Australians at War Film Archive

Norah Baddeley (Betty) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 16th September 2003

http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/611

Tape 1

00:41 **Good morning Betty.**

Good morning.

I'd like to start today by asking if you could tell us a bit about where you were born?

I was born in this house at 85 Booker Bay Road. And in those days there were, I was one of ten children.

01:00 I'm number eight down the line. I've got, I later married of course and had a family of six children. And they are all doing very well in life which pleases me a lot. But as kids here we used to run round bare footed, go to school through the burrawangs and the bracken and all of that and half the time we didn't have a pair of shoes, it was Depression. And they used to wrap our lunch up, tomato sandwiches,

01:30 ripe tomatoes with, I can always remember them, the newspaper used to stick to the, to your sandwich. But I went to Ettalong School from 1932 to '39. And we always had school picnics and all sorts of things. And everybody knew one another which was really lovely. And then, and we had sports days and things like that. But from there, I'd won a good pass to Fort Street High in

02:00 Sydney. And as a result of that I used to travel by train every day, the old steam train, to Hornsby, change trains to Wynyard and walk up to Bradfield Highway. Because those days Fort Street was on the Bradfield highway, near the, next door to the Observatory. We used to watch the ball go up and down at one o'clock, the Observatory. But after three years I was in, I did the Intermediate and I got a good pass.

02:30 But prior to that I was Dux of Ettalong School and Captain as well, and when I was in sixth class, I forgot to tell you that. And, I still got the cup. But I had a lot of cousins living up here and there was seven in one family and eight in another so we were never short of relations I tell you. But after Fort Street I, believe it or not I had the measles while I was doing the exam.

03:00 And I got away with it. But I passed. Any rate leaving school I applied for numerous jobs, clerical ones like with the council and things like that. And I didn't seem to be going to get it. I worked in the local post office for a bit down the road and at the snack bar over at the picture show. And things like that. And worked for Marjine's Ice-cream people. Any rate I saw

03:30 this ad in the paper wanting Land Army girls and I thought about it. And I always loved the garden, Dad used to get me doing lots of things in the yard. And we owned that land next door where the house is, it's me daughters now. It used to be all under garden. But we used to enjoy Dad's car, he had an old Whippet. And a heap of us used to be in it but we owned

04:00 the land behind us too. And Dad had a pit dug, you know, for the car to oil and grease the car. My brothers used to nick it of a night and he never new, and they got away with it. But when I was young there was really only my young sister Lily, who's now seventy-one, at home and I had two of my nieces, my sister died young and Mum reared the two girls. And they're fantastic kids,

04:30 they're not kids any more, they're over sixty. But they had a good life with Mum. Any rate I went down to Martin Place with Mum's permission to find out all about the Land Army, what was, what they needed etcetera etcetera And I came home with the papers and said I'm gonna join. Well Mum wasn't over thrilled at first. She said to me, you know your father and I had put a lot of money

05:00 in for you to go to Fort Street and we need you to see, do something better than what you're going in the Land Army. But any rate I defied the odds and I filled in the papers and within a week or two I was gone. And we, our, Mum came down the station to see us off and she was crying her heart out, she didn't want me to go. And I had a brother over

05:30 seas, Paddy. Pad was in Tobruk and Syria and he came out on the deck of a destroyer with the wounded from Tobruk. And that used to worry everybody. Altogether I still got some of his letters written in Syria

and the snow and all that sort of thing. But he came back to home. One lot, one ship went up the top to drop them off, and the other ship came

06:00 via Sydney and then they sent the fellas up to the Atherton Tablelands, to jungle training. Me brother was driving a bulldozer for an aerodrome up near Finschhafen and he blew the front off it. And he hit a land mine. And they bought him home, he didn't know his own name when he got home, he was in absolute shock. But he was only twenty, twenty-one. Had his twenty-first birthday in Tobruk. But we used to worry,

06:30 gettin' mail all the time. But I used to be a mail freak, and I wanted mail all the time too. But I still got a couple of letters I wrote to Mum, she saved them for me. And when I read the writing I think it's like a child's writing. And you know, over the years you improve. But the, when we left Central, there must have been two hundred and fifty to three hundred girls, it was a special train.

07:00 And we were going to Young, we didn't know what for but obviously it was the cherries. And, well we, when we got to Young everyone, it was hilarious on the train, everybody's making friends with everybody. And hoping you'll be together when you get to the camp. But any rate we got to Young and most amazing thing happened. There was horses and carts and sulkies and old cars and trucks there to pick all the girls up.

07:30 And I went, we were, went to, the main number of us went to the showground at Young and they even mucked out the stables and we had two girls in each one of the stables. They were, smelled a bit too. And I was in a pavilion, there were four rows abreast. Two one side and two were the other side. And there was a hundred and something girls in that pavilion.

08:00 And we had to walk a long way for, to go to the toilet, for a shower, and the mess room. And you washed your own plates, knife and fork etcetera and took it back with you to your, where you were sleeping. But before you could go to bed we had to fill our palliasses with straw and they were prickly too, believe me. And

08:30 by the time you left there, it was beginning to settle in and the, you lost the prickles. But we did quite a few things when we were there. Like I made friends with Jeanie Maliphant and Irene Elbourne and they continued on with me later to Batlow. But Jean was a great swimmer. And we went in to, walked in of course, from the showground to the baths, and we were standing

09:00 there and we'd been for a swim and we saw this old lady swim sixteen lengths of the pool. She looked like she had one tooth in her bottom jaw, every time she turned her head. Any rate this girl went, Jean said to me, "I'll bet that's Fanny Durack." She said, "No old woman could swim as good as that, and that many lengths of the pool." And we counted sixteen. And when she got out of the pool it was quite an honour, it was Fanny Durack.

09:30 Fanny Durack in 1912 won the first Gold Medal for Australia. And her medal used to be in the Library at Canberra but I think it's now in the, what do they call it where they keep all the medals, the school, I can't remember that. But that was really great and she wanted to put Jean through for instructions for swimming. And but what happened to us was we came home from work one day

10:00 and there was a sign up, twenty-two girls going to Leeton and twenty-two going to Griffith, and the rest going home. But some of the girls were billeted, in different places, you know on farms, there was Tunics. I was, I worked for a man named Caleb Sackett, he was an Englishman. And he used to pick me up in an old A model Ford. We used to have to walk across the culverts to get to his car because he was saving

10:30 petrol. Any rate we didn't do cherries first, what we did first was we picked peas. And you had to pick three a half corn sacks a day to make your money at the price there was. Our wages in the Land Army were poor, three pound five a week, and four and six tax taken out of that, and twenty-five bob for board.

11:00 So you didn't have much to go for fares or anything like that. Any rate we, getting back to what we did, we stooked hay. The peas we had, the, pea pickers back they used to call it. And you'd sit on the ground and drag yourself along, you'd bend over. By the end of the day you had no knees in your trousers. But we stooked hay and that was all prickly and hot, it was about a hundred in

11:30 the shade. And we caught a rabbit and tied it up and stuck it under the, a stook of hay. And that afternoon all the stooks of hay looked the same so I don't know what happened to the rabbit. But we, Sackett was extra good. Any rate we started on the cherries, early lines of the first cherries to ripen. Big dark one, very nice. And we used to pick them and put them and they used to go into wicker

12:00 baskets, and then someone would come along and take them away to the packing shed. But I ate more cherries than enough, Nowadays I wouldn't care if I never saw one, you get that way. But we were, Jean and I had our, we used to have to cut our lunch and take our lunch, great big, there was no sliced bread those days, great big hunks of bread. And when we were up at the packing shed,

12:30 he put us to harvest some gooseberries. They're the prickliest bushes you've ever had, you have gloves on right up to the armpits, and we did that. But back to the cherries with Jean and that, we laid down at lunch time and Mr Sackett come along and found us asleep at three o'clock, but we got over it. And

then I quite enjoyed being there on Sackett's property. And lot

13:00 of the girls used to go to work in all sorts of ways, push bikes, all supplied by the growers. And Reg Cunick had a truck and Cunick's is one of the biggest orchards at Young, I think it still exists today, a family thing. And I also worked for Jas Prisser, was another growers place. But I enjoyed being at Young, I went to the pictures once, we couldn't afford anything else.

13:30 But any rate from there we got home from work one day and there was a sign up, these girls be prepared to go on the train tonight, going to Leeton and to Griffith. We'd relieve the girls that'd been there all the time and they were going home for Christmas, it was just about Christmas then. So any rate from Christmas I,

14:00 we went on to Leeton, we had to change trains at Harden, I can recall that, and then go on to Leeton. We were met by all sorts of people again. But the petrol shortage was pretty bad, you had coupons. And any rate once again I was in the showground again. And I was across the road from oh, there was big huge gates, I can remember that to go in there. But once again we were across the

14:30 way in our tin huts, it was a hundred in the shade and we were in these tin pavilions. And we had our meal room was underneath the grandstand. But those days we used to get a ration of butter, half a pound every ten days. And that had to cut, that had to cover your lunches and everything. And you had to be pretty careful, you'd put it in the fridge and label it but they'd nick it all the time,

15:00 couldn't help themselves. When you get home you, to have a shower, your whole body was covered in red dust, absolutely. You'd have a shower and by the time you walked from there to your room, oh, well your hair'd be dry, it was so hot, it was a hundred every day. Peggy Feast, I recall I've written it in one of my books, Peggy Feast, now Peggy Williams

15:30 used to drive Marchant's truck, with a whole heap of girls on the back of it. And on, recreation there was, well there was always a shortage of money. Recreation there, we went to, sometimes on Sunday they'd have a four wheeled jinker, rubber tyred of course and a big, couple of big draft horses. And we used to go out to Yanco to the river, to the Murrumbidgee.

And what's a Jinker?

A Jinker is a

16:00 four wheeled like the Tooheys Brewery wagon in Sydney, you know in the shows, with the big draft horses. That's a Jinker. Well that's, to my knowledge, it's, we call it a Jinker and we did, there's a two wheeled one too, I'll tell you about that in a minute. But we'd go out to the Murrumbidgee and I used to swim, swim a lot. And we'd swim in the 'Bidgee [Murrumbidgee River] and have a really good time. And then of course in Leeton

16:30 we didn't know what we were heading for, you believe me. And it was pretty hot but we were allocated to different growers you know, a few day or maybe a week, for one. And my first job at, in Leeton was picking beans, for a family called Carbone. That was, they were, I must tell you that nearly all the growers we worked for were Italians,

17:00 and our boys were over there shooting Italians. And they were almost all, and some of them didn't speak much English, very little, the kids, some of the kids never spoke English at all. But I worked for Carbone, they were very nice people, very clean Italians. Some of them used to invite you in, you know, to eat your lunch inside, some of them wouldn't give a hang where you were. But after Carbone I went to

17:30 a grower named Piccolo, and that was hard work. It was something I didn't like, we were, had to, we were picking spinach. And you have you, they showed you how to break it off you know near the bottom so it wouldn't be rough. And you drag a banana case along behind you, picking it and filling it up. And don't forget it was a hundred in the shade, and they're not in the heat, the owners and the growers. But that, picking spinach, that was

18:00 a hell of a job and it really made your hands very sore, by the end of the day. But after Piccolo, I went to Ianelli, another Italian. And the, they used to take us out to their place on an ordinary horse and dray. And the young fella that used to drive us in, I can't think of his name but

18:30 he looked like an organ grinder, like you see in the paper with the high hair and all that. And he'd come in and from the minute he got there he used to sing song, sing, picka da spinachey, winna da war, the government told me. And we'd get it all the way to work down past the hospital. And he never stopped. And everybody knew we were coming. And we used to go past another camp there, Wade cottage, had a lot of Land Army girls in it. But Piccolo,

19:00 not Piccolo, Ianelli, there was, the father, they had a lot of bambinos, lotta kids, little ones and I don't think they went one a year something like that. And any rate when we were there, he invited us in to lunch. And we went in and you couldn't believe it, he's pulling off big bits of bread you know, for the kids to eat, just with his hands. And they were eating capsicums and onions and tomatoes

19:30 all from the farm. Any rate, the next thing we knew there was a great lot of WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s in there, they sitting in the dine, they're in the dining room, or kitchen, picking up all the

crumbs. So they probably never swept out. But one day there was a chicken hawk on his front fence, and the old bloke stood there with a shot gun and missed. He got a couple of feathers that's all. But they, he used to drink a lot of vino,

20:00 a lot of wine. They made their own of course. And the old bloke used to, he was, another picture, he had a handle bar moustache. And he drank all day, all afternoon, we were pulling carrots. And he used to come along and screw the tops off em. And acres and acres as far as the eye could see, was these flaming carrots and you thought you never gonna get rid of em. Any rate the old fella used to keep his wine

20:30 in the big canal which went through the back of his place. He'd go down and he'd have a swig, come back and work a bit more. But we worked hard, they worked hard, Italians are great people for the land. And I know because my son married an Italian. She died tragically when she was twenty-eight with a tumour on the brain. But they were lovely people.

21:00 After Ianelli, they, by the way they used to irrigate and your boots'd be full of mud. They'd irrigate before they pulled the carrots because it made em easier to get out, otherwise it was like cement, you had no hope. Another place, I can't recall the name, we hoed around pumpkins. They'd just started and they were about two feet across. And we had to hoe all the weeds out. Hundred in the shade

21:30 I'm telling you. So any rate we did all that and then I was given a job at, for an Englishman called Smith, a good name that isn't it. And he had us hoeing round his orange trees. And we'd never see him after lunch. And the lazy old devil, him and his wife'd go and lay down in the cool, fans and all and we're out in

22:00 the hundred degrees of heat. But oh we didn't have much to do for pleasure, you know at, in Leeton. I did a few silly things and a few funny things. But and I went to Darlington Point, maybe yous know where that is, out of Leeton. In those days there was a lot of darkies there. I don't think I saw a full blooded Abo but I sure I saw plenty, you know,

22:30 related ones. And some, I had a drink of beer, the first one in me life. And I ended up having three and I ended up with the biggest headache you ever had in your life, nearly killed me. And coming back on the track from Darlington Point, I'll never forget it. As is we were running parallel to one of the big canals. And next thing you know the driver went round a telegraph pole and back on the road again. I never ever touched liquor again for many, many years.

23:00 It could have been you know, just drowned, dead. But in later years, I went back to Leeton. I went on loan from the packing house at, from Batlow, there was four of us sent there to do a crop after the war. It was when refrigeration came back in. And I worked, I lived in the dormitories, which were part of, they were owned by the cannery at Leeton. And

23:30 oh, Phil Newton was the manager at the packing house there, but we lived in the dormitories. And they were the most primitive things I've ever seen. They were divided off into a couple each room, you know. But it was bare boards and all sorts of things. And there was a glut of watermelons and I never seen anything like it in me life, they...

So after Leeton in the Land Army you went to Batlow?

24:00 Oh yeah, I sure did, best days of me life. Any rate in Leight, we did, there was another fella there, Porky Adams, another grower, and the girls went there to his place. And you'd have to believe it, he let the pigs out in the orchard, to pick up the apri, fallen fruit, apricots and that.

And why do you say that Batlow, the time at Batlow was the best years of your life?

Well I was only

24:30 sixteen when I went in and I was, I thought babies come from under cabbage patches. I'd, believe it or not, and there was, I wasn't the only one, in those days there was never any sex education before you left home I tell you. And any rate I went home from, when I went back home from Leeton, February March, whatever it was. And plenty of stories to tell Mum and Dad you know. I

25:00 went up to Batlow. And at Batlow I learned to know a lot of the locals and they made us more than welcome. But I first went to, we were met by a Mrs Lester at the station. She was a huge woman, she was in charge of the whole of the Batlow areas. And there were a lot of camps. I don't know whether you knew that, there was so many.

25:30 Any rate, I went out to one which was way out of town, it was run by, Michael Hairing's property; it was called Francisco. I can't remember whether there was, I know there was two huts, but I think there were three and we had an outdoor shower and it was very primitive, very. And we never ever had anywhere, in all of those camps we never had anywhere to hang our clothes. We used to get packing cases and things like that,

26:00 and build it up and it was amazing. But out at Francisco, I was allocated to going to the packing house. And that didn't suit me, I was furious and I was only a kid. I went and saw Mrs Lester, who was the Chief Matron there of course and I said I want to go out on the farm, I don't want, I didn't come here to work in a factory. She said, "All right my dear," and a day or

26:30 two later I got a call to go in to Batlow to Central One, the existing, the Club there, the RSL [Returned and Services League] is now built on that land. But from Frisco, Francisco, we used to call it Frisco. To go to the pictures we used to walk a couple of miles down the darkest roads to get there. And

27:00 I didn't like that. But we had, used to have, we used to watch the football, we all got to know the footballers cause the men in Batlow were under sixteen and over sixty. Absolutely. There was, and being young girls, well they related to us. Any rate I went back to the packing house and I learned to pack wrapped fruit, you see boxes in the

27:30 shops and things. And if it's green paper it's oiled, and they use that on Granny Smiths, because it stops them from scalding in the freezers. But with being in the packing house I thought this is good, we got piece work, they had to guarantee that we got our ordinary wage of three pound five. And we used to get tuppence ha'penny

28:00 a case to pack it, and wrap each case. And threepence if there was more than a hundred and ninety-eight in the case. And that was unreal but we used to have to put a card in the top and push em down the rollers to the fella that nailed em down. And then I, once I learned I could make more money, some times I used to make five pound or something and that suited me down to the ground. But Mum had wanted me to

28:30 send some money home because they were only on a war pension and Mum said you owed me that, for what I, you know, for what I, for going to school. I sent her ten, I sent her a pound and I thought, "Gee, I've got five bob, that's all I've got." So I cut that down to ten shillings, I only lasted a couple of weeks and I said, "That's it, I need all the money I can get." But any rate I was a packer and in the season I worked in the shed with,

29:00 Wis Keenan. Shane was gonna pick that up, he did. And any rate Wis Keenan was the boss, he hasn't been dead many years. And he taught us to pack. And like you'd, couldn't bruise your fruit, you know apples and that. But in Batlow we'd, in the cannery and that, they did a lot. But in the packing house we did apples and pears and

29:30 some tomatoes, they were the main things that they did. And they were sent down, mainly down to Sydney for the markets. But they went by train, those days. And that little train was a very wonderful thing. It had a carriage on the back of it, was the women. And every, as the train came in say, ten o'clock in the morning, half the packing house'd knock off to go and see who's come,

30:00 who's come back or who's here. Oh, that was, and on Victory Day, I'm ahead of myself, but on Victory Day my girlfriend and I sat on the engine and there was a square box where the, near the coal tender and we sat on there. And we were right in the very front of it going down the hill. But any rate, getting back to Batlow, I went to work on a property called Sunny Side. It was owned by someone

30:30 named Smith of course, in Sydney. They had a manager on it, his name was Sam Cromley. And while I was there, he married very late in life, he was around fifty, and he married a middle age school teacher. And out of the blue they came up with twins, twin boys while we were there. And one of our girls that, Lester didn't know it, one of our girls did two or three weeks there, helping with the twins.

31:00 But one day there Winnie Fowle and I were sent over, she's later Winnie Jones, she's dead now. Then, Winnie was a little bit deaf and we were out, we went over and we were sent over with a pony, we double dinked on the pony a fair way from the packing shed and we were sent to fire a gun into the cherry

31:30 trees, because the white cockatoos were having harvest, they had a wonderful time diving down there. Any rate I said to Winnie, "Let's tie the horse up." "Oh no, no, no," she said, "it'll be right, I've done it before." She fired the gun and we walked home. It beat us back I'll tell you. But I worked with Winnie quite a bit and she was a gun case maker too. She could hit a nail without

32:00 holding it on the wood, she could just hold it in her hand and boom. But they used to burn the prunings, you used to and when you, after they'd been pruned, there's all the laterals laying on the ground and etcetera So they used to put on skids, like on slides, they used to put a couple of forty-four gallon drums, open on the side. And you,

32:30 the prunings were raked down ready for you and you went along with the horse, burning the prunings you know. Something now and again the wind'd change and the horse'd move I tell you. But Winnie was, being a bit deaf, I used to make a clicking sound and the horses'd go along. And she caught me one day, I used to make her work hard, putting em in from the top. Any rate we, on many a times the flames got too much, I'll tell you.

33:00 But that's the way to get rid of them. And we used to put naphthalene bandages round the Jonathan apples, that'd burn you, you had to hang on, you had to put gloves on to do that, that's to stop the coddling moth. I don't think they do that thing, not these days. But I mean I'm talking about almost sixty years ago. But on Sunny

33:30 Side, that was one of the greatest places I ever worked. And it was Winnie, and I had another girl, Doris Fernance, she was six foot something. And she used to sit, I had, we had our bikes up there and we used to ride on our own bikes to work. And she'd sit on the seat with the seat right up and put her feet flat on

the ground. She had the longest legs I've ever seen. And they started at my waist. But...

34:00 **Can I just ask you, you mentioned earlier that you didn't really want to work in the packing house,**

No.

but you ended up working in the packing house.

Yeah because I found I could make more money.

And is that why, it, partly why it was the best?

Oh, yes and no because I made a lot of good friends in the packing house and we used to go out together and enjoy one another. When we went out, we always

34:30 went places where we couldn't spend much money cause we didn't have it. But why I learned to pack, and after the war and I didn't, I'm getting ahead of myself, but after the war I didn't know what I was gonna do with my life. Mum and Dad had ideas I was gonna go in and do radio, that was repairing, etcetera, like our father. But I liked the crowd in the packing house

35:00 and I learned to wrap. And so after the war I didn't know what I was gonna do. And Mum said to me, I went back to Batlow after the war. I couldn't stand coming home to Mum and Dad and Lily, me sister. She'd shoot me if she heard me say it now. But no I realised that I could make good money if I did it right. So I used to work at Sun Gold in Gosford which is now where Gourmet Design near the race course, six months

35:30 of the year. And the other six months I went back to Batlow, I think another time, but I wrote to a packing house in Tasmania in Mowbray Heights at Launceston. And I still got the ticket, it cost me twenty-nine pounds something for me fare to Tassie. And they made, they got me accommodation, with a young couple with a couple of kids. And

36:00 it, that was one, a place I went. Then another, then I, one of the growers at the Sydney markets. Bill Nelson, wanted a packer for an orchard up at Yetholme. And he was apparently quite friendly with our boss up at Gosford. And any rate they asked me would I want to do it and what would I charge them. And

36:30 I think I put it up a ha'penny. But I was there for ten weeks. But what they didn't tell me was that there was no electricity. So I was met with a lamp, kerosene lamp and a potty, a chamber. The toilet was down under the big pine trees, oh, frightening at night I tell ya. But no I packed there and I did a record, a hundred and eighty in

37:00 the day. And it still stands you know, to wrap. But when, like I did quite a few trips, you know, of packing, made good money. And then I did a silly thing and got married, and had half a dozen kids.

And that was after you were discharged?

Yeah after we was discharged, that was what I did. And even when I first got married. But

37:30 getting back to Sunny Side, we did things there, they had a thing called Saint John's Wort, it's a weed. And we used to have to drive a horse and a wooden sled. And looking for this weed, you know, with rock salt they put on it. And that was another job. I learned to prune and I learned to graft, they got rid of all the London Pippin's

38:00 and put em over to Delicious and Granny's. And learning to graft was good, course I've used it plenty of times since. And they used to pit the laterals for a while before they did them, that was they used to dig a hole and put em in. And the same when, with the other stuff. On Sunny Side I worked damn hard I tell you. And I had a couple of close calls of different things. I rode the pony into the bank

38:30 to get the wages. And he wouldn't let you have anything in your hand, at all. Any rate, oh, he was a devil. But I used to have to put the little calico bag on a post and go passed it and grab it. But on Sunny Side I was, I learned a terrible lot. But we sprayed the fruit trees. The first spray was red oil and then

39:00 oxycot, arsenic and lead etcetera And I got pictures, I'll show you one, I think there's one behind me up on the wall, spraying with, we used to wear a boiler, course we always wore boots. A boiler suit and a hessian bag round our middle and our hats, when you'd go back to camp your hat had changed colour. Each different spray, when the last one, arsenic and lead, oh it was dreadful, all on your hat, you know.

39:30 But you used to get filthy and they were huge long hoses that you were dragging round to spray the trees, but they do it differently now. And the horse, horses were all trained to get up and go about twenty paces and then, and they'd call out whoa and then it was on and off, you were great friends with your horse. One day I was working with Bill Faulkner, he was the foreman there

40:00 and he had a little, what he called a chaser dog, it was a little cocker spaniel. And it started to bark and jump and go mad. And it was a snake and Bill picked it up and whipped it, hit it on a post and said, "that's it. We were lucky. And then another time we were up at, we were spraying up on the top orchard, and we came across another black snake with a red belly.

40:30 And we killed it of course. And the following year we were up there and we put some stones around the hole where it had been. And the following year we were up there and there was a snake in the same place. So that was that. But we had another orchard belonging to Sunny Side called Hillcrest and we used to have to go up to spray up there. And when it was, had been raining, oh it was unreal, it was the worst bit of road you've ever had.

41:00 Big culverts, and the horse'd be, when we were coming down, the horses, the bridge, and it'd be pushing it's back legs down, it used to like put the four legs together. But because of the war there hadn't been much pruning and they really chopped the trees back hard after the war you know, they had, you had to have staff to run those big orchards. And, well we used to drive the tractor. Another thing

41:30 we did.

I might actually stop you there cause our tape is just about to run out.

Righto.

Tape 2

00:31 I was in the Land Army from October '43 till we finished up in '45 after the war. But and when we left Batlow they had a special train and to go to Sydney. I'll tell you about that in a minute. When war finished, we were working on Sunny Side, and we could hear

01:00 bells and sirens and all sorts of things. And they came up, the war was over and the girls all dropped everything and said right, we're going home, not realising there were no jobs or whatever and it was gonna be a time before the men came back. But I've got some photos I'll show you of us leaving Batlow. And we're piled into the, into these carriages, special train. And there was all toilet paper

01:30 hanging out the windows. There was, all the locals were there, I don't think there was a soul missing to see the Land Army go. And when we, I sat on the engine with Dot Patrick. And when we got down to Gilmore where you used to change trains for, the train went on to Tumut of course, the engine driver gave us a farewell, he pulled his, the strap for his whistle and the train went toot, toot

02:00 and sprayed the girls with soot. I missed out, I was lucky, but what a mess. And when they got to Sydney for the Victory March they had to get them all clean, I was lucky. But I've got a photo, I don't know whether you've ever seen one, of us in the Victory March in Sydney. Have you seen one? Which was great, and I spent that night, we were sitting on searchlights going all over Sydney. It was a terrific time.

02:30 But I'm glad I was part of it, absolutely.

That's fantastic. What I might do now is, if I may, go right back to the beginning and ...

To living at home or Land Army?

before the Land Army, leading up to the break out of the war.

Oh yeah, oh that'll be interesting.

And perhaps you can tell me a bit more about what you recall about growing up during the Depression?

Yeah, if you want.

03:00 Well, you ready? Of course me being born in 1927 was Depression times. And my brothers and sisters of course had to get work and there was no work. Dad had a fella come to him and he said for threepence I'll cut all the wood you want. But the Depression was hard on us all. And

03:30 my Dad had been, was a soldier in the First World War and he'd previously been in the Royal Navy.

And what did you know of his service?

My father? It, only recently, in the last few years I, Dad changed his name. He was born Stanbridge. Arthur Edward Stanbridge and he changed his name to Winter and so did one of his brothers, he was one of eleven children.

04:00 Because his grand mother that he spent a lot of his time with, gave him ten guineas and gave Harold ten guineas, when, come to Australia and keep the Winter name going which was her maiden name. And they did that and so Dad's joined the, he was Stanbridge in the navy and he was Winter in the AIF [Australian Imperial Force]. When he met Mum he married her under that name. And a lot of things happened like that. Like Mum

04:30 reared my sister's two girls and they used Mum's name. Because everybody knew you know, they were one of the Winter's, and their name was Davis. That happens. And there's a lot of families like that. But with our Dad in the navy he met my mother in Tas, when he was in Sydney he'd been in Tasmania and he was on a ship called the Sykie. And he'd trained on Nelson's flag ship, the Victory. There's a photo of it there.

05:00 And he, when he came to Australia and he met my mother at, outside Anthony Horden's Building singing with the Sally's. Which they used to do every, all Friday night, and collecting money and things like that. And Mum and Dad were both a little bit on the religious side but they never drummed it into us you know. They made sure all the kids were christened and confirmed and all that sort of jazz. But my brothers, my oldest brother

05:30 got, took his swag and went out to around Peak Hill Parks, lumping wool and wheat and just, mainly only for meals, their keep, they used to call it. And you, and they used to kill their own sheep and, when I was a kid we used to go out there with our Dad, we'd watch em killing sheep and making rope and all sorts of things that you never dreamed of. And I know my brother was left on Evie Ferry's farm. Evie stayed

06:00 away too long, so Paddy ate all his pigeons. He couldn't kill the sheep but he ate the pigeons. But the Depression you always passed your clothes on. And I got a habit of keeping clothes too long now, I've got bags there to throw out. But, well, with the schools, everyone used to put in for anything that needed doing, they'd put their money in. But

06:30 Tommy went away to the Depression, in the Depression and I can remember him coming back. But I can't ever remember him living home. He later became a carpenter and he was a boss on the Maritime in Sydney. Teddy, my second brother, finished school, Tom went to school for one week so he could say he went to high school. Teddy left school at twelve and went to work, and later on there was a thing

07:00 called the Lang Scheme. And they made a lot the fellas that missed out on apprenticeships, they made em trainees. And so those two brothers of mine became trainees. The next brother, Perce, spent a bit of time with my grand mother and I can only vaguely remember him. Because see Tommy was born in 1913, so there was a big span, right across. And there was that many young kids,

07:30 you know at, with no work, no work, no way of getting any work, or learning anything. But Percy, the next brother, he did he went to Hornsby Technical School. And he later became a Shipwright and he worked at Goddards at Palm Beach. They used to build racing skiffs and things. And then he went to Garden Island, the same as Teddy had gone to Garden Island. And he later became the, one of the high bosses and he lived on Garden Island

08:00 for eleven years. He paid three dollars and they put it up to five I think it was, for his accommodation, a five bedroom house, two storey, looking out to sea. And we had many times down there over the year, he was there for forty-two years. And we had many terrific times at Garden Island. And they got a, I don't know whether you know it or not, there's a big park on Garden Island, beautiful it is. And when the Queen came out or anything important

08:30 came on we used to go down to Percy's, and it was wonderful.

Well I'm wondering you would have been very young when the war broke out...

Yeah, well when war broke out, I was asleep on the front verandah. And in middle of the night, we heard about it right. But when the Japs came into Sydney Harbour I was asleep on the verandah and there was no radio, no anything, everything was silent.

09:00 And we knew, didn't know what had gone on. Any rate Mum sent us off to school in the train as usual. And when we got to Cowan here was people with the Sydney Morning Herald opened, Japs submarines enter Sydney Harbour. Well I thought we should have gone back home again. But that didn't happen. And I can remember looking through the periscope of the submarine, I think it was threepence or sixpence to go for the war effort, wouldn't make much money

09:30 but that's what they did. But then they decided up here they would take all the boats in the district and put them up on the Gosford Showground, in the middle of it. Not the showground, the race course. And Dad's boat was the only one left, and he was, I think his ration was a gallon of petrol a month. And I don't know how many gallons for the car but it was only two or three. But any rate in, and my sister Flo

10:00 who later became a very wealthy woman, was put into service. That was her job and she had to live-in in a place called Querks in Orange Grove, related to the Silent Night fellow, I can't remember his name. And she worked there and she used to get a couple of hours off in the afternoon and come and see Mum. But Ali, Alice it was, she worked at Ayres Own

10:30 Fine Radio. Those days they used to have to solder everything in, now they just put resisters and that in, all goes with the machine. So that put a lot of people out of work didn't it. But...

And how do you, did you react at the time to your brothers going off to war?

Was terrible. My father, when Paddy came home, Paddy was only seventeen , he put his age down, up I mean. Pad was seventeen and I can remember him

11:00 coming in, in his khaki uniform. And Dad said, “Isn’t it been enough to see what I’ve gone through? And, to go in the army, Paddy, you’re mad.” You know.

And what did you know of what your father had gone through?

Well my father was gassed at Pozières and he was on the Somme. And he suffered all his life from TB [Tuberculosis], which

11:30 they got in the trenches. So did his couple of brother-in-laws and brother, Dad had five, there were five boys of, yeah, four of my Dad’s and four others all in France at once. And because Dad had skipped the navy after he, I wrote to, I’m changing the subject a bit. I’ll tell you about the war, Dad was, as I say, they were going over the top with their bayonets. And he said,

12:00 there was once he said, “I said someone, like a Sally or something, I’ve got a heap of kids and the missus having another baby.” Which was true, because Perce was born after he’d sailed. And he didn’t go over the top that one. But if you mentioned a German to Dad, he’d say the Huns. And he would get really very angry. But he had war neurosis of course. And I slept on the verandah and Dad’s room

12:30 was the other side of that window. I’ve heard him delirious calling out, “Quick, the Huns are coming over the top.” All your life you’d hear about it but he didn’t talk a great deal about the war to anybody. But I’ve got it on tape. My eldest brother was only a little boy when Dad came home from the war. And he says they were met by trams down the quay of all things.

13:00 And Tommy says, “I can remember Dad coming with the os…” He had ostrich feathers and ostrich egg, cause they come back via Durban. And I’ve got all my father’s letters to my mother, which I found here in the house when I came home to live. And they were all in a bit of a mess in a bag and so I spent about three winters straighten them out. And I’ve got them, I’ve got a book now with it. And one of my nieces worked at, for

13:30 the telephone people and she took redundancy and he let her Photostat the whole lot, a hundred and twenty letters. And the originals I rang Professor Dennis is the chap in charge at Duntroon. And they’ve got a special library there, I don’t know whether you know that, a special library at Duntroon, and I went down there

14:00 and saw him. And he said, “Where did you get these?” I said, “They were at home and I’ve sorted em up.” And I said, he said, “Could I borrow them, to photostat them?” I said, “Well, I suppose so. But,” I said, “don’t you lose em.” He said, “They’re a national treasure, I’ll lock em in the safe.” And he said, “And I’ll return them personally.” So any rate I was down at me daughters and that’s where he returned em. And

14:30 he said to me, they’re absolutely amazing. He was talking about little helicopter, not helicopter, an aeroplane a tri-plane flying over, the Germans were strafing em in the trenches. And he said, “And out of the blue comes one of ours, a British plane, and shot him down and the German pilot jumped out.” Well of course he would have died as soon as he hit the ground. But these are some of the things in the letters but I checked that out to think it might have been the Red Baron but the dates don’t,

15:00 don’t coincide. But any rate when Professor Dennis bought me, brought back the letters, he asked, he said, “What are you gonna do with them Betty?” I said, “I don’t know. I’ve thought about it but what’s the good of giving them to my kids? They’d stick em in the garage and cover them in dust and, they’d be useless. They’re not interested.” And he said, “What do you think you could do with them?” He said, “There’s the War Memorial and there’s numerous things.”

15:30 And I said, “I might auction em.” Cause I would have got a lot of money for em I can tell you. And any rate in the, they have auctions of war things and different things. And he said, “Well we’d be… I’d be prepared to give you, to buy them off you, but,” he said, “it mightn’t suit you, the price.” I said to my Julianne, “What do you think?” She said, “Mum, do what you like. Put em in the safest place since the Professor

16:00 said how valuable they were.” And I sold em to him for two thousand dollars. But they can’t come, they’re, my sons have been down and copied a bit out of em. There’s also a bit about the Land Army and things in it, when we got the medal and all that. And the, numerous things that are in it, there’s a couple of Paddy’s letters from Tobruk. And they call them the Arthur Edward Winter collection. And you want to put white gloves on and everything to handle them.

16:30 **Well I'm just wondering if you can me a bit more about what it was like having a brother overseas?**

Well Paddy, when Paddy sailed, they went to, he was in Tel Aviv, he had his appendix out there. And luckily for him he, that happened because his Unit was sent to Greece and most of them were either captured or wiped out.

17:00 Paddy was, Paddy had his twenty-first birthday in Tobruk and he occasionally used to say things and tell us. And he said, “One of me mates was sitting in the toilet, a hessian looking thing,” he said, “and one of the fellas made a pot shot and killed him. Didn’t know there was anyone in there.” But Paddy was driving, he was in the Engineers, Second Third Field Company and he was driving a truck on the

perimeter he called it. I remember that word because

17:30 it stuck in my mind, it was on the perimeter of Tobruk. And he had a load of gun cotton, and it was hit by shrapnel from the Germans and it blew the back off the truck. And he said all there was left was arms and legs. But Paddy and another fellow got out of it, a Tasmanian bloke, they were in the front. But Paddy got, Paddy was in shock and numerous things had happened to him in Tobruk. He said, "I had me twenty-first birthday and what, couldn't tell anyone," because he'd

18:00 altered his birth date. And Pad got so bad that they had what they called the dawn patrol, used to go into Tobruk and pick up the soldiers that, the men, the wounded. And also take the stores in. And one of those dawn patrol ships, I can't think of its name, was torpedoed and sunk very quickly. And one of Paddy's mates, Alec Ladhams was on that,

18:30 on it. And the reason he got out, he got through a port hole, that's how skinny he was. And he worked for Paddy for many years up here. But when Pad came back, he, I can remember he was on the Queen Mary when he came back and I can remember him, he had a lot of money, and I was only a kid still. And I couldn't make it out, where did he get it from. But they run a housey game on the Queen Mary,

19:00 that's how he got it. And then Pad was sent up to the Atherton Tablelands to learn, for jungle stuff. And then he was sent up to New Guinea where he got, well, he was so shell shocked they, he came down and we saw him, they used to wear navy blue trousers and white shirts, the sick fellas. And they took him down to Goulburn to Ken, is it Ken, what's the name of,

19:30 whatever the, it's still there, the psych place. And we went down to see him and some kids threw a stone on the roof of a pump shed and all the men went to ground. They were, any noise at all. But Paddy suffered very badly from the war and he died at fifty-seven. At thirty-seven he had a massive heart attack. And he was a fine young man, truly he was. But my father and mother worried, they,

20:00 every day, they'd say we've gotta letter from Paddy or we haven't heard. And...

And what about any of your other brothers?

No, my brothers were all in, Tom, Ted and Perce were all doing war things that were necessary for the war. And Tom couldn't, in the Depression, Tom couldn't, had lost, had his big toe and the ball of his foot cut off. He was working on what they call the mountain road going to Batonga.

20:30 And he had no shoes on. Any rate he chopped and he cut his toe off, his, all that off. And one of the silliest things that every happened, my step brother chopped his boot to make out that he'd, what he'd done, and he chopped the wrong boot. And Tommy was in Lewisham hospital for a long, long time, getting over that. But I had a, I had

21:00 two other brothers. One died before I was born, he was five months. And the other one was, when I was going to school at Ettalong, in 1939, Harry, we went for a hike over to Pearl Beach. And he had a headache and he had a big headache on the Sunday. And he was in, I went in, I got sent to bed about six o'clock cause the family were all up. Harry was making a funny noise and I shook him and he wouldn't, we slept in

21:30 the one room. And he wouldn't wake up so I told Mum and Mum came in and Harry was unconscious, and he died next night. They took him down to Sydney in a taxi to the Children's hospital, we didn't have a hospital here. And down there and he died, it was that menin, type of meningitis, it's cerebral, it's very quick. And I can remember all of the kids at Ettalong School, we had two big blue buses.

22:00 And all the kids from Ettalong School walked in front of the hearse and that down to the Booker Bay Wharf. And Harry and my other brothers are buried at Kingcombe, but the little church on the corner there, Saint Paul's. And they put his little blue coffin on the roof of the ferry. And when we got up there they couldn't the ferry couldn't go right up because it was low tide. So they carried his little coffin, me four brothers, up to the cemetery.

22:30 And it left an impression on nearly every kid in the school to, you know, to do that. I don't think it was a good idea but they reckon it was the best way to for the kids to know that, you know, what could happen. And it, near that time too another boy, one of the boy scouts, he was riding his bike round there, Pearl Beach. The road gave way and he died too, from cerebral haemorrhage. But ...

And how did you,

23:00 **I mean, I'm just wondering you've mentioned that you recall visiting Paddy when he was in hospital...**

At Ken, is it Kenwell?

Kenmore?

Kenmore, that's it, Kenmore. And Paddy was terrible. He bit his nails off until only he had the last stroke and he couldn't bite his nails. He used to bite his nails back to the quicks. But...

I'm just wondering if you can

23:30 **recall how you felt at the time, did you feel like you understood what had happened to him?**

Oh yeah, oh yes, I certainly did. I, well we all knew that he had war neurosis. And I tell you how bad he had it. He became a contractor, sand and cement and all that sort of thing. And concrete, he did a lot of the footpaths and things like that. But he was driving his truck, he had a Blitz truck one, ex army

24:00 thing. He was driving along Picnic Parade, which goes down to Ettalong and the truck backfired and he jumped out and left his wife and kid in the truck. Now that's a fact. But I learned to ride a motorbike and I was riding Sid's, I was out on the airport, and I married Sid later on. And Paddy come along in his Blitz wagon and he was gonna half kill me, he was gonna tell Dad cause I was on a bike. But I rode one for many years, and with Sid.

24:30 But, no Paddy was really very bad from the war, that's for sure. But...

And what did you, I'm wondering if you felt like Australia was in danger at that time?

Oh yeah, all the time. We always did, and from the time the Japs shelled Bondi and Stockton and that, the, every day, every day it was war, war, war. I've still got, up on that top there, you know the

25:00 photo you see that was, the man dancing round in Martin Place, the war, I've got that newspaper, up on the top there, don't know what to do with that either. But it's terrific. And I've also got some Sydney Mails that Dad left here. 1910 and 1914 and one of them tells you that there's blocks of land in Woy Woy for ten pound a block

25:30 and seven and six deposit and two and six a month. I've got it over there. And Dad used to write but he was a collector of papers and junk, like me, I've got a big collection. But ...

And how did you hear about the Women's Land Army?

I saw it in the paper and like a lot of us, now a lot of our girls that went in when war finished,

26:00 had nowhere to go. There was break-ups of marriages you know and things like that. And I had two girls that when I came home on leave, they had no family home left.

I'm just wondering like when you were fifteen, sixteen...

Sixteen I was.

and wanting to join up with the Land Army, how did you get the idea?

I just saw it in the paper, and, I saw the ad in the paper, they

26:30 were wanting the women, and, women on the farms while the men were fighting the war. You know they put out a lot of placards and things like that and being young that just interested me. In fact I couldn't get away from home quick enough because my Mum and Dad were, Mum was a docile lady but my father was the boss. He'd been in the navy and in the army and he had strict rules and you kept to em. I used to work over

27:00 the picture show shop and after interval I had to come home. Now I couldn't stay out, no way. And you didn't boys home. You, if you went out with anyone you, you know, he was like it with all of us. But he was a gentleman, there was no doubt about that, he was a wonderful father and a book of knowledge. He lived to be just on ninety. And you gotta believe it what he died of.

27:30 Active pulmonary tuberculosis, caught in France and cancer of the prostate. So that was that. But Pad, my other brothers are all dead of course. And there's only left out of the ten of us now, there's only me young sister and I. And I'm not trying to get there first, I can tell you. But...

Well I'm wondering if you can tell me when you, or how you came to make the

28:00 **decision to join up with the Land Army?**

Oh, I reckoned, cause we were well looked after at home etcetera . But I reckoned it'd be fun, get out with other people and other women, I love people. And from the very first day I joined I said picking peas wasn't for me. And then once we were picking cherries I was settled in and I said, "This is the life. And you get paid for it." But ...

28:30 **And what do you think in your mind, what did it offer that you couldn't get at home?**

Oh fun with the girls. We had lots of laughs and did lots of funny things and made, I made some terrific friends and I can tell you where each one is and if they're alive or dead.

29:00 I have different ones comes up here Land Army girls, and, or go away on trips. We used to, after the war, and we had an, we've got an Association as you probably know. And we used to go back on reunions you know. And I, when Max my youngest son was forty, and we were heading for Griffith and up to Batlow, Doris Piddy the lady I told you before. Was Doris and Merle

29:30 and another lady, I don't know who it was. And we stopped up at Katoomba. Oh, Dot Hill, and she bought a pair of shoes and she was broke for the whole ten days, cause she bought a pair of shoes. But I

drove and we stayed in the caravan park at Griffith and which was good. And I had something I wanted to tell you about it, oh yeah, in the caravan, bit of fun, the girls were still having fun.

30:00 And Merle Hodson had a blow up mattress, someone pulled the plug out and she woke up with a crook back I tell you. But we've been back to Griffith numerous times. And I went down, the last time I went down I hired a car down there to save the long trip. And then we went on to, I left a couple there and there was, then we went on to Gundagai and slept the night.

I'm just wondering

30:30 **at the time when you joined up, whether you just wanted fun or did you have any kind of awareness about contributing to Australia's war effort?**

Oh yeah, yeah. Oh yeah. We all wanted to do something for the war effort. Absolutely. Even down to knitting socks when I was going to school in the train, I used to knit Paddy's socks. But no we all, we were all very conscious of the war but we were more conscious of our local boys up

31:00 here. Which we all, every, you know, being such a small place those days, you knew every body and you hated to wait for that telegram. Mum and Dad got one telegram to say that Paddy was in hospital in Tel Aviv, and he'd had an operation but it was his appendix. Well he was just lucky he was in Tel Aviv when they went to Greece. But then he had Tobruk didn't he. But Pad didn't stay in tow with many of his friends from the army, one or

31:30 two but not much at all. He got married and had a girl who now lives in Queensland. But the, when I was in Batlow packing after the war there, some of the men got jobs back in the packing house. But one or two of em, like one I can't think of his name, he was yellow, they took Atebrin up in New Guinea in the tropics.

32:00 And God he was yellow but by gee he could work. But the men that came back, a lot of them didn't want to work on the land and they'd move on, let the young ones carry on . But they just didn't want to go back on the land. I was working on Sunny Side and I must tell you this one, it's rather funny. We planted a few acres of potatoes and in the winter time we used to cut the potatoes to two eyes.

32:30 And then we had a triple furrow plough, and three horses used to pull it. The girls'd go along with the, it was a terrible job. One girl'd or one or two girls'd be planting the spuds and treading them into the furrow. And the next girl came along with a bucket of super phosphate. We were working on a paddock that was down hill and up hill. Any rate Sam Cromley said to me, "You can ride on the plough down the

33:00 hill, but you've gotta walk back up the hill." Any rate the horses mucked up on me so when it was time to harrow it in. I was driving the three horses and the harrows. And the bloomin things had stopped, and I fell over the harrows twice. Oh, my legs were in a shocking state. But they were all different jobs. But that was, we, the big, the tall girl, Doris Fernance, we had a horse there called Boot Lace and Doris Fernance was

33:30 very was very tall. She said, "I'm gonna ride that thing," and it used to buck and carry on and broke the stable doors down and they could only work it in the middle of the other two. And she said, "I'll ride it, don't worry." And this day, after being in the plough, she rode it. And it didn't have a kick left in it. But I've bumped into Doris Fernance, I must tell you this. I was up at Tamworth with, one of my girls lived up there, still does.

34:00 And I was in one, an arcade in the middle of the town there and where Woolies was, no, Coles I'm sorry. And I, this tall girl was standing beside me with, she had her hair in a plait at the back, crisscrossed. And I looked at her and I thought, "Oh God, you look like Doris Fernance." And she kept looking at me. And I turn, I couldn't help meself, and I said, "Excuse me but you do look like someone I used to know." And she

34:30 said, "And who would that be?" I said her name, "Doris Fernance. But," I said, "you wouldn't know her but," I said, "gee you're like her." She said, "Hello Bett." And we kept in touch. And she was in Darwin when Cyclone Tracy hit. And her husband died, he, from the cyclone. And she remarried and she lives in Tamworth. And she's had open heart surgery and lots of

35:00 things, but what a place to meet her. And she told me a couple of other Land girls and I went and seen them.

And what did your mother and father think of you joining up?

They were quite proud of me joining up, after they got used to the idea that I wasn't going to be home. They were quite proud of it, you know, with me, of me in uniform. And of course when the war ended all I had was a uniform. I'd grown to be a young woman, from a

35:30 kid.

Well can you tell, take me through that process of going to join up and getting your uniform?

Well when we, we went to Martin Place, I think it was upstairs somewhere. And I got the forms, I took em home and I had to have my parents permission. My service book'll show you that, I've got it here with me, a

36:00 blue linen book. And I was tickled pink when I went down there, all the things they gonna give you, boots, socks, overalls, shirts and a hat. That was the first lot of stuff you got. And I still got all the paperwork in my albums there, Leave Passes and all. But that was, Mum didn't want me to go but Dad didn't object, really he didn't, he just said we've spent a lot of money on you and

36:30 etcetera but Dad was always proud of me. Right up till he died because, and he left me two thirds of this property. Not forgetting that my brothers were, four of me brothers were still alive and two sisters. But no Mum and Dad were very proud of me. And even when I went to Tasmania to work and I came back by train, Dad met me at the Central. And you couldn't shift him for anybody else I tell ya. Even when

37:00 Paddy came through. But we, we're got this issue and then it was you had to be in at least three or four months before you got your walking out uniform. Which was pretty miserable. It was a khaki dress buttoned up the front and a brown hat with this hat badge on it. And you got working boots

37:30 the first time. But when you dress uniform was, later on we had our uniform similar to the AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service], only I might add ours was better cloth. Ours was like that American gabardine cloth. And when I bought it all home, you know, Mum and Dad were thrilled to think that I was clothed properly. Because before the war, was very hard. I had an aunt living over here and

38:00 her husband was killed with her son, she had eight girls. And the boy and that were killed up near Staples Lookout. And I forgot what I was going to tell you about them. But he was also in the war, in the First World War but he was in Egypt. That was different.

And when you arrived back home with your issue of clothes, I'm wondering did you have any idea of where you were going to be sent?

38:30 **No idea in the world. Well all I know was I was joined up and you went wherever you were told. We had a lot of girls go to South Australia. We had a lot of girls go to Darling Downs to Queensland on the cotton. And one of our girls held a record for picking by hand, four hundred and fifty pound of cotton. And it's a total record. But the thing about the uniform was, after the war I wore it all the damn time because we still had coupons.**

39:00 **And we only had seventy coupons to do for the year. And when we finished our service, a few of them that went down to headquarters they took their shoes and all, but they didn't us. But you had to build up a wardrobe and with the small money you were on, you had hell on earth, Mum used to make all my clothes, just about. In fact when I went away in the Land Army I didn't have a, I didn't, I hadn't been wearing a bra.**

39:30 **I was, I didn't have enough to put in it. And I had home made pants and home made dresses. I had, didn't have a thing bought in a shop because Mum used to have to run an order with Marcus Clarke's, to live. And now, then it, later on it was Walton's turned up and all those time payment people. But we didn't get enough coupons to do anything really. And I don't**

40:00 **can't remember how long coupons went for but there was a couple of years. And that's about all I can tell you about that.**

I'm just wondering if you knew where you wanted to go, [(UNCLEAR)]?

I didn't know where I wanted to go, if I'd have known that they were regrouping a crowd to go to South Australia I'm pretty sure that I would've said, "Righto, I'll be on the train." But Batlow, I didn't enjoy Leeton so much, but Batlow

40:30 was like old home town, I absolutely loved it and Dad wrote me a letter after the war which I've got in my album there, saying, about, "Now, the war's over." He, straight out, "The war's over. And we would like best for you to come home." And it's a beautiful letter. And as he says, "Your friends that…" Oh they were girls, girls

41:00 will be girls. But he said, "You're not girls now. You're men and women." And you, then you find that you get on with your life but it's entirely different, your friends, they're gone. But little did he know, I've still got heaps of them. Absolutely. And, absolutely.

Thanks, our tape has just come to a finish.

It's coming back.

Tape 3

00:30 **I was wondering if you could tell me Betty, you mentioned that your parents were very proud when you joined the Land Army, I just wonder what the perception was of Land Army or the Land Army girls, just with other people you knew?**

Well the Land Army girls that I was very friendly with, both during the war and after the war were from all walks of life. The lady who painted that calendar of mine there

01:00 married I think he was from Denmark, a diplomat, you know, to do with some organisation after the war, I can't recall. What particularly was it you wanted to know?

I just wonder if people thought women joining the Land Army was a good thing, or whether it was…?

Oh yes, yeah, yeah, people were, local, there was only a few locals here. One of my cousins joined up and Aunty Lou used to swap letters, Mum and

01:30 Aunty Lou. And the eldest girl, her eldest sister, Violet, also was in the WANS [Women's Australian National Service], which was before the Land Army. She married an English sailor and she lives in, she died last year and she lives in Wales and I stayed with her when I was over there. But there was not a lot of girls here that went, but there was one girl I went to school with

02:00 Dawn Cyphers. Out of the blue with our photos going in the paper, when we got our medal in 1945, I got a phone call. And, she, the girl said, "You'll never guess who it is." And she said, "Dawn Cyphers." I couldn't believe it, I hadn't seen her since I was in third year at high school. And I went over and had morning tea with her over, she lived at Saratoga.

02:30 And I said, "What did you… What's your married name, Dawn?" She said, "I wasn't as silly as you. I didn't get married." And she was a matron of a hospital. And she'd retired, just retired. And any rate I belong to the Fort Street Union mob they got and they asked me to find out where she was, her mail had been returned. And I went over there and she was dead. She got a cancer that was very quick. And that was

03:00 Dawn. But I think nearly everyone who had anyone in the services was very proud of em, but they all dreaded a telegram. We lost quite a few of our local boys. But what they gave, after the war, it was very, very mean and miserable of the Government not to give us some sort of compensation or money. But, like the

03:30 five bob that the men, our men got in the army, that was a joke, the amounts of money they got. But it really was. Paddy, my brother was so ill and he got knocked back for TPI [Totally and Permanently Disabled – Pension] many times, and they gave him the TPI after he had a stroke. And my brother, he couldn't talk, and one of my other brothers had to speak for him at the tribunal.

04:00 But there was all, lot of money raised for Legacy and things like that. And they've got a lot of money that they sort of can't get rid of, but they look after war widows.

I wonder Betty, you mentioned that you'd hear about the other young men in the town that were I guess being injured or killed.

Well there was different ones that were injured and killed. And they, some of our local boys, Georgie Redford

04:30 was one, he was on the Canberra. Well the Japs got some of those men but he was lucky. Bobby Fraser down here, he played football and tennis with my brothers and that, he's still alive, but he was a POW [prisoner of war] in Changi. I worked with fellas that'd been in the army or air force. I used to go out with an air force fella actually. And I don't know what happened there but I just,

05:00 disappeared. But I worked with different ones and Dougie Wright, Doug said… Reg Douglas it was, he said to me, "None of youse could understand what we went through in the jungle." He said, "He was on the wire," he called it, you know, for communication. He said, "You're going through." He said, "The next thing you know you had your head cut off," sort of thing. They waylaid

05:30 you all the way and it was pretty terrible. And another friend, Frank Hillston, he was shot in the foot and in the shoulder on the Kokoda Trail. And he went for the TPI and he never got it till he was well in his eighties. They made it very hard for the men to get. Frank's dead now, he died of cancer like a lot of others. Yet I've got a, the girl you saw, Audrey Cooke, I think you went there, might have been

06:00 you people. No, Togoracan just recently, her husband died of cancer and she applied for the TPI and they wouldn't give it to her, war widows. I got another friend, Jeannie Maliphant, lives down the coast. And her husband was dead fifteen years before she got the pension. And he'd been to the doctor and he was, he applied for the pension, he got knocked back, and he dropped dead that night.

06:30 And she was fifteen years, you know, fighting for it. But it's very hard to get. Well the Land Army girls, we wanted some sort of return from the Government, you know, health wise. Like I walked behind the plough and the harrows. I did that for two and half, three years. But I had to have both complete hip replacements and me back. But

07:00 I'd just like em to buy me shoes. Being honest, I gotta pay nearly two hundred dollars a pair. But they, there's one girl in particular, Sheila van Emden, she was Sheila Ferguson. She knew her onions, she joined the air force just before the war, she went transferred from the Land Army over to the air force and she gets a pension. But she deserves a pension any rate, there's no doubt about that, she deserves it, and her husband, he was in the Air

07:30 Force.

Can you tell me Betty, you were mentioning some of the physical I guess problems now, can you tell me how you coped with the physical work at the time?

Well I was a packer and I had to lift a hundred to a hundred and fifty cases a day for, but I did it after the war too for many years. And they weighed fifty or sixty pound each. You know, and you do that a hundred times

08:00 and you'll find that something has to wear out. And as a fruit packer you sway. But we had a girl up there lost her arm in the machine, in the dehydrator. And she was paid a thousand pounds that's all, but she had no right arm. And with the, while I was in Batlow, the CCCs which was the Civil Construction Corps. built the big cannery that's up there, it's still

08:30 in use. Our original packing house got burned down, the freezers went. But they take the peas, nowadays, you wonder why, when you buy a tin of peas or frozen peas, they're all the one size, because they're graded. But nowadays they just bring it in, they reap the whole lot, vines and all, tip it in the machine, and the pods come out one part and the peas come out the other. But life's so different, but we

09:00 used to dehydrate potatoes, I must tell you this. And in the old spud shed we called it, and you stood up, you had a water proof rubbery apron on and rubber boots because there was water everywhere. And they'd learned to dehydrate potatoes, that means shrink em so you just add water and they're right. And they used to put em into four gallon drums, tins. And I was home on leave one day and someone said to me,

09:30 "What are you?" I was there cause I had me appendix out. And they said, "What do you do in the Land Army?" I said, "I'm a skin and eye specialist, I peel spuds." And I hated that, I hated it. But the spud shed was linked to a big storage that they'd built, central one. And they had like railway sleepers going across with a couple of pipes on it. And they, from the apples, they can make a

10:00 not just apple cider, the pinnacle was very alcoholic, believe me. And of course we never ever went near a pub or anything like that. And we nicked across this one night and we got some and everyone was a bit tipsy. And they never found out who did it, but we did it. And when I look at it now over the years, I saw it there still there and I thought you must have been awful game, awful. But we did a few funny

10:30 things. Eileen Everingham, at Central One this was, was cross eyed cause, I don't know how she got in the Land Army but she was cross eyed. And they gave us a winter issue of, underwear, believe it not, they were singlets like a baby wears with strings in sleeves. And they made silk and wool pants, which were totally unsatisfactory. And Eileen had hung her clothes on the line, she come home and she hit em, she said they're still frozen. And we,

11:00 we'd starched em stiff and it was three or four days before she realised that that's what we'd done. And Dot Patrick was, with the new issue, we were in the laundry such as it was, a copper and a couple of tubs. And I said, "what are you doing Dot? She said my mother boils everything. And she put the bloomin silk and wool singlets in the, I mean that was the end of them. But real cocky, my mother boils everything, I can still see her poking the

11:30 copper stick into it. But another night we were at the pictures, this is Batlow. And Saturday night and a notice came up on the screen, Japs are, Japs have escaped from the Goulburn Valley from Victoria and they are believed to be nearing Batlow, they were, they'd been seen. And you gotta believe it, we, they asked us all to go home together, those on outlying farms to stay in town and

12:00 everyone was co-operative about it and frightened. And Dot and I slept on an open verandah with a big blind you know. And I'll never forget it, we could hear munch, munch, crunch, crunch. And I whispered to Dot, "Did you hear anything?" She said, "Yeah." And we heard it again. And we jumped out of bed and banged on the door and the girls wouldn't let us in and wouldn't open the door. And turned out it was cows, someone had put their cows in the grounds and they were grazing near us. But very

12:30 frightening, it really was. But they caught the Japs believe it or not, at, between Carnamah and Laurel Hill which was six or seven mile away. But and some of our girls were at Cowra you know, for the breakout too. Now and again, something crops up in the magazine you know, about what happened there. We had...

How, can I just ask Betty, how scared of invasion were you by the Japanese were you

13:00 **or?**

All very conscious. All very conscious of that the Japs could really get here. And especially because one of my brother in laws was a seaman. And he was very lucky and, very lucky. But we were all very conscious. My brother in law died a few years ago, he was a seaman on the Pamaire, which is a four masted bark.

13:30 And the Japs surfaced alongside him, them in the Pacific. And the men stood at attention with their life jackets on for two hours. And the submarine ca... Must have been the captain or whatever you call him, waved to em and submerged. And after the war, Captain Chambers who was the captain of the Pamaire at the time, he got a letter from

14:00 the commander of the submarine. And he said he didn't have the heart to sink it because he'd served his time on it in sail. But Ossie said that's the closest he ever got. But he also was in the landing at, for Italy, he was, he shook MacArthur's hand. I said, "You haven't washed it yet." But we were very conscious of the war. And most mothers were frightened of their kids being called up. See the First World War had no conscription, and it went

14:30 to the polls. Billy Hughes was the Minister, Prime Minister and they objected to having any like that. And in one of Dad's letters from the war it says where the men in the trenches over here don't want conscripts, it's hard enough being a volunteer. I'm wishing they had. But Dad was fortunate, he was stationed at

15:00 Red, a place called Red Hill in London, and his mother lived in Surrey and he was only about ten mile away. So he used to see his family. And the old girl used to get the pip about him leaving the navy when he did. And she was frightened to have him walking up and down the street in his, that uniform, for fear he'd pick him up and put him in jail. In later years I wrote to England and wanted Dad's particulars and what ships he was on and all

15:30 of that jazz, and I got terrific reply. They told me that he skipped out in 1908 and he'd joined before 1900. Any rate, they gave, I had his number and all the names of the ships he was on, the Powfer and all them. But that was of great interest to me and the rest of the family. And we,

16:00 about two years ago we, I decided to get Dad's birth certificate. Cost me seventy-five dollars to get it, but he was christened Arthur Edward but they called him Ted. But they, I started a family tree and there's one on the wall there, that goes back to 1570. It's a lot of work and a lot of money but I lent two sheets but

16:30 that go above that to my niece, who's gonna put em through the, they gotta go through a planning machine. But and that was quite good but a lot of the kids missed their parents, missed Dad. I know Lena and Tony, Lena was, Lena's girl was born while he was away and Tony sort of didn't fit in with the, he pampered the others but she was

17:00 sort of, he never saw her as a little one. And he was in Changi. He was one of the ones where Paddy came down round the bottom in the Queen Mary, they went straight to Java. They hardly had any bullets, they hardly had anything, well they were POWs. But I know a lot about the fellas that went in.

I wonder Betty, you mentioned the conscripts, you were talking about conscripts, were there any girls that were forced to

17:30 **go into the Land Army?**

No. There was no call up for men and women to my knowledge. They were, we did have them, the fellows that had been called up, a lot of them went to New Guinea but I don't think they went to middle east, I'm pretty sure of that, they were all volunteers. Well see they volunteered, they had no work. The

18:00 Depression was still there and they had no work. Paddy, my brother, believe it or not, he was sixteen and he was driving the buses up here. I imagine they never had a licence, I'm pretty sure of it in fact. But there was no work and a lot of them were thankful to be able to join the army and the air force. Not so many in the navy but army and air force there was heaps. And lot of the fellas, the air force fellas went to

18:30 Canada to train. But there was oh, the war did funny things, it made a lot of good friends. And you couldn't do it again, you couldn't imagine what went on during the war, you just couldn't.

I wonder Betty what was, I mean you mentioned that you joined the Land Army for a bit of fun,

Yeah.

19:00 **what was the, I guess the hardest thing at first to get used to about Land Army life?**

The first thing was, the hardest thing about Land Army life was filling that palliasse with straw and slowly getting it worn down so it was comfortable. And in Batlow I slept with eight blankets, I don't know how I turned over. I was sleeping on an open verandah and it was snowing. But we followed the footballers, I'll tell you a bit about them. We were all, well the girls were all

19:30 great friends with the boys there and we used to follow the footballers. Well a group of us went to Cootamundra and we won. And when we had such a party after, we were all in the room, all the boys were there and the girls, having a ball. And not thinking we're gonna get into trouble. So the Publican's wife kicked the boys out and told us to go to bed. Instead of that we went down on the station and they

20:00 jitterbugged half the night. But that was one of the trips but the horrific one was to Tumbarumba. And we went up on what was called Pat Waters truck, a big Chev with high sides. Seat down the middle and a seat each side. And it, when we were up there it started to sleet. And we knew that it'd we'd be in for a terrible ride home. Some of them didn't have their great coats. I did luckily enough. And

20:30 by the time we got to Laurel Hill there used to be a ho, pub there not a hotel, a pub it was. And a few of em stayed on the truck and they got told to get off and jump up and down, warm up a bit, cause we still had ten or twelve mile to go and it was snowing by then. And I went in the hotel and I, something I never done since, I went and had two glasses of wine, and, keep me warm, Dad used to tell us that.

21:00 And I was all right and when we got back to Batlow I could still walk but Dot Patrick couldn't, my mate, and they had to carry a few of em and it was just like a nightmare. The next day you couldn't believe that it wasn't a nightmare. But I know I, one of the funniest things, I shouldn't say on tape. Dot Patrick wet herself, when Norm was carting her,

21:30 she couldn't stand up, and she said she couldn't help it. But we laughed and teased her all her life and she died of cancer. We've lot an enormous amount. See what I didn't before is I've lost a third of me right lung in the lower lobe after surgery. But they don't know what deadened the lung. And I relate it and I'm sure of it, down to spraying with

22:00 arsenic and lead during the war and it's been a slow process and the surgery, well that's it. I can only walk from here to the letterbox and back again and I'm exhausted. And it's ruined me old age I'll tell you. I'd like to go to craft, I go to different things here, I go to craft. I go to day care one day. I'd want, I'd like to have enough air to be able to do the things

22:30 I want to do. I still drive the car, got one good foot. And I still drive it, but only to the shops or the chemist or the club. I go over with me young sister to the club every week or two, for a Spin & Win. But it's out, you go crazy sitting here. But the only thing, luxury I've got, I've got Shane acting as my carer for the time being. But if I didn't have Shane here, I guess,

23:00 if I, the kids'd have me, but I'd be, I'm a nursing home case. But me mind is too active to get in one of those places with all those lovely old fuddy duddies. And I worked for home care for nine years in Sydney. And I know just how some of them are. But I'm, I'm lucky, I've still got me mind, I haven't got Alzheimer's.

I wonder Betty, you mentioned the chemical spraying,

23:30 **can you tell me a bit more about that, what you were actually doing and what you were wearing while you were doing it?**

Well, if you have a look at that photo up on the wall later, I'll show you. We wore our boots of course and we wore boiler suits not overalls for spraying. And we used to tie a handkerchief around our face, our mouth. And you'd be covered in spray, you know, by the time you finished.

24:00 And I'm quite sure that some of my problem is related to that arsenic and lead, which they don't use now of course. And the red oil didn't worry us and then there was sulphur. I forgot to tell you that one. But I do think that like when you're spraying and the wind's blowing and the droplets are coming all over you. And me hat would be, end up, on oxycot, it'd be bluey green. Arsenic and lead, it'd be white. And over the

24:30 years, it's like the soldiers from the war and loading fibro, getting that, oh I can't thing of the name of it but from the fibro, they took a long time for it to act on the wharfies, that's for sure. A long, long time.

Was anyone feeling, I mean considering you're covered in a lot of residue, was anyone ill at the time while you were spraying?

Oh a few, a few. We had

25:00 a few sick from work. We had, there were a few injuries. And if you were really hurt you went to Tumut to the cottage hospital. That's where, I had appendicitis, I had me appendix out and I went there. But you had to pay your own fare to come home on leave most of the time, you got one ticket a year. I went to Batlow seventeen times. And I paid, most of my money was going in paying fares. But

25:30 almost all of the trains had soldiers and air force and navy. And I think nearly every family that had a young man had someone in the services. But war does a terrible thing and I'm always thankful my kids have never had to go in, that's for sure, very thankful. But the Land Army in

26:00 my opinion were very neglected when war finished. We got no, we had no money, I was lucky I had a Mum and Dad and a home to go to but there was a lot of the girls that didn't have. And then there was some of them were grown women, not just kids, like us. We had some older ones and one of, one or two now, up at Wyoming and Henry

26:30 Kendall Village, Hazel Fenwick and Elsie Ford bought and sold and they lived at Davis town in that village, which is lovely. But they went there when they were both fit and able. And now Hazel's eighty-nine and Elsie died a few months ago. So they can't keep their house so Hazel's now in a nursing home, got a terrific mind, but she's nearly ninety. And we've got a lot of the girls, see I'm only

27:00 seventy-five. And I'm one of the youngest, that's still alive any rate, I am one of the youngest. And we used to look up to the ones that were oh, in their late twenties and thirties, we used to think they were old women. But our matrons were good. We had Miss England, she's dead now, she was very good,

quite religious. The next one we had, Miss Chris, she only died recently. And

27:30 she was very religious and she was always up at the church when it was on. And very good, kind person to the girls, a lot of them used to have a weep and they'd go into her and tell em their life story. And across the road from there was, I think it was one of the [(UNCLEAR)]. This is one of the things that I shouldn't tell you. And we were out this night and we were bored, bored to tears, nothing to do.

28:00 And we jumped over a fence and picked some lovely dahlias. And next day we heard about the vandals who'd been in, and she was, they were for the Tumut show. I never forget it. And we took em home and Miss Chris wanted to know where we got em but we weren't game to tell her. But oh, the things you do. I jumped in the swimming pool for a bet for two bob, in me boiler suit in the middle of winter, and there was ice on the ground. But silly things. We used to go on Pat Waters truck to

28:30 Wagga and play the WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force], you know. Vigoro was a game then, I don't know if you heard of Vigoro, it's something like softball any rate. And I had a, that was the first time I had a ride on a motorbike. I had a ride on Van's bike but we stayed in Wagga at a hotel the air force had taken over. And we used to swim in the 'Bidgee beside the

29:00 bridge there. But Pat Waters truck was the greatest thing ever. And we all wore our great coats after the Tumbarumba episode, don't worry about that. And then we went to Kiandra through Yarra, and Yarrangabilli. And I was at Yarrangabilli Caves when the, a whole lot of us, a truck load of us, when Mrs Day I think her name was, the publican there, at Caves

29:30 House, won the lottery. And Pat Waters was too drunk and couldn't drive the truck. We all got into trouble but what could you do. And we were safer so we all slept in front of a roaring fire at Caves House. But I've been through the caves quite a few times. There's also got a hot spa thing there you know, heated pool. But since the war it's been done up by the prisoners. They put em there to do a lot of the

30:00 stone work. But they were fantastic trips. And our picnics, the Land Army picnics, the packing house picnic was down to a place called Brandembury's Flats on the Tumut River. And I was, it flows very fast, you know. And one of the girls said to me… I was swinging on a rope out into the middle and having a ball. And one of the girls said to me, "Betty, you getting burned." I said, "Bull, I've never been burned in me life."

30:30 And I kept playing and jumping and carrying on and oh, that night I was in agony, I had the biggest blisters you've ever had and I had to go to work because it was self inflicted. And the bush nurse covered me back in carbonated soda and vinegar. And years later one of my kids got burned and believe it or not it was icing sugar I'd picked up and oh I had a hell of a time with her. But we only

31:00 had a bush nurse, there was no doctor. And in many latter years there was, a doctor used to come up certain days of the week. And the chemist there, in later years, they found out he wasn't trained. And lots of different things. They had a town race at Batlow where the water ran round, round the, water, round the mountain. And one of the local boys, Billy Brown, fired a gun at something or other and it ricocheted off a tree and

31:30 killed the race keeper, the man that used to walk along and keep the weeds out. But I could go on and talk about Batlow forever, but I have to recall a hell of a lot you know. But some of the turn outs, I've been, I see a lot of the girls, or hear from them. It wouldn't be a week go by that I don't hear from

32:00 one, two, or three. And different ones come up, used to and stay with me but they're getting too old and too tot, and tottery. I can't get on a train. I might have a free ticket but I can't use it. And I, to travel very far, I get to Sydney and by that time I'm in a lot of pain. But …

I wonder Betty, you've mentioned a lot about how close you all still are now, how quickly did

32:30 **you make friends when you first joined?**

I made friends easy, I made friends easy, I don't know why but I made friends quite, very easy. And I used to have a retentive, good memory but it's not as good as it used to be. No I made friends quite easy, I got to know all the girls' names. When you get a new girl, like I'd meet you outside and say,

33:00 "Yeah, what's your name?" And if I did, and if I couldn't remember later on I'd say, "What was your surname?" And they'd say, "Smith." And I'd say, "Smith. How do you spell it?" They'd say, "S-M-I-T-H." And I'd say, "Oh, I thought it was Smithe with an E." But it's a good way to get to know them. But we had a few, one or two girls got pregnant I know that. But

33:30 Elma Seenie, she got pregnant, she was working with us and gee she was sick. And she married the chap and had about ten kids. But that never entered my head. I was twenty-three when I got married.

What was the, I guess the attitude towards Land Army girls who did fall pregnant?

The only one that I personally know, became a great friend of mine, over the years.

34:00 And she died of a stroke and oh she got past her seventies. But I know that Mrs Lester, shouldn't say it on tape, Mrs Lester arranged for her to have an abortion, I know that. But Mrs Lester's not here to hear

either. She was a middle aged woman, you know, when we was kids. But the CCC's fellas that were building the big cannery,

34:30 were older men, you know and they had plenty of choices with the Land Army girls. I can remember the, they used to have the Batlow Show and Tumut Show, they were great. And I used to ride a bit. But then they had all sorts of competitions and wood sawing. And I'd always go in the crosscut saw one with one of the girls, and win, occasionally. But that

35:00 there now is where they have the show is, there's a big golf course and a new pool, in Batlow. But the roads haven't changed. They're still the same as when we went up and down. But we did a lot of hilarious things. Dot Patrick, I cleared out from the hospital, I hated it, to be in there people looking after me. And they, got, found me in the picture show, took me back to camp. But we had leave passes

35:30 the same as the AWARS and everybody else. So we weren't allowed to go to the hotel, didn't worry me, I was only young any rate. And I used to think anyone that was drunk was nuts. But most, very few people broke the rule, very few. The publican'd never get, he'd never get rich on the Land girls, no doubt about that.

How was the discipline maintained in the Land Army?

36:00 We didn't have a problem in the camp I was in. But in one or two others at Curran I believe the girls were, if they were really annoying the matron they were made to chop more wood. But put it this way, down on Bishell's property, he had Italian prisoners of war, working there. And the lady that had the only cafe shop then, Mrs Nicholls, was a

36:30 Greek. But on a Sunday you gotta believe it, these, they were, they dressed em in maroon, army uniform but maroon, they used to dye their second hand clothes and things I believe. And they'd come in and go into Nicho's, they'd have a few bob in their pocket. And they'd go into Nicho's and make friends with the girls. And one girl, Kaye Ipond, married one of em. Dunno how or what but I heard in later years she married him.

37:00 But that, Mr Bishell was a German, and here we are fighting the Germans and fighting the Italians and still copping it. But...

What did you think of that at the time that you were working for people who, I mean your brother was fighting...?

We thought it was wrong. I don't think there was one Land Army girl really, friends of mine that thought that our blokes should be over there fighting and these blokes are sitting here eating three meals a day and

37:30 singing and, you know, enjoying themselves. They used to sing a lot, but then of course later on was the Cowra breakout. We had quite a lot of POWs. But I mean they were harm, put it this way they were mostly harmless people, they're like you and I. Only the thing was they were captured and had rules. But I know a lot of my friends that were prisoners of war of the Germans and the Japs.

I wonder, not the POWs but the

38:00 **land owners who were Italian or German, what was your attitude toward them?**

Well they'd been, put it this way, we were always friendly to everybody. And we never treated them nasty or anything like that, not at all. In fact I'm quite sure after the war a lot of em came back. See in Griffith, the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area was made after the First World War for

38:30 what do you call it, oh, it's got a name, can't think of the name of it. But they broke up the land and they were mostly Pommies and English people and Italians. And of course Griffith used to have a sign up, English spoken here. But no the, I never had any resentment of Italians or that, neither did Paddy.

39:00 He didn't like the Germans. And some of his pieces of Messerschmitts and things, I gave to Professor Dennis. What am I gonna do with it? I've got a cupboard up there with different stuff and in the bottom cabinet there, there's a hand grenade, with the pin out of it. And there's a land mine that Paddy bought home, deloused of course. And I offered Professor

39:30 Dennis the hand, but he said I don't want that. But I notice Ettalong's got a war memorial ah, museum and they put it there. But I've, the Land Army's got a badge in there too, I oughta give em that one there too. I won that, Peggy Williams daughter in law made that, which was good. But no, Batlow's, lives well

40:00 in my memory.

I wonder did you think of the people you were working for, I mean the Italians that you'd go in and have lunch with as an enemy, or were they...?

No. We never felt, they spoke a bit of English some of them, they'd had to pick it up, and we treated em as ordinary people but when we went in, if we'd go into Nicho's for tea and toast, which a lot of us used to do, they used to pass it over the back fence to us on a weekend, cause we had to walk

40:30 a long way to the mess hut. But we never had, I never had any feelings against em. I just thought poor cows, you know, when are they gonna go home? And that's true. When are they gonna go home? But Batlow and, I won't ever go back, now, I'm too old. Not too old, worn out. Shall I live in sick? But they were the best days,

41:00 the best days of our lives, I'm sure of that, I'm positive. And when we got that medal at Central a few years back, they, we didn't realise what they were doing. They'd ring us up and ask us something about what did you do, or your opinion or whatever. And apparently I said something to them and I never thought any more about it until the presentation.

41:30 And Mr Walker read my name out and then they gave a little ditty. One of the girls worked at McWilliams Wines and the bees got drunk on the wine she reckoned. And my one, Patsy Adam Smith was there and she said that Betty says, one of the nicest things in the world, you know, that she made the nicest friends and still has em. Bought, had, bought a big cheer from the

42:00 mob, I tell ya.

Tape 4

00:36 **I was wondering Betty if you could tell me about I guess the first work that you started doing when you got to Young?**

The first work I did was picking peas, pea pickers back. And we had an old English couple there, and they were, and they drank cold tea, all the time. And

01:00 yeah and we didn't have any water, they never supplied us with anything, they just said, "Get to it." And as I said three, and a half sacks of peas is a lot of peas I tell you, a lot of peas. And you really worked hard, you really worked hard. And you wore the, I ended up with hessian tied round my trousers to stop wearing the knees out. I can remember that.

Can you tell me how you

01:30 **pick peas?**

Yeah you pick peas by, you lift the vine up and you go down, one, two, three, four, five, six, down the vine, that's how you pick peas. And cherries you need a good thumb and, to get them. But like, the Sacketts ones, he had ones called Napoleons, and you don't see them now but they're a white grape, very nice and they use

02:00 white grape, or white cherry I should say. They use them in mixed fruit a lot you know, and flavourings, you know when you get lollies, Cherry Ripe and all that sort of thing. But cherries are quite expensive at the beginning, down the markets in Sydney, they raffle one that that they get thousands of dollars for the first one.

How did you learn how to pick peas and cherries?

They, well they show you, the farm, the grower, the farmer shows you, this is the best way to

02:30 do it and the quickest way. And the cherries the same thing, we used to pull the limb of the tree down and held it under your arm. On the young trees, not the big ones, Batlow had cherry trees as big as Morton Bay Figs, they were huge. But where I was the trees weren't really terribly old. But they'd give you a demo and you'd hope you could do just as well. But

03:00 the apples and pears were different. You had a big picking ladder with one leg at the back and you'd push it into the trees and hope you weren't gonna fall. But the hanging round, hanging em, a bucket of apples and pears specially, pears are very heavy around your neck, I don't know why we haven't got worse backs than we've got. I've got a terrible back and I've had, suffered with it all me life just about.

03:30 But...

What was the hardest physical thing about picking the peas initially?

Back ache. Picking peas, the hardest part was the back ache there's no doubt about it. Nowadays they reap the lot, put the vine in and out come the peas. But beans are the same, you go down, you start at the top, one, two, three and go to the bottom. But, course apples and pears you

04:00 go in, tomatoes not so much. They used to, I can remember in Batlow a man named Ryan, he had a beautiful crop of tomatoes, we got a frost, and he had none. He, what a heart break you know. But Batlow, the frost is, and then you get the snow, it's pretty terrible, in the winter. We used to tread on a puddle and think it was hard ice,

04:30 you end up in, and it was mud underneath it. You'd do that all the time but the fruit itself, you had to do the right thing and handle it gently otherwise it was, you're bruised. And nowadays they put em in big

crates so you don't do what we did. But ...

How did you and the other girls, I mean guess how long were your working days?

My working day?

05:00 Forty-eight hours a week on the farms, and minimum of forty-eight. But there was, you were never really clocked on or off or you never filled in time sheets or anything, you just turned up. And no doubt about it I, and we saw a lot of, which was just started, pine forests. And now around Batlow Carnamah and that are the biggest forests you've ever seen. And I saw where

05:30 what you call it, a typhoon came through and I saw enormous pine trees cut in halves, like someone bent a match stick. And it was a fluke thing, it was near what they call the Cow and Calf. I tell you about the pushbikes. We rode down to Tumut on pushbikes, but we forgot it's all up hill coming home. Oh we had a terrible time till someone come along with a truck and put the bikes in the back. And we did the same going to Laurel Hill.

06:00 And we went up there and it started to sleet, and we had to come back, and by this time it was getting close to dark. And there was three of us but we only had two bikes and we were double dinking I might add. And how we got back to Batlow was my friends got in the cupboard… in the cupboard, in the front and I rode the logs, all the way down. And I think now if my kids did it I'd kill em. If I saw em on

06:30 a motorbike I'd freak. But you learned the dangers you know, yourself and you wanna pass it on to your kids. But I talk mostly about Batlow because I spent my youth in Batlow, that's for sure. But ...

I wonder how did you manage to have the energy to ride a bike to Tumut, I mean after all this physical work?

We were pretty physically fit I

07:00 tell ya. And I rode a, I used to ride to work on the bike. No, it's all down hill to Tumut, how you gonna get back, you gotta get up the hill. And being young, you know, you do a lot of funny things. You do things because you need something to do. And there was very little to do in Batlow, you made your own fun. There was, oh there was a dance on a Saturday sometimes, Friday night or Saturday. I did a bit of

07:30 acting and stuff when I was young, bit funny. And we had concerts up there and I, in the hall there I've got some of the books, my names in em, in the books, of different sketches and things we used to go into. But we later on went to Wakehurst. After the war they closed, down most of the camps went and

08:00 we went over, when I went back the first time, we went to Wakehurst, Lady Wakehurst Host, she opened it during the war. And it's now a hospital. It was a beautiful building, it even had sewerage, septic toilets, where nobody, everybody had a hole in the ground. But it was really magnificent after being, putting up with what we had. Like we

08:30 were sleeping, our whole furniture was an iron bed and a couple of fruit cases, and your suit case. I know when I had my appendix out and Dot Patrick borrowed me sheets, I never got em back. But she got me uniform and gloves, and she used to bite her nails and she bit the tops out of them. Oh I was fuming, but they did them things. But Wakehurst had a tennis court too,

09:00 and there was some pretty good tennis players up there. The girls used to, you used to nearly have to book it you know, to get on to the courts. But it had a big patio off the big, off we call the rec. room, which is now a ward. And we'd get out there on a Sunday and lot of us'd go out there quite often. And I can remember Dot Patrick and them putting henna in their hairs, and

09:30 wrapping them up in brown paper, that's how, what they used to do. put the colour in, quite a few did that. And I don't know about the blondes. But we had two girls very fair, Irene and Jean, and we called them the Frisco kids. They were very blonde and very popular with the boys, oh that's for sure. But I don't know,

10:00 you couldn't compare the camp at Young with Leeton or Batlow, you couldn't, could not possibly compare. And it was also, like after we had Miss Chris the Matron we had an old lady, a Mrs Hogan. And she was old, her son was a Head Master at Broken Hill, the high school, one of the high schools there. And she was that strict, lights out at nine o'clock and she was

10:30 terribly strict. But we had no amenities at all, not eve, I never, we were surp, shocked when the war was over. We'd never read a newspaper, we couldn't afford one any rate. But we were really, a lot of us were stunned, "Where we gonna go? What are we gonna do?" And it was quite frightening, you know, we didn't want the war back but we needed something to do. Oh yes, it was quite frightening. But,

11:00 I don't know.

I wonder about times when you must have been a little homesick, especially initially. Can you tell me about that?

I was, well sometimes you did get homesick and there's no doubt about that. And I used to ring up Mum and she'd write, she used to write a letter occasionally and Dad wrote a letter occasionally. But if I hadn't heard from them, they'd end up

11:30 sending me a telegram, and say everything's all right at home. But I definitely, if I was young again, I would do it again. Every, there's not any of it that I wouldn't do again. Even some of the funny things we did. But your, you learn by your mistakes any rate, whatever you do in life. No doubt about that. But I,

12:00 I stayed friends with, there's still, one of them's still down there, I think one of the growers, one of the Faulkner's, he owns one of the big packing houses there now.

There must have been girls that just couldn't cope with the work and the conditions?

There were, every now and again we had girls come up and within twenty-four hours, they want mummy. And one in particular I can remember

12:30 she cried for the whole week, they sent her home, not suitable. And my references were all very good and in my blue service book there, there's a comment from the matron, a good camp girl, meaning I behaved meself. But one of the things that happened at Central One, I can remember we used to eat in the scout hall.

13:00 And it was about half a mile away, where we were. And this partic… I had the alarm clock, and it was dark when you got, woke up in the winter. And the alarm went off and I went and woke everybody up and got dressed, the ones that were working, like us. And we got three parts of the way up and nobody had a watch, in those days you couldn't afford a watch, it was a absolute luxury. And someone said, "Eh, winter, it's four

13:30 o'clock, a.m." Someone had done a, they did a joke on me, had re-set the clock and I never lived that one down. But we went up to the mess hut one morning, they fed us well, I gotta say that. And we wound up there and with one of the girls, we had these scrambled eggs and they were, didn't look like scrambled eggs we thought. And so we're abusing em and telling em that, telling the cook that they

14:00 used powdered eggs, which they used to have. And she came out with the biggest basin of egg shells you've ever seen in your life. But we always, like we had to cut our lunches and things and it was mostly tomato and it was very little, not a lot of meat. But we were fed well, you know, we got plenty to eat. But some, on a Sunday they sometimes we'd spend five bob and buy tea and toast and go back to bed, and that's for sure.

14:30 But…

I wonder you mentioned the girl who couldn't handle…?

Ah, that's, name's Rose. And there's a picture of her over in the corner over there of her, we had a reunion, about eight of us went to the Club, Hearlston, any rate doesn't matter the name. And she was there, and she'd married and believe

15:00 it or not went to Christmas Island, her husband was with Telecom. And she, there, and she was still a mummy, you know, all for her family, Mum and Dad.

What could the girls do to comfort each other when they were feeling upset?

Well you couldn't. You'd really, you could try to if anyone was home sick you know, we used to say to em, don't worry, you'll be home soon, the war'll be over. And you'd always say that to em but otherwise you wouldn't go up and give em a

15:30 big kiss and a cuddle. And any rate, talking about them you weren't allowed to sleep with anyone any rate, that was against the rules. I know one girl who got put out from Griffith, sleeping with another girl. Had a very strict matron and that's, she only died a little while ago. She married and had a couple of kids, she wasn't a, we didn't have problems with lesbians. And you'd think with a lot of girls all together, that could

16:00 happen but I never saw it ever. I saw a couple of girls sleeping together but that's cause we were frozen. Believe me we were cold, there was no heater, not like today, I don't know whether they existed even. Our rec. room had one chair in it, a fold-up deck chair on the floor. We had no amenities at all, we had a radio, and I don't ever remember even listing to the radio, being honest.

16:30 And I hardly ever went in that room, that's for sure. We used to sit on our beds and talk, as kids would today, that's what we were doing. But there's a big lookout at Batlow up the top and it looks down on the town and it doesn't look to me to be, the town doesn't look to me to be different from when I was there. But Connie See, one of our Land girls, she married,

17:00 I think his name's Brian Smith, good old-fashioned name. And she married and had one son and she lives on, what they call a Sunny Side Estate, part of Sunny Side Orchards, now gone housing. But like they do, they, it's very different now, the apples and that, they run drip lines along and all that sort of thing, like they do that in Italy too, when I was there. I saw the,

17:30 the same lines. Since the war, since I came home to live, I used to go away in the Land, with the Land Army girls and I used to take the kids camping and fishing and that. And I had our boat after I divorced my husband many years. And I kept the boat in the settlement and the kids learned to ski. And I was the captain, we went outside fishing off Bendalong and all

18:00 sorts of wonderful things we did. And I got it, when I first sold Sydney I got a bus ticket and went off round Australia. Went up to Darwin down the centre, across to Perth, the whole bit. I met my son in Darwin and went to Kakadu with him and all that. And then he was on a yacht coming home from Moresby with a friend, they came round the top. And

18:30 I hired a car and made him pay half too. Because he was ten days late coming in and they couldn't get in from the point up above Darwin, the, his motor was only small you know. But I did a lot of touring, I did a cruise, I didn't like that, not at all, I hated being on the ship, I wanted to get off. Went with my young sister, we won it too or I wouldn't have paid for it. And then I had a month in New Guinea

19:00 with Malcolm and that was great. And my son in law's sister went up with me, Lorella, she later married Malcolm. And she only lived two and a half years, she had a tumour on the brain. Very sad but he's married again, married with two kids. But New Guinea was, I, there's a photo hanging up there of me on the gunning placement up on the,

19:30 it overlooks the entrance into Moresby. The Japs they sunk a ship, it belonged to Bern's Philip, and I believe the Government and Burns Philip couldn't settle the argument who's gonna pay to shift it, it's still there, Macdhui. Macdhui it is, the ship, big one. And I went from More, I went over to, dropped into Lae but we went and stayed at Madang and saw the native villages

20:00 and we saw the Japanese War Memorial. You know what, it's, I think it was three or four, I think it was three lumps of pipe, a three inch pipe and two inch pipe stuck in a row, and that was the Japanese Memorial. But the Madang one, for the Coast Watchers, it's a beautiful memorial, like our Carillon in Canberra. And that was a very interesting trip.

I wonder Betty, I might just stop you there and we can talk about that

20:30 **after the war. But I just wonder, we were talking a bit about sickness, and I just wonder if there was a time when you'd just had enough and you wanted to pack your bags and go home?**

I, there was never a time in all the camps I was in that I wanted to go home except from when I was at Frisco, Fran, Frisco first in Batlow, I hated living at, being out in the sticks where we were and in the packing house.

21:00 And I overcame the packing house and enjoyed it for many years later. In fact the Sun Gold in Gosford that I went to after the war, the oranges, they got me to bring some girls down to, because they had export to do. And two of them lived here at my place, with me. Girl, Eccleston and June something or other, can't recall her name. And we used to go to Gosford and it used to cost us eight shillings

21:30 a week, return, our bus ticket. Now you, now it's about three bucks, three dollars, something like that.

In those, the first days I guess of Young and Leeton and, how much younger were you than I guess the other girls who you were with?

I was on an equal par with well you might as well say nearly half of them. I was on an equal

22:00 par, there were, well all my friends which you'll see written down there, there was only one or two that you could say were in their twenties. Joyce Haddo was one and Kaye Ipond and Betty Fazakeley. How I remember the names I'll never know. They were older but you, most of them in my own opinion, the ones I went through, mostly around twenty was nearly getting old, twenty-five you would be old.

22:30 And that's, Dot was sixteen, I was sixteen, Griffin was sixteen, Haddo wasn't, Joyce died only just recently. She was a big girl. Her son was killed, I don't think she ever got over it. But Patty Wishart lives in, on the Gold Coast, she writes to me all the time. And the girl I went to England with has now, Mary Hymes, she's Mary Bloom now, she lives

23:00 in Tassie at Wynyard. And we still ring one another, it's your turn or my turn. And my own particular mate she was bridesmaid, went nursing after the war. A lot of the girls went nursing because there was accommodation. And she, her accomm, she had no home to go to, her mother had divorced a long time.

23:30 And behind Saint Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney was a hostel and oh, they were lined up in there. And that's where Tiny, oh we called her Tiny, her name was Maureen, Maureen Boyd and she worked there. And she had a couple of friends that were nurses, she did her obstets [obstetrics] at Balmain, she'd already done her what do you call it, general. And she went to England and you couldn't work in England.

24:00 They wouldn't let you, though I think you can get a permit now but they wouldn't those days. So they went and got a car and drove all across Europe and then they went to Japan. The best years of her life was spent in Moresby, three years of contract. And then they went to the states, there was four at one stage. And they went across Texas, I've still got a letter she wrote me, I couldn't toss it out, it was so lovely. And

24:30 Tiny was working at Tweed Heads hospital and they were jitterbugging and acting the goat, and she was jitterbugging, she loved to dance. And she fell and she fell through a glass door and severed her

jugular vein and she was dead in minutes. A terrible thing to happen to such a lovely girl. A terrible accident. Well they had intended to endeavour

25:00 to get a nursing home to, of all places Darwin but they liked the tropics. But Tiny, and I didn't know she'd gone till they returned the Christmas card, you know. And I rang, then I rang up to find out what happened to her. But I, you get, now Roe Valerie, another one of the Land Army girls, she was, I think she was the only one, there could have been two but I know Roe managed to get to Uni

25:30 before they blocked the Land Army. They used to give you rehab, like that you know, for the other services etcetera , etcetera, but the Land Army never got any. Excepting Roe managed to get in before hand and she became a teacher. But she retired, she put all her money I think into Cambridge Credit and they went bust, they took all the girls with them, everything with em, you know their super. But Roe went to White Cliffs and

26:00 she wrote all the history of White Cliffs. And she was given one of the few things that happened because we tried for someone for the OAM [Medal of the Order of Australia] and Roe got an OAM for public, doing the history and research on White Cliffs, I've been there and done that.

I wonder Betty, you seem to, you said you obviously enjoyed Land Army days,

26:30 **what was it that made a good Land Army girl, what characteristics or personality?**

Well if you weren't pleasant, they'd soon make it tough for you and they'd do all sorts of funny things. We had one girl give us the pip and the girls got her bed and put it up in the air on a partition. But we had, we didn't have very many that were disagreeable, you did have

27:00 some, I got to admit that. Joyce Haddo was one of em, she'd snap back at you, you know, and like, mind your own business sort of thing. We didn't have very many but we did have, you didn't, oh how could I say it, you, it didn't directly walk up to someone and say hello or anything like that you know, it just happened and we were just all good friends. Thank God we were.

27:30 Well we were all there for the same purpose put it that way, and some of them were there for accommodation too. Quite a few were there, joined up because they had somewhere to live but then they enjoyed it, there's no doubt about that. I can remember Tiny with, I was with me husband, not married then and we used to go to the

28:00 Showground to the races, motorbike races. Now I hate em, I hear a, I hate motorbikes. But I don't know what else to tell you about in Batlow, I keep thinking about things. Oh yeah I've got one, the Gilmore Falls. I got some funny photos of us, we were at Wakehurst and

28:30 the four of us decided we'd go for, and camp out down the Gilmore Valley. And we went, we didn't have haversacks, we got our duffle bags and cut the straps and away we went. And we woke up, we were sleeping in this paddock, the, oh you gotta laugh. And we could hear this munch, munch and we were there and there was horses all round us. And here we are laying in the middle of the paddock.

29:00 But we went, the Gilmore Falls is a very pretty area. And to get across the Falls you had to walk on a wire rope and hang on to another one three foot higher. And Edna, my friend had taken her shoes off, I don't know why. She dropped one and it sailed down the, never got it back, and she had to come home with one shoe off. And oh that was a funny one. But there used to be black snakes with red bellies, very,

29:30 lot of em, very many, I tell ya. And we got down to the rocks and there was a couple there basking in the sun and I grabbed one by the tail, don't ask me why but I did. And it went back in the hole and I'm pulling and it's there, and thank God it didn't come out it would have got me. But young and stupid. We took it home and cut it's head off to have a look how long its fangs were. But another night we were out knocking off cherries, yet we picked em all day. And that was out near the

30:00 Gilmore Falls. And we heard a voice say, "Stand where you are!" It was Dellavalli's property. And, "Stand where you are!" And we thought, "Oh, we're sprung." And any rate I, we, I jumped down and hid and it was blackberries. Oh it was dreadful I tell ya. And it turned out to be Curly Harvey, he lived just down the way from us and he knew we were going, he'd been warned. But it gave us a big fright.

30:30 Another night we went chasing walnuts. Walnuts look like passionfruit you know, in a way, and it was nearly Christmas. And we went along Nichael Hayries, we could have asked him, he'd have given to us. And we went along there in the night, scratching round for walnuts. I brought home half a kitbag, I'll never forget bringing them home. There was no nuts at Christmas, they weren't a necessary item but

31:00 yeah I'll always remember crawling round on our hands and knees. But you did those things because you were bored, you needed something to do or a bit of excitement.

How much free time would you have?

By the time you left work and had a shower if you were lucky, and got up, cause there was twenty-two sharing a bath. And there was two baths, tin baths and one chip heater. And we used to

31:30 now I forget what I was gonna tell you, can't recall. Oh yeah, going to, no, I can't remember.

I wondered how much free time you'd had?

Oh yeah right. Free time was you worked half a day on the Saturday and then you were free. And that, oh that was

32:00 that and then on the Sundays we used to stay in bed as long as we could, especially in the winter, unless we were going away on the truck. But we used to well, if there was something on you'd go. But we mainly used to go to the pictures on a Saturday night, some of the girls'd go to the dance on Friday, or if there was one Saturday. But that, your free time was silly things like I just told you.

32:30 Like going down to Tumut or going up to Laurel Hill and knowing it's out of bounds. And we, you were allowed to, if you wanted sandwiches and that to take back to your shanty, there was no shortage food, none whatsoever. In fact we made Batlow, what Batlow is today. If, H.V. Smith was the founder of all of this at Batlow. He

33:00 lived to be past ninety and he did wonderful things for the Land Army girls and helped them. And even Mrs Nicho with the little shop, HV Smith set her up with her kids cause when her, the husband died it was, they're united, that's all you could call it, everyone. You help one another, it was just unreal.

How appreciated did the Land Army feel?

Oh,

33:30 the Land Army, the girls were, wanted to do what they did. They weren't forced to go and do anything and not at all but there were some jobs that you didn't like, like peeling spuds. You didn't like that, your hands'd be shrivelled with the water all the day, time, and it wasn't funny any more. But our free time was maybe going to the football

34:00 Sunday afternoon when it was on. Never followed the cricket but always the football, and afterwards.

What was the policy on fraternising with men? Was there a…?

You could do what you liked. If you had a boy, couple of em had, got boyfriends. A few of em, I could write some funny stories about them I tell you. But some of them had local boys but some of them'd get told they

34:30 were baby snatchers and cradle snatchers and things like that. But it just was, there was, the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] from Wagga used to, some of them used to come over but mainly on motorbikes, mostly. There were quite a few actually.

Who was getting called cradle snatchers?

Oh the women that went out with the

35:00 young boys, they called them cradle snatchers, oh yeah. That's and they use, like there was a shortage of men, a shortage of boys, all the time. I can remember one saying oh I went out with Billy Brown but I went out with him yesterday, you know what I mean. But some of the girls would claim a local boy and a few got married up there.

35:30 Alma Seenie, Connie See, just a few. And that's about all I can get before now.

I wonder, was there, did you ever have any boyfriends there or?

I had one from, not a local boy no, I had a friend from Wagga. And I wrote to him for a long time after the war, and I wrote to a couple of his mates in New Guinea.

36:00 But I was, I wasn't interested in men or boys of that age, some of the girls couldn't get enough of em but I was not interested in boys. And that's for sure but I used to like to dance. That's where I met my husband over at the dance, over where the, near the old club. And that's where I met Sid, but we used to go out a

36:30 lot to the dances. But not now in me old age I couldn't dance a step.

Was there any pressure to be finding men to go out with?

No, no, It'd… If a fella asked you to go out, you went. But they, a lot of em'd say, "Don't go out with him. He's red hot." You'd get a hell of a lot of that.

What did that mean?

Oh they were looking for sex. You got a lot of that. But

37:00 I know, you know, different stories about em but they're not for tape, that's for sure. But there was a lot of people worked there you know. I got a picture of the staff at the packing house and I reckon there'd be well over a hundred, maybe two hundred in it. A lot of people. But when the soldiers came back a lot of them didn't go back on the land.

37:30 And course before the war there weren't many women that used to do these things, but they certainly

learned, that's for sure, they certainly learned. And that was the beginning of women working like men, with the Land Army, cause they never thought we could do it. But we did it, that's for sure. How much tape have you got?

Oh a little bit.

Still got a bit?

I wonder how aware were you at the time

38:00 **that this wasn't considered to be women's work?**

Oh all the time, different growers'd say, "Don't do that. I'll do that." And we used to say, "I can do it. I can do it." You'd get quite a bit of that. But then you'd get people like Mr Smith at Leeton, that he didn't give a damn what you did, you know, you work and him and his missus went and lay down in, or went inside.

38:30 But definitely you'd get some, you'd get a few that were considerate. Piccolo the Italian in Leeton he was very considerate and stopped for morning tea and cold drinks and whatever. But some of them just expect you to work like a navvy. Like the Land Army girls' first camp was in Gosford, and the place

39:00 it's the CSIRO [Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation] or whatever you call em, they're in there now. And they were put into a place full of rats, window out, a real mess. And they had to spend the best part of the week cleaning the place up to make it liveable. But some of the girls you know lived on properties. Like I went, after the war I went to Yettomine place, I told you. And very isolated but I enjoyed the people,

39:30 for all of that I enjoyed you know, staying there. But some of them, the girls were given terrible meals. My cousin worked on a dairy farm and they had, they walked off, they left it. And then a couple I know were on WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK places, you know gathering the eggs and cleaning up the fowl muck out of the cages and all of that. And the farmer, he,

40:00 or what would you call him, a grower, I don't know, weren't very nice to them and just expected you to, you know, work like a man or a horse.

Did you ever just feel like slave labour?

No. I never felt like it was slave labour for me. I was willing to do anything that was put to me that was reasonable, that's well, that was true, I never knocked anything back

40:30 in the whole period but I know some that did. They said it wasn't, well it wasn't women's work. But I was pretty strong young girl, maybe I'm sorry for being that now, maybe it's got something to do with the problems I've got. But I'm fortunate that I done my touring before I, me bones went. But I'm very thankful for that, I've been a long

41:00 way.

I might just stop you there Betty, cause our tape's just about to run out.

Yeah, okay love.

So we'll stop and give you a bit of a break for lunch.

Yep.

Tape 5

00:33 **Betty, I'd just like to go right back to the beginning, and you mentioned earlier on in the day, the day that you left on the train to go to the Land Army. And can you just describe that scene at the train station with your parents saying goodbye and how you felt?**

Well when, leaving Sydney was, with that train, I was excited

01:00 but on the same token I was a little bit worried about leaving home and if I could manage and all those sort of things because Mum did everything for us. And, like some of the girls had never washed a pair of knickers and they got a few rude shocks. Such as Dot when she put her silk and wool clothes in the copper. But that was, I looked forward to it, you know. And I was excited to get

01:30 all this new issue of clothes. I hadn't had new clothes, I don't think hardly in me life. And it ended up being khaki.

I'm wondering if you cried on that day?

No. But a lot of the girls, there was a lot of young ones that did have a few weeps. And mainly before they got on the train. But there was one or two weren't suitable, well I think they went just for the fun

of it. And they didn't last, they got sent home as unsuitable. There were

02:00 a few of those. And a few of them just wanted to go home, it was pointless keeping them, they don't want to work and they only get sick. But after the war of course, the train we came on, all the photos of it, there was toilet rolls everywhere, there wouldn't have been any toilet paper for anyone. And all the locals turned out, everybody, to see the girls go. But some, a lot of us went back afterwards, well we had to. There, we, you

02:30 felt guilty, there weren't any men back and they had to wait for them to come back from the war zones, mainly New Guinea and all that. And the POWs that came back, Georgie Boyd was one of them and he was oh, full of Atebrin, they make it yellow you know, from the, from New Guinea.

And I'm wondering you've mentioned that

03:00 **some of the girls didn't quite know what to do when they got there, and your mother in fact had been looking after you a lot. What kind of shock did you get when you found that you had to start doing everything yourself?**

I got a terrible shock when I started to do everything myself, and you've gotta think, "Have I got any clean clothes?" Some of the girls had stored their clothes up. I never, I used to, I like to

03:30 even now, get em done nearly every day. But then again in Batlow we had a terrible time with the weather. And there was no such thing as a, getting em dry when you didn't have a fire to get em dry, so you had to wear your clothes a bit longer. And the same went for your sheets, they asked you to buy, when you were joining up you had to take three sheets. So you changed the top one to the bottom, etcetera. Was a funny

04:00 one. But I must tell you about Dot Patrick. Dot lived with me at Central One on the verandah, where the cows were, had been. And Dot had nowhere to go, her parents had split. And her mother was a pro, if you know what that means, in Sydney. But Dorothy wasn't sure, and poor old Dorothy she was coming home to stay with me, at my,

04:30 with Dad and Mum, who accepted all my friends any rate. And when, what's called the old box carriages and it, that's how we came down. And she said to me her mother was gonna meet the train. I said, "Oh, that'll be nice," because we got in about half past six in the morning. And she said, "But I hope she hasn't got a Yank with her." That was the first time I knew about what was going on with the Yanks. And when we were pulling into the station

05:00 she put her head out, she said, "There she is. There she is. Fur coat and all." She said, "At least she's got an officer, not a gob." And a bottle of whisky under her arm, it was a plain box. Apparently the Yank had got it for her. But Dorothy was really happy that she had an officer and not a gob. Any rate her mother said, "You can come down to where I stay, Dorothy, but you're going home with Betty, that's for sure." And

05:30 she said, "You come down and have a cup of tea." "Well," we thought, "well this little old lady, that's all right." And when we got down there, we're walking, it was a terrace place in Riley Street in Surrey Hills, the worst you could go to. And we're looking along, we're going in and the woman says, "Get out. I haven't finished." I'll never forget it as long as I live. And over the, we left her and went over

06:00 to my brother's and then up home. But in later years I bumped her in the train. And course she was too old to be a pro [prostitute] then. And I saw her a couple of times actually, but this time in the train she said, "I'd love you to come and visit me." And I'm thinking, "What am I gonna get into here?" And it turned out she lived in the same street as me. She lived in Military Road at Marylands and I lived at Guildford. But that was Dot. And then I always

06:30 sent her a card...

Well you also mentioned that Dot was trying to wash her silken stockings,

Oh yes and she put them in...

what happened?

Well they came out jelly, when you put em in they were jelly. But that's it. And I must finish telling you about Edna Patrick. And then I didn't get a card couple of years and I went over to where she lived, she had a beautiful home. And she sure did. And she'd gone into a home with Alzheimer's.

07:00 And we went to visit her at a nursing home but it's futile now she wouldn't know you. But, what was the thing that you wanted?

Well I understand you wanted to tell a story about Dot's mother?

That was it,

That was the story?

that was it, she, she used to laugh about it and one of the things she told me which I don't think should

go on tape. She used to say, “I broke in so many young Americans,” she said, “I think I had half

07:30 an army.” And I was horrified because I’d never talked about sex to anybody, really. Even me own kids, they could tell me. But yeah, that was, and she had a fur coat on, an American officer and a bottle of whisky. And I would have been so ashamed if it was my mummy, mother. Oh I really would. But we were shocked at where she lived.

And how do you think Dot coped with…?

She, Dot married a chap from Batlow

08:00 and had a son, we don’t know where he is now. And …

I’m just wondering if she was ashamed of her mother?

Oh yeah, oh very much. She was, used to hope that she wouldn’t turn up like that. But she was, she never told anyone she was a pro. And Mim and I knew, my girlfriend and I, we both knew because we went down to Riley Street and we knew straight away that’s what she was. But I was walking down Castlereagh Street with Mim

08:30 and we saw a lady with a leopard-skin coat and hat – they used to wear a little pillbox one. And you gotta believe it, it was my sister-in-law on her first wedding anniversary. I sprung her, did I ever. And then we went over to Balmain to the party and to Paddy, their first wedding anniversary. I thought, “If Paddy knew, he’d kill her, he would, he’d really do his block.” And I never ever told him.

09:00 And in later years they got divorced and Pad’s dead and she’s got Alzheimer’s. But yeah that was a real funny night. You know the place was, there wasn’t, there was full of Americans. There wasn’t a cup of tea there to be had but there was empty bottles. And we weren’t used to that sort of thing and we were innocent kids I’m telling you.

Well I'm wondering on that note of being really innocent, do you think at the time

09:30 **you wished your mother had told you more about sex education?**

Oh yeah, oh yeah, the, you were frightened to sit on the toilet seat, put it that way. And hardly ever did you go in the train, you know you used to think you could get VD [venereal disease] in those days. And quite a few people did get it from the Yanks. We had one girl, one lady, Doris, what was her name, Kaye Ipond, and we know that she got it. But whatever happened to her, she disappeared from where we were and

10:00 well nobody that I know heard of her any more. But that came out with the Yanks, you know, more so.

Well I'm wondering how, if your mother didn’t tell you about sex, and you…?

The girls did.

Well I was just gonna ask you, how did you learn, how did you…?

Well you’d listen to them, you’d listen to the conversations, you know, the different ones. And they’d say things like, oh guess who I was out with

10:30 last night, he put the hard word on me. And another girl’d say, he put it on me but he didn’t get anything. And this is, this was one of the things, we were only young and I wasn’t the only one, there were quite a few of us that had never had our sex education. I’m sure in the other services it’d be the same. But any rate I, the sex didn’t worry me, any rate. I was twenty-three when I married.

Well I'm wondering if your choice

11:00 **not to have sex when you were young, was**

Good idea.

not only a good idea for you but through, was that through fear?

Oh yeah. But I didn’t want any, I had no desire to have sex. I got a bit older, that was all. But no I didn’t have any desire at all. But some of them oh yes they did. But you were always, I was terrified if I did I’d get pregnant, and I didn’t want to get pregnant, no way.

11:30 **Well I'm wondering if you felt a bit of pressure from the girls who were saying yes?**

Oh not really, not really, we used to not exactly shun em but just keep away. If they wanted to do them things, most of em didn’t tell you. Like they’d tell you what went on but, they’d tell you who to avoid, that’s the best way to say it. But the boys were so young, you know.

12:00 **And what, if you can recall, when they would say, oh avoid that boy, would they say why?**

Oh you’d, mostly I think we were, if she say, she said, “Don’t go out with Billy Brown,” and you’d know straight out all about it. Even when I was having my first baby I didn’t know how it was gonna come out. And I was twenty-three, which sounds ridiculous. Very true. But

12:30 my sister married a soldier and that marriage broke up. Mum reared the two kids cause Al died, Ali died, my sister, her name was Alice really, she died and that's what happened.

Well I'm wondering if there was something about sex education or just life education that you learned from being with the army girls?

Oh well you listened to them, you always were listening to them, if they were talking about it.

13:00 But there was no sex education and because of that I've taken my girls to lectures and things. I didn't want them to be in the same boat as we were when we went away. Because we were, well life was so different wasn't it, in the war. We, I don't know, when we came home and that was a strange part of coming home. When we, I did

13:30 come home, the girls I used to play tennis with and everything, they were nearly all married. So life changed again once, you're a girl at one stage and you're a old married woman at other. And you found out that they'd married, a lot of them had moved away. And being that I was born here and went to school with all these kids and all of that, it was hard

14:00 to come home and pick up the threads of the girls. Tennis was all right but that was only once a week. But it was very hard. And where I worked at Gosford on the oranges I was the only girl until I bought June and Valerie, Val Eggleston down. And they used to think the girls couldn't do the work of a man. Well how wrong they are.

14:30 **I was just going to ask you a bit more about, you've told us a few stories this morning, but I'm wondering were, did any of the farmers ever give you an outright hard time for thinking that you couldn't do the work?**

No. Not, well they put em off. I just read out there while you were away that one of the Land Army old, very old magazine where a girl had been put off as unsuitable.

15:00 And what they used to do, the grower could ring, would ring the Matron in charge and just say that the girl you sent me wasn't satisfactory or suitable to the work. And then you, I never, never happened to me but I know some it did. And they'd say, "We're going to send you over to someone else and you might suit them." But not many of the girls,

15:30 not many of the girls went on their own. There were one or two of the girl, Land Army girls who were sent on the sheep stations and stayed there and probably they married the bosses son, you wouldn't know. But not many of our girls married in Batlow, I'd say half a dozen at the very most. And some of them went back, after their married, the marriages split up. And

16:00 three or four of them went back to Batlow because, I think it was because it was such a friendly place. And because down here you don't even know the name of who lives next door. Once upon a time you did. But it's so different.

Well you've mentioned some of the Land Army girls having or dating younger boys, some of the younger farmer boys, I'm wondering if there was any dating of the older

16:30 **men that were around?**

Only one or two that were infatuated that I know of. Because we were, being in Central One and not, Central Two had a heap of girls and they were a bit wilder mob than ours. Ours was good.

How did you know about what was going on in Central Two?

Well I worked with some of them. And with quite a few of

17:00 them over the years. I worked with some of them and they had a canteen, they had things we didn't have, you know down there. And some of the hostels well they had very little. Like my cousin Myrtle Milton worked up at the guide hall at Batlow and they lived in the, behind the Scout Hall. One of the funny things that happened to her, they had a Queen's stove. That's a funny little wood fire with

17:30 a, you can put wood in, it's got two little hot plates I think. And sometimes the girls used to sit on it, you know it'd be cold and Myrtle sat on it and got her backside burned, it was hot. But they lived in there. But the growers used to send in, I don't make em much any more, I don't mind apple pie a bit. But they used to have baked apples, cause they were easy to do. Oh they used to, every other meal, you'd get baked apples.

18:00 But and stews, very, a lot of, you never got a steak or anything like that, that was just taboo. But HV Smith did a wonderful job of Batlow, it was him that you know, you buy your asparagus green or white. It was him that made em turn it green. You know to pick it at the green stage. But …

18:30 **Well I'm wondering perhaps if you can tell me if you ever received, or in what way the farmers would show their appreciation for you doing a good job?**

Well in all my time on, in the orchards and in the packing houses, never once did I ever get, did ever, the growers might have said, "Thanks girls," you know, and that's where you get the book, Thanks Girl and Goodbye. But I

19:00 don’t know myself of any girl who had the hard word put on her by a grower but I don’t know about his staff, the younger fellas. I don’t know but I don’t recall anyone ever saying you know, he’s hard to get on with or he did this or he did that. There’s no doubt about it that with the, there was a lot of marriages split up. We only, I only knew of two girls that were married that

19:30 were in our camp, had been married I better say.

Well I'm wondering also about the local women and whether you had much contact with…?

Yep, the local ladies, the local women, we worked with them as teams. I worked with them in that packing photo, two were locals and the other two was us, there was four to

20:00 a team. And I was never jealous of anything they did, I didn’t care. But the local women were marvellous. We had Mrs Withers next door to us and she was, they called her Bridgie, she was terrific. And I was in Tumut hospital and two or three of the local women came down to see how I was and bring me all the things I

20:30 shouldn’t have, you know, to eat and drink. And that was one, Mrs Cromley and a couple of others, they had like a Red Cross thing. And they, if you were in hospital or hurt or anything like that, they’d come to your party. But as I said, we only had a bush nurse there if you were sick. And they’d have to take you to Tumut.

Well I’m also wondering how would you cope with, when you

21:00 **got your period?**

Well you used to get a box of Modess once a month. And that’s one thing they did dish out to us. But oh yeah, that was right, they gave you one and that was all. And when you got your pay, you went in and paid for your board and whatever you owed. You used to get a tobacco ration if you wanted it. I got mine and gave it to Dot, she was a heavy

21:30 smoker. And that’s where her money went. But she, we didn’t get many privileges.

But they gave you free pads?

Yeah. I’m pretty sure they were free. They, I could be wrong, I could be wrong. My memory’s not quite as good as that. But …

I’m wondering if there were any times that you, you know, you were a bit sick with your period and just didn’t want to go to work?

Oh yeah, plenty of times.

22:00 When you’re younger I think you get a lot more belly aches from it than when you’re older. It seems to settle down or something. I used to get a lot of pain with mine on, one of them things. But some of the girls’d be crook and wouldn’t, couldn’t go to work. But you never got sick pay or anything like that.

And what would you do?

Well you were broke.

22:30 And that’s for sure. I used to come home and I’d be broke. But I don’t know, Batlow’s just got a lot of happy memories for me, more so than Leeton and Young. I just read on a thing about imagine picking four baskets of cherries a day. That’s a lot of cherries I tell you. You had to pick three and a half, I used to pick four. But

23:00 some of our girls went to South Australia and they saved the grape harvest. But how important was, is grapes to everybody. Is it just grapes to eat or grapes for sultanas and raisins, the whole bit. And I thought they’re not suitable for the war effort but they were the same as the cherries were. And up north a couple of the girls

23:30 worked on a property, they’d being hoeing round and round cabbages and that. And the army picked em up and tipped em all to the tip. Because they decided they didn’t need em. But they should have given em away. And no doubt about that. And the girls you know, that had been hoeing and looking after em, were not impressed that’s for sure. But that did happen and

24:00 I’ve been trying to think of the funny incidents, every now and again one crosses me mind. It’s a long time ago you know. A long, long time.

Well you mentioned this morning, the very tall picking ladder, was that at Leeton that you were using that?

The, they used em in Leeton. In my instance, it was Batlow mainly. And those picking ladders are not light either, you bet ya, they’re ten foot.

24:30 And if you asked me to carry it now I couldn’t, on, for years I wouldn’t have been able to have carried it.

What I enjoyed mostly on the orchard was, what do you call it, can't remember. I can, when we were grafting, that's it. When we were grafting the fruit

25:00 trees. It was lovely to go back next year and find that you had Granny Smiths and Delicious on the one tree, sort of thing. There was, they had to, London Pippins and that, especially South Australia, they barred em, they said get em out. They were those green apple, and they used to have em on the railway, and they had Democrats on the railway too. Big, hard, like a flat, round, but flat if you know what I mean. And

25:30 we grafted oh, so many. But South Australia made em pull em out, that was an order. But we had a fruit inspector up in Batlow, Mr McKenzie. And we had a local lady was in the Land Army and was running the canteen at Central Two. And they got married, it shocked the lot of us, old McKenzie and her. The bloke in charge of the

26:00 cannery and everything was a Doctor Steeples, you gotta believe it, he was a German. But you wouldn't write home, could he?

You've mentioned that you loved wearing your uniform particularly after when you came back to the city, what would you wear when you were out picking or...?

Overalls. Oh we had bib and, our first issue were , not bib and brace, they were overalls with buttons up

26:30 both sides. And then they came up with bib and brace like a carpenter wears, a work man, with shoulder straps. But I don't know what they wear now. But the boiler suit was mainly for when you were spraying and things like that, that was the idea of that. But you got issued with a whole lot of stuff. But they, yeah had to buy

27:00 a lot of stuff yourself too, no doubt about it. But the, after the war was the hard part. Getting into civilian clothes, having accommodation and getting a job. That was the hardest part. But I don't know quite a few of em were gonna get married when the boys come home. I know I could have but I

27:30 didn't want to. That's for sure.

And you've mentioned that you were a bit of an actor?

Oh yeah, mainly in plays. I, we did, we always got chosen to do a few, chosen few you might as well say. We'd have a concert and they'd put on sketches and things. I always had a big loud voice and nine times out of ten I was in it. But and we'd have practice runs and all sorts of things, it was good fun.

28:00 It was good fun, good clean fun.

Where did you do that?

In the School of Arts. That was the picture show and the whole, it's everything in Batlow, it's the School of Art. But now they've got a, an RSL Club, and they've got a bowling Club, and they built a new swimming pool. And the roads are still not sealed where they should be, the main road is now I think. Nicho's Cafe where we used

28:30 to have our tea and toast is gone, the RSL is there. As a matter of fact they asked me, I got a letter, inside it is, asking me to join the RSL at Batlow and I said to Reg Hydes I've only just joined Ettalong, that's Ettalong, Hardy's Bay. Well he said, "That lets you out because you can't belong to two." I said, "Well I'll cancel the one here

29:00 because I don't go to anything." And he said, "I better find out about it." And the idea was he wanted my name on the Honour Roll in Batlow. And it didn't happen, you know, you can't nominate and go into one with the RSL and transfer, you're in that forever. So I fell for that, when I told Reg he was disappointed and so was I. And Batlow's

29:30 got a lot of money for their soldiers up there, and still got a lot of money to distribute. But that was Batlow any rate.

Well I'm wondering if you can tell me a little bit more about your performances and concerts that you put on, and about the, maybe the songs or music that you remember?

Oh well the Land Army had a lot of ditties and a lot of songs. Some

30:00 were clean and some weren't so clean. And the, you got to learn to know the songs all the, you know, they'd all, one'd sing it and next thing you knew the whole crew was singing it. But they converted things over quite often to the sound of the music, you probably heard that before. But you know...

I'm wondering if you could share

30:30 **with us...?**

One of them? I'm just, I been the Land, what; 'The Land Army is happy, the Land Army is free, the Land Army is happy when they're out upon the spree. They never fight or quarrel and they never disagree, for they all drop dead when the matron said come and have a drink with me.' Will that do you? That's

just one we used to sing. But Dad used to write a bit of poetry and he; As the train approaches Batlow with the engine pulling

31:00 hard, there's puffing smoke and belching steam that gets there yard by yard. And I don't know the rest, I can't remember but I remember learning the, at school, a lot of things you know. And I once had a photographic memory but I'm losing it now, and, oh yes. But like at school, changing it, my history teacher was my English teacher.

31:30 And for punishment I used to have to learn prose and do you know I can still recite great lengths of Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott. True. It's unbelievable that you can do it. And …

Well I'm wondering how those ditties and songs that you learned, helped you through the day when you were in Land Army?

Oh we often were singing, that was one of the, which is not amazing you know, together.

32:00 And we didn't have music like you have today, you know, TV'd be a godsend wouldn't it. No, we used to sing a bit or on the orchard sometimes you know they, we'd sing. But it'd be songs to suit the occasion, sort of thing. And there, oh there was a lot of songs. I can't sing that, put that one on tape.

What's that?

'Two Little Girls in Blue Land', did you know that

32:30 one?

No, but I'd like to hear it.

What, on that tape? Who's gonna listen to it? What was it? 'Two little girls in black slacks got in the family way, one, the other knew better she wore a French letter and that's why she's single today.' And you've got that on tape. But they used to sing them. And you people don't have the privilege of listening to it, but it didn't mean anything but we'd have a lot of fun. Especially when they put it in at

33:00 in camp and we had a very religious Matron, and the girls'd sing it and she wouldn't come out and abuse you, she'd shut her door. But I bet she was listening behind the door. I'm sure she was. But I don't know who invents them. There was, oh even my father wrote a lot and I used to say a lot of the prose, you know for, in

33:30 different things. And I can only remember, not all of them now. I'm going to write a letter to a pal that I knew better when I swagged it on the Overland in the days of long ago. And I'll tell him of new friends I've met and things that have been hard to get and how the old days were the best when we set out on the station to.. when we set out on the station to shear a sheep for the nation and we rallied round

34:00 the camp fires in the west. Yes I'm going to write that letter to that pal that I knew better and I'll meet him on the Castlereagh and tell him all the rest. And I would live with that with Dad. And so many, he used to write some about the Land Girls, you know. And we'd have a, we'd, a few of us used to like prose and stuff. And I still do.

You've just mentioned that your

34:30 **father wrote a song or poem about the Land Army girls?**

Yeah.

Why did he do that?

Well I don't know, he loved to hear from us, you know and all that but, out of the blue he'd send me up something you know, with a, like I cleared that the other day, there's all books under that. There was one of Dad's, a little blue, with a little blue bird on it, and it said,

35:00 something to you and I'll inviting you to my home, it's a lovely little passage you know. But we used to sing ones; 'For I don't like work and never did and I'm no M-U-G, cause standing at the corner watching other people work that'll never upset me. What's the use of kicking up a fuss if there ain't no work about, you can't get work you can't get the sack and that's an argument that's always safe and sound. So put your head upon your pillow and read your Daily Mirror and wait

35:30 until the work comes round.' They're were nothing to do with the Land Army but Dad used to sing em, the girls'd join in. I used to bring a lot of girls home. And the grand kids, this place was teaming with kids. And the grand kids'd all be here and we're now a big family. On that chart from about eighteen inches up, that's what the family, we're running into two hundred. From two people.

36:00 That's a lot of people in it?

Well I'm wondering, the Land Army wasn't actually a recognised service, I'm just wondering in what way you felt at the time that you were actually part of a Land Army, like…?

We were part of an army of women who did everything a man could do almost,

36:30 right? But in what way were we, what was the question again?

Well I'm wondering at the time, I mean this might apply more to post war, but I'm wondering at the time whether you had any connections with any of the other women in other services?

Not really. But the Land Army, the Land Army was

37:00 promised by, I thought it was Dr Evard but I've been corrected since. But some high up in the Parliament, we were told and they've got evidence of it. Whoever's got all our books now, or they've been put in the archives, they had evidence of it that we were promised the same things as other services. And Roe Valerie was the only, excuse me, was the

37:30 only who managed to get in, at thirty-three she became a teacher. I read it the other day in one of our magazines. But I don't know, we were, we're still rather angry that we never got anything, because we worked for growers and shifted from one place to another, that you couldn't get compo [compensation] if

38:00 you tried. Even if you hurt, if you broke your leg you could, but you didn't get any compo much. No way. And those, the things of today they get compo if they hurt their back and things. In the Land Army you could be dying and you wouldn't get compo. But you didn't have to pay for the doctor, I can remember that in Batlow, when he, in the beginning there was none, there was only a bush nurse. But later on there was a doctor and I can't remember

38:30 whether we paid him or not, we probably had to. But I don't know. Some things I don't remember, I remember like there was the school, and the Catholic school there. I don't remember.

And why, perhaps now looking back do you think your time at Young and Leeton wasn't so good, like what was wrong

39:00 **with Young and Leeton?**

At Young you didn't make friends as easy. You were working in terrible heat and you were exhausted, at the end of the day, you know, you really were exhausted. But I didn't enjoy Leeton so much. I think perhaps it was the heat. And them nicking the butter, you'd have no butter for your bread. There was

39:30 no entertainment ever. But at Young we had, I think her name was Gwen Peck, she was a radio announcer those days. And she was in, out at, with us, she was in the stables. And the locals decided they'd put on a concert. And so they bought a big truck, it was not a semi trailer, it was a proper truck with a big table top at the back. And we had an open air concert.

40:00 All the girls all sat around and it was all the locals but there was one or two of the Land Girls that had beautiful voices and they were willing to, you know, to be heard. And I can still remember sitting on the ground, you know, looking up to the truck. But Batlow never put anything on for the girls, excepting, what's her name mentioned the Queen competition when, on the medals there.

40:30 And she, Hazel it was, the little girl, Hazel was in the Queen competition, it was run by different camps to raise money for amenities which we never got. And one of my friends, Merle Hodson, she won it, she was the Queen. And what's her name, one of the others came, Hazel, Hazel Fenwick came fourth. She's still Hazel

41:00 Fenwick and ninety next birthday, October. There was, I was in quite a few concerts down there. Made, I don't know why they chose me but I, you know, I'd go in. That was entertainment, oh and go for bush walks. But any rate, what else have you got to ask me?

Well we might actually just stop there and change our tape.

Tape 6

00:32 **I don't know, you said you'd just thought of something to tell us?**

Can't remember.

Oh it'll probably come back to you.

I told you but I can't remember what I did yesterday.

I wonder Betty, you've mentioned a few times the Matrons at the camps. I'm just wondering if you could tell me I guess what their role was?

Well the matrons did different things. Our Matrons they shared in the

01:00 cook house in the guide hall. They, none, they never worked in the fields, ever. And one of them, sub matron, that's Doris Piddy I told you lives up Cariole, she was a sub matron. That means she was like a vice president if you know what I mean, she was second in charge. And she was at Young when I was there originally. And we're still friends

01:30 and it's great. And she visits some of the Land girls here that aren't too good, or rings em up, keeps in touch. But the Matrons, that was their main job was meals, working in the kitchens and things like that. But also keeping the girls in order. And like I'd never seen any of them have a fist fight or anything stupid, but it can happen.

02:00 But really and truly the Matron was a somewhere, in my opinion, was someone there to open and shut the door. And work up in the kitchen. I mean no one made your bed or swept out, you didn't' do it yourself you didn't have it. And if there was anything really wrong, she'd want to know you know, what it was and try to sort it out. I can remember Dot Patrick gave me a pound note to mind.

02:30 And for some reason or other I went and gave it to Ella Chris, Miss Chris, the Matron, who wasn't really old. And Dot asked me for it a couple of weeks later and I said, "What pound note?" Do you know, I couldn't remember it? And I was in with Miss Chris and I said to her, "Dorothy gave me a pound note to mind and I can't remember that she gave it to me." And Miss Chris said, "You're pretty lucky cause you

03:00 gave it to me to mind." But oh I felt terrible over that, absolutely. But the matrons, Mrs Hogan, she should never have been a matron, she was too old. Far too old and she was too officious. Like, you would think because we weren't sworn in you know, as a service, well they shouldn't have had any jurisdiction over us but they did.

03:30 They made the rules and you put lights out at nine o'clock. But and then after the war we were told that we were only women that worked on farms and, etcetera, etcetera. We got a letter to say, which is inside, to thank us for all our work, you know. But that was it, that was it. And to tell us that we were producing food

04:00 for, not only for Australians but for all the occupied territories in the Pacific. And that made you feel good. But other than that, we got nothing. I, they paid your fare home and you, we should have got some money to be able to pay a week or a fortnight's board and to get a job if you, well there were jobs around. During the war there were jobs around.

04:30 But my brothers were in essential services and my husband wasn't, he, well later husband, he was at Commonwealth Engineering, that was also, what did they call it, doing things for the war, the steel. But the things I did after the war was mainly I went fruit packing. And then

05:00 after I divorced my husband of twenty something years. I was glad I did what I did it, cause it brought peace you know to the house and to the kids as well. But we built the garage and we lived in that and we built the house and lived in that. And we used to come up here weekends and you know, holidays with Mum.

05:30 Till we bought a tent and went camping with the kids. And my kids, my eldest girl Lynette was twelve when I had Max and they don't know one another. She's, she was gone at sixteen and it's a strange thing that. But they don't relate to one another at all. My oldest three girls, they

06:00 the eldest girl doesn't relate to Marilyn and Chris or Julie. And they don't, Julianne's in her forties, she doesn't remember Lynette living home. That's strange that but she didn't see like, she'd go to work, when she was home she'd go to work and there and back and by, the kids'd get up and go to school and go to bed and they hardly saw her but they don't, Julie doesn't remember.

06:30 And all the others, I kept, Malcolm got his HSC [Higher Schools Certificate], the other couple left in Fifth Form, they got jobs and said we're finished with school, we want to work. And they've all done exceptionally well, there's no doubt about that, they've done exceptionally well, I'm quite pleased with em.

I wonder, you said to Kathy [interviewer] before that during the war, or at the end of the war you had the chance to get married but you didn't

07:00 **want to.**

Yeah I didn't want to.

Why didn't you want to get married?

I wasn't ready for to have sex with anybody, I just didn't want to get married. I didn't want to be tied up and as my friend said to me, you can be led but you can't be driven. And then I, funny part, then I met, that was Mervyn, then I met Luke when I working at Gosford and he had a motorbike too. I went out with him for quite a time.

07:30 And he'd been in the air force but Dad said to me don't you marry him, he's got a problem. And that was a war neuroses problem, a little bit but not, well he was good fun. But for some reason or other I just skipped out. He was building a house too. And he later on had the taxi in Gosford. But he only died a little while ago.

08:00 But I met Sid at a dance over at Ettalong and that's, and we come home four on a motorbike. Don't ask me how we did it but we did. And I ended up getting married in 1950.

Was there a lot of pressure, I mean specially at the end of the war on a young woman to settle down and get married?

Yeah well the fellas come home from the war and in my opinion they expected to pick up a wife. There were very

08:30 few, very few that didn't get married. In fact I don't know anyone of the local lads who didn't marry that had been to the war. I'm sure of that. There was a lot of kids born, lot of kids. But no that's one of those things that some friends of mine their husbands come home from the war and they were straight away pregnant. And

09:00 oh, yeah, Paddy was, Paddy and his wife were too. But, what else would you like to hear me say?

I was just gonna ask Betty, all this work you did for the Land Army, and then…

Got a kick in our seat.

I wonder, you've shown yourself to be a very strong person, I just wonder where that strength came from do you think?

I don't know I think that, well I always wanted to do well.

09:30 And you shouldn't have to compete but you did, after the war, you had, you were girls, I told you that before. And then after the war you were men and women. And you had to compete and then you had to compete for good jobs. And a lot of us had left school at Intermediate thing. A few of them ended up going to Business College, but we were too late, you know.

10:00 I knew one girl was a buyer for David Jones. They, Merle worked for Snow Elliotts for nearly forty years and she never married but she used to be in line with the boss. And she was there a long time. But the sort of work, quite a lot went nursing because there was accommodation.

10:30 One of the worst things after the war they, what they had in Sydney was Warwick Farm and Merrylands and a few other places and they had, they were the old army camps, like Ingleburn. And they made em into accommodation for families and they couldn't build houses quick enough. The housing commission places everywhere. And I went to Sydney, I've still got the cutting out the paper.

11:00 I went to the Housing Commission which used to be I think it was Elizabeth Street, up the top end, complaining I'd had the application in a long time and you had to wait your turn. And a reporter came out and was doing a story and they put it in the paper. The next week I got a telegram, etcetera, I got a place at Warwick Farm. And my old man, I could have killed him – he wouldn't take it. He said, "I'm not

11:30 gonna get up there amongst all those so-and-sos and thieving people." And, Where would I put me bike?" you know, to go to work. We later bought cars I might add. But he wouldn't go and yet I had, and my sister and her husband lived in what they called the radar huts over Bankstown way. And they loved being there, because you got people around. See I don't have people around me here, Shane or

12:00 me cousin or whatever. But I like people around me, you know I prefer. This week I've had three of the girls. Saturday for Marilyn, Sunday for Christine and this morning, last night, Julianne. She's a lovely girl too. I haven't got a photo of either they're over on the wall. But…

You said Betty how much you loved being around people,

12:30 **but I just wonder while you were in the Land Army was there any chance for a bit of privacy?**

Oh go and read a book on your bed, that was the only privacy you had. Three in the bath together, things like that, that was true. In, never, I never did that but I know two or three of them, they'd be in a hurry and they were going out and they'd say, move over. But oh there, that went on. I was never shy but I was always modest.

13:00 There's a difference and big difference. But I did get along well. And I enjoyed being on Sunny Side, I really did. The things we did saddling, harnessing up the horses and things like that, getting bitten on the bum with one of the big draft horses and how, when I look at em now and I see that big collar, I

13:30 can't for the life of me, I can't think that I was able to put them on but I did. And amazing, I had a bit to do with horses when I was younger, but these big draft horses, oh boy. The collar and harness were always a problem but you did it, you got em on. And I don't know what else to tell you, I'm nearly given you a life story.

That's what

14:00 **we want. Betty, you mentioned before something about having to fire a gun at birds. I just wonder if you can tell me a little bit more about…?**

The gun. Well in Sunny Side they had an orchard of cherries, away, well away from the sheds and a long walk. So the boss said, "he, and the funny part was, the day before old Sam

14:30 had gone down, he was waiting for daylight for the birds to come in and, white cockatoos, they tear the

cherry trees apart. And he was waiting on em to come in. And they came in all right and he turned with the gun to fire it and it ricocheted and hit and oh he busted his nose and his cheek and everything because a double barrel shotgun's got a lot of kick, you bet. But when Winnie and I did, went over, we only had an ordinary

15:00 twenty-two. And as I say we got over as close as we could, fired the gun and the horse took off and we walked. Sam went crook on us for not tying it up, I can remember that. Absolutely. But there was another thing they used to do that amazed me. They did crystallised cherries on Sunny Side. And they used to put all the cherries into

15:30 the boxes like you still see in the shops, they're a small wooden case. Oh now I think they're cardboard, but they were wooden. And they put em in a big vat with sulphuric acid and they're cured. They're the ones that they use for cakes and crystallised cherries they call it. But I never ever ate any, I'd be frightened to. But I can recall doing it, you know. And

16:00 I can recall stacking cases, mountains of em, that were made. We, wet weather we used to do spuds and cut the, cut em up, and make cases. But that, most of that part has gone from Sunny Side over to another grower. Jack Faulkner, he's still there. "If I go there," he says, "why don't you come and stay at my place?"

16:30 And him and his wife, she's a lovely lady too. But that was Sunny Side. I can't think of anything much to tell you any more about Sunny Side. But the packing house was, well we always got paid, put it that way. But if you didn't work you got put off, oh yeah.

Can you tell me about the process of packing the fruit?

Well first, it's bought in from the orchards

17:00 and it's a, some of it goes straight over the graders, and some of it just goes in the cool stores. And mostly goes in the cool stores. But if you're doing a growers lot, they tip them onto a big wooden, call it a bench, but it's a big tray. And they put em on there and they go up on a grader which is about six foot high.

17:30 And they roll along to the other end and what happens is, they go into a holding thing and they come out on a belt you know, into big drums, like this big, they're about four or five foot across, and they revolve. But in the meantime there's a, I think it's three or four girls, sometimes more, if it's what they call a dirty drop.

18:00 You know if you have hail or anything like that it puts a ding in the fruit. Yeah, then there's a brown looking thing that, you probably seen on apples, you've seen marks and all that, you know on the things. But then they go along the grader and they fall into the right holes, the sizes, that's why it's all one size in a box. And then

18:30 you put your card in it, for, cause it's say a hundred and eighty or whatever, you put that. If it was two hundred odd you'd put it in the other sort. One is, which I think is still the same, they, fancy grade is apples and standard is second grade. They're the ones that are marked and etcetera ,when you have a look in the shops, you'll see that still. And oranges were

19:00 second one was plain I know that, I can't think what the first one was and I packed it for years. But Gosford also had same grader. Then there used to be little graders, they used to do some of the fragile fruit like tomatoes and they had canvas hoppers, they didn't have to fall so far as the things on the grader. But we had I think

19:30 it was three lots of graders, big ones in Batlow. And they cool stored stuff, cause the refrigerated ships came back and the, a lot of it went overseas. But now, we don't produce anything like we should for apples and that. If you went to Tasmania, or I worked down there, and

20:00 from Launceston up the Tamar was all orchards. I mean I was there working in '48 the Bell Bay, they built the big aluminium smelter works. And since then they've pulled out, I never saw an orchard, all the way from George Town, coming in to Launceston, which surprised me. I went looking for where I lived and it disappeared into houses, lotsa houses. And I used to ride a

20:30 bike home from work those days, oh in Tassie. But the Huon Valley down the Derwent they pulled a lot of that out. And the same as up here, you're paying a lot of money for lemons. And at one stage they couldn't sell em, so they pulled em out didn't they, and that's why you haven't got, oh lemons are big price. But in Griffith,

21:00 one of my girlfriends, June Galoni, married Tony any rate. Her name was McGruther and she's now Galoni. And she married a farmer, Italian, there, but they bought a, they had a lot of peaches and things. And they bought a picking machine which they have now, not hand picking, they fall, they the thing goes round the tree. And it was over a hundred thousand dollars.

21:30 And they used it and their neighbours also hired it off em. And all of a sudden Letona went broke, he didn't pay anyone. And that was a terrible thing to happen, to close down. So that meant that they had all that fruit and nowhere for it to go. So they put in vines during the, they put in grapes. And what a sin

to see all those

22:00 trees pulled out and that was it. So that's why you're paying dearer now any rate. But as June said, "she doesn't mind the vines, it's not as hard as, you get more time when they're ripe sort of thing. But she had about four kids, one of em was married to a doctor and the wedding broke up, the marriage broke up. And she, they'd

22:30 dragged an acre or so out of the farm, and built a house for their daughter for free. And they split up and he ended up getting the house on the old people's land. But that can happen. In Griffith they went to Mirrool House, the old guest house there. But I don't know a great deal about Griffith.

I wonder Betty with all the fruit

23:00 **that you were picking and packing, was there ever anything that you just didn't ever want to eat or see again?**

Yeah well I don't eat peaches or plums, I don't eat any stone fruit, I don't know why but I don't. But if you cook it I'll eat it. And I, no I could eat almost anything. I hate brains, I don't know about you, I couldn't stand them. But no I eat almost anything.

I just wondered if

23:30 **maybe picking apples all day had turned you off apples?**

No, I still love an apple. And oh yeah, I got sick on oysters once but I still eat em. But no I don't know, anything really. But you would think when you're working amongst apples you'd be having an apple and having a pear. Well I used to, every now and again I'd get an apple and I'd bite it and probably take a couple of bites

24:00 and put it on the belt. But occasionally you'd have one but doing silly things like going out to nick them walnuts and things is mad, but you wanted to do something, you had to play. But other than that the packing shed, we were all good friends, everybody knew one another. Absolutely. But

24:30 that's all I can tell you about that. Oh other than the new thing, the other new thing down there was asparagus. And they'd put it in at Brandy Merrys Flats and down as far down as Gundagai. And they found that the soil, everything was good. But that was another back breaker for the girls to get it. And the same went for cabbages. They dehydrated cabbages like they did

25:00 potatoes. And that was a smelly job. You hit the back of the cabbage to take the big awful leaves off and just and the centre goes in. And it goes on to a machine that looks like a washing machine till you get there and it's a row of blades about half an inch thick and they go round in a curl like a centrepiece. And one of the girls was cleaning up under the machine and her arm went up the machine. She had her, she lost her arm.

25:30 It was a terrible business and a thousand pound wouldn't cover anything for the rest of her life. I'll always remember that, of the machine. But they never had a guard on it see. But they're more severe on people now aren't they, protecting their staff.

It's quite amazing when you hear, I mean people without much training doing very, quite dangerous work

26:00 **at times?**

Oh yeah, oh yeah. Like even, I'd never driven a plough in me life, horse and plough. And here's me over, up and down over plough driving three horses and I wasn't even worried, I didn't like turning at the other end but I wasn't worried. And Mum, Dad couldn't believe that I did those things. But any rate after I got married we didn't, I didn't have much money and Sid didn't give me very much, he was as tight

26:30 as you could make it. And I dug the whole back yard up from where the toilet is outside and grew tomatoes. And I was just starting to pick em and Sid said, "We're going away at Christmas. We can go down to your mate's place down at Tyabb in Victoria." So we went off to Tyabb and when I come home Mum had sold most of em. And guess who got the money? Mum. But any rate

27:00 I used to get up five o'clock, half past five in the morning and take Lynette, I used to worry she'd wake Dad. And I'd take her down in the pram and prune em and everything. And when you look at the yard now you wondered, you know, you wouldn't do it. I carried all the sticks home to prop em up from under the mountain here, on the bike. Till me sister come up and they had an outfit, a motorbike, sidecar, and put a lot in, but I always made effort. And

27:30 before I divorced Sid, I decided, we used to work for ourselves. And he had a big operation and things went wrong. Any rate it, I don't know, just slipped my mind what I was gonna tell you about it. But I was talking to you about home here and any rate we moved, we didn't, we moved to

28:00 Sydney and that was it. My Dad didn't like Sid, he told me so too. But all those years, we went away and did a lot of good things with the kids. And they don't see him very much. He only lives two streets from their place. And from where I lived, he never saw our kids for eight years. And he didn't know them,

that's the strange thing. I shouldn't

28:30 be putting that on tape, but he didn't know them. And Max was fourteen and he hadn't seen him since he was eight. And he was over at, to see Christine for something and Christine said to Max, Max how you going home? He said, "I'm walking. And then Sid said, "Max who? He said our Max, he didn't know it, he'd been in the same room as him. Julie was putting horses in the paddock at Yennora and Peter was the woman's,

29:00 one of her sons, he's dead now. And he called Julie to come over and said to Sid, "There's someone to see you here, Sid." He was under a car, working. And he said, "Hullo," and they, he, we called her Julianne. And Peter said, "This is Julie, Dad, ah Sid." And he said, "I heard you the first time." Then he had to say it was our Julie and he hadn't seen her since she was ten. And she was getting on and

29:30 he did the same to Malcolm at Narooma. Malcolm was twenty-one with a beard and all that, hasn't got em now of course. And they, he was in a caravan, he was camping down there and he called out, "Is that you Julianne?" And we were camped at Bendalong. And she went over and she said, "Yeah." And they were all there and after a while she said, "This is this and this is Mal." And after a while Malcolm said, "Dad, I'm Malcolm."

30:00 And you know the kids were so hurt. They were really, really hurt. And he'd never given em a Christmas card or anything and that was what happened. But I couldn't stop the break-up. I asked her to leave us alone, Sid and I and the kids, and she said, "While you buy me anything or take me anywhere I'll be in it," and that broke our home up. I divorced him; he didn't divorce me.

30:30 And I got the house and in the settlement, and I got the boat and I had me own car which I was paying for any rate, I had a big hole in it, Kingswood.

How did you learn Betty, I mean you've talked about the time in the Land Army, you know doing things like the horses and the shooting, and then even here with the garden. How did you learn to do all these things without any instruction?

Oh Dad was a good gardener, on next door there he had a very

31:00 big vegetable garden but I had, needed to earn money. Another thing I did, I did photos you know for Kingswood and that, all those. I think I walked from Ryde to Liverpool every street if you ask me. And then I went to work on the railway at Flemington and I wasn't separated from Sid but you might as well have said I was. I worked on the railway as a cleaner in the night time, oh I hated it

31:30 too. I was frightened at Flemington you know where you, the rail the sheds are, I really was frightened. Any rate I saw an ad in the paper for sorters, mail, trainee sorters for learn, GPO [General Post Office]. So I did that and ten weeks training and I worked at the Mail Exchange which isn't there now in Cleverand Street. And you had to pass the, what they call

32:00 the barrier. And you've gotta be able to sort up four hundred and something, I think it was four fifty but let's say that, in nine minutes, into the right places. And they come up from Canberra to test you. And there must have been a hundred and fifty of us started and you'd be lucky if you was fifty left. But the money was good and I did night shift, so I could get home for the kids. But they were long, hard

32:30 hours.

You mentioned that at the rail yards you were quite scared, I wonder during the time in the camps you've told us that often the toilets and showers were a long way away...?

I wasn't frightened there but the reason why I got frightened I'm pretty sure, was when I worked in Tasmania I came home from work on the push bike about nine o'clock at night and went to put it in the shed at the back, where the toilet was as well, it was cubicled off.

33:00 I went to put it in and there was a man standing there. And it frightened the lights out of me. And he took off up the yard and I went in and it turned out he was a town idiot, you know, he just used to wander round and sleep anywhere. But ever after that Henry and his wife sat up for me if I came home. But I'm sure that frightened me. But when I came home here to live, the

33:30 door for the back of the house was over, further, over at the edge. And we'd had two murders up here. And any rate they never ever found out who got one of them. And the other one it ended up it was to do with family. But any rate they were, Josie was the one they didn't remember. Any rate I was here in the house on my, I was on my own. And I, my, had a big red setter, and I put him out the

34:00 door to go to the toilet and he used to jump that side gate and go out and I don't know where he went but he come in. Any rate I went out in me night shirt, opened the gate, said go on Arch. And when he come back I went to, I got him and you gotta believe it, there was the shadow on the garage roller door, there was a man, man's shadow there. And I just got to the back door and I

34:30 bolted everything like fury, rang the police who came five hours later. But that terrifies me, I won't go outside in the night. Not unless I'm with someone, no way in the world. It's, that's could only be the reason why because we used to go out in the dark and didn't give a damn.

I was gonna say, what stopped you being scared, what?

I don't know. I think, I don't like being on my

35:00 own, I still don't. I wear it when I'm here, I got to, but Shane's down the back and I got two way. But I'm still frightened, I don't drive the car in the night time now. I've got, well, I can't drive unless there's a white line, so I don't, I know my limits, but I really do.

35:30 But life after the Land Army was well, some, I had some very good years, I used to love outside fishing. And I can show you some fantastic photos of fishing, out off Montague. We got wrecked on the bar, got the boat back, went a mile and a half out to sea and it's pretty easy for that to happen on there. But

36:00 I used to drive the trucks and everything but we had a garage hoist service there. I think we put in over three hundred hoists for Shell Company. We were doing very well only Sid had, got terrible asthma and they gave him shock treatment for it at Bankstown, the specialist did it. And ever after that he forgot he had a family, that was, that was

36:30 part of the result of the shock treatment, he just didn't want em any more. But in latter years the kids took him camping down at Narooma to get to know him, and they'll never know him. And it, shock treatment does terrible things. But he'd had a big, he'd had meningitis and he had a car accident, or motorbike accident, went under the back of a

37:00 truck. The other bloke was nearly beheaded and Sid was unconscious for a long, long time. And he had a bone cut out of his leg and five pieces, grafts put in to his head. But they used to tell me, you can't live long but the devil's still there, the devil in his own. But he's never gone to Batlow with me but he used to go to the Land Army Christmas parties. And he used to be

37:30 Santa Claus. And this was in the days when the kids were little and everything was good. But they'd go to the Lane Cove River, and for the picnics. And used to hire rowing boats, I don't know that you'd ever do it now, I don't know. And they used to hire boats so they'd take him up the river and dress him up as Santa Claus. And my kids, one of em'd say, "That's Dad, I'm sure that's Dad," but I'd never admit it. But he did that a lot of times.

38:00 We went to, I don't think it's still there now, the Coronation Ball Room it was and that's where we, well we announced our engagement at the ball. But where we used to have a few hundred girls, we're down to, well we're losing em like flies. We're at that age where they're all dying to try it I tell ya. We've lost a terrible lot of girls, in the last six

38:30 weeks we lost three real good friends, two died the same day. But yeah, it's just one of those things that we're all heading for it. But I'm not yet. I've got a lot of things I would like to do but I'm too disabled to do it. Terribly disabled and now I'm getting cancer things and all that. But

39:00 I can't blame the Land Army for that, because I wore a hat, always wore a hat.

I wonder Betty, why has it been so important for you to go back to places like Batlow and ...?

Cause we had a lot of fun. Oh well we had a good relationship with a lot of the locals. And because we were so young, this, that was our territory. And I still call Batlow my home town.

39:30 Because up here, I was born here and went to school here, I could go over to the club at Ettalong and I wouldn't hit anyone that I knew. A few, there's a few, still around but they married and they've gone and it's just different. Batlow is like this was when we were young. And it really, it is, you know,

40:00 and we didn't have criminals or anything like that those days, that's for sure. But the first time we had any break and enter here was two doors down. And Charlie, they didn't pinch anything, Charlie got up and the bloke was sitting in there having his breakfast. And he had, he was in the wrong house. He'd come up in the night and we never used to lock our doors. We never, we used to go on holidays and never locked the door.

40:30 But that was Woy Woy. But my life I told you was fishing and the kids I taught em all, I took, they used to ski. And I was, the only driver was me and I'd be sick and sore the next day I could hardly walk, you know, getting jolted around. And I used to go outside here fishing and then take Malcolm, now the kids all dive. And they, and I mind the kids and that annoys me

41:00 and worries me. If we go up to Terrigal and they go in the bay there. I'm sitting up there with kids four and five year old, you know, trying to keep track of them and I'm watching the water all the time for them to surface. But they take their dive gear down to Narooma, and but I don't like em diving. Julianne double dinked and parachuted for her birthday. And

41:30 Iris me cousin over here at Ettalong, she, for her seventieth birthday, she walked over the Bridge. And you gotta pay, a hundred odd dollars to go. But there's a lot of old people go over the top I'm told. Not me, I don't like heights. And I've flown a lot but I don't like heights.

I might stop you there Betty cause our tape's just about to run out. It sounds like the children are all a bit too adventurous like their mother?

Oh look they

42:00 have a ball, truly they do.

Tape 7

00:32 **Betty, one of the things we haven't really talked much today about is whether you got mail while you were away and how you kept in touch with what was going on?**

I, my mother always wrote letters to me. Occasionally one of me sisters would if I'd been a long time before I come home. In between, journeys back and forth, there's a letter out there on the table, of me writing to

01:00 Mum. Mum kept it, and it's, I look at the writing and I think gee, I was only a kid. But it's telling em about PPB, Pea Pickers' Back and things like that. It, I, Dad all, my father wrote a lot of letters, and bits of poetry and things. And Dad'd used to write to me and lot of that stuff on

01:30 the table in there, there's quite a lot of things you know from the Land Army and I don't know what to do with em. And Dad used to write me letters and he wrote beautifully, a lovely hand and but everything was what was going on.

Well I was just going to ask you, in what way you managed to keep up with what was going on with the war and what was going on with Paddy?

Well I used to find out how things were going with Paddy, via Mum or Dad,

02:00 you know, that he wrote, that he'd been in touch and all of that. But as far as the war was concerned, we, well we knew the Japs had entered Sydney Harbour and I think that was the finale of me knowing anything about the war. When we went to Batlow, well none of us bought a newspaper, we'd never probably bought one in our lives. And I was rather stunned, we didn't know that they dropped the bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

02:30 And the first we knew that the war was gonna be over, or over, was when peace was declared. And Sam Cromley come down the orchard to tell us that was the bells were ringing because the war's over. And then the girls started thinking, what are we gonna do, the ones without homes in particular. What are we gonna do? But when, a day or so later the, we're all packed up and the train came in to Batlow, and a lot of tears, you know, the girls with the boys

03:00 and I wont see you again. One of my girlfriends, Gloria Mackel, happened to marry a local boy. Connie Mara, you know, different ones. We didn't know that the, how the war had even progressed, we never knew anything about the Coral Sea, the battle. We knew Singapore had Fell of course, that was, I was only a kid then when Singapore Fell and we knew a lot of the fellas you know. But

03:30 the reaction mainly was, what are we gonna do? Well I went back and it was a good thing that I did go back because then in the second half of the year I applied to Sun Gold and went up to Gosford to work. They were stunned when they found I was a good packer. Because their men, they were fumbling. And they'd, you've gotta learn it when you're young. And you can't have old men learning to pack, your wrists are not supple.

04:00 But oh that was the score there. I was really worried when war finished of what I was gonna do but it didn't take me long to get work.

It sounds kind of odd doesn't it but in one way the war gave you an opportunity that you wouldn't have had

04:30 **otherwise?**

Oh yes, of course. And I mean in those days there was a radio and they'd want music. They wouldn't listen to the news, the girls would they would love to have music. I, before I joined up I used to know a bit about it. Because Dad'd talk about it you know. But other than that we didn't know anything. We never bought a Women's Weekly or a magazine

05:00 or anything because you couldn't afford it. You couldn't afford it or you didn't want to afford it any rate. But I, we did not know the progress of the war. And that'd go for nearly every girl that was in camp, I'm sure of that.

And what do you think it was about having or being frightened of losing your independence I guess?

Well I didn't know whether I wanted to come home,

05:30 to live at home. Because Dad was a stickler for rules, you know. And if you went out, what time you coming home. And I felt that I could be led but I couldn't be driven but Dad was very, very strict. With a lot of things but I found that my friends, or that I had, had either married, gone away or done

something, but there was no such thing as living together.

06:00 Not really, not in my day. But definitely we didn't know when the war was over the big re-shuffle, women didn't want to stop working, they got used to the money and they didn't want to stop.

I'm wondering if you had almost a sense of resentment do you think?

Oh no I don't think so, I just loved being in Batlow and

06:30 I liked working in Gosford as well but I didn't make many friends back up home, up here, we always call it home. Not so many. Tried playing tennis again and Sid would, he'd come up and he would muck it up you know, just being funny. But no I used to swim a bit with Paddy, me

07:00 brother, we had baths down here those days. But other than that...

Well I'm wondering, looking back on that time, perhaps, was there ever a time when you felt like you lost your cool?

Oh not really, not really, I always thought ahead. And when I said I was going to Tasmania the old man went off his head about it. You know, "You're going on your own," and that sort of thing. "You're not in the Land Army now where there's a lot around

07:30 you." He used to bore it into us. And but I was quite happy packing and the other job I liked was the mail exchange.

Well I was wondering if there was any, a time in the Land Army where maybe you'd made a mistake and somebody gave you a hard time for it?

No. I can only recall incident where I did me block. And

08:00 I can't remember what it was about, it was something easy and simple and we had this girl, she was, and I know she was quite insulting but I can't tell you what it was about. And she was knitting on circular needles and that's when I done me block and I pulled em all off, naughty girl, but that's the only time. I never had arguments with anybody excepting tell Dot off for biting the tops out of me fingers, out of me gloves

08:30 and things like that. But other than I can't remember having ill feelings and that but you had a few that did. You know, they'd say, "I'm not working with you," or, "You get out of the bathroom, I want it meself." You, and there was a few. And big Doris, that was so tall, used to, was learning the violin and that was hilarious. She'd be in the middle of the, and wouldn't matter what you

09:00 did, she wouldn't stop. Oh, hee haw, hee haw. That was big Doris, and I wonder if she's still alive, I haven't been in touch for about two years.

And what do you think was maybe the strangest thing that you encountered during your Land Army years?

I don't know. I really don't know the strangest thing. No, I couldn't say there was anything terribly strange.

09:30 No, walking in the dark, that'd be about all. No, I can't tell you that there was anything really strange, it was just something that like topsy, it grows. Learning to pack and being with other people and cause when I went to high school, I used to leave here at quarter past six in the morning and I didn't get home until that hour at night. So I didn't

10:00 keep in touch with the kids that went off to Gosford High. With their age, and me going to Sydney every day, well you lose your friends. There's no doubt about that, you do lose your friends. And I did and not that I did anything wrong, it was just the hours you kept and that's true. But I enjoyed school, I can't say I didn't

10:30 And I went for, about two years ago I was still mobile enough and I went down to their, one of, they have two meetings a year. And we went for, on a catamaran from the quay up to Parramatta. They picked us up from the Leagues Club and we all had lunch together. And to see those women after fifty something years. Little Connie See was the most beautiful little Chinese girl, and she's all crippled up, like,

11:00 with arthritis and shoes. There was a few I still remembered. I don't know why but a few of the names but I had to look, and they recognised me, nearly everyone. Must have made a name for meself I think, but they did recognise me. And I enjoyed the day out with the girls.

I wonder if you made a name for yourself because you were on

11:30 **stage a bit performing?**

Not at school I didn't. No, it, main, in the Land Army. At school we had, I wagged scripture if that's any good to you. Did I ever.

Well you've mentioned your, the pride that you've had in wearing your Land Army uniform, I'm just wondering, we haven't asked you, actually asked you to describe it. Can you tell me what

it was like?

All right. Brown hats,

12:00 with a badge like this was on the front of it and it's got your number on it too. And... Shane'll answer that. Yeah Shane answered it. And we had, originally we had a khaki dress uniform, kha, it was really rough stuff, buttons up the front which were always pinging. And we had a round neck jumper and we wore

12:30 oh our khaki shirts. One thing we did used to do was to starch our collars, really stiff, don't ask me why but we did. But we had khaki shirts and skirts and jackets. The same design as the AWAS but our were better, ours were really a lovely cloth whereas the other ones were pretty rough, you know the material. You know when something's woollen

13:00 it's fluffy, that's what theirs was more like than ours. The air force were not bad. But what I can't understand is, we got no benefits whatsoever, absolutely nothing. And we never left Australia of course we just worked around the farms and things. Now there's, I reckon there'd be more than ninety per cent of the WAAAF and

13:30 the navy girls that didn't, they didn't go out of Australia. I've got a girlfriend, she was in the cookhouse at Duntroon, and all she did was peel spuds and trim em up and she got a medal. But I never got a medal for driving the horses and the plough. But what, we were very and still are, annoyed that we didn't get that Peace Medal. Because

14:00 if you have a look in my books on the table there you'll find I've got leave passes and the same things, same restrictions. We weren't allowed to go to the hotel, oh we didn't want to. We weren't allowed to do a lot of things and we were ruled by the Matrons, you know, you had to go to bed like naughty little kids. But you, that was well, what went on there. But I still think we should have got something.

14:30 And I've written repeatedly, just to keep annoying them, I've written repeatedly to the Minister and we get the same answer every time that we were not, we were a service but we weren't a service that was like the AWAS and them. But we had to go for a medical at Victoria Barracks. And we were governed by, you know, there was sorta, it,

15:00 well, similar rules as them. But they got their fare paid home, we didn't sort of thing. But definitely...

Well I'm wondering, it sounds like from what you're saying and describing that you felt like you were in army...?

Oh yeah, we did feel like we were in the army, yeah of course.

Why do you say that?

Well the army had rules, and for leave,

15:30 mess huts and camps and all that, the same as, we had the same things, exactly the same thing but we did different work. And it was hard work. But I got to admit some of the nurses and some of the AWAS and them did wonderful jobs but so did some of ours. And there's, that's all I could say about that. But we were disappointed, what we, one of the things we wanted after the war was re-education. Well

16:00 the AWAS and the AIF fellas all got re-educated and one particular friend of mine, Bernie Weaver, was a prisoner of war in Changi and he lost his hearing over there, high temperatures do that. And he studied law and because he couldn't hear, he could lip read though, he was very good at it, he got a job with the Government. Whereas nowadays it'd be a different

16:30 story I think. But he's gone now but he was married to one of my Land Army friends, or she was married to him, which was it?

Well I'm wondering whether you felt at the time that your opportunities were limited by joining the Land Army?

Yep, oh yeah. Dad wanted, Dad was, Dad radio, he was a radio engineer and re-used, those days you repaired electric sets and all that sort of thing. And we had a business here and me brother Tom used to

17:00 do a bit when he was up here. But Dad wanted me to go into it and open a shop and I had no interest whatsoever to do that. All I wanted to do was go back to Batlow. I didn't want to, I didn't want to. I could've, but I didn't want to. And I was satisfied with what I did, till I got married. And I enjoyed working I think, that was my problem.

17:30 I did, I enjoyed working. But...

And what did that mean for you to be working?

Well I liked to be occupied and I got a very active mind. And I notice lately I'm not reading like I used to, things like that but I just been active, I was very active and I'm missing it now I can tell you. I used to walk a lot and ride

18:00 a bike and now I'm battling to get up one step. It's hardly fair I think but I worked for me money I was never frightened to hold me hand out I can tell ya.

No it sounds like you worked very hard. I've also heard stories, you've mentioned that you had to take three sheets with you?

Yeah.

And I've heard a couple of stories about girls playing pranks on each other, short ending the beds.

18:30 Yeah short sheeting the bed, we did all that. They were pranks, occupational therapy I call it, believe it or not. But that's, we did used to play tricks on one another and do some funny things you know. But you missed all that, afterwards you went, you came home, you went to work, you came home, you went to work the next day, and it was so boring. So terribly

19:00 boring. And I used to like to write, you can probably see that. And I've been writing a book for my grand daughter, it's over there. She wanted our, my life history as a girl, what you asked me. Well I couldn't, I could tell her a lot of things, like we had a water frontage here. I could tell her a lot of things of what I did and where I went

19:30 and trips overseas and all sorts of things. And I can keep her for hours and hours just listening. She's a policewoman, she's just flown out, two o'clock she flew out. And her mother's down there and she'll be, Marilyn'll be in Tamworth tonight, she's going home. But the grand kids are okay

20:00 all bar one, one lot.

Well I'd also like to ask you a bit about, you told us a story early on today, I think it was at Young when you got drunk with some local aborigines?

That was at Darlington Point out of Leeton. And I tell you what I was that sick, I pushed the wrought iron gate of the Showground and fell over. And I spent all Christmas Day, it was Christmas or New Year, I think it was Christmas

20:30 Day. Any rate I was that sick I never got out of bed, it nearly killed me the headache, oh. I always remember it.

Well I'm wondering whether that was your first social contact with Aboriginal people?

Oh yes, I never, when I did, when I used to go out back with our Dad to Lightning Ridge and that we used to see them. But you hear about it in the paper about the Abos you know, drinking habits and all that sort of thing.

21:00 And I don't think they were really allowed into the pub but they were there, there was a lot of them. Same as Darwin and all those places, there's a lot of them. But ...

I was wondering that seemed to be an isolated case or incident for you,

It was.

you never had further contact?

No. It was, that was it. I had no inclination to have anything to do with them, none whatsoever.

21:30 I never been frightened of em or anything but I just never, it was an Italian truck I was invited with a lot of other girls and to go There was a truck load of us really. There was, we had girls, I can remember, and boys sitting on the back of the, on the table top. But I, it's such a long time ago I can't remember a lot of it except I was giddy and sick. And that cured me for a long, long time.

22:00 **Well I was wondering a bit about the Italian families that you came into contact with and whether there was anything from the Italian way of doing things that struck you as different?**

Yeah, putting wine in the canal and drinking all day. No I found most of the Italians were good. I never, I didn't have one that picked on us, I never had one that offered us a glass of their

22:30 wine. But they drank it, the little bambino's, the whole lot, they lived on the stuff. No I don't think, I don't think that that introduction to having a drink made any difference to me, my life. I still have a couple of beers every night, I have two, I'm rationed. I, I never been a drunkard or anything like that, that's me medicine.

23:00 Stops me pain.

I was just thinking about whether the Italians that you came into contact with were keeping their own culture or trying to be Australian do you think?

No, the, most of them, I, not Piccolo was more Australian, but Ianelli's and them were still very Italian. Their kids were really Italian, you know, and they didn't speak

23:30 much English. On some, because the men were out in their fields you know, all the time. But old Mr

Ianelli he never spoke a word of it. But my own children are married to a Foreign Legion as far as I'm concerned. One married a Dutchman, he's now married to a New Zealander, the next one's Australian but the mother's a bit, was a bit Polynesian and Marilyn's married to a Maltese,

24:00 and Julie's married to Italian and Max has never married, he says why buy a book when you can have a library, and he's never married. But the Maltese are, their mother doesn't learn English, didn't learn it. She's now got Alzheimer's, this week they put her in a home. And they lived, she lived with the old things of goats milk and

24:30 awful cheese and stuff she used to make but they, the kids live in this world, not in her world you know. And Julianne's outlaws or in-laws, ma and pa we call em, they're very Italian. And they only go out with Italians, Mrs Muscat used to too, but they only go out with Italians, and they still cook like they were in Italy, all their sauces and things. But

25:00 Luce, my son-in-law speaks fluent Italian of course. And sometimes to his mother, you can get cranky if he's just talking the language. But Malcolm, well she's New Zealander, Lorella the girl he married first, she was Italian. I had brother and sister marry brother and sister and she spoke fluent Italian too. And Hank my eldest, the eldest one, he spoke five languages.

25:30 **Well I'm wondering if you could also describe the girls in the Land Army as coming from different walks of life?**

Well we had girls in the Land Army that they, there's no doubt they came from all walks of life. Like Merle Hodson I told you before she worked for a silk merchant for forty odd years, in the Land Army, after the Land Army, she went back to

26:00 his place. But, what was it again you wanted to do?

Well I was wondering if, in a group of girls that'd come from all sorts of different places, probably or a mixture of backgrounds?

Oh we had a great mixture, now the photo of that girl there climbing with the apples, that was the girl Wilkin, Nancy Wilkinson and she was a university student, had been and she was a graduate. She's a very talented

26:30 artist, very intelligent woman. But you struck, look you struck all sorts of people from all walks of life. The majority of them were clerical that I can recall, I can go through the whole list of girls but there were a few of them were factory workers that I can recall. But I was

27:00 different and Dot my friend was a, she'd been, was a young barmaid at a hotel.

Why do you say you were different?

I don't know. I, well I had a very stable home life, some of these didn't. Like Dot worked in a bar, in a hotel, Joycey Griffin, they had Griffin's boat sheds at the Spit, used to, they're not there now, their boat sheds are but they're not. Joycey

27:30 Griffin she went clerical and ended up going up the islands of New Guinea and that. I think that the majority of them went to clerical sort of work. Because the factory's changed, Ayres Own shut down, became something else, a lot of the girls went to the Egg Board and they were doing eggs. And another lot of the girls before Land Army was totally finished,

28:00 believe it not were sent to PA [Prince Alfred] to the hospital, quite a few. But some people of course were promised their jobs back after the war, mainly the soldiers but some of the Land Army girls were, such as Merle and they went back to what they'd been doing previously. I could've too but I didn't, I wanted something different to that.

And looking back now after many, many years

28:30 **of reflection, how do you think your time in the Land Army changed you?**

Oh it changed my whole world. Because I wouldn't have the friends that I've got now, that'd be one of the things. But the Land Army, I still did a lot of the things that when I was in the Land Army. But we used to go away a lot weekends and things or a few days at a time. I used to get

29:00 someone to mind the kids, sooner be there. And I enjoyed the company, we just, when we got together we were still Land Army girls, you know no matter how old we were, they'll always be girls. But they didn't change you, I didn't get changed very much, I don't think. I just made a new world.

I'm wondering if or in what way you perhaps felt more

29:30 **confident when you came out of the Land Army?**

Confident. I was quite confident but I think that if I had of got a knock back for the job in Gosford, I think that I might have been a bit shaky. But other than that no I've got a lot of confidence, I always did have. I always did have, I never was frightened of work to do and like going back to school sort of thing. When I went to the mail exchange, that was, you needed a brain and a half to

30:00 do what we did. And to get, course you got the barrier, you got more money but if you didn't, you were down the drain. But no I've got a lot of confidence, except in walking. I've always had a lot of confidence such as when I divorced my husband I appeared in the Supreme Court for meself and I didn't care.

30:30 And I did a real good job. The judge asked me to come and sit at the bar table, I was going so well. But that took a lot of confidence. You know, if you believe in something, well you've gotta have confidence to believe in it haven't you?

Well I'm wondering if you're saying, correct me if I'm wrong that some of that confidence to get you through your divorce came from your youthful experience?

Yep, yep, yep, it really did.

Can you explain a bit

31:00 **about that?**

Well, when I was young if I wanted to do something I did it, you know, and it had to be done right. And when we had the business in town, in Guildford, I was, I did the office work, the clerical side and there was plenty of it cause we had five trucks working. And I was very confident, there was a lot of paperwork, I never lost it. But when Sid played up

31:30 I never lost me confidence, I nearly did. I nearly did. I took a dose of pills and nearly killed meself and I got out of that. I lived to tell the tale and I said I'll get ya. And I got him that same night. I was sure that I was gonna do something and I did that. And I always had a lot of confidence and then I decided the only thing to do was to get free.

32:00 And I did. And I was confident I could do it but when they took legal aid off us that was terrible. And so I kept going back to court meself and I had all his money frozen and he ended up having to settle on the house and give it to me, the judge made him, and all sorts of things. But I wasn't a bit frightened to stand up there and dig for me and the kids. No way. So that's confidence isn't it?

32:30 I reckon.

Yeah that sounds like quite a journey [(UNCLEAR)].

It was. It was, but I was glad to come home here. It got to the stage where there was only Max left and where I lived at Guildford, it was factories, it was declared C class industry and they, factories went up all around me and the houses got burned down and taken away and all sorts. But I was, I liked living there

33:00 but I was still frightened of the dark. When Max my youngest bloke played up on me a bit, and he was gonna leave home. And, unless I'd have his mates, his mate come down and stay at my place. So I took the better of two evils and I had him but I wish I hadn't. And he was smoking pot and any drugs at all, oh I, don't come to my place.

33:30 **I'll just get you to straighten up a little bit. Yeah thank you. Can I ask you, looking back, perhaps, and maybe there's not one single moment, but I'm wondering what do you think from your Land Army days is perhaps the proudest?**

Oh the proudest days of our lives was when we went in the, I'm quite sure, was when we went in the Victory March.

34:00 That was something. I don't think you could have been more proud at all, Dad and Mum, you know, they're the same, they were thrilled to bits cause I was in uniform, and I hadn't done anything wrong and I hadn't come home pregnant that's for sure. But no I think going in the Land Army was the greatest thing I ever did. And keeping in contact with the girls I knew so well,

34:30 and now we're in our late seventies and over, eighties. No I think it gave me a lot of confidence. I don't think I'd have had more confidence if I hadn't joined up. It's a big thing fending for yourself. Making sure you can pay the bills, isn't it? But no that's it, that was it. But I liked what I did, a lot of the work. And if you don't

35:00 like someone you don't bother about em, like at work, but I never bothered. Living at Guildford, well I sold out and I blew the money, the lot.

Well I'm wondering if there is, in fact a, maybe a saddest moment looking back?

Oh the worst moment in my life was to find out that

35:30 I had no choice but to be single again, that nearly destroyed me, because I always thought marriage was forever. But I slipped. And no that was one of the hardest, that was the hardest thing in my life. But I've had a lot fun, I tell ya, lot of fun. And especially with the kids, with my, they're not kids, they're adults,

36:00 but especially with the kids, I've had a lot of fun. I was good to them and got em through school and camping and holidays and all sorts of junk.

And what did you miss about the Land Army?

Oh miss having the women, the girls around, that's all. I had a lot of friends and we'd have a nag or we'd go different places, and after the war a lot of us still met. We still do, that

36:30 photo over there, there's seven or eight of us, we, we meet usually each year. And now we hear how many grand kids they got. And how may great grand kids they've got. I've got fourteen grand children and five great grand kids. But that's about all, yeah. Me young sisters got more than me, Lily has. But my kids,

37:00 like Marilyn me that TV and video last time. One of em paid for me new shoes. Marilyn gave me the money to put all new blinds through the house. I fell over and broke me leg and had to stay there three months, that nearly kill, that was awful. And Marilyn is terribly good to me and Malcolm's the same, he's terribly good to me.

Well I'm wondering if you had your time over

37:30 **with the Land Army, would there have been anything that you would have done any differently?**

I don't think so. Clothes wise we had enough, we worked hard but we had a lot of fun, a lot of laughter. No I don't, wouldn't have changed anything. I really wouldn't have. Except living at friends at Frisco, I didn't like that, but the rest of it no I, if I was young and there was a Land Army

38:00 I'd do it again, that's for sure, I'd do it again. But I wouldn't like, I don't know whether I'd agree to my kids, I don't know. I've thought about it and when there was war in, Vietnam and all that, it used to worry me that they might take my boys. I wouldn't like that. Hope there's never another war like that.

38:30 But the kids are, well the kids are good. Malcolm, and Max went for a trip overseas and didn't have enough money so Malcolm give him another five hundred and Marilyn give him another hundred and he still rang up for more. But the others are, they're just good, you know. Malcolm wants, they want to buy me out. I

39:00 don't know. I don't want to go in a nursing home and while I got Shane I can manage. If he's not here I don't think that I, I'd have a go but I would probably have to give up. I look forward to em, you know, coming up and ringing up.

Well we're coming to near, almost to the end of our session today, I'm wondering if there's anything that we've missed out or anything that you would like to say about

39:30 **the Land Army?**

Well all I can say about the Land Army is that I'm glad I joined but it made me learn to finish things, you know, not half do things, you had to do that. But as far as I'm concerned the Land Army was the makings of me.

And how would you like the Land Army to be remembered?

Oh by our hard work I suppose. That's all I can, actually, talking about that,

40:00 we made Batlow, the Land Army girls made Batlow. If they hadn't had the Land Army all the fruit would have been wasted and the vegetables would have been wasted and we all felt that we did a wonderful job of Batlow. The Griffith girls feel the same about Griffith. And I don't know about the Leeton girls but Young was different because Young was only, we did a six or

40:30 eight weeks, that's how long the fruit lasted, put it that way. Whereas Batlow was an ongoing thing and so was Leeton. But the growers that said like McKenzie was the fruit inspector and Doctor Steebles and them said that women couldn't do the work of a man on the farm, but we showed him they were wrong. Absolutely. But no I'd, if I was young, I would do it again. Like

41:00 I chased some of my grand kids to join up things like the police. And they have done those things and no doubt, and they've all done well. But the Land Army to me was the makings of us. And that's how I'll always feel I think, I'm sure. I got a couple of photos I'll show you before you go, not all of em because there's too many.

41:30 But I'll show you a couple and I don't know what to do with them all. Our, Jean Scott who wrote the book, Girls with Grit, Jean's put a lot of her albums into… The Land Army had an album, one, just one for them. And they've… She's put em all into… What do they call the library in Sydney, the big one? Oh, any rate, doesn't matter.

INTERVIEW ENDS