Australians at War Film Archive

Joan Wicks (Donkey) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:35 **Okey dokes. Well, first of all thank you for doing this interview with us today. But let's start by talking a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up.**

I was born in Brisbane in 1915. And my parents did not live, we didn't live there very long, they came to Melbourne soon afterwards.

01:00 **And what about primary school, where did you move to then?**

In Melbourne, I've been most of my life in Melbourne. I started, we didn't own a house, we moved around quite a bit in my very early days. And we moved to Lydian Street, Hawthorn and I started school at Auburn State School. I was a bit late

01:30 starting because being an only child, my parents... My mother was forty-nine and a half when she had me, and my sisters when I was born were twenty-three, twenty-one and nineteen. So I was the result of sunny Australia because they were all born in England, they came

02:00 from England.

So a happy afterthought?

Well, I think - the reunion, I can say.

Had your parents been separated while they were travelling?

My father came out for business reasons two and a half years before my mother.

Okay. So it was a reunion.

Yes, I was the reunion.

How lovely. And what about high school?

Then Auburn school.

02:30 We then moved to Surrey Hills and my mother insisted I keep on at Auburn till the end of the year. And I used to travel on a little black bus that ran along Canterbury Road - can't remember the name but I met the people who ran that bus and they were most interested that I'd been one of their first customers. And I walked from Canterbury Road to our house in...

03:00 And then... I have to think. Then I became older and I went to Mont Albert Central School which also was, that was in walking distance to our home in Surrey Hills.

How far did you get in high school? Did you stay for Leaving Certificate or Intermediate?

Well, no, they were all different there, I think it was the eighth grade or something.

03:30 Then I went to Melbourne Girls' High School, which, in those days, was in Spring Street where the college surgeons used to go. I always think it was interesting that it had been a boys' school and then a mixed, combined. And when the boys' high school was built in South Yarra they left the, the girls

04:00 were still there. It was a terrible old building and, interestingly enough, I found out that there's a triangle of land there from Spring Street to the next one that was one of the first allotments in Victoria of land for educational purposes. And that's why it's still something on the educational, there is part of it

04:30 that is a triangle, there's trees and things. And we had an awful lot of trouble with weather there and I think I was there one year. We used to put up umbrellas in class because of the rain and our locker rooms got flooded. And I gather the parents got together and went to the government about it and the next year we went to Government

05:00 House to school. And I was there for a couple of years. We took over the stables, as they were called, which are outhouses used for something else nowadays, I've forgotten what. And we had some classes around the ballroom, we had assembly in the ballroom every morning or every time... And we used

05:30 to enjoy our lunch on the lawns of Government House, I think.

Sounds very pleasant. How old were you when you left school?

Oh, I knew you'd ask me something, I'll have to think about that. I'm not sure, I think I left... I think I was eighteen.

Oh okay, that's quite late given the...

Well, I was late, that's why I mentioned the first time, I had so much illness.

06:00 Yes, I didn't really... I started school at the normal age but for twelve months I didn't have it. I'm not sure whether I was eighteen or seventeen. I think it was... No. I'll have to think. 'Thirty-three. I can look that up.

06:30 **Okay, so what were you ill with as a child?**

You need vitamin C tablets, I'm a great believer in it with sneezing.

Vitamin C? Yes I should have had a lemon before I came here. What were you ill with as a child?

Mmm?

What were you ill with as a child?

Oh, the usual things, the mumps, the measles, the chickenpox and all the other things that children get.

And did that mean that you left high school with, was it called the Matriculation then?

No, it was

07:00 Intermediate, I only went to Intermediate.

Okay. And did you go straight into nursing after that?

Yes, very soon afterwards. I'd started nursing by being a mothercraft nurse, I think I must have only been seventeen or something, when I left school. Because my sister, who was a nurse, didn't want me to start training early. She was insistent with my parents about it. And because,

07:30 oh, just the Depression and everything else. I started nursing as a mothercraft nurse at Berry Street Foundling Home.

I don't understand why your sister wanted you to start later.

Well, I think she'd had the traumas of nursing and I don't know exactly why but she was a bit insistent. I had a brother-in-law who wanted me to go into a bank.

08:00 Whether it was a family argument, I don't know. But so I didn't apply for general nursing till later, so that's why I did mothercraft.

Oh okay. So she was trying to protect you?

I think so.

Oh, that's sweet. Okay, what happened after that, how long did you stay at Berry Street?

I stayed twelve months course there. And then, I think I can say it, I actually applied to do my training

08:30 at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. And when we, I went to be examined the day before the exam for the mothercraft nurses and I was told that I had a heart condition and I wouldn't be able to nurse. I cried all the way home. They said, "But look, come and we'll see in a

09:00 year's time, but at the moment, no." I think it was dirty work at the crossroads because my sister had been in the mission field and had come home with a rare form of malaria, and was a patient in and out of the Royal Melbourne because they were doing research with her about it. And I think the doctor there was a bit frightened of me.

09:30 And she also had a chest condition. So I was a private nurse for mothercraft for the... And I did quite a lot, not continuously. I even was mothercraft nurse to the Kingsford Smith child.

Well, do I take it that you're a bit fond of little children then?

Oh, I think so. I

10:00 actually never met Kingsford-Smith but I gather that her family... There was some problem and she came down to live with her parents, Mrs. Powell, in Irving Road, Toorak and I was the mothercraft nurse. And I used to take the child for a walk and if an aeroplane went over he used to say, “Daddy, Daddy.”

10:30 And Charles Arthur Kingsford-Smith [aviator] he was, he knew his name well. I worked at several, with other people but I think that’s the outstanding one.

So what happened then, how did you get into nursing after that setback?

Well, when I was turned down at the Royal Melbourne I went to my, that same day I saw my local doctor and she was horrified because she said,

11:00 “You wouldn’t have done as well last year if not...” I had my appendix the year before that and I had complications, things didn’t go right for a while. And so she was horrified that I’d been turned down and assured me that she couldn’t find anything wrong. And I applied to Epworth [Hospital]. And in those days

11:30 we used to have to do lectures once a week for a year before we trained. That’s when I, while I was doing those lectures, that’s when I did my mothercraft cases, yeah, private nursing.

I’m curious that you had a female doctor then too, was that uncommon at the time?

Doctor Roberta Donaldson and her sister were both doctors. There were quite a few

12:00 but not many, not like now.

No, that’s very interesting. Okay, so they really put you through the wringer at Epworth before they let you start to train?

Well, I told, I was quite honest with them and... But they accepted me. Actually, during my training when I had something wrong with me, a well-known Melbourne man said, “I do not understand what happened at

12:30 the Melbourne.”

No, because did it turn out that you didn’t have a heart condition, that they were in fact wrong?

No.

That’s a pity. So do you think it was political?

I think it was....

Do you want that turned off? Okay. Okay, fortunately, though, Epworth saw sense in letting you train?

Oh well, I don’t know whether it was sense but they accepted me.

How long was your training?

Three years in those days.

They didn’t muck around. Three

13:00 **years is a long time for training.**

And we were working six days a week in those days.

And when are we looking at? This is quite a few years before the war is it not?

Yes, ’35.

Okay, so quite a long way away.

Yes.

But did you... Like the militia, was there a system for nurses where you could sign up...?

I’m sorry, I wasn’t 35. Oh well, it doesn’t matter.

13:30 **Was there a volunteer service?**

Well, I nursed at Epworth. The matron at Epworth was an Ethel Grey who was a First [World] War nurse and we had numerous patients coming into Epworth who had been First War nurses. And they, I’m not sure when, whether it was going my general training, but when my, or after

14:00 my training they used to say... We expected that Second World War, everybody did; Germany was taking over different countries at different times and everybody felt that something was going to happen. And I remember these people saying to me, “You should put your name on the Reserve, you should put your

name on the Reserve." And actually, I did put my name on the Reserve and never told my parents at that stage.

14:30 **Would your parents have been upset about you putting your name on the Reserve?**

I thought they would because they were elderly and my mother had bad rheumatoid arthritis and the Depression... I mean, I couldn't have stayed home with the money or anything. I mean, I just was concerned. I felt they always

15:00 feel okay but doing it long before anything happened... And I've got the answer to that one, if you... It's not quite here. When war was declared, which was a long time after that, I was home the night that Chamberlain [English Prime Minister] said it and it came over the air and my mother was sitting in her chair, I can see her there, and my

15:30 father was at his desk and I was at the fire. And when it was announced war had been declared my mother turned round and she said, "I expect that you will volunteer." And I said I had my name on the Reserve and they were both very pleased.

Well, what an unusual experience to feel, though, your listening to war being declared and you know you're going to be part of it somehow. Well.

16:00 **And you must have been their little girl too. I mean, if they had you at forty-nine you must have been....**

Oh, I grew up normally.

Yes. But I mean their special little girl I suppose, after their other children.

I think so.

So how soon after war was declared did you actually get a uniform and become....?

1941. I think it was

16:30 when Paris fell, I'm not sure. There was something... I was away for a weekend and I remember, went travelling for a weekend or something and a couple of days later I was called up and so was the lass I was with, who was a physio[therapist] at the time. I got into uniform in early '41. I've got the dates, or [the Department of] Veterans' Affairs have got it.

And

17:00 **where did they send you first of all?**

They sent me to Puckapunyal. Oh, before that, they called me up earlier and I found that I was only going to Broadmeadows or somewhere very locally and I said to them that I didn't... I'm glad I was on the Reserve but I said with elderly parents I felt that if I was only just going there,

17:30 it didn't warrant me going there when I had elderly parents. And they agreed with me. And that's when... I was called up later. I think it would have been 1940 I was called up, the end of '40, the last part. And then I went to Puckapunyal. A little interesting fact at Puckapunyal, my eyes were opened considerably,

18:00 I didn't know lots of things in those days. Girls and boys weren't like they are now and I actually helped Vivian Bullwinkel [eminent wartime nurse] pack her bags because we were sharing a cubicle. And I was green with envy that she was going overseas and I was going to Bonegilla. I was transferred from Pucka [Puckapunyal] to Bonegilla.

Oh dear,

18:30 **Well, small mercies though, aren't they?**

Oh yes. I knew her well otherwise too, especially after the war.

Well, I will ask you many questions about Miss Bullwinkel, I'd like to ask you about her later on. Quite interesting. But Bonegilla, how did that appear to you? Funny old camp.

Well, Pucka was a pretty old camp.

19:00 We had, it was a funny camp in many ways.

Had a hospital at Puckapunyal there?

At ..?

Did they have a hospital at Puckapunyal then?

Oh yes.

Don't think they do any more.

Don't you?

I'm not sure.

Oh, I think they've got a bit of a hospital there. Bonegilla,

19:30 well, they were tented wards. We did live in huts, I think there was some hutted wards. And of course, there were casualties occurred with training and things like that. We were not allowed to travel on our own, we always had to have

20:00 some escorts. And I don't remember getting home for leave but I'm sure I did, we got leave, weekend leaves or something.

Okay, so about how long were you at Bonegilla?

I don't know, can't....

A couple of months, or were you there a whole year or....?

Oh well, yes, it would be a couple of months.

20:30 **And then did they post you overseas from Bonegilla?**

Well, I think my story here was the day... I was on night duty and we had awful trouble getting the boys out of bed in the mornings, used to pull off the sheets and blankets and get them out, they were lazy.

The patients you're talking about?

Yeah, I'm talking about, yeah, the patients. And this morning I was doing a dressing with the wireless

21:00 on and Pearl Harbour was bombed. I've never seen the patients get out of bed so quickly in their life, that really woke them up and they really wanted to go to their units and all sorts of things. And I was engaged to a man in those days and he was at Pucka [Puckapunyal].

Aha,

21:30 **is that where you met?**

We met, I'm not quite sure, oh, a long time ago. Before that we met. It was in the army we met, it was before Bonegilla. He arrived at breakfast time to say goodbye to me because he'd be off that night. And I said, "You've got to wait." "Oh, we'll be going,

22:00 we'll do this, we will do that." And I went to bed and halfway through the afternoon I heard people outside my cubicle. "We won't wake her yet." And I thought, "Whatever's gone wrong?" So I jumped out of bed and opened the door and, "Why won't you wake me now, yet?"

22:30 And they said, "You're on the train to Melbourne tonight." Well, we had been gathering our equipment to go, but there were a couple of things that I didn't have. So it was arranged for me to go into Albury and buy the few (UNCLEAR) that I hadn't got. And I was on

23:00 the train that night. The man who I was engaged to came to see me off on the train. He was seeing me off, not... And we came down to Melbourne and we stayed at Lady Duggan's Hostel which was in Punt Road near Toorak, on the corner I think. The next day we went to the barracks and had numbers, all the

23:30 preparations that had to go on.

At Victoria Barracks?

Yes. And we went... The nursing thing was in Queens Street or something, the office wasn't at the barracks. I don't think we went to the barracks. But all about the nursing, don't remember quite... The next day we went to

24:00 Government House for morning tea, I always remember this, and guess what we had for morning tea? Cucumber sandwiches.

Are they very nice, I can't imagine they are?

They're quite nice. And after, I went home and saw my family or something and we were on the train that night.

To Sydney?

24:30 To Sydney. And we went to Wanganella. It was a hospital ship. I think we sailed the next day or something. I can look up those exact dates. The Wanganella, of course, had no patients,

25:00 no casualty, so we lived in, we as a group of nurses. I think I'd been posted to the 2/2nd AGH [Australian General Hospital] then, and some time in that trip it was changed to the 2/1st.

Oh okay. So you really were one of the first....

Some of the girls were, the 2/1st had gone in 1941, 1940, and this is 1941.

Late in ’41

25:30 **by the sounds of it?**

Yes. And we, they were, the wards that the Wanganella had, three bunks. And here we were trying to sleep on three, all in the wards, the extra nurses.

So the nurses… Are there doctors as well travelling?

Yes.

Yes. And what about members of field ambulance units, are they travelling with you?

No, I don’t think… There were doctors on

26:00 the staff, I don’t remember doctors going to the… We didn’t know, well, I think we did know we were going to the Middle East, I’m not sure. Yes, we did know we were going to the Middle East. I don’t remember any doctors going to the Middle East, it was only nurses and I think physiotherapists might have been there too.

Oh okay, so a ship full of nurses, some physios and the naval people that were sailing you there?

There was the staff of the Wanganella

26:30 and then we were extras to reinforce the hospitals in the Middle East.

Can you recall around about how many people sailed on the Wanganella?

Mmm?

About how many people sailed on the Wanganella?

Oh, I don’t know, can’t answer that.

Would it be, for example, more than a couple of hundred?

Oh no, nowhere near a hundred.

Okay, so it was quite a small ship?

Yeah, well, yes.

So quite a select group of you was being sent over there?

Oh no. We

27:00 were just reinforcements to the other hospitals.

Yes. So what was that trip like? That would have been quite an adventure, I would imagine.

Well, I always understood, or at least not always, but I found out after that we were the first ship to leave Australian waters after Japan came into the war.

Okay. So you weren’t worried that you going to be sent off to the Pacific at this stage?

No

27:30 we weren’t. It was the Middle East we were going to.

And where did you stop along the way to the Middle East?

I’ve got, I’m a bit vague on that. We went to Bombay; we went to Calcutta which is Ceylon [Sri Lanka] in those days, what’s it called now? Doesn’t matter. I’m terrible on names.

That’s

28:00 **all right. You went to either India or Ceylon.**

Ceylon, Ceylon, which was down the bottom. We were there for a few days, it was probably a couple of days, and then we went to Port Said and then we travelled along the Canal. And that was the first time I’d seen air balloons. And

28:30 the local population was always around trying to sell you cooked eggs. “Egg cooked, cooked egg, eggie cooked,” or something. And the ships were so near the coast that, you know, you could… And we went to Aden. Then we trained… I forgot the small details.

29:00 My memory’s telling me we went to Aden and then we went by train to Gaza.

Right. Well, what was that like, suddenly being catapulted into a whole new world?

Well, it was, the work you... Weird buildings, but I actually did very little nursing in Gaza.

29:30 And I was in a tented area because by this time things were going wrong. I mean, Pearl Harbour had been hard but things were going, and I think they knew, and the Greece episode had been over and I don't think they quite knew what to do with us. And we ended up having

30:00 a lot of orderly duty, living in tents, six to a tent then four to a tent. And it was freezing cold at night and we had no, really, facilities. Our water, hot water was never hot and things like that. We used to boil up a kerosene tin, a half a kerosene tin

30:30 of water and we used to have what we called an "APC". Do you know what that stands for?

An ABC or a....?

APC.

Well, let me have it, what's an APC?

Arm pits and crutch. Because the showers were so cold. And I went to... I'd been there a couple... We were often put on

31:00 kind of orderly duty in the mess and things like that. And I was there one night and a man came up to me and said to me he wanted to see Joan Bray and I said, "You're speaking to her." And it turned out he worked with my father. And we sat down and had chats and things. Within a couple of days of arriving he asked me to the officers' club at

31:30 Gaza and I accepted. But do you know, I said, "We've got to be in by ten o'clock or something," early, because when you're new that was one of the rules, that you had to be escorted, you had to be back at ten o'clock or something. But any rate, I duly went and we were sat at a table for two, that was all right.

32:00 Next thing I know, we were demanded to go to a table with a big crowd. It was a long table... Well, when I say a big crowd, I can't remember how many people but, you know, it was quite a big table. And I was sat straight opposite Tom Blamey, the General. I don't know whether

32:30 this should be recorded, the next bit. So as soon as I sat down he looked at me and he said, "I know you, how long have you been here?" Oh no, first thing, "How long have you been here?" And I said, "Oh, a couple of days." And he said, "But I know you." And I was dumbfounded, I knew him. But I was dumbfounded. In front of all

33:00 these people with his second wife sitting next to him, who was in the Red Cross. And he kept at me during the night, it seemed to be at me, I was conscious of it. I said, "I don't think I've got a criminal record," or something to that effect. But anyway, that's the meal. But every now and again he'd say, "But I know you." He knew me. I was too shy,

33:30 too embarrassed to say. I turned... afterwards I told the gentleman I was with what it was. I had nursed his first wife at Epworth and I'd even laid around with her if you want to know. And he had, he was head of the police in Melbourne in those days. And he used to walk down promptly at eight o'clock every morning with a bunch of flowers, military walk,

34:00 down to his wife. And I knew him, I knew his sons who, got to know them. And I was just embarrassed to say it in front - "Well, yes, you do know me." And if I had to say how, when, where and why with his first wife there, I was too…

That's fascinating. That's an excellent story to have heard.

If you really want to know another bit, when we were getting late I said to the man I was with, I said, "We're supposed to

34:30 be in by ten." And he said to me, "Oh, just say you were with Tom Blamey." I said, "Oh, my reputation will be gone for life."

Well, I have a lot of questions about that but I'll save them for later. Did the general ever finally work out the connection?

No, the man I was with told him. He was on his staff or connected with his staff. When it was all over I said, "Yes, he did know me, he knew me quite well."

35:00 **How about that, plucked from obscurity into almost instantaneous fame. Well, there you are, just a young woman from Australia suddenly at the table with General Blamey.**

Yes, with the boss.

Did you know much of his reputation at the time?

Oh yes. It wasn't a very good reputation.

Did you tell your girlfriends?

Mmm?

Did you tell your girlfriends back at the Gaza camping ground?

Oh, I suppose I did, I don't know. I'm sure I don't

35:30 remember.

Wow, that's remarkable. Well, we'll hear a little bit more about that. So you said the Greece and the Crete campaign was well over by the time you got to the Middle East?

I'm not sure whether they were all over but they were, when we got to the Middle East there was a lot of uncertainty. I'd have to look at the dates and things. And I did not do much nursing there, I did a lot... I was very fortunate in the fact

36:00 that a man I'd known for some years was a Red Cross worker and he had another Red Cross worker with him there. And they approached my matron, when they were going to visit different hospitals could I go with them? And sometimes two of us would go. And we were permitted to go and talk to the soldiers, sometimes

36:30 write a letter or something for them if they couldn't do it. But talk to them as entertainment. And I actually... it was very fortunate that I went to so many places in the Middle East at that stage.

Okay. Because nurses played such a vital role in so many ways. I guess when they weren't nursing they were being somebody's sister or somebody's mother?

Well, that's right, and I was fortunate I was able

37:00 to do it and permitted to do it at other hospitals. Not always at other hospitals, but I feel I was fortunate not hanging round or doing things locally.

So that was the bulk of what you were doing in your time in the Middle East?

Yeah. Very little nursing.

Okay. So how and when did you get a posting back to Australia?

Well, we were told

37:30 we were on the return journey. We duly packed up. The 2/6th hospital took over the actual hospital part. And then we went by train back to (UNCLEAR) or something. And we were put in what they called

38:00 "the aviary" which - they still, I don't think, knew what to do with us. The aviary was a big fenced-in area and we were put in that. And I can't remember quite what we did but very little. And the Italian POWs [Prisoners of War] were waiting on us

38:30 which were... They were very good, very kind, very considerate. And we were there for some time and I've got some photographs of that. And also then we duly went onto a ship, a merchantman, which nurses don't normally travel on.

What was it, sorry?

An armed merchant

39:00 ship. The Laconia. Are you folks warm or cold?

Tape 2

00:31 **We were sailing back from Africa on an armed merchant navy ship, by the sounds of it. Was it called the Lockona, did you say?**

The Laconia.

Laconia. And where did you sail to, did they send you straight back to Australia or detour somewhere?

No, we were three months coming home.

Good Lord! What were you doing for three months?

We were known, I believe we were known as "Lost Convoy".

Was there a reason for this?

Yes. Well, I think it was the war situation,

01:00 that's the reason. We duly arrived on the Laconia, we duly went on the Laconia which was an armed merchantman, so they had stewards for them. Any rate, the nurses took over one deck. My experiences of that, sometimes nurses had to do a bit of work, but I can't actually remember doing it. You know, people were sick on the ship,

01:30 we did different things. But we had, it was, we had talks about the war and the places, we had several of those, lectures as well. Only just, I think, to keep us... My feeling about the Laconia, I was in a cabin that faced a deck, it wasn't one

02:00 on the side, it was one that faced a deck, with a Bofors gun out there, outside. And I can always remember, I had the diarrhoea badly and I'm on the upper bunk and suddenly the Bofors gun goes off, I tell you what, it's not good for diarrhoea. Well, I was in bed, that was all right. Then there was

02:30 a church service going on and they were singing for those in peril on the sea.

Your peril was a bit personal?

Yes. One of the... my first half hour, I can say, on the Laconia, there was a little tiny English steward and of course, when you've been travelling where do you want to go? That little toilety place. And I suddenly

03:00 meet him in the corridor and he looks at me in absolute horror. Where have you been, where have you been? And I pointed, "Toilet." "Oh." Next time I went he draped the men's urinals with sheets. That story is now being told, I gather, by another man. When I told the story at our local RSL [Returned Services League] they had somebody

03:30 who was much closer to that. But I'll never forget that face. So that was duly what happened on the Laconia till we got to Bombay.

And what were they going to do with you in Bombay after three months?

I don't know, they didn't tell us what they were going to do with us. We got to Bombay, living on the ship,

04:00 and we got leave to go in somewhere, we got leave at times to go, escorted always. And I saw quite a bit of Bombay. And then one day we were to be transhipped to the Devonshire which was a smaller ship.

04:30 And it was still on her maiden voyage. She was an English ship that had been made with luxury for the Hong Kong tourists and she'd never got back to England because the war had come. She was doing all sorts of things. We had Portuguese stewards who ran around with their bare feet and walk in whatever state of clothing you were in. And it was quite luxurious. We were only

05:00 there for a few days when there was the most terrible smell. And apparently the refrigeration had gone wrong and the meat had gone bad and they'd thrown it into the harbour. So that ended that and it also ended the Laconia for us. And the next thing, we were transferred to the Duntroon troop

05:30 ship. Right. And an interesting sideline to this, that that smell... People have told me you never forget a smell but I think I did, but that smell has made me have contact with two other people later on in life. At the bowling club not long ago, well, perhaps ten years ago, more,

06:00 and they were fertilising the bowling club, and they said – oh, it was stinky. And people would say, "Oh..." And I heard a man say, "Uh, you don't know what a smell is." And I said, "Well, it's certainly something..." and the others with me, you know. And he said, "Oh, I had an experience." I said, "You must have been on the Laconia." "How did you know?" Not the Laconia, the

06:30 Devonshire. And that led to two other men in the bowling club that were on the ship at the same time.

Extraordinary, it's a small world.

It is a small world.

I'm curious that the Duntroon was all the way over there in...

Mmm?

I'm curious that the Duntroon was all the way over there in Bombay. They must have just deposited a lot of troops over there, to pick you up.

Well, I think so, I don't know. We were put on

07:00 the Duntroon with two... I was in a cabin with two older nurses that weren't well and four of us were in the cabin. And one slept on the floor down the bibby [bottom] of the cabin and one slept under there. I was down the bibby and she rolled and rolled and I'd hit the basin and then I'd hit something else because she used to slide. We were on the Duntroon...

07:30 Actually we went down to Colombo again and swung round on our anchor for a few days not knowing what was happening. You know, no communications from Australia or anything. And we swung round on our anchor and next thing there was a bad air raid on Colombo.

08:00 And we were out of Colombo, we went down - out, not actually in Colombo. The next thing, we went into Colombo because we were nearly out of food, I gather; they hadn't expected what had happened in Bombay and here. So we went in and we were tied up to a burning ship, I've always remembered that.

Good Lord. And you saw the air raid?

08:30 We saw it, yes, we heard it and saw it.

Wow. Again, much to ask about that later on. But let's move on.

Then they supplied... Then we went, sailed again. And we were very concerned because we thought we'd be going towards Australia, and we suddenly went the other way.

09:00 We all said, "Oh, we're going back to Gaza or something." When you look at the map, there are some islands that would have caused... We went a bit south and then north and you know, round some islands and things, and then we suddenly started sailing south. And we ended up in Mombasa in Kenya. We were tied up there with some navy ships.

09:30 The navy asked some of us to have a meal or something at one stage and we had to climb a rope ladder to get down from the ship or up to the other ship. I remember one of the junior nurses falling in the water. And we didn't really see much. We went for a short train journey, some of us, but we didn't see much of the area. I always

10:00 remember they had Africans in the bank. We wanted some money at some stage with our pay book, and I mean, I'll never forget the man counting money. But we didn't really do very much, we weren't there very long. Then we set sail again.

No wonder you're the lost convoy; you seemed to be going around in circles.

Well, this is, I've heard since, they

10:30 called us the lost convoy. Then we ended up at Durban.

What happened in Durban?

Well, we went ashore in Durban and stayed at an English hospital. And we did get round and see quite a bit, you know, escorted, and we went around. I'll always remember one thing, I went to the Valley of a Thousand Hills and saw the most wonderful sunset that I've ever seen to this day.

11:00 And then we duly went, got back on the ship. Apparently she wasn't armed very well, she wasn't armed really at all I don't think. And she was rolling so much, there was no protection for the bridge, so they put concrete round the bridge of the ship. And you used to roll thirty-three degrees one

11:30 way and thirty-three degrees the other way.

Gosh, how did your stomach stand up to that?

Well, I wasn't so seasick, some were. And when we duly started to go south we thought we'd be going towards Australia. The troops used to say, "Oh, we're going down to train a battalion of penguins." But any rate, we duly turned and came back to Perth.

12:00 **Finally.**

Finally. And we had lived in a small suitcase all that time, that we originally packed for three weeks.

When you left Australia?

No, when we left Gaza, they said, "Pack for three weeks."

And you'd been gone three months?

Three months. Great trouble with one thing. We had

12:30 a valise, a kit bag and a trunk and they were in the hold of the ship and we had our little cases, great trouble. Because girls want something every month.

Well, indeed they do. I've often wondered how the nurses coped with that.

Well, I went, when I went to the Middle East, in my trunk I had twelve dozen Modess [sanitary napkins]

That's a hundred and forty-four.

13:00 Because the girls had written to me, that were over there, they were hard to get. And also when we were on the ship, one of the ships, I think it was the Duntroon, it was a great thing, we were asked which piece of luggage we would like at sea. And I remember the troops saying, "What do you want your bloody leggings for?"

13:30 I don't think... It wasn't an open world like it is now.

No, they wouldn't really have had any idea.

No. And that's why we needed them. And also, I think, we frequently carried them in our gas masks. I've always thought if we were called out to give a gas mask there would have been an awful flood of Modess.

Now women are, superstitiously or otherwise, are supposed to get into sync [synchronisation] when they're working together

14:00 **closely: did that happen with the nurses?**

What?

Well, their cycles, apparently, all start to match up if you work….

They do, yes. I think that's right, they do. And the POWs did it. And the experience that I've had [is] that there are cycles, they match up the cycles, everybody at the same time.

Well, with that many nurses

14:30 **working together, yes, I wouldn't be at all surprised. So your needs probably all arose at exactly the same time.**

Well, not exactly but very.…

What a situation. Look, again, there's much to ask and I wish I didn't have to push you on a bit further right now, but we'll come back to that. So that's virtually three months at sea not doing any nursing really, just waiting. I'm just hoping you were having a good time.

No. I've marked where...

15:00 Oh dear.

Interesting. How long did you stay back in Perth? Did they ship you back to the East?

No, we trained, I think. No, we came back to Adelaide and then were given leave.

You went back to Melbourne, I take it?

We came back, I came back to Melbourne on a train.

And where was your next posting after that?

Well, it was still the

15:30 2/1st AGH and after the 2/1st AGH I went to Western Australia for almost twelve months.

What to do over there?

Well, there was a lot of work to be done, we worked hard. The Armoured Division was up north doing training.

What, there was a concern that Western Australia would be attacked or invaded?

Yes. And actually, our unit was the 2/

16:00 1st still, we took over Guildford Grammar School which had already been taken, the Americans had been there. If you really want to know, they walked out of that place without taking even the food out of the things, and the smell again and the mess they left, we had to clean up. And we lived in Padbury House, some of us,

16:30 and some lived in another one near by. But Padbury House was actually in a little township next to a grain storage. And our beds were no further than that apart. And rats, we used to set rat traps underneath the beds. Actually, before we went to Guildford we were at a place called "Lady

17:00 Lawley Cottage By the Sea". And some of us went to different hospitals to work and some didn't, really. Then we were posted to Guildford and some went to Meridian which was more or less a field hospital. But Guildford Grammar, we took over the Grammar School but we still lived in poor conditions. We were there nearly

17:30 twelve months, I think.

So mainly looking after the Australian boys during their training exercises?

Yes, oh yes. And we had a huge sterilising thing and I remember they used to put a guard on it. I've always wondered why. Nobody could have believed it but I suppose they wanted to make sure nobody opened it or did something, I don't know. But Guildford has got a good

18:00 record, good memories. I happened to know the man who was head of the junior school, who I'd known many years before the war even. And he had been given new accommodation. He had to go and buy the curtains and things and I went with him into Perth. Everybody assumed we were getting married or

something. So it

18:30 was all right.

Where had they sent the children from that school?

I don't know. There's a big chapel, it's a lovely school. And then we were posted to Meridian for a short time which, once again, was tented. And oh, it was cold. And the facilities weren't good really

19:00 but it was interesting. Can't pick out anything about it now. I've been there fairly recently. Somebody said they found the area where there were our tents. But I was with a tour so I didn't perhaps look that much. And we were duly put on a train and,

19:30 to go, it ended up in Townsville. It's a long train trip. I had seen... I'd had leave while I was in Western Australia but when we came back I notified my parents that I was in Melbourne. I rang them from Melbourne, I think, and they got a taxi into Spencer Street but missed us. And then we went to,

20:00 actually to Brisbane, out of Brisbane, if I remember rightly. And we were stationed there for a short time, a couple of, a short time. Then on to Townsville. And I'll tell you what, it's the longest pair I've ever been in. Carrying all your luggage in steel helmets

20:30 and everything. And I was not a sort of person that managed to look limp when people... (UNCLEAR)

You looked sturdy, did you?

Mmm?

You looked sturdy?

I must have looked sturdy. And we duly went to Moresby and our hospital wasn't ready for us and we went to the 9th

21:00 AGH which was seventeen mile out from Moresby. We were there a fairly short time. We worked, I worked (UNCLEAR) and then we went to our own hospital at Boofus Bay [?].

If you're at Boofus Bay, I

21:30 **imagine...**

Out of, it's near Moresby, the 9th was. The 5th AGH was also there, at Boofus Bay.

So that would be the men from Kokoda I imagine, at Boofus Bay?

Yes.

So that would have stretched for quite a few months, your time there?

Oh, we were there twelve months at least.

Yeah. Okay.

22:00 **Was it twelve months all up in New Guinea, that you stayed there? It would have been '42 by the looks of it.**

No, it was '43 when we went to New Guinea. We came home '42 in Western Australia then it was '43 we went, we were in New Guinea.

Okay. So the Kokoda track had been won by the time you'd got there?

Won? No, we were getting.

22:30 casualties.

No? You were still getting... Okay. Yes, of course, sorry. So twelve months in New Guinea?

I think it was about twelve months.

Okay. And then where did they send you?

Well, in New Guinea we worked, I think we worked very hard, just general nursing and things. It was a dry island,

23:00 no grog.

Well, I'm not sure about that. Certainly some people had it.

No. I won't say. Unless it was sent up. You could send up a bottle of beer in a loaf of bread.

I've heard that happened.

You've heard that?

Did you ever lay eyes on any of that?

Oh yes.

Well, it might have been a dry island but I'm sure from time to time men were able to get their hands on something.

Very hard.

23:30 You just didn't see it. And our conditions there were tents, we lived in tents, four to a tent. And I would say we worked quite hard. I do always remember one occasion, going to the toilet which was up the hill a bit - our mess was down and we lived up the hill - and there was a python round the back of the toilet. I went for the guard,

24:00 there was a guard, and he came and killed it. And things like that. And I always remember one morning, I must have been on night duty, the boys used to say, "Oh, I didn't sleep last night." And I said, "Well, what did you hear?" And they didn't hear anything. And there'd been a crash not far away on the airstrip and they hadn't heard it, you know, that sort of thing. But

24:30 the scrub typhus was the disease that worried me. They'd walk in and say, "Oh, I don't know why the MO [medical officer] sent me here, I'm all right, you know, I'd like to be with my mates." And they were dead in a couple of days. The malaria was bad but the scrub typhus was my…

That was the killer, yeah.

And the wounded of course.

And dysentery and all sorts of other illnesses. Well…

Then we returned home

25:00 and I can't remember exactly... I think we went to, I went to Heidelberg for a very short time. Then we went to Bougainville.

Did you know where on earth Bougainville was when they posted you there?

Oh, I think so because my sister who was the [nurse] had worked in the Solomon Islands. That's where she had her troubles and that's why she was pointed out. I think I knew where

25:30 Bougainville was. Didn't know much about it but.…

Well, it was a strange old time for those that went to Bougainville; they still call that "the forgotten war".

They call it.…?

The forgotten war.

Do they? I haven't called.…

You haven't heard it called that? How long in Bougainville then?

Till after the end of the war.

Okay. So you were there by the end. All right. And whereabouts were you, down at Torokina?

Yes,

26:00 Torokina.

And that's where the war ended for you?

Yes. Actually, we had our problems up there, just quietly. I seemed to do a lot of night duty. We worked hard. The skins were bad.

26:30 I found the Americans are very one-tracked. Now, I was in a skin ward and, you know, the Australians you'd say, "Oh, I want a bench there so people can sit while they're soaking their feet and things like that." Our boys would go and get something. But the ones in the American ward, one of my friends was in charge of a ward that was all Americans. They

27:00 couldn't do a bloody thing, just quietly. They are a one track people. And we used to go picnics and swimming. One picnic we went, there was a couple of men, a couple of nurses I suppose, I can't remember what, but we were sitting on a river bank and a big log comes down and they boys get their guns, their revolvers and bang, bang.

27:30 And I always remember, I turned. One of them said, "Would you like a go?" And I said, "Yes." I got my revolver and they said to me, I said, "Which part of the log do you want me to hit?" They said, "Just hit it." I said, "I think I'll go for the bit sticking up." And I got it. My reputation around the place was pretty good after that. The reason being that I knew how to handle a revolver.

28:00 My brother-in-law had been a bank manager and he, in those days, they used to take their clerks out to revolver practice every now and again. We used to go too when he was at Blackburn, the Surrey Drive, I always remember that. And I learnt to handle a revolver. That's one of my little stories.

How about that. I'm sure you were the toast of the town for a week or so there.

Well, I actually came home from

28:30 Bougainville. After the war was over my mother died and I came home before the rest of the unit. Some of them went to, the 2/1st went back to New Guinea for a while. But we were all coming home at odd times. But I came home a bit early because my mother had died and my brother-in-law had contacted them about my elderly father. And I worked at Heidelberg.

Okay.

29:00 **That was post-war at Heidelberg, all right.**

There is one interesting story about Heidelberg which I have been on the air [spoken on radio] twice for. A patient I've nursed - I've got the records things there. I was specialling [working in area of special responsibility], before I went to Bougainville I was specialling in Heidelberg. I was on night duty I think,

29:30 evening shift, and there was a boy there who was only eighteen or so, air force. And there'd been an accident in Spencer Street with one of these trolleys that go up, it had hit the power lines and the driver had been killed and this boy badly injured and a couple of others injured. And he was sent by (UNCLEAR) there. And I went, he'd been

30:00 there a few days I think before I actually got nursing, on duty for him. And I always remember him, he had seven lots of tubes in and out of him and he had lost his legs, both legs, and he... Oh, by the time you went along one lot

30:30 of tubes it was time to start again. And I used to think, "Oh dear, I wish he'd die before I go on duty." That was my reaction. I don't think... I usually prayed for what was best, but in his case I remember praying he would die. One night he had acute abdominal pain and turned out he had a gangrened gall bladder which apparently is not

31:00 uncommon with electrocutions, with electric shocks. Electrocution. He didn't die. At any rate, I remember him going to the [operating] theatre and, you know, me praying he'd die but he didn't. And I went to Bougainville and when I came back from Bougainville... The Red Cross used to have entertainment down at the area and one night a

31:30 boy came up to me and said, "Will you dance with me?", you know. And I said, "Yes." In their hobnailed boots and things, that was our entertainment. And I said "Yes," and he said, "You know, I don't dance, I shuffle." I said, "Well, I'll shuffle with you." So I shuffled with him. Then he said to me, "You don't remember me." I hadn't a clue, and it was this boy.

32:00 And only a few years ago I was approached from Sydney, somebody ringing me wanted to know something about my story, would I go to the Shrine of Remembrance for an interview. "I won't go to the Shrine of Remembrance for an interview." They didn't know where the Melbourne shrine was, and I said, "It's a long way from where I live," or something or other. And they said they wanted to interview me about something, I've forgotten what it was

32:30 now. And I said, "Well, look, I'll arrange for you to do it at the local RSL [Returned and Services League]." And I asked a couple of the men to go with me for morning tea or something, afternoon tea or whatever it was. And they asked me all the questions they did and that was all right. And when we were having tea I mentioned this story. And didn't hear any more for ages

33:00 till, it was when Kerry Packer had his heart attack in America. I can remember the time, he wasn't there. Next thing I knew, Channel Nine were on my wheel [exerting pressure], would I tell that story again, you know. And I did. And I knew the name of the man. I don't know it but it's in a book that's been written. And

33:30 next thing I know, they wanted me to go up, and he lived at Bacchus Marsh. And I have lost touch with him over the last twelve months, I don't know how. I hadn't seen him all this time and here he was. Had, very upset with the RSL because he wasn't a member of that because he hadn't been in service. He was ex serviceman when, only a few months

34:00 and he'd lost both legs and one forequarter. So he had two artificial legs, an artificial arm and a hand. And do you know, he'd been the Mayor of Broadmeadows, he'd done all sorts of things and he was as active as could be. And so after I went up with an interview

34:30 with him, next thing I knew, I was picked up in a taxi and taken there for a film test.

Did you tell him that you'd been praying for his merciful death?

I told him, yes. He used to say to me, "I'm glad I didn't die."

Did that give you a kind of funny feeling as a nurse, that you just never really know, you never really know when someone's ready to bite the bullet?

I don't know that I had any particular feeling about, but

35:00 I think it's made me very much pray for what's best and not for... Oh, once again we're finishing.

Nearly, nearly. Well, that's a lot to talk about.

Do you want to know anything after that? We'll talk about it but.…

I will.

Will we go on further, what happened

35:30 when I was discharged after that?

Oh, tell me what happened when you were discharged then.

Do you want to know?

Yes, I do want to know.

Oh well, when I was discharged I... Leave it, leave it. I was discharged and I duly had my elderly father, a bit of a problem, and I went to live with my sister and brother-in-law. I didn't know quite what to do. And having

36:00 done my infant welfare, there was a nurse, an army nurse. at Anzac House in the Children's Bureau and she wanted to leave. So I went and relieved her while she had several months' leave. And from there on I went, was secretary of the Returned Nurses Club, happened to be. Had never done a business course, I had done a business course

36:30 at school, and the next thing I know, I'm secretary of the Returned Nurses Club for four months or something, while she does her course. And then I was doing, then at the RSL, had a system of nurses,

37:00 elderly patients that needed help in their dependence and things, and I became their visiting nurse, went all round Melbourne. Then I was a visiting nurse. Then I felt, "This isn't for me." Oh, the District Nurses took over and I applied

37:30 to work in Melbourne City Council and I was what they called the "milk girl" there. And oh, conditions were terrible. They were so terrible I started and did a health inspector's course. And I stayed with the Melbourne City Council and I used to go to the different health centres. I became what was known as the milk girl.

What is a milk girl?

The milk girl... In those days

38:00 John Dale was the Medical Officer of Health, they had arrangements that, for infant welfare and things, that they had tins of Lactogen [infant formula] for three cents, six cents and a shilling or something like that, I've forgotten now; a shilling was the top price. And I used to assess them of what they had. Do you know

38:30 that eighty percent of the population earned under five pounds a week in those days? But any rate, I went around the health centres doing this work. And there was a lot of discussion about, I've forgotten exactly, I'll have to think about it. I then turned round and did my Health Inspector's course, getting things wrong.

39:00 One day I was on my milk round, doing the course, and I went to one of the health centres and the sister there knew I was, were to be changes. She said to me, "I know the job you should have." And I said, "Well, what's that?" Any rate, it turned out to be the matron of St. Gabrielle's Babies' Home, which was a mothercraft training school

39:30 in White Horse Road. And I applied for the job and I duly got it.

Well, you've come full circle really.

Mmm?

You've come full circle.

And I went there and I was there for four years I think. And I realised that, oh, this wasn't my job. They were well children, good mothercraft training, but I felt I had more in me than that.

40:00 And I thought, "I've got to think about this." And I applied for a Florence Nightingale Scholarship which I duly got. Left the babies' home and did twelve months' study at the College of Nursing, Victoria.

Tape 3

00:31 **Now, you were born in Brisbane. I just wanted to ask a little bit about your parents: were they both English?**

Yes, the whole family was English.

Whole family English and you're the only Australian-born?

My father came out two and a half years earlier than my mother.

And did he have to come out for work or did he choose to?

I think family difficulties.

01:00 And he decided to... They were cabinetmakers and that sort of thing and he came over, came here, actually lived at St. Peters, Eastern Hill Church House. He was a very involved churchman. And then he went up to Queensland after my mother arrived to start his own business, which

01:30 didn't work out.

Was he a World War I vet [veteran]?

No, he was too old.

He was too old. I was trying to do the numbers.

My brother-in-law was World War I veteran, my eldest sister married.

And did they marry before they came out, your sisters?

No, my sister married after, when I was a year old. He'd been to the war and was injured and was home.

Okay, so growing up

02:00 **you would have been like an only child?**

I was like an only child and they only had one child, so we spent all our school holidays together, lots of time together. They were in the country, he was a bank manager and he was in the country, and I went to the different places in the country. I can remember him being born, his father was at Yarram, and I can remember, you know, going down, my mother apparently went down because of my sister

02:30 having a baby. I don't know why.

Did they like being in Australia after their time in England?

I never heard anybody complain.

Mmm. It would have been a nice break, I imagine, even if it wasn't the old country. Where in England were they all from?

Well, they all came from Wisbeach which is in Cambridge (UNCLEAR) And it's well in from the Wash but originally

03:00 it was on the Wash in England and it was a beach. These days, that's another little story, they spell it without the "A".

They spell "Wash" without the "A"?

No, the "beach" part [hence "Wisbech"]. And actually... Oh, I'm a bit of a devil I think. I went to Wisbech museum and

03:30 I looked around the different things and there's an etching in the other room which is of this beach, and I remember going to the girl and saying, "When did they drop the 'A'?" At the museum. She said, "Never been an 'A'." I said, "Well, you'd better go and look on that wall over there and see how they spelt it."

I think you are a devil, I wouldn't want to cross you.

04:00 **Now, Hawthorn in the early part of the century would have been quite a lovely place to live, I'm sure, along the river there.**

Early part of the century, oh, I suppose. It was Depression. That's a new one to me. Actually we didn't... I can remember living in St Kilda.

Just a moment, we've got a phone ringing.

That's my 'phone.

Yes, I wanted

04:30 **to talk, well, I guess “early part of the century” is pushing it a little bit, but in the twenties, growing up in Hawthorn.**

Then I remember we lived in St Kilda. Then we lived in Hawthorn and I can remember Manningtree Road was one house, though we shared a house, we didn’t live completely on our own because of my mother’s bad arthritis.

She was unwell, was she?

Well, she wasn’t well and she couldn’t turn on taps and things so we actually

05:00 shared a house. And it wasn’t till we moved to Surrey Hills that it was a home on our own and she was pretty much, you know, able to do things. But in those days, that was one of the reasons we had flats in a house.

Well, you said you moved around a fair bit and the depressions wouldn’t have helped, you were probably still…

The Depression. Well, the house in Surrey Hills was built… was

05:30 there, we moved there in ’42. So the Depression was on the way out.

Way out. What was school like for you, were you a happy student, were they good schools?

Yes, I’ve got no complaints about them. I think I was a bit of a stickler about things. I remember being caught talking at Auburn school and the teacher

06:00 asked me to leave the room, “Go away.” So I went home. And she was drawn over the coals I believe. And I always remember, when I got home my parents were going to an auction about a house, and I went to the auction with them, in the same street that Menzies lived in, I remember, that was Malvern. Any rate, I always remember, the next morning Mother took me to school to the headmaster. And the teacher, apparently,

06:30 got into trouble. And I did the right thing, I went home.

Now, you went to Government House to school: I’m just curious why they converted that into a school at all and why they turned it over.

I think it was the very poor conditions of Spring Street. The boys had moved out and the girls were there faced with the poor, you know, terrible conditions

07:00 and they had to find somewhere.

And Government House turned itself over?

It was empty at the time. It was after camp.

Where was the Governor, do you know, why wasn’t he living there?

It was the federal Government House. And the state Government House was in Toorak Road, “Stonington”, was it “Stonington”?

Yeah, somewhere near there because that was used

07:30 **as a hospital too during the Second World War, I believe.**

Yes, I think so.

Now you said you stayed on at school until you were eighteen but left…

Well, I’m not sure, I’d have to… I can’t remember.

I was just wondering whether because you were…

I think it was seventeen.

And because you were a later child I was wondering whether that made it possible for you to have a bit more of an education than you might have otherwise? Were they able to keep you on at school because there was only one of you to keep at the time?

Well,

08:00 I don’t feel that ever had any effect. I think that originally they wanted me to go to a private school but the Depression and things, there was not much money.

And how did your dad cope, you said his cabinet business didn’t go so well in Australia?

I don’t know anything about [that], I was too young. But he came back and ended up working in the carpet

and furnishing department of Craig Williamson's which was a big store, do you know where? Corner of Flinders and Elizabeth Street. And he, when I was still, I think it was when I was a year old, he developed a problem with cancer of the tongue. And he, Sir George Syme was the, I think he was the last operation he did

before he went to the war. My sister being at the Melbourne, I think we were, you know, I've always understood... And my father had half his tongue removed, well that's what I was told, but it was, well, technically I'm not too sure about that. And he was advised not to go into, to get an outdoor job, I suppose the dust of carpets and things. And

he worked for a shipping company as a tally clerk. And believe it or not, only yesterday I met a woman with the same name of that shipping company and it was her husband's father that ran the business, only yesterday.

You have a number of these curious coincidences in your life, it seems, when....

Yes, but I'm still active. As I've said, I'm on

three times a month to town to committees.

It's a good way to stay involved, committees, it's a good way to feel...

Well, I feel I'm too old for one of them particularly, but I don't know who else will do it. And yes, I feel I'm fortunate that I can still do it. I drive to Kew RSL, we are unfortunate

enough to have a car park. This has only happened in the last few years, so I park my car there and get on the train.

You sound like one of those people whom other people will always rely on, they know you will always probably do what, the work that needs to be done. It can be good and bad being a person like that, it works both ways.

I try to.

Where did the desire for nursing begin with you?

I don't know. Really, I don't know

when it began. Perhaps because of my sister. And the other one trained later but my brother-in-law wanted me to go into the bank. He was a bank manager and he wanted me to go into the bank.

I can't see that at all.

Mmm?

I can't see you in the bank at all.

No, well I didn't. He was very keen. I think the fact might have been that I would be home to care

for my mother and father. I think that was it.

Was your sister and her husband a bit like your second set of parents?

Well, I suppose in some ways. We spent our holidays together. And he was very, a dominant man. There's a man at the bowling club who worked under him and one day when he was talking to me he said something about it. And I said, "Oh, did you ever know Eatie Benton?" He said, "God, I was frightened of that man."

And that was my brother-in-law. And I'll tell you what, there was an awful explosion when he asked me what I did with some money. There was some, not very much, but there was a bit of money when my father died and the house was sold. It was a thousand pounds, I'll be honest. He asked me what I did with it and I said "I've bought shares." Well, he hit the bloody roof. And it was the best thing I did. I "should have put it in the bank".

I'd like to ask a bit about your sister, is it Violet who was the nurse?

Yes. She actually, she joined a religious order, she joined the Community of the Holy Name which was in Spring Street. I believe that building's empty still. And then down to Cheltenham. She was, prior to that, she'd actually been in

charge of St. George's Midwifery section and she was quite active in lots of things. And she'd been at Darling Babies' Home after she joined the religious order. And she became Novice Mistress for over twenty years of their order. Her name in the church was Constance Mary.

And what was it, so she wasn't training to become a nun?

Well, she was really, like an English nun, Church of England nun.

A C of E [Church of England]? You know, I'd have to say I don't know very much about Church

of England nuns at all, I can't even think of having met one in my life. How did their order differ to, for example, the Catholics who were very famous for their nuns?

I don't know how to compare it.

Because she got married, Violet?

No.

Oh, this is the other sister?

Yes, that's the second one.

Oh okay, now I'm not confused any more. So Violet didn't get

14:00 **married, Violet became a C of E nun?**

Yes.

And the other sister that was married to Eatie Benson, what was her name?

Evelyn.

Evelyn. Oh okay, but Evelyn wasn't a nurse? Right. So Violet, did she care for soldiers in the First World War?

I suppose she would have at the Melbourne. I was so young, I didn't know. And after the war she was district nursing for the flu epidemic

14:30 and used to ride a horse around Western area.

Now, speaking of which, if you were born in 1915 that flu hit somewhere around 1918 or '19, did it not?

Mmm?

You know the shocking flu epidemic, the (UNCLEAR) that began, you would have been maybe five or six, you may not remember but…

No I don't remember. But I've been, they were writing a history of the nurses from the Royal Melbourne and I've been a bit involved in it because of her.

15:00 **Wow. So she was quite a torchbearer, I suppose, for you in your own career?**

Well, I suppose she was. I don't, she'd actually, [I'm] not sure when she joined the community. She didn't have, she had some influence but she was away from home when I was home.

Yes. Okay. But you decided…

Oh, and she was in the mission field in the

15:30 1925s, yes, she was in the mission field for the Australian Board Missions.

Is that why she was in Bougainville?

She wasn't in Bougainville, she was in the Solomons. But that's how I knew, you know, I used to look at the map and I knew about Bougainville, I think.

So, well, let's talk about you wanting to become a nurse then. You mentioned that the Royal Melbourne was silly enough not to allow you in but you'd done your nursing mother-

16:00 **craft at Berry Street. Hang on, I'm going to sneeze, (sneezes) pardon me.**

I meant to get a vitamin C.

Thanks, Sister. Tell me a little bit about becoming a nurse, then, and what you need to do and what you went about to get your qualifications.

I don't know. I just went to school and had a school life and then, I don't know.

16:30 **Well, you said your brother-in-law thought you should be a banker and you wanted to be a nurse. I guess the other profession was school teaching; there wasn't much else on offer.**

I never thought of school teaching.

But when you decided to be a nurse did you have a desire to work in medicine or to heal people or to travel, what was it about?

Oh, I don't think it would have been travel because people weren't travelling in those days. I remember, at the end of my nursing career

17:00 a lot of my friends travelled and it was one of the things I would have liked to have done but financially

or parents, I don't know, I couldn't have travelled. And I always feel that I regretted that I didn't travel then but I've made up for it since. One of my main tours was forty-eight days in Antarctica

17:30 so I've done a lot.

Wow, that's something that I'd like to do. Well, when you started training as a nurse, were you given a lot of responsibility early on?

I don't really remember. We had our responsibilities but there was always a charge sister who could rule the roost or the deputy

18:00 matron could rule the roost. As a trainee I don't... Well, we had some responsibilities and I think that we were very aware and, if things weren't right, to report it to somebody, your senior; we became very aware of that. I always think of a patient who was very fat and I can see them in the very bed now, and they

18:30 were put onto Prontosil, which was the first of the antibiotics, the sulphur drugs. And that night she had red urine and I remember reporting it and remember having doctors galore, or several doctors came in to see her. And it was quite all right, it was something to do with the drug. But do you know, I reported it as soon as I knew it, I think we were, we learnt,

19:00 we didn't take responsibility as trainees, we reported difficulties.

Okay. It's a very strict profession, sometimes it sounds a bit like convent school, the rules and regulations that young nurses were put under. The stiff matrons and the, what was that like?

Oh yes. I don't, looking back and perhaps being

19:30 a matron afterwards I accepted them.

Were they very no-nonsense with you, good on advice, or were you scared of them?

No, I don't think I was scared of them.

And were you a good trainee?

Oh, I hope so. I think I might have been.

What did you like especially about nursing when you started? Was it working with the people or

20:00 **giving injections? I'm sure it wasn't cleaning bedpans.**

I think it was perhaps my mother having had the rheumatoid arthritis and needing help at times, I think I was pleased to help people. Now, even to this day, I always feel good if I've helped somebody during the day. And my first husband

20:30 used to say to me, "God, you have a post mortem when you get into bed." And I do, I like to think of what I've done. I don't know what I'm going to think about today. But yesterday I went to that meeting; and I don't know that I was help to anybody, but I called at a household here where the wife's got Parkinson's disease and he's hopeless. And

21:00 she always gives me such a welcome because nobody visits them. The family are overseas and things like that. And I just thought, "Oh well." I was tired but... I get so terribly tired. And I just thought, "Oh well, I'll call in." And I just blew in, you know, and she was so thrilled to see me. And I just, when I went to bed last night I thought, "Well I haven't done much today except

21:30 that meeting." It was drawn out about different things. But I thought, "Oh, at least I saw her and cheered her up for a few minutes." I think that's one of the things I like doing. There's a couple down the road here that have troubles and I go for a walk every day, yesterday really wasn't much of a walk, and I often call in just because of

22:00 their loneliness and their handicaps and they always make me most welcome. I think I like to feel that I'm helping someone.

Well, as a mothercraft nurse, what were your main duties, did you work like a nanny looking after little babies?

Yes.

And did you work for people privately or in a hospital?

Well, I worked, did my training at Berry Street Foundling Home, then I did

22:30 private nursing, like a nanny.

So you would go into people's homes?

Yes, and live there.

And that's how you ended up at the Kingsford-Smiths?

Yeah.

And what were they like as a family?

Well, they were very nice as a family. She was very nice, I called her "madam" because that's how I had been brought up. I think she was Lady Kingsford Smith then. "Yes, madam," you know. And she said, "Oh, don't 'madam' me, 'you' me; everybody else 'you's' me."

23:00 You know, we actually shared a bedroom so the boy could have his own room. And her mother was a very nice woman. And I got to know, I didn't actually meet Sir Charles, it was just before his last trip, but I had numerous 'phone calls about him because he'd ring up every day to know what Charles Arthur was doing.

And do you wear a uniform for that?

23:30 I don't remember. You'd wear, I didn't wear a uniform but I wore, I can't remember what. You wore sensible clothes, I think I'll say.

And did you have to live in there?

Yes.

And was that your first job out of home?

Oh no, I had several.

24:00 I can remember another couple at East Melbourne. I remember Ducketts, they were a firm in Melbourne at one stage; I remember being mothercraft nurse there. I didn't take permanent jobs, I'd take, I took six weeks or something.

Freelancing here and there? And how many, like would they expect you to work every day for them or would they give you a bit of time off on Sundays?

Oh yeah, I had a bit of time off I think, I don't

24:30 remember.

And tell me about Epworth. I'm sure it didn't look the way it looks now when you started there?

Well, there's a history, I've got a history of Epworth. It was originally the home of the Danks but I'm not sure that is correct because the history I've received fairly lately, fairly recently, it was left to them and I always understood that the place

25:00 that Epworth is was the Danks' home. But this one that I've had, this kind of, it's only a typed sheet, that actually the Danks lived in Hawthorn and that house was sold and the money bought what was the place in Erin Street. And when I went training there the original house was still standing.

Training at Epworth, you said you had to go to a lecture once a week.

That was before I did

25:30 my training.

Did those lectures train you well for what you would then have to do as a young nurse?

I don't know that they trained you well but you did anatomy and things like that. I can't remember what else.

And was it just girls training then or…?

Yes, only girls training then.

And were the teachers more senior matrons and nursing sisters?

Yes. They were tutors, called tutor sister.

Okay. What about your

26:00 **training then? Were you thrown straight into the deep end and working in wards immediately?**

Yes. Once you start training you went straight to the ward, once you started training. Doing the bedpans et cetera mainly to start with, you know, the humbler jobs.

When did it start to become more comprehensive and they allowed you to do…?

I don't remember.

Okay. That's all right. Well, let's talk about your decision to put your name down on the Reserve list. I think it was 1935 that you decided to put your name down on

26:30 **the Reserves. I'm curious about that because I don't know how that worked. I'm aware that young men could join the militia but I'm unaware of what services were available for women.**

Oh 1935, was it as early as that? No, it was later than that that I put my name down. Don't know whether it was, I don't know, can't remember.

That's all right. Was there a service, for example, that…?

There was, they

27:00 had, now you're asking me. I'm not too sure. I think there were still military nurses about, left over from the First War.

That's interesting. I'm wondering if it was a professional service that, you know, you could be an army nurse then or…

I don't know that there was army nurses then.

And did you have much appreciation of the troubles that were happening in Europe at that point?

I think so.

Yeah? Now, while you were at Epworth

27:30 **that must have been where you met Tom Blamey's wife and looked after her. What did she die of?**

I think it was cancer but I'm not sure. I can't remember.

And there was Tom Blamey every morning with…

With his bunch of flowers.

Evidently then, you weren't to know what he was to become in the war?

Oh, no.

Nobody was. But did he cut quite a figure? I mean, he stayed in your memory by the sounds of if?

Oh, he stayed in my memory, and also

28:00 he had a very bad reputation with women while he was head of the police.

Is that right? Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Mmm?

Can you tell me a bit more about that?

I can't tell you. But, as I say, they just said to me, "Oh, just say you're with Tom Blamey." I said, "My reputation would be done, ended for life."

How about that.

Oh, I don't know whether I should be saying this to tapes.

I'm sure it's harmless these days. But nevertheless,

28:30 **laying a person out, what was that like for a young woman to have to do that, to be in touch with people that have passed on and death and corpses and so on?**

I don't remember being, it was a job to be done, had to be done.

Was there a ritual that you had to go through? Did you have to wash them a certain way?

Oh yes, wash them. Oh yes, wash them and that, yes. And pack certain orifices,

29:00 the bowel et cetera, you know, yes.

What would you pack them with?

Cotton wool.

And what about their personal things, was it your job to take off their jewellery and hand it over to the family?

Well, hand it over to the authorities of the hospital.

Did you ever have cases where somebody died in hospital and they didn't have any next of kin?

That wouldn't have been my problem. I don't know.

Well, I'm even curious to know why it was your job to lay a person out afterwards.

29:30 **Was that jst part of the job of a nurse?**

Well, every nurse did it in those days. Don't they do it now?

I don't know. I don't get to ask nurses as many questions, I guess, as I'm asking you. Perhaps they do, it's just of interest to me I guess. And what were some of, what were the patients that you were dealing with mainly? Was it just, you know, we're talking pre war so...

The general population.

Was

30:00 **that what a general hospital...?**

Yes.

Okay. Now, in your time before joining up, I'm just looking at where you were working. You stayed on at the Epworth then did you?

After I finished my training I then did midwifery there and then I became a staff nurse there. And I think I was in charge of a ward when the army called me up.

30:30 **Now, you said you met your fiancé before Puckapunyal?**

No, I think it was actually before, not at Puckapunyal but some... I can't remember where I first met him.

Well, who was he and how did you meet and fall in love?

Mmm?

Who was he, how did you meet and fall in love and get engaged?

How did I? His name was George Farr. And how did I, I can't remember

31:00 how I met him quite. I met him during, just met him, it was nothing particular about the way I met him.

At a dance or through friends?

Oh, I can't remember that. Through contacts of some description.

We warned you we'd ask you a lot of questions. Well, I'm interested because....

You know, it's a long time ago.

I know, I realise that. Well, talk to me then about joining

31:30 **up. You said you were at home with your mum and dad when you heard the news that war was declared. And you knew you would be part of it.**

Yes.

So what were the steps preceding your joining up? I realise you said it was delayed because you said your parents were elderly.

Well, nothing happened then but I duly got notice to go to the, to go to somewhere, I can't

32:00 remember. I think it was Bacchus Marsh or somewhere which was a camp or...

There was a camp called Darley down at Bacchus Marsh.

Yes something like that. I can't remember exactly where it was because I promptly went to see them, I think, or contacted them, I would think it was just personal contact, and said that my parents are quite happy for me to be in the services. But I said, "But they are elderly and if it's only

32:30 to Darley or somewhere I would really like to be excused, but if it's actually active I'm happy about it."

So what were your expectations about life as an army nurse?

I don't think I had any, it was just a job.

Did you know much about what was going on in the Middle East in that time?

Well, I think yes, I

33:00 think I kept, read the newspapers and things, I didn't... A few contacts had gone to the war and then,

oh, later on several of the nurses I knew that trained at Epworth would write back to us and tell us things, you know.

Did you know any boys that had joined up and gone away?

Oh, I think so.

Did you see any when they came back? I'm

33:30 **not talking romantically, I'm just wondering what your interest or knowledge of the war was when you were becoming a nurse.**

Oh I think I knew people who joined up. What were my contacts with them, I can't remember really. I feel that, no, I can't answer that question.

That's fine. Going to Puckapunyal then and getting your uniform.

We got our uniform

34:00 before we went. We were allowed money for it but it only covered half the cost. If you really want to know I've got the figures somewhere.

How did they imagine you would make up the other half?

I don't know.

Was it a better wage than the nursing wage, in the army?

No, worse.

So you were really doing this because you felt it was your duty?

Yes.

Okay.

I've got my pay books there.

It wasn't much, was it?

34:30 Seven and, seventy cents, seven shillings or something.

Was there a really big difference between being an army nurse and being a regular nurse?

Look I can't answer that one.

And at Puckapunyal what were you there to do? Was it straight into the wards immediately?

Straight into the wards.

And who would you be treating at Puckapunyal then?

Well, the local,

35:00 the accidents, appendix and things like that. I remember getting into trouble because there was a boy who had an appendix to be done and I shaved him in the appropriate area. And oh, that was not done. Now, at the Melbourne hospital they never did it but at Epworth we didn't have an on-service barber, some of the nurses did it. And I can remember

35:30 going before the CO [commanding officer] that I did it.

What was the problem with you giving him a shave? He had to be shaved didn't he?

He had to be shaved but not the nurses, not a woman having to shave a man.

What did the fellow say while you were shaving him?

I don't know what he said. Didn't worry me. And I also,

36:00 you know, it was very innocent in many ways. Before I went to Pucka I knew two people who actually were associated with Epworth, who when they heard I was going to Pucka were very pleased. They said their brother-in-law or, yes, somebody's brother-in-law was a patient there and they weren't

36:30 allowed to visit him. And I thought, "I don't know anything about this." I didn't know anything. So I remember going to Pucka and looking down the list of patients and it wasn't there. So I met one of them afterwards and said, "Oh, I'm glad your brother-in-law's better." And they said, "But he isn't, we're still not allowed." I said, "Oh." And I

37:00 remember saying, "Oh, I've mistaken the name and used a different name." Of course, there was only one solution, there was a special ward there for VD [venereal disease, .i.e. sexually transmitted disease]. And that's where he was.

Now, that was quite a problem.

You know, in Gaza there was a thousand-bed hospital next to us for VD.

I think they called it the “pox [syphilis] hospital”.

Mmm?

I think they called it the “pox hospital”.

Did they? I

37:30 haven’t heard that one. But one of my friends who was in intelligence said the fifth column, which were spies for Germany, would send infected women to camps north, Syria and that, and they were, I’ve forgotten how many they could infect, about five a night or more.

On a slow night even. Did you believe that?

Oh I think I believed it, yes. But it had not hit me.

38:00 You know, I hadn’t really, I knew syphilis was a disease but I didn’t...

At that age did you know how you’d get it, like were you aware...?

Oh, I think I knew that much.

Yes, okay, I just wanted to double check that you weren’t a complete babe in the woods [innocent]. But at Puckapunyal it was a problem there already, was it?

Must have been. I didn’t actually have anything to do with it.

You didn’t have to treat any of the men?

Oh no. Well, the nurses

38:30 didn’t. The same as the hospital that I’m talking about, there were no nurses there, there were only other soldiers.

Just male orderlies.

Male orderlies. Yes. One episode I remember was we had a patient at Heidelberg who had a most peculiar rash. And he was being treated,

39:00 one of the doctors I know later in life, well, later in life he specialled in skins. I’ve always wondered whether it was this case that did it. And he was treated there for a while with this that and the other. And one day a very well known physician who I greatly admired called in and came and looked at him. And when he looked at him

39:30 he turned round and said to the group that was there, which were a couple of other doctors, went down to the office and he ticked everyone off because it was a typical rash of syphilis and nobody picked it up. And I always remember that, you know, episode. Oh dear, it was... And he said he had not had contact, that’s right, I always

40:00 remember, he hadn’t had contact. He was a dentist and he must have got it through his work.

Did you think that possible?

No. Well, wait a minute. He was examined and there was a certain spot that had a blister on it.

Tape 4

00:31 **Okay Joan, I’d like to ask you, actually, what it was like having school at Government House? Do you remember much about that?**

I don’t remember. It was just school. I remember being naughty.

What did you do?

I was talking in assembly and three of us had to get up on the platform at the end of the ballroom and sing our school song.

01:00 And I remember, I’ve never had a voice for singing and it’s worse still now. But I can remember having to sing the school song from the platform for punishment, for talking.

That’s terrible. Now tell me, did you get to meet the Governor?

The Governor wasn’t there.

Who was the Governor at that stage?

Well, you see, I think I said, it was the Commonwealth Government House and he'd gone to Canberra and it was empty. And the state

01:30 Governor lived at Stonington, I think it's called, in Glenfield Road in those days.

Okay. All right, that's the end of my questions on that line. Being an English migrant family, as the war is approaching in the very late 'thirties, were your parents trying to get news from home or were they worried about relatives over there?

I don't remember.

02:00 You see, my father was too old for the war so it was the next generation. The only occasion I remember of any concern was when they called for ships to go to France and pick up people from the coast. A cousin, yes, that doesn't - yes, a cousin of mine didn't go.

02:30 And I remember my parents being very upset that he had a boat, he had everything to go and he didn't. And I can remember my parents not being very happy about it. In my case, the family was my mother and my father, my father's sister married one of my mother's brothers so they were...

A very tight family. Did your parents

03:00 **still consider themselves English then or were they Aussies by that stage?**

Oh, I don't know.

Well, how about yourself, did you consider yourself English or Australian?

No, Australian.

Even though everybody else in your family was born there?

Didn't mean a thing. Oh, I was Australian, never thought of being English.

Oh good on you. Did you refer to England though as "home" or "the mother country"?

No, no.

Did your parents?

I don't think so.

Because a lot of Australians did in those days, didn't they, even though they hadn't

03:30 **been there, they referred to England as "home".**

Don't know. I never thought of it as "home", no, that's never entered, and I don't think it entered my parents' - home is your home here.

So in that case, if you're signing up to join the army as your duty, what was your duty to England then, if Australia was your home?

I think that, I don't know why

04:00 or why I felt it was my duty. I think perhaps the First War, having lived through that, even if I was young, and the post-war, and there were Australian troops would be involved. I think there was, I don't know, Australian troops; I've never thought of it being English troops. I thought if there's going to be another war was taking over all sorts of countries, it was a known fact

04:30 that Australia would help, I think, or it was felt. And I just felt, "Well if there's an army nursing service I'll be in it." Actually I did put my name down for the air force because they were a bit long, because I thought that was a bit more interesting and they were definitely away, you know, from Melbourne. And I was called up at the same time within a day or two of my call for the army, but I chose the army.

05:00 **Was that to have been a WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] or air force service?**

No, an air force nurse.

Why did you choose the army over the air force in the end?

Well, the army was the first thing because I was nursing army nurses. And it was because of the delays and things and the air force were calling, they didn't have a nursing service at the beginning of the war, it was a bit later. I thought, "Well, I'll put my name down as these people are a bit long-winded

05:30 sending me," when I had turned down because of my mother and father and not wanting to be with the local people.

Well, tell us about army, joining the army. Did they give you much training, did you have to learn to march and so forth?

No.

None of that at all? No square bashing?

No. We had, we were taken on route marches but no we weren't, there was no training for military service.

Well, that's

06:00 **a relief. It would have been very dull to be marching up and down the square.**

Well, we did do quite a lot of marching, especially in Gaza; we'd go for a march every day. It was our exercise as well as anything else, you know.

And with your uniform, were there any trousers or even marching you were marching in a dress?

No, there were no trousers till New Guinea. And I've got a photograph there. We were issued with

06:30 the dungaree things. I've got a photograph of me. They were so big. But any rate, that was the issue.

So like overalls were they?

Yeah, khaki overalls. Then we went, when we went to New Guinea, before trousers, we were given, I suppose, leggings which were

07:00 a piece of elastic, grey, which you added to your suspenders, up here. And one of my old associates, it was well before war, came to see me in Moresby and the first thing he said to me, "God how far do they go up and how do you keep them there?" That was his first words, that was his reaction to me and my leggings.

07:30 Then the trousers didn't come in till Bougainville, I think or, I'll have to think, I can't remember.

What did you think of the army uniform, did you... Being a young lady, obviously you liked to look nice: was it a good uniform, quite flattering?

Yes, I think it was a good uniform, yes.

I've heard that they had some rather, what's the word,

08:00 **unglamorous, what do they call them, "romance busters". The bloomers you had to wear, did they call them that, romance busters, or...?**

I didn't know that.

Oh, I spoke to another nurse who mentioned that, saying that was a rather unglamorous part of the uniform.

I don't remember that.

Okay. Tell us about Vivian Bullwinkel, how you got to know her and what sort of person she is?

Well, I didn't know her until we were at Pucka.

08:30 She was nothing outstanding, she was one of the mob. I helped her pack and I was, as I said, green with envy. And that was that. I got to know her very well after the war. By the way, I haven't mentioned this earlier, but after the war, she and Betty Jeffrey formed a group for the Nurses'

09:00 Memorial Centre and they went round in their car around Victoria gathering money for this war memorial. There was a committee formed to help them. I was the secretary of the committee. That's written up on the book called The living memorial. And I was their first, I was first secretary of that. Mrs Daikenheart was the

09:30 president, I remember. I can't remember much more. I am still a member of the Nurses' Memorial Centre in St Kilda Road.

When you were helping her pack, were you chattering about what you might think she would expect or what she might do or where she was going?

Well, we had a set uniform and I don't think we discussed where she might be going. But she had an overseas posting.

10:00 I don't know that... Well, of course it was towards the Middle East, I mean, I was Singapore as it turned out. But I don't know that I knew exactly where it was. And I was green with envy.

But did you guess, were you guessing and trying to...?

I don't remember. She had an overseas posting, we'll leave it at that.

And when you met up with her again after the war, did you think she had been changed

10:30 **radically by her experiences?**

No, I don't think she had. I don't know. I can't remember that. She became Matron of Fairfield when I was Matron of the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and we used to have contact then. And we always got on well together and ... No.

11:00 I perhaps shouldn't say it but I think the stronger character there was Betty Jeffrey who wrote the book, White coolies. And there's been another book written recently, or fairly recently, by somebody who was not a nurse about their camp life. And she was -

11:30 what shall I say? - a much more forthright person but she didn't have the experience of being the only survivor. I think that Vivian was very good, I think she was very good the way the bullet actually went through her hip

12:00 here, and how she coped with that, and then to help wounded Englishmen. I think she was just an outstanding person. But I think she was actually coming to Melbourne to live when she, and I had arranged to go to see her on the Friday in Perth

12:30 and she died on the Monday. Because she was coming back. She'd married late in life and his family were all in Western Australia and she was away from everybody here. I understand she was booked into a nursing home or a care place in Brighton while they looked around for something in Melbourne. And I had a little bit of contact with her then, not much. But when the Nurses' Memorial Centre was

13:00 opened in Canberra, some years ago, she was up there in Canberra and so was I and she came down to Melbourne to stay at a hotel in Swanson Street and I went in a couple of times to see her there. It wasn't a close relationship, but it was a friendly one. And she had a carer, a full time carer, at that stage. And I went to relieve the carer

13:30 while she went and did some things at one stage. And the carer I remember saying, the last thing was that, "Don't worry if you have to go earlier." I had a meeting later. So that was all right. There is a painting about, that somebody did at the time, of the Nurses' Memorial Centre which is in lots of public places with nurses

14:00 there. And while I was at this hotel for her, somebody came with a big pile like that of these huge paintings for her to sign. And I remember saying, "You shouldn't do that, you can't sign those." You know, she was handicapped. But any rate, I remember ringing up afterwards to speak to the carer and said, you know, "I thought it was wrong." But she did sign quite a number of them.

14:30 So I think she was a, what shall I say, a good character.

You mentioned that you thought Betty Jeffrey was, perhaps, a more forthright character. What did you mean in that respect?

I think she was a very outstanding character, that's all.

I don't know much about Betty Jeffrey. Could you tell me a little bit about her story?

15:00 Well, she was one that was rescued from the ship and was in camp, and went to the camp that they went to. And she actually did quite a lot of work in that camp, by the books that she's written and what other people have written. And I knew her personally,

15:30 and I knew her more personally than Vivian. And I always felt she was a very outstanding character. Now, one thing, when we went to the opening of the Memorial in Canberra, I acquired some tape recording of the speeches. I had one copy made for Vivian -

16:00 not for Vivian, for Betty Jeffrey, and took it over to her. You know, things like that. It was a closer association. So I knew her a bit more than I knew Vivian.

Okay. Now, you mentioned that you were engaged by this stage in Pucka and in Bonegilla.

I broke it off after I came home from the Middle East, because he had been in different fields

16:30 to what I had and we were different.

Where had he been?

You've asked me that. I'm not sure. I think it was Northern Australia and then he'd gone over to one of the other islands, not New Guinea. And we were friends, and we were friends up to the time he died. We always met on Anzac Day at the marches and things and there was no ill feeling about it. But we were different.

How had you changed?

Oh, how

17:00 does anybody change, with experience? How had he changed with experience?

What, do you think it was simply the case that you'd fallen out of love, or were your interests too different then?

I don't know. We were different. We had made up our minds before I went to the Middle East that we would not marry until the war was over. But - what was that? As a matter of fact, the story, I don't know whether it's the right one to say on

17:30 this tape. I saw him in New Guinea, and when I was on Bougainville he arrived on Bougainville for some official work for him. And I always remember the first thing he said to me: "What are you nurses up to?" And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I believe I can get anything I want on this island." I said, "What do you mean?"

18:00 And he shut up. It turned out that the Guinea Gold, which was our local paper, had "Red Lights Burn on Torokina Strip, Not for Navigation". Have you heard this story? It turned out that two women that... Unfortunately, I

18:30 can't find the leaflets, because I had them here and I've lent it to somebody and they haven't returned it; I think that's what's happened to it. Two women were, they said, shanghaied onto an American freighter or something and taken to Bougainville and they had set up a business on Bougainville. And I

19:00 remember being very upset when I found out that he was accusing the nurses of it. Interestingly enough, the night they were found or arrested or whatever it was, I was on duty in our mess and we went down to the sergeants' mess where they were and I met them. One of them had a fur coat on and nothing else.

19:30 And I can see that fur coat hanging on the sergeant's door right now. And the AAMWS [Australian Army Medical Women's Service], the one that was in charge of the AAMWS, she was a higher rank than me, she said - they wanted to know what to do with them, and she said, "They're not coming into AAMWS uniform." And I said, "Well, they're not coming into army, into nurses' [uniform]." And they ended up being put into hospital blues

20:00 which, perhaps you've had some experience, [are] blue trousers and white shirts. And they were transferred back to Melbourne, I think, or back away from the island.

How extraordinary. And were they just civilian women?

Yes.

Where had they been picked up, in Queensland?

In Melbourne. Their names and everything were on the piece of paper. It was published in the Melbourne papers.

What was their attitude of being caught, were they at all...?

Oh well, in the paper they were

20:30 shanghaied, you know, they were quite innocent. At the other end it wasn't innocent.

Now, I have to say, you mentioned in your notes or we heard from the phone call that it was very easy to get swept off your feet, you were saying, as a nurse. And you were lucky because you were engaged at this stage.

Yes. I feel that there were... Now Helen McCallum, you didn't interview her? No.

21:00 Now, she became engaged during the war, and actually somebody who knew my family in England, but a Palestinian policeman. And it was broken, but they remained friends for a long time afterwards. Obviously, the men got very interested in females, try and put it that way. And I

21:30 look back and think, "Well, I didn't get swept off my feet because I had a commitment." And when I look at that little diary, it tells me these things. I just feel sorry for some of the men getting a bit keen because I wasn't.…

Well, I imagine all these young men and women in dashing uniforms, miles away from home, lonely and so forth, you know, you can't really blame anybody, can you?

No.

22:00 **It's just nature taking its course. Did the army discourage weddings and engagements?**

Oh well, if you married - the nurses, if you married you were instantly discharged.

So would they discourage the nurses from forming close attachments with...?

Beg pardon?

Would they try and discourage nurses from forming attachments?

I don’t think so, I don’t think that was it. How could you? I don’t think you could.

Oh no, I’m sure you couldn’t stop it but you

22:30 **might, you know, you might impose strict curfews or chaperones.**

No, no, don’t think so.

So were people falling in love left, right and centre?

Yes.

It must have been a very exciting time, lots of heartbreaks and lots of passion…

Yeah, well, that’s why I always feel pleased that… I think I was fairly level-headed and because I had a commitment here in Australia…

Very good. Well, let’s talk about

23:00 **travelling to the Middle East and on the Wanganella. What was the ship like, can you describe it?**

Well, it was a hospital ship. I’ve got some photographs there. And it was, as I said, the cabins had been bored out and they were big wards really. And three bunks.

23:30 And we were allowed to play deck tennis and things like that, there were facilities there. I don’t know how else to explain it, it was nothing…

Was it a very large ship?

Oh, I can’t tell you. Quite a large ship.

Had it been a passenger liner before the war?

Yes.

And were there ever any scares on that

24:00 **trip across from Japanese or German submarines or that sort of thing?**

No. We were, it was lit and there were blackouts, you know, everywhere else.

Yes, hospital ships had to be brightly lit up, didn’t they, and well marked?

Yes.

Well, sort of when you say “lit up”, was it festooned with lights like a Christmas tree or how did it look?

Well, they had big red crosses, lines there, and they were lit up and that’s all

24:30 I can say, remember.

Fair enough. And on the ship going over were there any soldiers with you or was it just the nurses?

No. Nurses and the crew and doctors, yes.

And would you be… Because I imagine if I was in that position I’d be thinking every day, “I wonder what it’s going to be like and I wonder what we’ll do and what will the weather be like, what will the food be like?” Was all that stuff being chatted about all the time?

No, I don’t think so. I think you accepted what

25:00 was put in front of you. And no, I don’t remember anything.

Well, I imagine that when you stopped in ports like Colombo and…

Oh yes, we went on trips. I arranged to, well, I don’t know how I arranged but I went around the coast and I went around several places. And in Bombay I went to the Taj Mahal.

25:30 **That must have been quite magnificent.**

Yes, it was magnificent. Interesting little story about the Taj Mahal. On the way home I, I can’t think of his name, some British, some big noise British man was having dinner there at the same time. But the other thing was that we had been warned

26:00 that we were not to say anything about our movements. There’d been lectures about our security. And while I was there with one of my friends, the two of us were sitting there, two women came up in civilian clothes and asked us a few questions. And they… I don’t know that they said they were Australian, but they talked

26:30 about it and wanted to know... And I remember I was as dull as could be then, so was the lass I was with, we didn't know anything. And when we went back to the ship one of the boys I was friendly with said, "Oh, I've had a wonderful day, I've met my sister." And I said, "Oh, that's..." "She's coming on board tonight." And it was one of these women. And she belonged to an English,

27:00 to the QAs [Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service], which were Australian nurses working with the British Army, and she wanted to find out something genuinely. But we....

Right. Did you speak to her on the ship the next day?

Oh yes. Oh yes, and I knew her after the war too.

When you packed to go on the Wanganella, would you take any keepsakes or lucky

27:30 **charms or anything from home that was special to you?**

I didn't. No, I don't think, and I don't know of other people who did. I think we were very restricted to what we had and wanted. I did take - I meant to bring them up - I've got a little tiny hurricane lamp which I used because

28:00 the lights on night duty, you needed something. Batteries were hard, getting torches. And my little kerosene, methylated spirits stove, I took that. And I acquired an American torch which was wonderful, you know.

How did you acquire it?

Oh, don't ask me, I don't know. Somebody, one of the Americans handed it over to me because they seemed to have a lot of equipment.

28:30 Might have been a patient or anything, I can't remember. I've got them here and I meant to bring them up in case you wanted to look at them.

Thank you. Now in terms of things you packed, the army was fairly strict about diaries and so forth, so what made you sneak one on?

Well, I have only... I'm not saying anything about the places. And it's only my romances or whatever you like to call them.

29:00 **Now, I thought you didn't have any romances. You said you were tied up.**

No, well, they weren't romances. But how can I explain them? Somebody who wanted to be romantic.

Gentleman callers.

Oh is that what you call them? And you know that while we were in tents we didn't have any furniture or anything. We acquired boxes by our beds and we had a rope between the poles, they were Indian

29:30 or VIP [Very important Person] or something or other. No, that's not it. Things... We had a rope between which we had hanging wardrobes - I've brought mine there - to put up. And I went away [with], because of girls who'd written and said what you needed, a coathanger with a piece of material with pockets and they were our chest of drawers, our underclothing and all that, that's the only place we had to keep [it].

30:00 **Were you expected, as you're living in a tent, were you expected to have ironed your uniforms, starched your veil and so forth?**

Well, this is something that I cannot remember properly. I think where I was we had them, but in the Middle East we did wear our thing but because we weren't working hard we were wearing our outdoor dresses and things

30:30 and they weren't dry cleaned or anything like that. I don't know how we managed but we did. And veils, even on the ships coming home, we were expected to wear those veils. They were ironed. I think outside labour came in to it. But on the ship coming home we were expected to wear veils when we were on duty, which wasn't always. If you starch your veil or

31:00 handkerchiefs or anything, you don't need to starch them if you spread them out on a small smooth wall, no creases. When they're dry you peel them off and they're ironed. And on the ship coming home we were doing it along the corridors and the captain made us all, or ordered the walls be cleaned and not done again. But they

31:30 still expected you to wear your veil when... I can't remember exactly. I asked one of the girls about washing and she said, oh, we didn't wear indoor uniforms. But we did, I can't actually remember what happened. We had laundry people on Bougainville, we had natives. But I think in New Guinea it was a laundry

32:00 unit that did it. I don't know, I can't remember.

What about... I know you had your, what was it, APC washes. Was soap hard to get hold of?

I don't remember soap. But the Red Cross, that's where the Red Cross was wonderful, they always

produced things you wanted.

Lucky you to have the Red Cross there. What would they produce, soap and....?

Well, anywhere, everywhere we were they would,

32:30 if we were stuck, I think soap was on issue at times, I don't really remember. You know, we had, even our sterilisers on Bougainville were only Primus stoves and things like that.

You never had autoclaves or anything like that?

No. Everything was boiled up on a Primus stove, you know. No, we didn't have autoclaves.

33:00 And we had kerosene refrigerators.

Big noisy things, I'm sure.

Well, they were in a, if they were in a tent or in a ward that's tented and the roof over it or even those... In Bougainville our wards, our accommodation, that was the one place where we weren't in a tent, it was a roof and open with eaves going well out and then the walls up to about

33:30 here, and then the rest were open. The wall in between each cubicle was a bit higher but there wasn't the eaves down. But we were really... And it was a dirt floor. I have an interesting story about the dirt floor. We didn't, when you showered or things, we did not have benches or things. I think there might have been a bench but

34:00 nowhere to put things. And our great joy was to have something to carry your toilet things in. Cake tins were sent up with cakes, they were grabbed and handles put on them to put your toilet goods in. Well, I actually had a wooden one that one of the boys had made for me and you put your soap, your talc powder, your BO [deodorant, for body odour] things and all that in, toothpaste and everything else. And on Bougainville I went to...

34:30 I had trouble in New Guinea and had a small denture made after the wrong tooth was taken out, and that's another story. And on Bougainville I used to have a little dish that I put my teeth, go over and clean my teeth and put them on this little dish. And one day, one morning I got

35:00 up and no teeth, and rat droppings round my little box. And I was terribly upset and I went to see the dentist and he said, "Oh, that's nothing. A full colonel on the islands lost both his uppers and lowers." Rats like teeth, they think the pink

35:30 part, the gum part, is like their babies and they pick it up because of the pink stuff. Not long afterwards.... In our case, we had dirt floors. Some of them had managed to get other things. We had maltha wheat on our cubicle, some of them had floorboards that the boys had made.

36:00 Well, there was a great to-do with the rats. We were having rats around our beds and things. One of my friends was awakened, when her cobber [room-mate] was on night duty or something, to hear awful noise and finding out there was a python on the other bed killing a rat. That's the sort of thing we had. And so there was a lot of trouble with rats. So it was said that all floorboards

36:30 had to come up. So floorboards came up not far from where I was and there were some dentures in them. I didn't claim them, but they were mine.

Yes, I imagine you wouldn't want to be sticking them back into your mouth.

No. I forgot that little story.

That's a gem, that's a good little story.

It is a gem. Somebody who I hadn't seen for years suddenly met me one day at (UNCLEAR). She said to me,

37:00 "I always think of you and those teeth."

How easy was it in the army and at Bougainville to get a replacement?

I got something, yeah. I think, I remember going to the dentist soon after I came to Melbourne again, because things weren't quite right.

You said in the Middle East you weren't required to do an awful lot of nursing.

No, very little.

Were you treating any wounded soldiers?

Not really.

37:30 This is where I think a lot of the others would go and talk to them and [keep them] company and things. And that was where I felt I was very fortunate having these two friends connected with the Red Cross. I

went to other places to do that.

Tell us which places you visited?

Oh, CCS [Casualty Clearing Stations]. No, I don't think CCS. Other hospitals.

38:00 **And who would be in there, fellows recovering?**

Yes, recovering, yes, the same as we were.

Give us a, it's hard to say, but what was your bedside patter [routine conversation]? What would you say? "Hello boys, how are you doing? You're looking good, you're a handsome one"? What would you be saying to cheer these fellows up? Seeing a young nurse in uniform would cheer everybody up anyway but...

I don't know what. Well, "I hope things are not too bad," or something like that. I don't

38:30 know, I can't remember.

And were they a cheeky lot?

Sometimes, sometimes not.

How would you cope with that?

Oh, go to the next bed. That's easy, walk away.

Did you ever encounter any German or Italian prisoners during that time in the Middle East?

Yes. Now I have to think.

39:00 No, I don't think so, in the Middle East. The only time I really had any prisoners was at Heidelberg. I was in a prisoners' ward and there were Italians and Japanese and all sorts of things. They'd come down from different camps that had been in Australia.

Tape 5

00:32 **So where were we? In the Middle East. If you weren't encountering too much active nursing and you were visiting these young men in hospital to cheer them up and write letters for them and generally help them out, did you feel then that you weren't really experiencing war at that stage, that it was sort of the war was somewhere else and you were...?**

Well,

01:00 you see, the war, it was after Pearl Harbour and you knew the war was going on in Singapore but things weren't going very good. I don't know that we... What was your question?

Well, I guess I was leading to the

01:30 **point where I was thinking were you wondering "I think I could be of better service somewhere else."**

Oh well, I don't think there was any hope of being... You left it entirely to the army where they wanted you and needed you.

But you could still feel, you might still feel, you know, "I'm sure I could be helping somewhere else." You didn't think that at all?

No, I don't think I had that feeling because I'm trying to say I'm a person that gets myself occupied.

Well, you would

02:00 **certainly have been occupied travelling around visiting these young fellows.**

Yes. And, as I said, I have a post mortem every night on have I helped anybody or done something, you know.

So you embark again... Just let me check my notes, sorry. You embark again to head back to Australia and you think, "Well, that's going to be a trip of maybe two or three weeks."

Yes.

02:30 We were told to pack our cases, we had little leather cases, for three weeks, that's what we expected.

And there were nurses and soldiers on that ship, weren't there, or was it just nurses?

Which ship are you talking about?

The first ship you boarded to leave.

Oh, I think there were nurses too, yes. And walking patients I think because we were sometimes rostered to duties at times, yes.

You must have become

03:00 **quite the sailor after three months?**

I am a good sailor, I have not been seasick except going to Kangaroo Island, or coming back. I had egg for breakfast and I have a low tolerance to eggs. And I've been on many sea trips, never any worry till that one.

I imagine that being on that lost convoy for three months…

That's only a surmise,

03:30 that people have said that they thought we were known as… And also, you see, I think we were originally to go to Singapore and it fell. We were then going to Java, I think, because somebody had a letter back from Java, so one of my associates… And that fell. See, they didn't know what to do with us.

Were you hearing about Singapore falling and Java falling?

I think we heard about Singapore. I don't remember

04:00 hearing about Java falling.

Was that a bit of a shock, hearing that Singapore at fallen because it was suppose to be impregnable?

Singapore? Yes. That was a shock. And see, we didn't know anything about the nurses who'd got out of Singapore and the sinking of the ship [Vyner Brooke, whose survivors were massacred at Bangka Island], we didn't know anything about that.

The Centaur?

Mmm?

The sinking of the Centaur?

No, the …

The Veetor [Vyner Brooke]? It's gone out of my mind too, I know which one you mean but I can't remember the name.

Yes.

04:30 Vivian Bullwinkel had been on this. [Vivian Bullwinkel was sole survivor of the Bangka Island massacre.]

And so were you thinking then that Singapore's fallen and, you know, maybe Australia will be under threat some time in the near future? Was that going through your mind?

Oh, think we knew that, I don't think we knew, I don't know whether we knew that Darwin had been

05:00 bombed. But, oh yes, I think we knew that the Pacific War was on.

Was it frustrating, then, that you were drifting around in the Indian Ocean for so long when you could have been at home doing something?

I don't feel I felt, frustration isn't the word but we certainly wondered what was going to happen to us, you know, wondering where we were going.

It must have been quite bewildering at times.

05:30 **Did they tell you, like when you left from Colombo and you ended up in Mombasa, did…?**

We were never told anything.

So you didn't know where you were going?

No idea.

So you woke up one morning and there's Africa?

Yes, Kenya, yes. No, we had no idea where we were going.

Well, did anybody kick up a stink? Like, I know you can't say anything because it's the army and you go where you're told, but there must have been someone who said, "What are we doing in Kenya, what's the point of this?"

I don't remember

06:00 that. I don't remember that there was any, you know, stink about it. On the Duntroon we did have one experience, I always think. One of the boys who had mates on the thing had a birthday so we saved a biscuit occasionally, put them in a box or something, so that when we had a birthday we had something extra,

06:30 because food was tight. And I remember one night, that a friend of mine went down to the mess to get a card table, we were going to have cards because one of the boys had a birthday, and we didn't know what we were doing. And when we found out what we were doing, we'd had meals at different times, it was arranged

07:00 that I would meet the boys under a certain lifeboat up on the deck. Well, the next thing we know - I know; I think I might have been the only nurse who actually witnessed this - there were fairy lights going up and all sorts of things and the boat was rocking and depth charges being, from the Chitral, I think it was the Chitral, and

07:30 all that going on. And I'm up there on the boat and suddenly I see a white stream come from the boat out and I said, "What is it, what is it?" And it had been a torpedo that went, was too deep and on the fore, front - not the stern, the other - under the Duntroon. That was one of the

08:00 most dangerous moments I had.

I'm sure. Now, did you have diarrhoea at that stage because that...?

No.

Wow, that must have been a real heart in the mouth moment.

Yes, it was a heart in the mouth moment. Didn't understand whether there was another and whether they ever got it, we never knew, but it was a sudden change.

Yeah, because where there's one torpedo there could be two or six or...

Two or three.

08:30 I believe on one of the other ships where there were a few of the nurses who'd gone, because of any sickness on the ship, on one of the others, they were very alarmed because they saw it going to our ship and they said, "Oh, that's where the girls are," you know. Somebody else on the convoy's told me that since.

Wow, what an amazing thing to witness

09:00 **really. I bet that's seared on your memory, that vision of that white streak.**

Yes, yes.

And it disappeared off towards the horizon. Were any ships hit?

No.

So did you still have the party that night?

I don't remember. I think we went down but I don't know whether we had a party of biscuits or something.

Were you able to reach for something a little stronger then?

No, there was not alcohol on the ship.

09:30 New Guinea, oh, I mentioned that was a dry place.

I'm sure people found ways and means, though.

Well, not very much.

Must have been a very clean living army then?

I think some of the, I do think some of the medical people got pure alcohol and did things with it. I agree with, I think I'd say that.

With a little bit of pineapple juice or something?

I wouldn't know.

You clean living girl.

10:00 **Three months on a ship together with the same bunch of soldiers, same bunch of nurses...**

Nurses, same bunch of nurses. Soldiers were there but you mixed with....

I'm sure you did. I'm sure there were plenty of... it would look like the "Love Boat" [reference to television comedy series] after three months. Lots of time for people to make friendships

and for romances and so forth. Any engagements on that ship?

I don't remember any. I think the nurses kept to themselves and the men kept to themselves

10:30 really. We had our own deck, as I've said earlier.

Was it the rule that soldiers weren't allowed on the nurses' deck?

I don't remember.

Okay. So when you finally arrived back in Australia you arrived...

There weren't many soldiers on that trip but there were some.

When you finally arrived back in Australia, was your first port of call Perth?

11:00 Yes.

And did you know then that you were going to Australia or was that a surprise too when you got there?

We more or less, I think we'd worked it out. And of course, there was blackouts and all sorts of things when we, which we were a bit surprised about yet not surprised, you know what I mean?

And did you go by train to Adelaide from there?

No, I think we went by ship from Perth to Adelaide and then train.

And you went back to Melbourne for leave?

11:30 Yes.

How long did you have?

I don't remember.

Probably just a week or two.

It was not very long.

And was it, did you see yourself as a grown up woman now, a woman of the world?

I don't think I ever thought about it.

Well, how did your parents see you, their little girl coming back?

I wouldn't know.

They did say, "Oh, you're all grown up"?

No.

They just treated you exactly the same as normal?

Yes.

Did you see a change in your view of Melbourne?

12:00 **Having seen a bit of the world, did Melbourne look a bit quaint and small?**

I don't think... There was too much to concentrate on what we had to do that I never thought about Melbourne.

Do you remember what you did on leave then?

No.

Nothing. Okay. All right, we'll go from... and was it on that leave that you broke up with your fiancé?

No, I don't think so, I think it was a later leave.

And so from Melbourne you went back to Western

12:30 **Australia then, didn't you?**

Yes, we went to Western Australia by train.

That must have been a long trip in those days.

I've been across that Nullarbor four times.

How many times too many is that?

Mmm?

How many times too many is four times?

Actually I've been on the Nullarbor, driven across fairly recently,

13:00 less than twelve months ago. I was thinking it was going to be terribly boring but it wasn't. We were with a very good crowd, I went with the Probus [service club] people from Geelong. There was a combination of three Probuses and I was asked, because of my nephew. And they had it very well organised and they had us doing things while we were crossing the Nullarbor. (UNCLEAR).

How was it in those days on a train, though?

13:30 **I assume it wouldn't have been an air conditioned train or anything like that?**

No.

It would be quite hot at times.

Yes, I think it was, I can't remember.

Were you in sleepers?

No.

Sitting up?

We didn't have sleepers, we slept on seats. Look, I don't really remember.

That's all right.

It's a long time ago.

It is isn't it?

14:00 **It's a long time ago. And in Western Australia where were you posted initially?**

Guildford, where Guildford Grammar [School] was. Oh, the first place was "Lady Lawley's Cottage by the Sea". And some of them went to work in Hollywood and odd places around there. I don't know where I went, I seemed to have little jobs. Then, it was a very short time, we went to Guildford and then we

14:30 started working which was... We took over Guildford Grammar School from the Americans.

Well, forgive my ignorance, where's Guildford, is it a suburb of Perth?

A suburb of Perth, not far, towards the middle, west of Perth, not far from the present airport.

Perth must have been a bit of a tiny little country town in those days.

Well, it was different to what it is now.

15:00 I can't remember it being a tiny little town exactly and I can't remember it being a big town.

You said you took over from the Americans there and they'd left everything including food which had gone off.

Oh, in the blinking stove.

Like a leg of lamb left in the stove or something?

Well, it was mainly stews and things that I had to clean. I don't know what they... I remember I was one of them, though. Not all of them did that, others had to go

15:30 to wards and set up, make beds and things. I remember helping in the kitchen.

Had they left any good stuff behind?

I don't remember.

And you were working, I guess... Sorry, the soldiers stationed near you were the Armoured Division, weren't they?

Well, they weren't, yes, they weren't very near but the Armoured Division was in Western Australia training, in those days. Because,

16:00 I think it was from Meridian, I went up for a couple of days to a place called Strawberry, I think it might have been a nickname for the place because of casualties that had happened. But they were mainly transferred to Perth. But we went up there for a couple of nights or something, I don't know, a very short visit.

So who were you mainly treating in Perth, what sort of injuries and soldiers and so forth?

16:30 Oh well, illnesses, accidents. I always remember a Don R [Despatch Rider] who had been a patient of ours for ages. Next thing I know he's coming back again and he said, "What would you do without the Don Rs?" And I said, "What would you do without us?" You know, that sort of thing. And there were skin, well, different minor, what should I say, medical conditions.

Was that an enjoyable time in Western

17:00 **Australia?**

Yes, I quite enjoyed it.

Was it a time where you were learning much or was... Like were there new things, new diseases and or new injuries coming in that you'd have to learn to deal with?

Don't think so.

Twelve months of quite an enjoyable time?

Yeah, well, it was. The girls at Meridian enjoyed themselves but I think I had contacts in Perth,

17:30 I made friends in Perth, and yes, it was quite an enjoyable time I think.

Were there...?

Not as enjoyable, I won't say enjoyable, it was a pleasant, that's not quite the word I know. I don't look back on it as being anything nasty.

Was there much in the form of entertainment for you over there?

We

18:00 used to go to pictures. I can't remember.

That's all right. Were there dances and so forth?

Oh occasionally yes, dances occasionally. In your hobnail boots.

Your hobnail boots?

The boys in their boots.

Oh right. Were you going everywhere in your uniform in those days?

Yes.

So you had no civilian clothes at all?

No.

Even if you'd gone to a dance?

No. We went,

18:30 on the hospital ship we were allowed to have a dingle [dirndl], that's not quite the word, which was just a casual thing, and a tennis frock. I think that's all we took with us.

Well, what would happen then if you'd gone to a dance? I'm sure all the girls would try and make themselves...

You'd go in your uniform.

But you'd all be trying to do something a little bit to make yourself look a bit special. What could you do?

I don't think we did.

Could you wear makeup and jewellery

19:00 **and so forth?**

Oh, we had a bit of makeup. No jewellery, no, no jewellery.

And what were the hairstyles then, what could you do with your hair?

Well, I had long hair because the girls had written to say that they couldn't find anybody to cut it.

No barbers, no hairdressers?

No, no. I think I, I can't remember now, but I had long hair

19:30 most of the time I was in the army, put it up in a bun.

Okay. So from Western Australia did you have leave back to Melbourne at all during that time?

I did at one stage and back again. I don't remember much about it.

And then from Western Australia did you go straight to New Guinea?

We went up to Queensland,

20:00 Fraser's Paddock, if I remember rightly. On the way back, as I said earlier, I rang my parents and they went in by taxi to see me but the train had gone. And we had a little time in Fraser's Paddock. Partly refurnishing part of the hospital, you know, that we needed different things. And being issued with our "dungarees", as I call them, and

20:30 our legging legs.

Were you missing home very much? Were you missing your family?

I don't think I did. I wondered about them. I've still got my mother's last letter, kept it. You know, I think it was a little anchor and I've still got it.

Did she pass away while you were in the service?

Yes. I came home, as I've said, a bit earlier than the unit. After

21:00 the war, but a bit earlier because of her death.

Were you a good letter writer, did you write well in return?

Don't... I was a terrible writer and I'm still a terrible writer. I'm getting worse in my old age.

Bad writer in terms of not writing enough or having...?

No. I have arthritis now, in my hand. And looking back at my old writing, it wasn't good.

But did you write often, though, that's the main thing?

Oh, I think I

21:30 wrote regularly.

And were your sisters...? You had one sister who was a nurse or more than one?

I haven't said anything about the younger one, Ursula, she's another one that joined a religious order. She joined the sisters of the church that run St. Michael's School in - well, I don't think they still do - in

22:00 St Kilda. She joined them. I don't remember this, this was when I was too small. And she, I think she was quite happy, it was more or less teaching. And that order was part of the English community and this was a branch, and she discovered that in England there were two types of sisters,

22:30 one that gave a dowry to the church who did nothing, or something, and the others who didn't give a dowry, they were the workers. And she disapproved and she left them. But because of my father's great interest in St Peter's, Eastern Hill - Canon Hughes was there and he was a very good man - and he immediately, oh, I don't know whether he organised

23:00 that she go, I don't know whether she went prior or what happened, to an order of Sisters of Sacred Advent in Queensland, which is still going. Ran a hospital at one stage and also did a lot of teaching, still teaching up there. St. Margaret's School was the main one. And she went up there and joined that order. And after a while she did her training in their hospital.

23:30 So she trained as a trained nurse later in life.

So therefore you had two sisters in nursing, or three? Two. Were your sisters, because they were so much older than you, were they writing and giving you advice and asking about nursing or telling you what, you know...?

No, I don't think so.

Were they good letter writers, though?

I don't remember. Yes, I suppose they were fair.

Was it like having, were they like aunties to you really, as opposed to sisters, because they were so

24:00 **much older?**

Well, I never thought about them being aunts but I suppose it was that kind of relationship.

Okay. So up in Queensland, did you have much idea there of where you might be going?

Oh well, I think we assumed it was New Guinea. I think we knew it was New Guinea.

Were you up there before or after

24:30 **the Centaur...?**

Oh, before; the Centaur was a lot later. Interesting, you know, the girl who was the next number to me went down on the Centaur.

So you just missed out?

Mmm, I suppose so.

Lucky you. Can you remember where you were when you heard about the Centaur?

Bougainville, wasn't it? When was it?

25:00 Don't know, can't remember. I'm sorry, the memory's getting old.

That's all right. But do you remember hearing the news or the shock of hearing that a hospital ship had been torpedoed?

Oh yes. And actually, the one survivor, Savage, I got to know her quite well here in Melbourne afterwards.

How

25:30 **had that experience affected her?**

I think that she was never a robust person afterwards, put it that way.

Understandable. A shocking experience. Tell us then about going to New Guinea, were you, was it just a quick boat trip up there, were you on a hospital ship or...?

No, a boat trip.

26:00 Some of the units went earlier than we did, we didn't all go together when we went. And we went to the 9th AGH and worked there and then, because the 2/1st was being set up at Boofus Bay... I'm not sure whether the 5th AGH was next door to us, whether they were established first, I think they might have been, and then we were.

26:30 And that's all I....

Were the hospital setups in New Guinea similar to, better than, worse than, those in the Middle East?

Well, once again I say I didn't do much nursing in the Middle East. They were tented wards. We had the dysentery in the wards I think. You know, there were some wards

27:00 that were built quite open as a rule, and the officers had them built. But... What was the question?

How did the hospitals compare, Middle East to those in New Guinea?

Don't think we ever thought of comparing them.

Well, did you think they were well-equipped, the New Guinea hospitals?

Well, we didn't expect a lot. We knew we couldn't have

27:30 it.

What did you have to do without then?

I don't remember. I'm getting terribly tired.

Tape 6

00:32 **Now, from the people that we've spoken to, nicknames were a big part of the morale and camaraderie during World War II. Did you or any of your friends have a nickname?**

Yes.

What was yours?

Donkey, because I was a Bray.

I see.

Donk.

Donk. Bray would be an old Scottish name is it?

I think it's an old English name, although... There's a place on the Thames called Bray

01:00 and there's also a big town, I gather, in Ireland, Bray. But my family were mostly, as I've said, from Wisbeach.

Right. I think there was a Reverend Bray in St Kilda. Did you hear of him or know him?

Yes. No, I don't know... But that name does ring a bell, though. Well, yes. There was another Bray that I went to school with, Lorraine Bray, and she did nursing and she was in the air force.

01:30 I think she's died now.

Now, so Donkey, Donk.

Donk, it ended up Donk. Not by many people, very few, but one of my... I just, only yesterday, gave the - no, the day before - Returned Nurses Club a book called, written by a navy man, he knew me and always called me Donk. He married one of the girls from our unit and we were friends till, well,

02:00 still friends. They live in New South Wales. He always refers to me as Donk.

What about some of the other ladies, did they have nicknames?

I don't remember them having nicknames. This leaflet had a, he sent me, they - I think she was still alive - sent me, when the book was first published, it's a reprint now and he sent me another one, "Dear Donk," you know. And I rang him and said I'd already got a copy but I would give it to the RSL

02:30 or the Nurses' Club or somebody. And he said, "Tear out the page." I don't tear out the page; I put "Donk, referring to Joan Bray," and that his wife was also in the 2/1st AGH. I made a little screed of it.

I wanted to talk a little bit about what I would only describe really as mateship between the women in the nursing corps,

03:00 **for the army, for the war I should say, unlike the fellows who, you know, were experiencing a sort of great sense of drama. I mean, I'm not saying the women had it easier because at times they definitely had it very difficult, but there was probably a lot of opportunity for forming great friendships.**

Yes, I think we did. I think we formed very great friendships. I'm afraid now very few of my unit are alive

03:30 now.

Well, you are fighting fit at an age when most people are not so fighting fit.

Thank you.

How did that friendship sort of present itself, though? I'm asking this specifically because it was a time when people were a little more free than they were able to be in earlier years, a little less conservative than they had been because of the war, specifically. And I mean that in terms of opportunities to try things you would never try before, perhaps alcohol or going out with quite

04:00 **a lot of boys instead of just the one boy and so on.**

And how did, I don't quite…

Well, your friendships, did you share a lot of information and secrets and did you protect each other through things?

Well, I suppose we did. I don't remember being very, I don't remember really. I think you just helped each other when they had problems, and

04:30 because we were in a strange country and you wanted to do things we travelled together, you know. And I think the friendships lasted.

Well, what sort of problems would you need to help each other through?

Well, if they have a death at home, and things like that sort of things. I don't remember helping them with any of their romances and things.

Can you recall ever covering for them, like if one boy

05:00 **wanted to take them out here and another fellow wanted to take them out there, did…?**

No, I don't remember.

I imagine there would have been a bit of doubling up going on. So much opportunity. So many...

Well, I always remember somebody who was a bit keen at the back of a utility trying to have a little smooch and the other one was, one each side of me. Things, you know.

05:30 **So what would you say to fellows who wanted to take you out, you know, you had a boy friend back home or a fiancé, would you say, "Yes, we can go out but as long as you understand that I..."**

Well, no, I used to just say till they, if they got... I didn't say it if there was any seriousness. Now, the man that called about my father, I became friendly with him and saw him after the war even. But there was never any

06:00 relationship, do you know what I mean? It was a good... When I look back, there wasn't even, very little relationship, but we were good friends.

Did you break any hearts?

I wouldn't like to answer that. By my diary, I think I might have.

I think you can be honest among friends here.

Well, I think I broke... As I said, in my diary when somebody's a bit struck,

06:30 I put, "Poor ... won't get anywhere," or something like that, you know.

So would they not have asked by that stage whether they had a chance with you? Like, did you not tell them you were spoken for?

I was wearing an engagement ring, I think.

So it was "buyer beware", they really ought to have known better?

Beg pardon?

They ought to have known better.

Yes.

07:00 I can't remember.

That's all right. You must have had...

I think I was, I never hid the fact that I had a commitment.

You must have had big blue eyes that knocked their socks off.

I didn't catch that.

What about some more serious matters for women, how did - and being a nurse you must have come across

07:30 **this - how did girls manage things like contraception if they were, you know, going out with boys or getting serious with boys? Did they have any lectures about how to look after themselves?**

No, I don't remember any lectures. In those days it wasn't talked about.

No, I realise people pretended it didn't happen but it did happen so I'm just wondering if girls had any sort of secret remedies or special ways of managing things for themselves to...

I don't know. But that brings back a memory to me.

08:00 When we were on Bougainville there was a girl, two, we were in cubicle kind of things in a long hut, and it was about three or four down was a couple of girls that I didn't really ever get to know till after, one of them I got to know very well after the war. By the way, I had a reunion in this house for twenty-five years, once a year, for our unit. I've got photographs and things there

08:30 when there was twenty-odd coming, but it gradually dwindled and stopped about three years ago. This girl was there and she was often sick and I decided after a while she was pregnant, being a midwife, she was pregnant. And

09:00 I think I spoke to a couple of my mates that were near her and I didn't know... I went to see the matron and I told her what I thought. She abused me because I'd think such a thing could happen. And as time went on it still, getting bigger and bigger and bigger. I was positive.

09:30 And she did have a child in Bougainville down our deep toilet. I was one of them that went to the toilet and, with horror, heard a baby crying. She's got up and walked away. Now,

10:00 I never got any apology, I never did anything. Nobody ever said anything to me of what happened afterwards. I was hurt. I must admit, our matron in those days I didn't admire and I gather she's out of favour. I gather she married when she was in Singapore or something, and never let on. I don't know where she was. Well, not our first matron who I had every admiration

10:30 for. But I always think about, she absolutely abused me, to go round thinking that about people.

What happened to the woman who had the little baby?

She was sent home to Australia and the baby was adopted by somebody on the island, a man. He went home too and the adoption was arranged in Australia.

That's extraordinary. When you say a man, do you mean somebody in the services or…?

Mmm. Somebody in the services.

It's hard to imagine that you could be a soldier and be able

11:00 **to get the paperwork through to adopt a child.**

Well, I don't know how it was done or anything about it.

Gosh. You can imagine him turning up at home to his wife or his parents and…

I don't know.

Heavens above. I wonder where that child is now. Well. Well, well, well.

That was the only case that I actually had anything to do with, and actually know that

11:30 somebody was pregnant, you know what I mean.

What about in places like New Guinea and Bougainville, did your midwifery skills come into fore with…?

Well, this was Bougainville.

Yes, but what about the native girls?

With what?

The native women.

I don't know, we never had anything to do with them.

Never set eyes on any of the women in New Guinea?

Oh, I think there might have been some but it was just normal life for them, you know. Well, at least, not normal life but… No,

12:00 it wouldn't have concerned me, being a midwife. A lot of the girls weren't midwives and I don't think the matron that we had was a midwife.

So there was no other time when your midwifery skills were called in for…?

Well, that wasn't call in, even.

No, I guess it wasn't called in but you spotted it. Remarkable. And what about other sort of difficult issues for women? I've often wondered how women coped. You

12:30 **broached the subject before, you know, women's monthly needs. If you're in the services that can be very tricky from time to time as to how to look after yourself. Were there special methods devised to deal with things, were there shortages of sanitary needs and so on?**

Well, they must have written to me from, the girls that went earlier, and said they were difficult, or somebody told me. As I say, I took twelve dozen away with me.

Well, was it enough? I bet you had to loan

13:00 **some to the other girls.**

Well, I don't know. See, we weren't long in the Middle East. But we learnt to pack some in everything. I can't remember buying any in the Middle East.

I hope you'll forgive me for asking this question but it needs to be asked. What did you do on a boat in terms of disposal? Did you have to burn them?

We couldn't. I don't… I think they went down with the toilet paper or something. I

13:30 think broken up in the toilet paper.

Yes, I guess. What about other complaints that women specifically develop amongst the

nurses, did you see cases of women coming down with internal problems or...?

Has what's-his-name gone out because he knew you going to talk about....?

He might have done, he might have figured with was probably the discussion we should have by ourselves.

Where is he? Can I....?

He's probably just making a 'phone call.

Oh, that's all right.

14:00 **Let me just check this is on. Okay. Yes, what about other women's complaints that they had to deal with? I'm thinking of either, say, infections or...?**

Oh, we were just put into the nurses' ward and treated. I can't remember anything very outstanding.

I'm just trying to think of what other women's business would have occurred. I mean, certainly

14:30 **not...**

We were all in good health when we joined, you see. I can't really think of anything.

And what about things you had to take like Atebrin, the malaria, did you take that?

I did and I was one of the few that reacted, very yellow, and I was known as an "Atebrin [anti malarial drug] blonde". I'm sorry, that's a nickname.

The "Atebrin blonde".

15:00 **So you were blonde-headed and yellow of skin?**

I wasn't blonde but I was yellow. And when I came to Melbourne on leave on one occasion, people used to turn around and stare at me.

Did the Atebrin make you feel sick on top of looking odd?

I don't think so.

And did you get malaria?

No, not really. No, I don't think I ever got it. There was one occasion when I felt I was getting it and I took some quinine and was really

15:30 sick. And I've got an allergy to quinine. I had to go off duty because I admitted I'd taken the quinine because I thought I was getting the malaria.

Were you ever worried about getting scrub typhus yourself?

No. Because it was in the scrub and we weren't in the scrub.

So it wasn't...?

No. It was the bite of a mosquito.

16:00 **Those mosquitoes were just about everywhere though, I mean...**

Yes. No, I'm just saying, when I said mosquito, I'm hesitating.

Might be ticks?

It was more of a ticky thing, yes, it was the bite of an insect.

And what about dysentery? You said you had a bit on board the Duntroon, or that wasn't quite dysentery perhaps but....

I had trouble. I had trouble when I got out of the army, I had to have a haemorrhoidectomy done afterwards. And actually, I

16:30 am on a small pension because of it.

What happens for healers when they become sick, I mean, you can't really keep healing, can you? Do you just get your leave like everybody else and do you get healed like everybody else?

I was put in a ward with the... I can't remember. On the ship I just coped. And I did have odd troubles at times and I had troubles when I got out of the army. I'm still the

17:00 person to go twice a day, early in the morning, but I'm all right. And it was only a few years ago that I had atomic, what's the atomic treatment?

Ectopic?

No, you know, what's the word I'm looking for? Atomic treatment. It's fairly new and I've been marvellous since it

17:30 was done. They gave you some infected water that's got, oh, what's the word? Atomic, what do you call that? Oh, what's the - well, where they dispose of it, what do they call it? They gave us that in water, it's a fairly new

18:00 thing, and we had certain instructions and have it. And I turned out positive and they gave me three antibiotics in a short time, within the week. And I've been better ever since.

And this is all related back to your experience during the war?

Well, they put it down to that.

Good Lord. Well, that's a legacy of it's own, isn't it?

Oh, what's the word I'm looking for?

18:30 **Nuclear?**

Nuclear, that's it.

Now, I wanted to also ask about... When you were in the Middle East you said that you didn't have to do much nursing, that you were there visiting hospitals and helping...

Yes, and our own hospital.

Can you tell me a little bit about that other role, that other vital role that nurses performed which was to be...?

Orderly officer and ...

But just of comfort and, you know, of friendship to

19:00 **these poor chaps in... You wrote letters for them?**

I did.

Tell me a little bit about that and how you would approach that without dissolving in tears yourself.

Well, when I was with the Red Cross blokes, I think they more or less said, "She'll help you, would you like something?" I think that's how... I don't know how I was introduced, quite.

Would you wander up to a ward and sit down next to a fellow and say...?

No, I was usually...

19:30 I didn't go on my own, if you know what I mean. One of the staff went with me or something.

Would you sit next to their beds and compose their letters for them?

Yes. Not... on their beds more than likely.

And would they say, "Tell Mum I'm well and tell my sister that I miss her and...?"

I've forgotten. You know, "This is... that I'm writing on his behalf, he's unable to write at the moment and here goes," or something. That's the sort of thing I'd do.

20:00 **Did you have difficulty detaching from some of the soldiers, did you subconsciously...?**

Don't think so. That's where I feel that in some ways being young, having a commitment...

You could kind of just keep yourself at a really decent distance to it all. So it never overwhelmed you, this sense of sort of feeling pity for some of the men?

Yes, it did overwhelm me at times, but you had to get

20:30 over it.

So what were your coping mechanisms?

I don't know, just got over it.

I hear that a lot but I'm sure that, you know, whether it was to go out and have a game of tennis or to go and talk to your girlfriends or to go and kick a can or something...

Well, we didn't have tennis, for one thing. I don't know. I'll tell you something that I did after you, today, that I do which other... I don't know anyone else who's crazy enough to do it. But

21:00 when you left I thought, now I knew... I had a grill, I thought “That won’t take long, I don’t think I should have alcohol when we’re having things.” So I got myself an orange juice and a double pack of cards and played patience. It’s a blinking game that never comes out, I think it comes out once in a blue moon, if that. And

21:30 I find that I can forget. I’ve got to concentrate, you have to concentrate when you put the cards down and then ones you pick up to go through those, you’ve really got to concentrate. And I had a game of cards and then I went out and got my lunch. And I find that now, I don’t know when I started it, I find that I can really forget everything

22:00 by concentrating on something.

I think I can totally relate.

You can? Yes, well, I really, that’s my great, what shall I say? Straightener or...

Mainstay or...

Mainstay, yes, something. And I haven’t been playing that game but I think I’ve always played a game of patience of something that I had to concentrate

22:30 on; it gives me the power to go back to it and work on whatever was worrying me. Not that you were worrying me, but I just thought, “I’m tight,” you know.

No, we ask a lot of very particular questions and, you know, we cut to the chase which is...

How do other people do it?

How do other people cope with us? That’s rather sad at the end of the day. Well, everybody has their coping mechanisms.

23:00 **The ones that have survived, though, I don’t think have turned to things like alcohol to survive, they’ve had other ways of coping. But I have found this process remarkable in hearing how so many people got through the worst things that could happen.**

Yes. I don’t think indulging in alcohol was common. Well, we didn’t, it was a dry island

23:30 in New Guinea. Bougainville wasn’t. I think that’s perhaps when I got to the sherry. The Americans had sherry and they had it in the ice chest, always half-frozen, and it was wonderful in the heat. And I still, in the summer, have a bottle in the fridge.

Of cold sherry? I once tasted port with an ice block in it that I thought would be horrible but it was actually quite

24:00 **good. Well, I want...**

And chardonnay. I went to a dinner one night not long ago and I said to the lass, “I’ll take the wine.” I don’t know why. I took a bottle of (UNCLEAR) and put it in the fridge and for something in the afternoon, I thought, “Oh, I’d better take that out now.” And I took it out, didn’t put it in a cool box, didn’t do anything. So when

24:30 we got to dinner it was, she said, “Oh, it’s warm.” So we put an ice block on it and we both enjoyed it.

There you go. Boofus Bay, that must have been a tricky place to have to work for a while. Did you find that you were coping with the conditions of New Guinea?

Yes. I don’t remember any outstanding troubles.

The wards in the AGH, were they well equipped?

25:00 Well, not compared with modern standards.

No, not compared with today’s standards, but for a...

Well, I think they were well-equipped enough. We had, I don’t remember real shortages that really mattered.

So you didn’t run out of things like, I was going to say “plasma” - on the television show, MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (US)], they’re constantly running out of blood or plasma or things like that. Did you ever

25:30 **experience shortages?**

Well, no, I think - no, I don’t think we had, I think the Red Cross supplied us with...

So can you run me through what an average day at Boofus Bay at the AGH there was like? That was the 5th AGH, I think you said.

No, we were the 1st. But the 5th was next door.

Oh, okay. So were you in a surgical operation or in post-operative medical?

Mostly post-

26:00 operative medical, some surgical.

So what were the kinds of wounds that you were getting from Kokoda, were they similar? Were there a lot of amputations, were there…?

There'd have to be amputations, this terrible scrub typhus and malaria and bowel conditions.

Would you separate them depending upon their injuries? Would you have the amputees in one section?

Oh yes, they were separated.

So all the amputees

26:30 **would wake up…**

There were surgical wards and medical wards and skin wards.

So you said there were surgical and medical, but you would eventually receive, say, amputee patients, would you not?

Oh yes.

How did you talk to them, or what did they say? Were they just beside themselves with fear for their future?

I don't think so.

27:00 I think people accepted what was happened to them, they had to accept it, so they accepted it.

I guess I find it incredulous that you can wake up without a limb and just say, "Oh well, that's life, I'll get on with it." Did you not have to console them from time to time?

Oh, I suppose we did. Are you a bit hot?

I'm fine but I'm happy to turn it down if you like. It's on "cosy".

27:30 Oh, that should be all right.

We can turn it off if you like.

No. Well, unless you want it off. How are you?

John [interviewer] will be fine. Yes, did you ever sit next to patients and console them and talk to them gently and ease them through?

Well, take the example of the boy I mentioned at Heidelberg. I did in that case and I suppose I did in others and didn't think, I don't remember.

What about the skin

28:00 **cases? There were a lot of dermatological problems.**

In Bougainville there was a lot. They'd always said, "I hope you've got a," what was the word? Not "the boot". They all hoped it was bad enough to be sent home to Australia.

How would you treat the skin conditions?

Well, they were treated with lotions and things and soaking and that.

And what about scrub typhus, how did you treat that?

28:30 I've forgotten. I think they had some kind of antibiotic or something. But I found that emotionally hard, to cope with these boys who'd walk in a say, "And why has the MO sent me? I'm all right, I'm leaving." They were upset at coming and were dead in a couple of days, you know.

Before they died would their bodies sort of bloat?

I don't remember.

And

29:00 **did they become aware soon after they walked in and said "I don't know what I'm doing here" that they were actually in a very bad way? Did they know, did they get time to know?**

I would think they did but I don't think I ever discussed it with them and really knew. I think they got very ill very quickly.

Did any of the other nurses find that they couldn't cope after a while?

I've not known any nurse who couldn't

29:30 cope.

So what sort of a sense of humour did you all have? Did you make jokes about various patients to keep buoyant, did you have nicknames for them?

Don't remember.

That's all right. Back at Kokoda, can you perhaps walk me through what a shift, what a normal shift would be like with patients coming in?

Well, in New Guinea we were rostered, I think, for eight hours.

30:00 But if you were on night duty you went off duty late. If you were on morning duty you didn't leave until things were under control. And if you were on the evening duty, well, you made sure that you were on till the night staff had coped, I think.

30:30 We worked a lot longer than our shifts.

So what would be your duties when you come onto a shift?

It depends on what patients you've got and what's happening. I can't say.

There wasn't any order of things, you wouldn't start with dressings or bandages or...?

Well, if there was - there was no definite order, no. If you knew the dressings had to be done, well, you'd set to work, do the dressings, you know. I don't think

31:00 that... Or if you knew it was medication time, you'd go round with medications, you know.

Now, you said that you didn't work in the surgical ward but were you ever present?

Oh, I did short service in the surgical wards at times.

Assisting in operations?

No, I didn't do theatre work. Oh well, nothing to speak of.

What was it like working for the doctors there? Were you rather separate to the doctors or did you all

31:30 **work in together? Were you good friends?**

We all worked together. I don't remember any social life with them, shall I put it that way. Well, I think we had the boys who we knew better, our patients or something. I don't... One doctor I had quite a lot to do with, but it was work. I think they were people who kept to their job and

32:00 I think socially you had the same people, at the same level as you, because you had something in common to talk about or something.

And in your off hours or "down time", I suppose, how would you spend that? Was there a mess tent near the AGH?

Yes. We all had mess tents. I've got some photographs. And

32:30 play cards and do some sewing if you had some with you. And we were often asked out to a trip down to the water for a swim or something, you know, that sort of thing. And trips up to the mountain to have a look up the mountain. And your contacts did arrange

33:00 some social life.

Did you ever get offered what would otherwise be contraband or hard to get things, like chocolate or alcohol or hairbrushes or combs? Were there ever any goodies that came your way that someone had gone out of their way to scrounge for you?

I can't say I remember.

And what about receiving mail from home, was that

33:30 **regular?**

Mmm?

Mail from home.

I won't say regular, but some.

You said you weren't much of a writer yourself but you kept a diary. Did you sent home lots of

letters to the family?

I think I wrote to the family regularly.

And did you tell them what was really going on or did you try and make it a bit softer for them?

Well, we weren't allowed to write too much because they were all censored and they were frequently cut out. You had to be very careful what you wrote.

34:00 **Were you allowed to let your parents know where you were?**

Sometimes.

Because I think everybody knew there was people up in Port Moresby for a long time.

Yes, they knew. I think a lot was known.

And in your time in New Guinea did you ever treat Japanese patients?

Nope, don't think so. There were some that came in, in a special

34:30 ward. I didn't treat any, I don't think. I did after the war in Heidelberg.

We will talk about that, we will definitely. What about, I think you already said that you didn't have very much to do with the locals there in New Guinea. Over in Bougainville, then, was it a similar set-up for you, or did you find yourself doing different sort of work?

I seemed to live on night duty there.

35:00 Do you know, the weeds or the jungle, you'd go to bed and it was cut off, and by the time you got up in the afternoon there were trailers leading to the tents. The jungle just grew and grew, and grew quickly.

Oh, trails of vines and so on. It did seem to grow overnight, shocking. How did they sort out the shifts, then? If you say you seemed to get night shift all the time, how was that arranged?

Don't ask me. The matron.

Could you ever cadge a better shift if you

35:30 **buttered up the matron?**

No. You were ordered to do something, you did it. There's one little story about the rats, I told you, that was where we... Did I tell you about the python and the rat?

You mentioned that you found a python, but that was in New Guinea.

In the toilet, that was in New Guinea, in our end hut. And I was second from one end, and the other end a couple of my friends. One of them was on night duty and the other one

36:00 was in her bed, and she woke up to an awful noise, and it was a python killing a rat on the other bed.

In Bougainville, it was...?

When I say "bed", we had beds there, we weren't in stretchers. You know that we, up to even New Guinea, we slept on stretchers with a canvas base.

No I didn't know, I guess I

36:30 **assumed it was something primitive like that.**

Yes. Interestingly enough, I feel, somebody wrote and said, "Oh, they're cold, bring something." And I brought a pure eiderdown quilt and I folded it double for my mattress, and I think it was very good. And when I came home from the war - they weren't cheap in those days, ever, those; they're worse now, I think - any rate, I

37:00 took it into Ball and Welshes and asked them could they clean it and remake it. They did and, do you know, I've kept it in cupboards and put it on spare beds and things. This year I put it on my bed and it's wonderful. And it is so warm.

Was it hard to keep clothes clean in New Guinea? I mean, did you have to and - you would have had to because you were a nurse, you had to keep everything clean.

37:30 **How did you manage that with the tropical conditions there?**

Well, I think our washing was done. They had a unit that did washing. I can't really remember. I asked one of my associates about the laundry and she wasn't very helpful. Somebody asked me that question recently. I don't really remember, so I think there was a laundry which had the hospital laundry; I think they must have done it and we got it back.

38:00 But that's something very vague in my mind.

What about replacement of uniforms, did you…?

Well, we were well-equipped when we went. We were only, what, twelve months in the places. So there was no replacement.

And that's interesting what you say about the hospital laundry: you probably don't know, but that would have been quite an interesting procedure, keeping everything sterilised and clean.

Well, washed, and then the sterilising was done

38:30 back in the hospital.

Especially given that it rained every day at three or four o'clock.

Tape 7

00:39 **I wanted to ask a bit more about Bougainville. From the people that we've spoken to about it, it was a very strange arrangement. For example, the Americans had been there for quite a while; they left it in not so much a mess but they moved out and left the Australians to sort it out afterwards. And there was a lot of casualties. Were you there receiving all of those casualties that were happening right across**

01:00 **the ridges? I think it was called "Spencer Corner."**

We were getting them but I don't remember the Americans being an actual problem.

Well, you said that they weren't much chop in terms of…

Oh, that was in Western Australia.

Oh, right. I thought you said in Bougainville. For example, if you needed them to build a bench or something, they weren't very good at that.

Yes, I did say that. About skins, you know, we wanted to boys to sit on something or put an arm rest up so that that when they got their hands, they could have their arm.

01:30 They were helpless at doing something they weren't trained to do.

Couldn't think for themselves?

Well, they don't do that. "I'm not a carpenter," you know, that sort of thing. I found them very, they had no initiative to do anything that they weren't trained for.

What about relations between the Americans and the Australian nurses? Were they sort of

02:00 **good fun to knock around with from time to time?**

Well, we didn't have that many and I don't know of any contacts [with] them.

And okay. Sorry, my original questions were about receiving patients, the injured, in Torokina. That's where the AGH was based, I think. Were you there when they were operating - say, high explosives dropped from

02:30 **planes above and then the action would start and the casualties would come in?**

Well, they'd go to CCSs, casualty clearing stations, first and be attended to there, then on to us. We were bases. There were field ambulances and casualty clearing stations before they got to us.

Well, in what shape would they be in when they got to you, then?

Well, fairly good shape, shall I say.

03:00 They were, needed more acute surgery or something, but they weren't too bad when we got them.

So what was the bulk of the work you were doing in Bougainville, then? Was it again dressing wounds, giving out medicine?

Yes, that sort of thing. And the skin, soaking them and all that.

Did you ever have the opportunity to recommend that some boys should be sent home?

No, that was left entirely to the medical people.

03:30 **Okay. You were there at the end of the war, were you not, when they declared victory over Japan. And can you recall where you were when there was victory in Europe?**

Yes. I remember the night it happened. I was off duty and we went to the mess and got some grog and

took it down to the sergeants' mess, and we all had a drink and didn't get to bed till late. I don't know exactly what

04:00 we did, I can't remember, but I remember going down to the sergeants' mess rather than the officers' mess for some reason, don't ask me why, but we went down there to celebrate. Bit upset because some of them had left to go to an area the day before and we wondered what would happen to them now, you know, when they'd ever get back and...

Did they come back?

I don't remember what happened.

04:30 There was a lot of, what shall I say, "What's going to happen to them?"

Was there instant change to the situation for you?

I can't remember.

So how did you arrange for your return into Australia?

I didn't arrange it. My mother died at the end of September and my brother-in-law went to the Defence people to ask if I could return because

05:00 of my elderly father, and I came home.

Was it hard saying goodbye to the other women?

I don't remember it being hard because I thought, "I'll see you again soon," or something.

And how did they get you back to Australia?

By ship.

As big as the Duntroon or...?

No. I'll have to look it up. I came home earlier. And I mentioned it

05:30 to them on the 'phone.

That's okay. Well, the point of my question is was it great relief getting back to Australia, or did you feel that you were giving up possibly one of the better experiences of your life?

I don't remember. I mean, I had something definitely to come home for. The physio[therapist] that I know who's moved from Sydney down here, she came home on the same ship,

06:00 I discovered the other day. She must have... I don't know why she came early.

Getting back into Australia, it was probably Townsville or Brisbane when you first got back. Did you notice much change?

Oh, there was strikes on and all sorts of things.

That's business, by the sounds of it. They were wharfie strikes or...?

I've forgotten what kind of strikes, but we arrived in Sydney and things were awful.

06:30 **I guess people, perhaps, thought that the end of the war meant everybody would be happy, but I guess it just sort of made things very difficult for a lot of folk as well.**

Yes. I don't know why.

Did you have some plans for your future in mind?

No, none at all. We'd been living in where there were no plans, you were ordered, and when you came home - well, I don't remember having any plans for some time.

07:00 **How was your dad when you got back, was he in a bad way?**

I wouldn't say a bad way but... I can't remember where it was but we went to a nursing home at one stage or special accommodation, this was some time after he was home, because he was with my sister and brother-in-law and that didn't work,

07:30 and he went to this place. And he was a law unto himself. And he was quite happy there, there were some women and men, seemed to be quite happy. And then one day, apparently, he went in to keep the fire going - he was a man that would do things for people - and one woman there wasn't going to move her

08:00 bloody chair for him to put the fire or something. There was a bit of an argument, and they asked me could we find anything else, another place for him. And I did find another place for him, I can remember that, and he actually was at Cheltenham Men's Home. That was a bit grim.

08:30 **Did you have any concerns that you'd been away all of that time and your mother passed away...?**

I don't think I did. She was seventy-nine when she died. She dropped dead at the kitchen sink and I think that's a wonderful way to go and I don't mind joining the club. Except they mightn't find me for a few days.

09:00 My father was home when it happened.

Was it great relief to be back in Melbourne, then?

I can't remember.

What do you recall about the end of the war and coming home?

I suppose there was a relief. But there was an awful uncertainty of what you were going to do.

Widespread, I imagine. And what about

09:30 **this fiancé you've broken off the engagement with, did you stay good friends?**

Yes, we stayed good friends until he died, really. We weren't friendly. He actually married a woman who he'd known before he knew me, and we had contact occasionally but mainly on Anzac Days and things like that. And we always had quite a good relationship. He had two children

10:00 I think, yes.

You didn't get married until your late forties, but was that on your mind when you got back, that you might meet a fellow and settle down?

No, it wasn't on my mind at all.

None interested?

I don't think I thought about it.

Women were very keen, I imagine, to get on with it and get married and have children and so on. Did you...?

No, I didn't have that feeling.

Was it because you were a nurse, or was that just the way you were?

I think it might have been partly nursing.

I'm wondering if you've got any opinions about

10:30 **what strikes me as a very early form of what later became known as feminism, the idea that women were independent and could work for themselves and could manage their lives. Do you have any views on that?**

I think the war had made us independent. And we'd seen a lot of trauma and the answer was to get on with life.

11:00 **This business of getting on with it, just putting it behind you and moving ahead, what do you do with that? Do you just simply not feel for the situation? Do you get up and have a cup of tea when you'd rather lie down and have a cry?**

Well, I don't, I'm not a person to lie down and have a cry, I lie down to have a rest. No, I just felt that, well,

11:30 I was home. When I was discharged I had to get on with my life. I don't think it really worried me, I thought much about it.

Before you were discharged did they send you to Heidelberg, or did you go after the war?

Oh yes, I went, when I came back I went to Heidelberg. Well, I had a bit of leave with my father and that then I went to Heidelberg.

What state was Heidelberg in? It's a big hospital, a big repat [repatriation] hospital; was it overflowing with patients?

12:00 I wouldn't know whether it was overflowing. The duckboards were built. I was in, I don't know whether I was in charge or second-in-charge of the POW ward at one stage - you asked about... - and we had Japanese and Italians, mainly.

Right. Where had they been housed during the war?

Oh, I don't know. I wasn't interested in where they'd been housed, I was interested in what was going to happen to them.

What state were they in generally?

12:30 **What were they ill with?**

I don't remember. The Italians were very nice blokes. Some of them were officers, I think. I always remember a little Japanese boy who didn't speak any English and he had, don't ask me what was wrong but he had to have a lot of treatment. And I remember that two drunk Australians came in and attacked him one day

13:00 and the Italians helped me get them off. And he was always very grateful to me because I, apparently, had protected him. I don't remember exactly what I did. And I was very interested, he was duly sent home to Japan on a certain ship, and that ship hit a mine that was one of theirs and they were all lost. I always thought after all that he never got home. I didn't really, can't remember his name

13:30 or anything else. I can see him, he was on the balcony.

So when you said he was a boy, you meant he was a boy of about eighteen or nineteen?

Oh, I don't know his age.

But I mean he wasn't like a little boy; he was…

Oh no, he was a soldier.

Yes, a soldier. And the Australians that came in, were they other patients, the ones that attacked him?

No, they weren't patients.

So they were soldiers, they were ex-soldiers or…

Something. They may have been orderlies around the hospital but they

14:00 weren't patients.

And I'm curious about this: was he just lying in bed when these men came in and attacked him?

Yes.

And he had no idea they were going to do this?

There was some kind of protection for people getting in, but they'd broken it somehow.

There was some security. And the Italian officers, was it just like very quick, over and done with very quickly? They didn't manage to do any damage to the Japanese?

No, there was no real damage.

So how was that for you,

14:30 **having come back from a war against the Italians and the Germans and the Japanese, to be caring for them? Was there a crisis of conscience for you?**

No.

They were patients.

They were patients.

And did you have any personal views about the Japanese at that point, or the Germans?

I don't think I did have any personal views about it. I have had a lot of personal views about Japan since. I have had three trips to Japan and

15:00 they've all been totally different. They were, the first one was 1960. I went with a group of doctors, mainly, and another nurse for the Manila Congress, first Asian Pacific Congress that was held in Manila. But on our way we went to Japan and

15:30 stayed, travelled around Japan, and I was fascinated with it. We actually went to Thailand first and then on to Japan. The Japanese were terribly small and half the buildings I had to duck in my head to get in the buildings, they were so, the doorways were so small.

Well, I have to say they must have been very

16:00 **small.**

Yes. We had a guide who was Japanese who was quite big and he'd been in a foreign country, I think it was England, when the war was declared and went straight home or something. And he was tall and big. But I was mixing with older people. See, we were going around the hospitals, fascinated with the hospitals. They had three surgeons working in the same

16:30 theatre, not individuals, and things like that. And that was all so different to what I'd ever had seen. And the people were all very small and they were an older age group. The next time I went to Japan I had married, I married... I was McKibben then for the first marriage. I married in 1963, I left the (UNCLEAR) in

17:00 '64. And it was not long after that that we went to Japan because my stepson was head of Reuters for the Olympic Games, late '56. No, no, sorry, '60-something, that's what I just remembered. And I went and met

17:30 newspaper people and sports people and they were all big and tall, such a contrast. And the family lived in quite a nice little house which had servants and things, and then that was interesting. And the next trip to Japan I was a bride again, [he] was a well-known journalist, just quietly, and he was there for the Foreign Affairs Department, and I

18:00 mixed it with all the embassies. That was very interesting.

I'm just trying to remember what started this line of conversation. It was about your views on the Japanese and you said...

I felt the Japanese, yes, that was right, I felt the Japanese - and I've had them, interviewing them, in this room since through Brian, he'd send them to me - I felt they were more or less

18:30 slaves to the controls. And the Japanese hierarchy were in that building and ordered them this. They didn't seem to have much initiative of their own to rebel or whatever it was. I always... I went to the rooms that the war planning rooms were, didn't actually go in, I went outside and saw them. It was just in an

19:00 ordinary building. But this is what I felt, the Japanese heads told them what to do and they did it. I don't think they're quite like that now.

So when you were in New Guinea or Bougainville and you're busy patching up or healing, helping men who have been out there facing the Japanese as the enemy, you didn't have a personal issue with the fact that these Japanese were firing

19:30 **on these Australians, it was just all part of the machinery?**

No, part of the war.

And meeting these Italians, these Italians officers, hopefully they were very fun and flamboyant and full of verve and vigour.

Oh yes, they were.

Did you experience outside of your nursing world anybody who had a problem with you treating what they were still considering the enemy? Did anyone give you grief about that?

I don't think so.

And you said there was a bit of security around the hospital because

20:00 **they were POWs, or POWs being repatriated.**

Well, this is Heidelberg. In that ward there was supposed to be a guard so that people didn't get into the POWs.

Well, I wonder if the guard was paid off.

Well, I don't know.

What else went on in Heidelberg? What were the returned servicemen there suffering or coping with?

Well, I think I can lay my hands on easily about this boy that I told you about in the...

Well, that's a remarkable story.

Mmm. I've

20:30 got the papers over there from that. And what else can I tell you about Heidelberg? We were just trying to get them better and back into civilian life.

Was it mainly men suffering from malaria and the effects of other tropical diseases or...?

And mental disturbances and things.

Did they have, I guess you could call it, a shell shock ward?

No, not that I know, shell shock, they didn't call it that.

What did they call it?

I don’t know, but there

21:00 were wards that were for mentally disturbed.

Did you ever treat any?

I don’t remember nursing them.

That would be quite traumatic, I think, for nurses dealing with…

I think we ended up having a few of them. Had some very odd people in wards at times.

What would they do or say?

I don’t know, can’t remember.

I’m grilling you, aren’t I Joan? I want to know.

Well, I’m sorry, my memory doesn’t tell me.

21:30 But I remember having some. You wondered, “What about them…?” You did what was necessary.

How did you spend your time outside of the nursing ward, post-war? I believe there was a lot of food shortages still, and certainly building shortages. Did you finally settle back into civilian life reasonably well?

22:00 There were, home, I didn’t stay with my sister, there were problems there and all sorts of things happening. I went and took a unit so that I could go and work in the city for the RSL et cetera. There were shortages, yes, I think there were shortages

22:30 but it was a long time ago. There’s been shortages at odd times since.

Now, I haven't heard you talk much about dancing and any of those sorts of activities, but I’m interested in how you enjoyed yourself. Did you go dancing, did you go to the movies?

Oh, I suppose I went to the movies, we used to go to plays and things. Have trouble hearing now so I don’t go to that many. Go to dances and things, I guess.

23:00 **And most of the girls you’d been overseas with, nursing together, did they stay in nursing or did a lot of them come home and get married? Did you find yourself…?**

A lot of them came home and got married. Some of them nursed for a while, quite a number nursed for a while.

Was that difficult for you, saying goodbye to so many of them or seeing them head off down the aisle?

Only the fact that I had not been with the unit at the very end. I had adjusted to being away

23:30 from them.

And what did you think the army, or being in the army as a nurse, gave you as an individual? What sort of skills or strengths?

Well, I think it gives your character strength. I hope it’s been a good character. And I think, perhaps, you matured a bit early. I

24:00 feel it was an experience and any experience in life does have some influence on you.

And did you sort of see Australia becoming a different place after the war than it had been before? I know a fair amount of time has passed, but it was quite a watershed.

Well, as I say, we arrived back and there were strikes and all sorts of things. I can’t really answer that.

What about the sights

24:30 **of soldiers in the streets? After the First World War, for example, there was a lot of grief inasmuch as they weren’t really looked after well enough after serving their country. The Second World War was a little bit different. But for the five or six years that the war went on there were soldiers everywhere in uniform, male and female. Was that still the case for quite a while after the war, were there still a lot of people wandering around in uniform?**

Can’t answer that either. There were people but

25:00 I haven’t any idea of the numbers or how long it lasted. I had to get on with my life and that was my life, my life was away from it.

And what about the first Anzac Day afterwards, were you invited to attend and march or was it…?

I wouldn't know, don't remember what happened. But I did, I used to march on Anzac Day.

When did you start marching on Anzac Day?

I don't remember the first one.

Was it long after the war or was it many, many years after?

Oh no, it was fairly soon after

25:30 the war.

So nurses were encouraged to be part of the Anzac Day march quite soon afterwards?

Yes, yes. Some photographs over there.

I think we should have a look at those in a minute. Were they allowed to join any of the associations or be part of the RSL?

I joined the RSL. I did have trouble that I found out later. I had been over fifty years in the RSL when it came to it. I'd been there as secretary, I told

26:00 you, the Returned Nurses' Club. And I, they had no record of my, there was no record in the Returned Nurses' Club of my membership. And that was a lot of trouble. And then I found out that the Returned Nurses' Club were not a sub-branch during the war and just after. And because I was working at Anzac House I joined the main register and I was registered on the

26:30 main register. And I received a certificate when I'd been fifty years with them.

On a slightly different subject, you said that you saw, when you started, was it the first, some of the first sulphur medicine come in? There was probably, what is it - can't read my own writing - sulphur drugs, Pontical or Pontie... Never mind.

This is before the

27:00 war? Pontisil.

Pontisil, that's it. During the war there were a number of introductions of medicine. Did you get to use early forms of penicillin and so on, were you sort of inducted into the new usages?

Not sure. I think we did have them. Actually, my father

27:30 here in Melbourne was one of the first to have penicillin. His grandson was a medical officer at Fairfield for a time and he organised it.

Did you see many new techniques introduced in that time?

I would say yes but I don't remember, don't ask me what they were.

Well, the things that they taught you in your training, were you still using those at the

28:00 **end of the war or were you using new, innovative techniques?**

Oh, I don't remember.

Just a second. Just trying to think of some of the other effects in Melbourne that were happening. There wasn't a new government but there was a change of government leader, I don't know if you were politically aware or astute at the time.

I don't think,

28:30 I think I'm rather conservative in my political views. When I, one of the reasons I did the health inspector's course which I did was I was going to Camp Pell - have you heard about Camp Pell? Oh well, the zoo's there, and that area there, there was temporary housing and some of the conditions were appalling, and that's what... I'd go in there from

29:00 the infant welfare side of it. That's when I decided to do a health inspector's course. And also in Carlton, the old houses there, a lot of them didn't have bathrooms and the blinking landladies would lock the toilet at night and things like that. And I was always referring back to the health inspectors. And that was one of the reasons I did my course as a health inspector as well.

What about the Florence Nightingale,

29:30 **not certificate...?**

That was a scholarship in 1954.

What was the Florence Nightingale Scholarship, where did it send you to learn?

Well, to Melbourne, here. It was in St Kilda Road, the College of Nursing, then. And it did, it paid my

fees but nothing else, not anything else. And I was, no refund or anything from the

30:00 babies' home where I'd been and all that. And I remember it was a very tight year. I had a car and I remember it cost me a lot that course, but there you are.

What were you doing specifically there?

Hospital administration.

Did that pay off in the long run?

Yes. Oh, yes, it paid off. I just realised that I was, I'd worked out that I

30:30 had twenty-two more years of nursing, I think '60, I must have been what, forty-eight. Any rate, I remember thinking, "Twenty, I cannot do this job, I've got to have something with more challenge," and that's when I did the course.

Did you enjoy your nursing during the war more than you did in civilian life?

It was totally different. Contacts, being

31:00 away from home and that, I can't compare them.

And given that you weren't in any real danger yourself. Or were you, was there any time you were in real danger, quite apart…?

Was I what?

Were you ever in actual danger?

Well, we were in danger because there were air raids on Gaza at times, trains were blown up. There were air raids in the islands at times.

31:30 I won't say acute danger but there were a, what shall I say, you had to be very aware at times.

Well, there's always the likelihood things could go wrong, yes, and that's definitely the case, but unlike, I guess, a front line soldier who could go at any tick of the clock. What was the point of my question? I was just asking whether you felt any greater satisfaction serving during the war as a nurse than you might have back in civilian life?

I think

32:00 I did the right thing. I feel that it developed me in many ways.

How much time left? Could we just turn off for a moment? When you were

32:30 **at Heidelberg…**

I've got to turn that off, can I?

Yeah, yeah, that's fine, I don't want to bake you. When you were at Heidelberg and men were in the hospital having been away for a number of years, would they be worried about going home?

That's something that doesn't really, I [don't] remember much about.

33:00 There were some that had problems where marriages had broken up and things like that. But I can't remember about them being actually worried with the fact that they were home and had those worries.

I'm just thinking about fellows who might be amputees who felt, "What am I going to do, what will my wife say?"

Well, a lot is due to the personality of whether they cope or not.

33:30 **Did you have, I know you had Italian and Japanese POWs.**

I didn't have them for long.

But my question was going to be did you have Australian POWs there who had come back and were still quite ill?

Don't know, can't remember.

Okay. All right.

INTERVIEW ENDS