

And the fact that he had been burnt, obviously that didn't put you off or deter you or give you second thoughts?

Oh no, no. They weren't nasty deep burns. They were noticeable but they weren't nasty.

11:30 You can see them in that photo. They were worse in the photo that Harry's mother had. I don't know who's got that now. There's only Patti left and I don't think she has it. No, that didn't put me off.

When you heard the news that he had been injured were you concerned at all?

Yes. We were quite concerned about that because they said that it had taken them three days to get him out to Alex [Alexandria].

12:00 **So just the fact when you heard the news, where were you?**

Don't know. Harry's mother must have dropped me a note because we still didn't have phones. I think I had to go and meet Pauline

12:30 somewhere and I think Pauline told me. That was Harry's – he was the eldest, but she was the one closest to him.

Do you remember what you wrote for encouragement to him?

Yes. Wrote and told him to get better quick and not to waste too much time in Alexandria. He was there for another six months or so before he came home, before the 9th Divvie was coming out. He was still there. That one that I

13:00 have is where he's sorting mail. He was in the mail officer for the last six months that he was there. He wasn't out in Tobruk or anything.

So once he came home and you guys got married, did he continue in the services?

He was in the army for a while, yes. He stayed in the army, I think he was still in the army till about – Robyn was born in '44. So he must have been in the army until late

13:30 '45, early '46 because we went up to North Haven then. Harry's aunt and uncle had holiday cottages

and cabins at North Haven and we were up there for several years after that. Robyn was small and Peter was on the way I think. Or I had Peter just before we left. Anyway we were up there for several years up at North Haven. And then Robyn got to be

14:00 four and a bit and I let her go up to the local kindergarten. Well, Harry used to go up and take the boat up at four o'clock in the afternoon and pick her up and come back in the boat because she loved the boat and she loved to come back in the boat. But I went up this particular day I went up, Uncle drove me in the car I think, and every child in that place in the kindergarten was sucking hanky.

14:30 She had them on the floor and she had them sucking a hanky to keep them quiet so they wouldn't make a noise while she was doing something. So I said to Harry, "That's it. I'm off. I'm taking the kids and we're back to Sydney." And he said, "Oh, what for?" and all that kind of jazz. But we came back then. And we lived with his mother on Rocky Point Road down there until we bought this block of land here.

So when he was still

15:00 **in the army where did he serve after you got married?**

Still in mail. Mary Street in the city there used to be a mail depot there. And then there was a truck used to come and take him somewhere out into the suburbs somewhere. I don't think it was Ingleburn again. It'd probably be that Moorebank one. Where there was another postal unit and they would drop the mail

15:30 from the postal unit there. We lived at Brookvale then.

You guys were living together at the time?

We lived at Brookvale. I lived at Brookvale with another girl and her baby. Until Harry and Syd were both demobbed [demobilised] altogether and then Harry and I moved and went over to his mother's place. But we were living at Brookvale there for a while after we came back from North Haven.

16:00 **You had a place, a house, or…?**

We were in a house, but it wasn't our house. It was Syd and Alice's house. We were just living there with them. Paying half the rent and all that kind of jazz.

Do you remember where you were when you heard the war in Europe had ended?

I honestly don't know. I can't remember

16:30 exactly where. What do you mean, where we were at that moment, or where we were living?

Do you remember hearing the news that the war in Europe had finished?

I probably heard it but I don't know how. It was probably all over the place. When they were all dancing in Martin Place which I wasn't there.

What about the war against the Japanese, do you remember where you were when that came to an end?

No.

17:00 **Do you remember it being significant?**

I remember it being very significant. When we were young we were never even slightly interested in politics. You didn't have all this political fervour that's about today. I was just beginning to be aware of politics then because of – I said

17:30 his name earlier, what was his name, the prime minister. Menzies. Because of Menzies and that we were just beginning to be aware of some form of politics. I didn't even think about it before. But I don't know where we were. Have no idea where we were. We were probably living with Harry's mother at Ramsgate by then.

So you had Robyn at the time. She was

18:00 **born in '44.**

Mm. Peter was born in '47.

When you were pregnant, these days again, there's special parking, you look out for obviously women that are pregnant or with kids. What kind of care and concern did society have?

I was pressing at a dry cleaners when I was pregnant with Robbie. I don't know that we had anything terribly specific. Living at Brookvale and I went to

18:30 Royal North Shore Hospital once a month then for check-ups – blood pressure and all that kind of thing. And I went to North Shore for Robyn to be born. She was born at North Shore. And nothing that I can think of.

Was there any prenatal classes and those sorts of things?

There could have been, but I wasn't aware of them. Didn't even think of that.

Was anything said to you about giving birth and signs

19:00 **to look for?**

The nurses used to discuss that with you when you went for your monthly check up. "You know, Mrs Blackburn, you're five months now and the child'll be moving," and all that kind of thing. But, no, I never went to any pre-natal anything. To us, having a baby was a perfectly normal result of being married. It was a normal thing that happened. And if you were healthy, and I've always been fairly healthy,

19:30 you just knew it would be a bit of a bother at the time, but that was it, it was soon over. And fathers didn't come in, in those days. You had your own privacy and you didn't have all that revolting thing that fathers would have to look at. I think that's terrible. I can't think how any father could enjoy seeing his own child popping out there. But anyway, that's only my opinion.

20:00 No, I don't remember having any special, I suppose there could have been, but the nurses at the hospital were always most helpful and then the doctor came to see you and said, "Did sister explain this or that to you?" And I said, "Yes." That's it. The ambulance came and took you to hospital and then you had a baby and came home again. After a week.

What about drugs during labour?

You could have had. They had an anaesthetic mask that you could

20:30 breathe if you really wanted it. I think I did breathe it a couple of times. But I didn't have it the second time because I dreamt about it and I dreamt it wouldn't come off after Robyn was born. I dreamt that it wouldn't come off. I had a couple of panic things, so I wouldn't have it the second time. I didn't have it with Peter. I just went through the birth without the anaesthetic-y thing.

And what was the deal with respect to

21:00 **actually once you've given birth, is the child taken away from you or does the mother immediately get her?**

They'd have to clean her up. They take the child away and they clean them up. They did. They took the child away, cleaned it up and brought it back wrapped up in a shawl and said, "You have a lovely daughter. What are you going to name her?" Well, I had a boy's name picked out, didn't I? I had Peter John. Which I did get. And I said, "I don't know," and Robyn seemed to be a popular at that time.

21:30 So she became Robyn Patricia. No, I was going to call the child Paul Patrick after both the sisters in law so they couldn't grizzle at me. So I didn't call her Pauline Patricia because I didn't like Pauline Patricia. So it became Robyn Patricia.

Living with the in laws once the war was coming to an end and ended – what was that like with a child? Moving in and living with your in-laws?

22:00 It wasn't always the best possible answer, but I'm afraid it became the answer. Not only for us, but for a lot of people really, I think. None of us were wealthy. We didn't have wealth. And then when Robyn was small I went to work at the local milk bar and I used to take Robyn with me. And

22:30 I used to make a bit of extra money there. We saved pretty diligently. And then Harry decided we'd go to Laurieton. We were up there as a I say for several years. But then when we came back down again and Robyn was in kindy then and I only had Peter so I used to put Peter into a day-care thing three days a week and I went to work in the local factory – where are we? We're here. The local factory is up there.

23:00 I went to work up there three days a week, only nine till three so I could drop Peter at kindy, Robyn at school. And I rode my bike. And I could pick them up and bring them home with me in the evening. And then we lived out the back in the temporary dwelling until we saved up enough money to actually have enough to have a loan. You've got to have enough money to get a loan. It's silly isn't it?

So when you were living

23:30 **with your in-laws was there many properties for rent? How much was rent, those sorts of things?**

I don't know.

Were there many properties for rent?

Not just there where we were at Ramsgate. We did rent at Manly when we were first married, but then I was pregnant with Robyn so then we moved out to Brookvale and I lived with Alice while Syd was away, and Harry was away most of the time.

24:00 We didn't even question rent before that. We discussed it with Ma and said, "We're trying to save," and I

don’t know what Harry paid Ma, but he paid Ma. But I used to do our own cooking and we’d eat our own. We didn’t pay Ma for our food, only rent. And we had the front bedroom

24:30 with a small veranda and Robyn’s bed was on the small veranda, and we were in the bedroom and Peter was in the cot. But that wasn’t a big house. There was only the other bedroom for Ma. But we got on all right. We had our moments but we got on all right, and she was quite sad when we actually bought the block of land with the temporary dwelling on it. “You can’t live in a pigsty like that,” she said.

So you bought the land here and a temporary dwelling.

25:00 **Cost how much?**

Five hundred pounds.

And can you describe the temporary dwelling for us?

It was strictly the same exact size and shape as a garage. But the people from whom we bought it had lived in it. The Birdsells. They had separated – the kitchen was about the same size as a bathroom, like this. The kitchen was that size. There were no cooking appliances. I had a small Roden stove.

25:30 We bought a small Roden stove. Then the bedroom was in the middle. In the beginning we had to have the kids’ beds at the foot of our bed. But Harry and a couple of friends built the extra room on the back. We had another six foot room on the back that we could put double bunks in. So the kids slept in double bunks out there. We had an annexe at this end of it that had an electric copper – what a luxury –

26:00 and a shower. So we could have a hot shower any time we wanted. Didn’t have a bath. We had a bath that we should have kept. It was an old hip bath. Have you heard or seen a hip – it’s a half bath, round like that and you sat in it with your knees up and we had an old hip bath that you filled up and had a bath if anyone specifically wanted a bath not a shower. But we tossed it. It’d be worth a fortune now.

26:30 We tossed it when we got the house. The hip bath was a very unnecessary adjunct.

So how long did you live in a temporary house for?

We just have been there 18 months or so. Possibly two years. Robyn was nine. We moved into this house on Robyn’s ninth birthday and she got into lots of trouble because the floors were

27:00 polished and she skipped up the hall with excitement at having a bedroom of her own and she slipped over and put a black mark on Harry’s new wall. I thought he was going to kill her. It was only about that big. We must have been in there the best part of two years, I would think, in that temporary dwelling.

So the temporary dwelling was on the land as you were building this place?

As we were building yeah. We’d come and sit on the

27:30 bits of the floor when there was nothing up yet. And we’d sit and say, “This is the lounge room.”

So was Harry building it or did you have builders?

No, Harry’s mate built it. We had a loan from war service. We had a War Service Loan, 3,500 they allowed and it became close to 4,000. That’s when I went back to work at the dry cleaning. I went back into dry cleaning because it paid best.

28:00 And Dougie came down this particular morning – I was home then – and the brickie was laying the bricks of the front and Martin looked at it and he said – you don’t mind if I use Martin’s language? Every second word was a swear word. He said, “What the bloody hell do you think you’re building here, mate, a pigsty? This is a house for a mate.” And he went along, kicked every brick down and he said, “Now lay them properly or go.”

28:30 Yeah.

And did the fellow stick to the job or leave?

Yeah. Picked it all up and started all over again. And the bathroom in there, that didn’t always have a bidet in it. It was a slightly bigger shower recess, and the bath there came down to the shower recess. That part of the wall. Well the fella that came to put the bidet in, he worked for days to dismantle.

29:00 He said, “Who built this shower recess? He built it to last, didn’t he?” It took him ages to pull the shower recess down to get the bidet space in. Dougie was a builder that built to last. It wasn’t going to fall over with a big wind I can tell you. When Dougie built it, it was built.

So how tough were things after the war? Building a place, raising a family?

Well, getting the money to build was

29:30 the basic thing if you wanted to try and get a house. We could probably have rented but neither of us wanted to rent if we could avoid it, and the people that, as I say, lived here, they had lived here and we thought, “If they can live here, we can live here.” And we did. We got on quite well. We were very

popular when bonfire night came because we could have the bonfire out the front and everybody came to our bonfire because we had the space.

30:00 Until we got enough money to start to build.

And how did you cope as a mum, building and also Harry who was emotionally and physically scarred from the war? Did you have any?

No, he and Doug were good mates. There were no hassles about the house. If there was any hassles Dougie would have had to straighten them out, but he didn't have to except for his brickie and he fixed that up. But

30:30 no. Harry was all right. I hope I didn't paint too dim a picture of Harry. He was all right for a good while. He worked with telecom and it was just as he got a bit older and his body began to fold up on him that he got really bad. But we had 45 reasonable years. Which is not a bad sort of effort. I'd have liked more, but it wasn't meant to be.

31:00 And I was very fortunate that I had Damian dependent upon me when Harry died. Damian was only 16 and it kept you going. You didn't have time to sit down and groan and moan. So that was it.

Just a few general questions, and this is for an archive, we're discussing Australia's past and military past.

31:30 **Anzac Day. Does that have any particular meaning for you?**

I love Anzac Day, yes. I sing every year at the Garrison at Anzac Day. Damian sings at the Dawn Service and he meets me up at the Garrison at eight o'clock. And then we do the Garrison church service and then we whip back out to church at nine-thirty and do our own church service on Anzac Day. He goes to three. I only go to two. But I think Anzac Day – I sit there and have a good cry.

32:00 Yes, I like Anzac Day.

What does it mean to you?

It just means that we wouldn't be free if they hadn't all gone.

32:30 And I love our flag. I don't want our flag changed for any reason, whatever reasons they can cook up. But suits all our past history. Somebody came from Ireland, somebody came from England, somebody came from Scotland. It's all part of our history, whatever people say about it not being Australian. It's a perfectly good Australian flag as far as I'm concerned. I wear it when I go away. I wear it everywhere.

33:00 **What memories does Anzac Day bring back to you?**

Harry used to march. I've got all his marching – oh no that's part of his – he was marching on that particular day. Peter had that picture taken out of the march picture to mount those. He left his medals to Damian and Peter had them mounted for him.

33:30 Harry always marched. We always went in to see him march for the number of years he could march. He wouldn't go in once he was in a wheel chair because he said, "No, it's too much trouble for people." But he used to sit there and swear at the TV set and say, "That's not what happened at all. You don't know what you're talking about." Used to have a terrible time arguing about what happened for Anzac Day commentators. But no, I like Anzac Day. I think it should be

34:00 kept. They're not talking about taking away Anzac Day, are they? Every other day but Anzac Day. They've taken away Bonfire Night. We don't have the 4th of May any more. Queen Victoria's birthday's gone. And that's not really Queen Elizabeth's birthday. That's either Edward the Sixth or George the Fifth's birthday, the birthday we celebrate for Queen's Birthday. It's not hers. Her birthday's 29th of April It's too close to

34:30 Anzac Day so they kept it where it was. But I would say I was a bit of a monarchist. I think poor old – I think she's done a pretty good job. The younger ones are not going to be ever able to carry on with the monarchy the way she has. We'll probably break right away from then. I hope I don't live to see it. I really would rather we

35:00 didn't break away from them. I don't think any country that has broken away as I said before has done any good whatsoever without their royal family.

Do you feel proud of your contribution during World War Two and what you did?

Oh yes, I suppose I can say yes, I was proud to do work in munitions and do something towards it when they wouldn't take me in the services when I volunteered.

35:30 Yes, I think so. I think there's a certain amount of pride there. I ring a person every single day here and I have done for 14 years. I ring a person that's housebound for Red Cross. So I work for Red Cross as well. And the singing group with whom I sing, we don't charge for singing. We make no charge, but we accept a donation and last –

36:00 just at the beginning of this year we gave St George Hospital another 10,000 dollars, which makes 48,000 dollars we've given them over the last four or five years, and that's donations from people. Little people. I'm not real proud, but I feel alright about myself though.

Given obviously we've been discussing your service through the war and it's for an archive on that subject, what would you like to say to

36:30 **future generations about war?**

It's hard to say what you could say about trying to keep out of war, away from war. Just realise that people are all people whoever they are and wherever they are. They're all people, and you're only another person in that conglomeration and try to

37:00 avoid all these reasons for war. They seem to go to war for no real apparent reason. Hitler was an egotist and these other countries, they don't all think the same – there's no way we could all think the same. But to remember that they are all people. We are all people.

Okay. I guess Chris and I have

37:30 **one more last request and that is, do you have another song from the war?**

There'll be blue birds over the white cliffs of Dover tomorrow, just you wait and see. There'll be love and

38:00 laughter and peace ever after, tomorrow when the world is free. The shepherd will tend his sheep. The valleys will bloom again. And Jimmy will go to sleep in his own little room again. There'll be blue birds over

38:30 the white cliffs of Dover tomorrow, just you wait and see.

Thank you so much for sharing. Are there any last thoughts you have for the day?

No. It's been – I didn't remember that I remembered so much. You prompted a lot of memories. Brought back a lot of memories.

39:00 But I haven't had a bad life. I've been very lucky. If Damian didn't have a cold I'd make him sing for you. He's got a glorious voice. Absolutely beautiful voice. He's won the Peter Dawson award for – I'm not on air now am I?

We'll stop you right there. Thank you for your time.