

Australians at War Film Archive

Daphne Caine (Bail) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/617>

Tape 1

00:31 **If we could start with the brief summary of your life from start to now please?**

Right. I was born in Barraba in Northern NSW [New South Wales] in 1924. I have one sister Jean who is 3-years younger than me and that's all that's in our family. I went to school at Barraba to begin with and this was

01:00 in the Depression and my Dad was a carpenter who would travel anywhere to get work and we went to a place once up in Texas he was building tobacco barns and we had school in a tent. And then we came back to Barraba after that job and when I was in sixth class we decided to leave Barraba and we

01:30 went to Newcastle where my Dad and Mum bought a poultry farm. So from there I went to Warners Bay School for just about 8 or 9-months I think and then I went to Newcastle Girls High School. Which I consider myself very lucky because the Depression was pretty bad then and there were 16 kids in sixth class and only

02:00 3 out of the 16 of us went on to high school. Two boys and myself and the whole three of us all ended up in the forces and one fellow was an air force pilot who was killed and the other one was a POW [Prisoner of War] and then I was in the army. So after I finished at school the end of fourth year

02:30 which I liked sport better than I did school but I still passed everything and did quite well in sport representing the school in Sydney several times. And I got a job with an accountant. And then I had in January 1942 I came out of the office to

03:00 catch the bus home and there was a big placard Darwin bombed. I thought that's it. As soon as I'm 18 I'm going to join the WAAAF [Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force] because I hadn't heard of the army in those days. So just before my birthday an air force recruiting team came and so I lined up and I joined the WAAAF and I passed the intelligence test and the medical and then they asked for my birth certificate and I

03:30 wasn't old enough so they told me to come back in 6-weeks and I could go in. But anyway then this Army recruiting team came and didn't even know what the AWAS [Australia Women's Army Service] really were. So over 200 women applied and they sent 50 of us to Sydney down to Victoria Barracks I think it was

04:00 and we had tests and physical examinations and what not and they took 26 of us. So we then went to Randwick and did 3-weeks Rookies course after signing the pledge and having needles and all the rest of it. And

04:30 then we were told at the end of that that we were to be an experimental group in Newcastle to see if the women could do everything the men did on the big anti 3.7 anti-aircraft guns so the men could be released to go over to the Islands. So we did rifle drill. Guard duty. Learned to shoot with .303's [Lee Enfield rifles],

05:00 Owen guns [light machine guns]. Route marches and all the things that the men did. But 12 of us went to what was called the Operations Room and the other 14 went out on to the ack-ack [anti aircraft gun] Battery. Well, I was one that went to the Operations Room and then later on we had to change and it

05:30 was can be told about it now because of the laws of secrecy have passed. But it was a very secret job. We were told that we were to tell no one what we did. Not even our parents. We had to tell them we were cooks and my poor Dad was horrified the first time I went home on leave because he said, "You can't even boil water how can you be a cook?"

06:00 And anyway I had to, he was so upset so I had to tell him well Dad I'm doing secret work and that's all I can say. So he was happy then. But in involved such a lot of we had to learn on these secret codes and air craft identification and telephones and.

I'm gonna ask you more about the details of that later Daphne.

OK. Yes so

- 06:30 I'll just say then that I finished up in the Army and I lived in went to live with my Mum and Dad for a little while after the war and when my husband came home from New Guinea in Christmas 1945 we bought some land and built a house and stayed in Newcastle because my Mum was dying of cancer and
- 07:00 when she passed away in 1950 we came to live in Wallabadah I've been here ever since. So do you want to tell you something about that?

That's fantastic. What I'll do now is go back. You did that brilliantly thank you and start right at the beginning with your childhood. What are your early memories in Barraba?

Well, it was a quiet little town

- 07:30 and we lived in a new house which my father built on the in Cherry Street which ran right along the river bank and we had my cousins family lived diagonally across from us and they were a family of 6-kids. So my sister and I grew up very close to them. And we used to spend a real lot of
- 08:00 time playing down around the river and, as I said, I went to school. It was a public school and you used to walk which was about a mile to school and I had a big black retriever dog and he used to accompany my sister and I to school. Home he'd go and we'd come out of school. How he knew the time no one knew but there he'd be at the gate and
- 08:30 take us home again. One thing I can remember of at Sat'day afternoon the Salvation Army band used to play round about lunch time and the boys were bits of devils. They'd get a lemon and stand near one of the fellows playing the trumpet and they'd dribble and they couldn't play. That was just a little
- 09:00 something. But then we used to go to the Matinee pictures and we'd have six-pence to go to the pictures. It'd be thruppence to go in and then we'd spend a penny on an ice cream at half time and tuppence on sweets and you could go along to the counter and have one of those and one of those. You'd get a big bag of sweets for your tuppence.

What films did you see

09:30 **do you remember?**

Oh my goodness. Charlie Chan was one I can remember and another one I know I can remember they used to have a serial mostly a 'Cowboys and Indians' thing and everyone'd get all excited the Indians'd be chasing all the goodies and they'd come to the river and you'd think he was gonna have to jump in the river and everyone course had to go back next Sat'day to see.

- 10:00 But he'd get to the river bank and wheel his horse back and there'd be no end to the goodie. But yeah so that was the good part of the movies to see this serial every week. And we used to have concerts at school.

What about the Depression and that side how did that affect your family?

Yes. Well,

- 10:30 we were very fortunate only having a small family I guess helped. And, as I said, my Dad would go anywhere to get work. And I can remember there used to be all these swagmen going through the town and course the mothers used to tell all us kids don't go near them. And I had a little push bike and my cousin and I were riding along one day. We were a bit
- 11:00 out of town. We'd been out to the golf course and I was in front and the chain came off my bike and we'd just passed a Swagman because we're peddling like mad to get passed this Swagman and Sara kept on going and I said, "Wait for me. Wait for me!" And I'm terrified. Here comes this poor old Swagman and me with no chain on me bike and he said,
- 11:30 "What's the matter?" And I told him and he put the chain on for me and I was so frightened but yet I was so pleased. And I jumped on the bike and I can remember to this day I didn't even say thank you to the poor fellow but.

Were they men looking for work?

Yes. Yes. There was nothing wrong with the poor fellows. But just that you know everyone used to tell their kids to not

- 12:00 talk to them or anything which was bad really. And then another experience. My grandma lived on the outskirts of town and she had a great big veranda on her house and there was a double bed up one end. You know how they used to do veranda's in and a cot up the other and my Mum and Dad went to the movies one night and took us down to stay with Grandma
- 12:30 and I was in the cot and my little sister was in the double bed because they were gonna go home after the movies and she was only just a few months old. And my Grandfather heard the front gate open and

then no one came through the house and he looked out the window to have a look and there was a man had his hands under my

13:00 little sister and he was just picking her up and Grandfather yelled and he was an old bullock driver I should imagine let out a great string of language. Anyway the fellow took off and when my Dad and Mum came home of course there was big pandemonium in the house and they my Uncle and Dad went looking but they couldn't find him. But next morning there was a strange

13:30 Swagman in a hayshed about half a mile down the road and they said that he was a bit mentally unbalanced. So we often wonder you know what might've happened. So that was in the Depression to so whether he was just a swagman or what I don't know. But I remember we used to play rounders a lot. As I said,

14:00 we lived near the river and there was a big nice big area there which is now a lovely playground and kids from all round the town used to gather there and we'd play rounders and cricket. Had to make your own entertainment apart from the movies on Sat'day and. Yes I can't think of much else what we used to do. Oh yes I can. As I said, my

14:30 Grandma lived just out of town and every Christmas we used to go the whole family used to gather at Grandmas for Christmas and it was a real treat because it was the only time we ever had ice cream was Christmas dinner. And there was no cordials and all ice blocks and all the things that the kids get now and she used to make lemon syrup and that was our drink. And the men

15:00 used to have their beer a course and it used to be lovely all the family. She had a great big dining room table about half as big as this room I think and there'd be anything up to about 30-people there for Christmas dinner.

What else did you eat for Christmas dinner?

Well, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK that was another thing that you virtually only got at Christmas and Christmas pudding yes and custard and this

15:30 bit of ice cream. My Grandma used to make beautiful biscuits and things I can remember not very long before she died asking her for the recipe of these lovely biscuits and she said, "I don't have a recipe. I just put in whatever I've got." And so I never ever learnt how to make her lovely biscuits.

And then when did you move with your family?

16:00 When I was in sixth class I would've been 11 or 12. I have got it written down up there. Thirty, I started high school in '37. So it would've been 1936 yes I was nearly 12 that's right. Cause I finished sixth class at Warners Bay School and then I went to high school and I

16:30 did a commercial course which was just one out of. There was four. It was a girls high school. It was a competitive competition in the QC as it was called to get in to different schools round Newcastle and this was the only well there was only about 3 high schools and it was the one where all the

17:00 Doctors and Chemists and things came from. But the girls in the A-class they learnt three languages and then the B-class learnt two languages and the C-class we learnt French and all the other subjects that go with high school.

What were the other subjects?

Maths 1. Maths 2.

17:30 Science. History. Geography. English and French. I think that's. It was eight subjects we used to have. Well, then oh and Business Principals and then we continued on with that in fourth year but then you learnt shorthand and typing as well. I've forgotten what we dropped. We had to drop something. Science I think.

18:00 And that was only one year at the end of fourth year. What would it be called now? Year 11. But the other girls in the A's and B classes they went on to do the Leaving Certificate and then I got a job in an accountants office which

18:30 I was there for about 18-months before I went into the Army.

So tell us about your job in the Accountants office. What did you do?

Switchboard. Book keeping. I never used my shorthand because there was another girl there used to do that. And typing and used to do... the Accountant

19:00 was the Accountant for a lot of businesses and we used to have to take our turn at cashiering in these business at times. And if you were short on the change you had to put it in out of your own pocket so you were very careful if you were ever short on change. And I had a little funny experience there.

19:30 In those days there was we used to have to take a turn one Friday night a month and do cashiering in one a these shops because the shops were open Friday night and one of the boys at one of the other shops was pesting me to go to the pictures with him and I kept saying no, no. Anyhow this night the

phone rang and I thought it was him and I said,

20:00 "Don't be so." The voice said, "Who's that?" And I said, "Don't be such a sticky beak I know who it is." And it was my boss and he said, "Miss Bailey. I'll see you in my office on Monday morning." I really got a dressing down. But anyway I never went to the pictures with the bloke.

Did you have boyfriends at the time?

Not serious one's, yes. There was all the fellows in the forces

20:30 that you know we all used to go out with. But then and, as I said, I'd made up my mind I was going to join the Army but just before my birthday a friend of mine the one I tried to join the WAAAF with just before she went in we went to a dance at Charlestown and she

21:00 met a chap that she knew and he said Mabel. He was in the Army. And he said, "Mabel do you still make those lovely sponges?" and she said, "Yes." He said, "How 'bout bringing one out to our camp for us tomorrow?" He said there's only four of us there. And Mabel was staying at my house with my family and she said, "Do you think I could make a sponge cake

21:30 Daph and take it tomorrow? Will you come?" And I said, "Yes, OK." So she made this lovely sponge the next morning and a few other things we took for a picnic lunch and there was as she said four of these four soldiers there. They were all Signallers and I don't know what happened but there's one of these chaps we just looked at one another and that was the man I married. And he

22:00 didn't want me to go into the Army but anyway I still did and he was training in Newcastle and then in November they had word that they were going overseas or somewhere. So at that time I'd joined the Army so do you want me to go back and talk about the Army more or what?

22:30 **I'd like to take you back a little bit before we go and speak about your joining the Army. How did you feel about moving to a new place? How did you adjust?**

What into the Army?

Into Newcastle?

When we left? Yes, I think I thought it was alright and to a new school and I soon made friends and

23:00 we used to. I'm just trying to think. I think I used to ride a push bike to school. It was about a mile to the school. Yes I think that's how I used to go. I've forgotten. And it wasn't a very big school. About a hundred kids I s'pose compared to what Barraba was but then I'd been in that tent school

23:30 so moved around a bit. No, I soon made friends there. But then when I went to high school I didn't know a soul there. Yeah.

What did you wear to school in High School?

It was a very strict school I went to. You had to have uniform. We had black stockings and

24:00 I was a very keen hockey player and we even weren't allowed take our stockings off to play hockey. And we wore a navy blue tunic. A white blouse. Red and blue striped tie and we wore gloves and a navy blue blazer which was and a

24:30 velour hat. You know what a velour hat would be? A navy blue one with our hat band on it and they'd decree sometime in October that it was summer uniform. So then we had to leave the blazer off and we wore a white panama hat. Didn't matter if it rained or it turned cold or anything that was what you had to wear to school. And then they declared it winter and then you wore your blazer and your navy

25:00 blue hat. And we had a gym tunic that we used to play hockey in. Which not short. It was just about to the top of our knee and our tunic was below our knee. And in the summer time we used to go swimming at Newcastle ocean pool or tennis. But I always went swimming in the summer

25:30 and hockey in the winter. And then as well as that I was a cricket player. I played cricket for Newcastle which, as I said, I loved my sport so I was always somewhere doing sport.

What position did you play in hockey?

Left wing.

You a fast runner?

Yes, I said I represented school down in Sydney.

26:00 One year I came second in the NSW Champions. There was only Juniors and Seniors in the Juniors and in that same year I won the over arm skipping NSW Champion. Yeah. And a course we had all the ball games and we used won a few of those at different times when I was in teams.

26:30 And the relay I was always in the relays.

What sort of work was your father doing when he moved to Newcastle?

He was a poultry farmer.

So tell us about that.

Well, we moved there and it was quite a big old house but we had no electricity and that was terrible. All this study at school and by candlelight or just an ordinary old light

27:00 and kerosene refrigerator. And eggs. Had eggs by the thousand and if sister and I'd want to go for a swim after school we'd have to clean a basket of eggs and pack them that was always. We always knew you couldn't go till you'd cleaned the eggs because we used to everyone used to have to help in those days. Because by this time the war was on

27:30 and there was no employees that Dad could get or anything and my Mum was ill so my sister and I just had to do some eggs before we went anywhere and I did feel a bit guilty joining the army and leaving them but I just though no I've got to do it. So

So what's involved in cleaning a basket of eggs?

Well, hopefully most of them'd be pretty clean. You used to, well,

28:00 they used to have boxes. I think they used to hold 36-dozen. There'd be and they're cardboard trays. Similar to what you buy eggs in now only these were flat trays and as you cleaned them you used to just have to pop them in the holes and then Dad'd lift em away and put the lid on. But mostly they'd be pretty clean. You used to have steel

28:30 wool and just clean them with that or a damp cloth and we used to get thousands a day.

How many WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [chickens] did you have?

It used to vary but it was many, many thousands, yeah.

And how were they kept?

Well, there was big sheds and then they'd have a run a wire netting run out the front and

29:00 all the nest boxes were in the sheds. And course they had to be collected eggs had to be collected twice a day and my Dad did have two young fellows working for him but then they both joined the Army so he lost them. And then you know it was pretty hard work for him and Mum and my sister, as I said, was 3-years younger than me so she used to still

29:30 have to clean her share of eggs as well.

And what did you feed them?

A feed truck used to come and bring all the feed in same as they virtually do at WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK farms now. Only it all used to be in bags in those days. Not big tanks and things like they have now. So they used to carry it out it'd be so many buckets'd

30:00 go to each pen and Dad had this trolley thing on wheels he used to put in the buckets and then pull it along and go along and feed them in troughs made of wood used to be out in the yard or when it was wet he used to put them in the shed. And yeah.

And what did you do for entertainment at this stage when you had weekend time?

30:30 Well, there used to be a lot of dances because all the men in the services used to be around and movies. There was a picture show at Charlestown which was about 3-miles from where we lived. We could go there on the bus of a Sat'day afternoon and go to the pictures. At night only

31:00 to a dance and had to catch the last bus home and all the rules. My Dad was very strict I might add. And swimming. Used to do a lot of swimming down at the lake. Lake Macquarie was just Warners Bay where I used to go to school. So it was only about a mile down to the water. Used to go to Sunday school of a Sunday.

31:30 Yeah, that was about it I think.

And what about when you started working, did you give some of your income to your family?

Yes. Yes I did. My Mum said that that was part of growing up. You had to pay your way and I can't remember now what I used to give her. But I do know that

32:00 when we were married she presented me the bank book with it all in so I got it all back. So it just stayed in the bank. It was very good. Because we had no home to furnish or anything then both being in the Services and then after the war it was very handy when we built our new house.

And what about when you were working in the Accountants office, what did you do with your free time?

32:30 Well, we used to work pretty long hours and it was only really the weekend. And mostly a dance of a Saturday night. I can remember one experience I had. I had a couple of my cousins from Barraba down on holidays at our place and I was 13 and another one of my cousins was 13. The other one was 15. And Sunday afternoon we decided to go for a little walk along the road just to show them around and I was on the side near the where the cars went cause there weren't many cars either in those days because

33:00 cars were only allowed 2-gallons of petrol a month and not many people had cars anyway. But this single seater car with two men came along and it stopped along side of us and they said, "Would you little girls like to go for a ride?" And we just ignored them, turned our head away, and kept on walking. And anyway the car went along the road and it turned round went down the road then the next thing it

34:00 came back and they asked us the same question and we still ignored them and the fellow in the passenger seat said, "This little red head looks interested." And he grabbed me tried to drag me in the car. And we were all screaming at the top of our voices and luckily it was outside a house and the man hopped the fence and came out and rescued us. But it's something I've never forgotten. They say these things happen now but that could've happened all those years

34:30 ago too.

And was that something you were often frightened of?

Well, I thought of it quite often yes. It was a terrible experience.

Did they ever catch the guy who did that?

No we never reported it to the police or anything. I can still remember the man's name that came and rescued us, yeah.

35:00 He was a big fellow about 6-foot-2 so it was good that it happened outside his house.

And did you hear about girls getting kidnapped ever?

No, I can't say that I did. But I s'pose it used to happen because there wasn't the coverage of things like now you know you used to get the paper everyday but

35:30 I don't think I used to read it. Just had radio but not the extent of news that you have now. Well, even the war news it was all censored and secret and people didn't know half the things that were really going on. Yeah.

So tell us about your decision to join the war effort?

I don't know. I just

36:00 felt that everyone had to do their bit and I thought well I can do something. So I didn't know what at the time but I was very pleased that I did join that group because it was something that was a real part of the war and I certainly made me grow up.

36:30 From being a young innocent girl I soon grew up. When we did our Rookies it was terrible. There was no doors on the toilets or the showers we all hated that. Never been what would I say? Well, never really left home or anything much before it was a bit of a cultural shock.

Do you remember where you were when war broke out?

Yes, we were sitting at home and we had the radio on and a course everyone knew you know what thought that was gonna happen and Mr Menzies [Robert Menzies] was the Prime Minister here in Australia and I can remember him saying as plain as can be

37:30 England has declared war on Germany and therefore Australia is at war. Yeah, that was September 1939. I think it was something that we didn't really know how bad it was going to be. Everyone was saying it'll be over in a little while but it didn't. It went on for a long time.

Did your parents tell you much about their experiences of

the First World War?

No, not really. Neither of them my Dad was too young. I think he was just about 18 when the war ended. Yes, he would be because he was born in 1901 and the war ended in 1918 so he was too young. But I do remember having a couple of Uncles

38:30 one had a very badly disfigured face and he was very ill because he was gassed as well. And I had another Uncle that had his feet turned in all funny they called 'Trench Feet'. But apart from that we didn't hear a great deal about it. I think they used to have a little Anzac March on Anzac Day in the town. But

39:00 so many men lost their lives that you know there weren't many there to do anything.

The uncle who had Trench Foot did you ever see his feet?

Not without his boots no. But he used to walk like that.

And did they talk about your two uncles did they talk about their war experiences at all?

No. No, not really but they were a long way apart. One, well, he didn't even

39:30 live in Borwaba he just used to come there to see my Grandfather who was his brother. And the other one lived down in Newcastle so used to see a bit of him once we moved down here but he never. No I never ever remember him telling me anything about it.

And this is the uncle with the disfigured face?

Mmmm.

Did he have problems breathing?

Yes he did.

40:00 He died fairly young too, yeah.

And did your parents feel happy about you joining up when you first wanted too?

No, they didn't want me to. But I was determined I was going to. And my Dad said, "But you can't because you've got to be 21 or get my consent." And I said, "Alright, well, I'll forge me papers if you don't do it." Don't know whether I would or

40:30 not but anyway he signed it for me.

That's great.

Tape 2

00:39 **Do you think that what the lessons and the time at high school prepared you well for the real world?**

Well, in some ways no. It was, as I said, a very strict school. All

01:00 girls. All women teachers and the only male we ever saw was the Anglican Minister came to give scripture once a week. And we used to the only apart from sport once a year we used to go to Newcastle Boys High School sports day and

01:30 they used to have a dance once a year and we used to have one and we used to have one once a year and invite them. That was the only, what would you call it? Encouragement we ever had to with anything on sort'a the outside world. And sport. Which was all girls sport too as well.

02:00 **How did you come by the job in the Accountants office?**

I think it might have been in the paper I'm not sure. But I know there was quite a lot of applicants and I was lucky that I was the one, yeah, that was chosen. There was 5 girls with myself that worked in the office. And

02:30 a funny thing happened. Stockings couldn't be bought because clothing coupons had come in. And so one of us girls got the bright idea what lots'a women were doing to paint your legs and put a stripe down the back so it looked like stockings. And we used to go to work a little bit early and do one another's legs and the second morning

03:00 our boss must have spotted one of us or something and he called Mr Froud who was in charge of the office in and said he didn't like the idea of us having painted legs. And he said you could've said that you can afford to buy stockings and you can go without them now. But no paint and so we just had to bare our white legs.

What sort of paint did you use?

03:30 It was something that was specially made just to do that. I can't remember the name of it. But it was we used to just paint it on and then we had a dark pencil that we used to run up the back to make it look like a seam because stockings in those days had seams.

What was the job market like for young girls straight out of school?

Pretty hard,

04:00 yes. But then a lot a those jobs now aren't there either because all the modern equipment and we used to get a real lot of money not even. Even though we were specially trained office workers we didn't get as much money as a shop assistant.

Can you remember what the salary was?

04:30 No I can't really. But I know there was a union movement going to try and get office workers at least equal pay to shop assistants. So the girls in our office we joined and it used to cost us thruppence a week and eventually before I left we did get the equal pay to shop assistants yeah.

How did your mother go making ends meet

05:00 **on the farm?**

Yeah, it was pretty good business actually. I think they... cause then poultry farm was declared... a what do they call it? When people had a job in the war that you couldn't be called up.

Protected.

Protected industry. Yeah, so it was a protected industry having a poultry farm. And I guess some people went out of it and there may have been a shortage of eggs. I don't know. Probably a shortage of feed and all sorts of things I sort of got away from all that problem.

And in the office what was the atmosphere like?

We had a very happy office yeah. And, as I said, there was 2 older

06:00 women. Oh well, they weren't really but they were older than I was and there was the baby. I always seemed to be the baby everywhere I went cause I was the last one on. And one girl and I particularly used to get on very well and of a Friday night when we used to have to take our turn of working late they used to allow us 2-

06:30 shillings to buy our tea. That was above our wages. So imagine buying tea for 2-shillings.

What would that buy you?

A plate of soup and a bread roll and a cup of tea. Bout it yeah, but we thought that was alright.

When you heard about the war breaking out in Europe what was the atmosphere like

07:00 **back in Newcastle then?**

Well, people to begin with didn't worry about it very much. It was just over there you know. And then when a lot of our fellows started going over to the Middle East and Greece and Crete and that you sort of seemed to know someone that had people family over there and from then on it started to get a bit

07:30 worse and then as the Japs came in well all sorts of things were brought in Australia. All food rationing and clothing petrol all that sort a thing and all the houses had to have the blackout curtains and then they had RAP [ARP- Air Raid Precautions warden], I think they used to call them, Air Raid people. My Dad was one of

08:00 those and I remember he built an air raid shelter at our place. And that was a funny thing. They had all these air raid shelters all over the place in Newcastle but yet where we had this big secret Operations Room which was a converted school there was nowhere there for any shelters or

08:30 anything else. And the school kids all did air raid drill and what else?

How did your Father become involved in the Air Raid Wardens?

Just volunteered, yes. Oh yes, there wasn't too many people that didn't pull their weight. It was really a good time in that respect because everyone

09:00 knew that it was do or die and you had to pull your weight.

How do you think the atmosphere changed when the Japanese came into the war compared to before when it was only a European thing?

Yes, I think it woke Australia up. Yeah, once Darwin was bombed and people were thinking it can happen here.

09:30 Then some'd say no it couldn't. But then the Japanese started sinking our ships around. Then the little submarine got into Sydney and people really woke up after that. That had just happened before I joined up. That was another reason that made me think well I've got to do something.

What was the atmosphere like with people thinking

10:00 **that Australia could be next or Newcastle could be next?**

Well, I think deep down people were worried about it but they still went on with life. I mean there were still all dances and people tried to you know do all these things to forget it. We sort'a knew I s'pose that it could happen.

10:30 Very lucky it didn't.

Before the Japanese came into the war I understand that you were too young but did you have any ambitions to join the services when it was just the Germans involved?

Well, there wasn't any such thing. Only Nurses and that was one of the things I wanted to do when I left school and my father didn't want me to so I didn't. Cause, as I said, he was a

11:00 strict father.

What was his problem with you being a Nurse?

I dunno he just didn't want me to. So I didn't. But actually I did try and transfer when they formed. There was the Army Nurses and then there was VAD's [Voluntary Aid Detachments] they used to call them. They were voluntary

11:30 ladies that used to go and help in hospitals and that, and then they formed after I'd joined the AWAS they formed what they called the AAAMWS [Australain Army Medical Women's Service] which you've heard of. And I tried to transfer into that because I still had a hankering to be a nurse but they wouldn't release me because of the training I'd had outside. I couldn't do that. And we had

12:00 a few AAMWS that we used to meet up with and that round Newcastle. But it was funny when we first went to Newcastle we didn't even have a full uniform. But when eventually we all did get our uniform and we'd be down the street or somewhere people used to stop us and ask us what the uniform was. They didn't know.

Describe to us your moment of

12:30 **truth when you finally decided to join up what happened?**

Well, I was just really excited to think I'd made it.

But what prompted you to make the decision to join at what point?

I just don't know what point. I had it in me mind for quite a while that as soon as I turned 18 that that was what I wanted to do.

13:00 And I s'pose it really hit home when I got down to Victoria Barracks and took the oath and they started jabbin' us with needles and all that sort a thing and I thought well I'm here. I've done it.

OK, lets go back and how were you recruited?

Well, a recruiting team came to Newcastle I think it was advertised in the paper and I can't even remember

13:30 where we went. But there were so many women turned up. There was over 200 and I thought I betch'a I won't be able to do this and we had sort of a sat down and we had a bit of an intelligence test and then they asked us if we had any health problems which we had to fill in too. And then they gathered

14:00 all the papers up and they just called out 50 names and they took us down to Sydney then to Victoria Barracks and we went through all that rigmarole again. And they just picked 26 of us and then we did our Rookies course and went on from there.

So when you were up in this meeting at Newcastle somewhere what sort of things were they testing you for?

14:30 Just general education I think. I can't really remember what one question even was now. But

Was there a medical exam as well?

Yes. Dental exam. X-Rayed your chest and yes it was really a good health test as well as all the rest of the things.

At this point what did you know about the AAMWS?

15:00 Nothing. I'd never even seen one. We just didn't know what we were in for really. That was also something different. We'd seen WAAAF's around and army Nurses but that was all and very few WAAAF's too really. Then when we did go back to Newcastle it was an air force base that I went to where I was doing all this secret work.

15:30 Do you want me to talk about that now? Not yet.

No. I'm just trying to get the story about when you initially joined up. How did you feel when you were selected 50 out of those original 200 at the meeting?

I was real happy yeah. I thought that was great I got through that bit. Surely I'm gonna get in now but didn't know that it was gonna be dwindled down to 26 or I might a been a bit worried about it. But I thought once they sent us to Sydney I was in.

16:00 But I know one girl she got in the next lot that came in all she got knocked back for because she had a

hole in one tooth. Went and got her tooth fixed and then she got in the next group. So they were pretty strict.

What was your parents' reaction to you being accepted?

I think they were proud in the end. Yeah, they were really pleased

16:30 after a while.

But initially your Father was a bit reluctant?

He was to begin with, yeah. 'Cause he was a pretty strict old fella. But he was a great Dad.

What about your boss, what did he say?

Well, actually he himself decided to join the Air Force

17:00 and he said that he'd be closing his accountants office. But the three companies that he had that he did the accountancy work for they still wanted 3 cashiers. So he chose three of us and I was one that was sent to be a cashier permanent cashier. Then he actually

17:30 had only gone a little while before I sort of joined up meself. So and then as it happened he got knocked back and so he didn't get into the air force. I don't know what he did after that but. Yes, and our head lady she went into the WAAAF's. Yeah, I can tell you a funny story about that.

18:00 She was posted to Brisbane and I was in the army too and she came out to see me out at my place cause I was on my day leave. So I went back into the train with her and she wanted her mother to come to Brisbane and spend a few days with her up there. But travelling was very restricted and you had to have a good reason. So she said, "Lend me

18:30 your engagement ring and I'll tell them I'm gonna get married and I want me Mother to come up there." And she did that and she got a pass for her Mother and then she went to give me my engagement ring and she couldn't get it off her finger. So we went to the washroom and put soap on it and couldn't get it off. Cause the more we pushed and pulled the harder it was becoming and we went to a jeweller and he couldn't get it off either. And she was going back to

19:00 Brisbane the next morning and I was going back on leave. We didn't know what we were gonna do so anyway she went off home and I went back to camp minus me engagement ring and when she woke up in the morning she was able to with her mothers help and a lot a soap she got it off yeah. But we both had a bit of a restless night I'd reckon. I know I did.

So after

19:30 **you were accepted into that first 50, what happened then? Did you have to go back home or were you straight down to Sydney?**

No, well, we went back home only for about a week I think and then we went back down to Sydney on a troop train that pulled into Newcastle they had a spot for us. Yeah, and they took us straight out to Victoria Barracks then and where we joined up.

20:00 **There must've been a lot of men on the train? How did they treat you?**

There was. There's a funny story when we got sent back to Newcastle on a troop train and it pulled into Newcastle station and all these fellows got off and they were met and slowly disappeared and here was we 26 women the only one's left on station. And they'd

20:30 promoted one of our ladies to a sergeant and we had two Bombardiers and the rest of us were gunners. So the sergeant saw an army sergeant and a couple of fellows further along the platform so she went up and told him what we were and he said, "The ack-ack gunners?" And she said, "Yes." And he said, "That's what I'm

21:00 here for. But you're bloody women." And he had a horrified look on his face. So anyhow, we climbed into the two trucks and off we went to where we had to go and it turned out that this same sergeant he was at the Ops [Operations] Room where I went to and he was our sergeant that had to teach us a lot of what we had to learn. But he said he couldn't believe it but. Anyhow, when we got

21:30 there, there was nowhere for us to go. This, as I said, was an old school that'd been converted into a air force camp and there were army men there that were doing what we had to learn and they had to take one lot of WAAAF's out of the biggest room that was there and the 12 of

22:00 us were just given 12 palliasses [sleeping pallets] and we just slept alongside one another. Twelve of us in this one room and the WAAAF's didn't like us very much either especially the one's that got taken out of their room. But yes they used to sort of avoid us a bit to begin with.

When you got to Victoria Barracks what sort of things happened to you then?

Well, we took the Oath of

22:30 Allegiance exactly the same one as the men.

How did it make you feel to take that oath?

It was good. I was proud to be doing it. And then we were given our needles and we thought that was quite funny because there was a great line of men and we were the only women there and some of these big 6-foot men were fainting and going on. But

23:00 anyhow, we got out to Randwick. I don't know what it was but it was a place that had a big parade ground and a few huts and there were other girls there as well that'd just joined up too. And they ended up most'a them were drivers and office workers and things like that. But we all just congregated together and,

23:30 as I said, the big shock of the toilets and the showers with no doors to begin with and we were just given a bag and told to go and fill our palliasses up and we just slept on the floor for that 3-weeks too.

What uniform were you given?

Well, we weren't given any. We just were in our own civvy [civilian] clothes because they didn't really have enough

24:00 made to give us any. But eventually before we left there we all went to the Q-Store [Quartermaster's Store] and we were given as much of a uniform as we possibly could and a tin helmet and a gas mask and that tin helmet and gas mask became part of us. Everywhere we went even on leave we had to take that.

24:30 Because they considered if ever there was an air raid wherever we were we had to get back real quick so we couldn't go looking for where our gas mask was we had to have it with us. It was a bit of a pain actually.

What were your duties at Randwick there what were your daily routine?

Well, march, march, march. That was when we learnt all our marching and all the Army rules and

25:00 everything to do with the army that they could put in our heads and what an important job we were doing. We had a big thing to stand up to. Set an example. You know all the pep talk. Yeah, but marching, yeah. We had well there was two men sergeant's they used to take it in turns and they used to bellow like I dunno what.

25:30 But they turned good marchers out of us after all that time. Yeah, when we had our first parade in Newcastle there was other girls had joined us then they used to reckon the girls could march better than the fellas.

What other sort of little jobs and training did you have at Randwick?

Very little really what I remember. Mainly

26:00 that was just all instil the army into us and we didn't even really know right til the last day what we were going to do. Then they just called a well we had a march around this parade ground and there was a few colonels and what not there watching us and then they just called out our names and we grouped up to where everyone was going to go to and that was it.

Were there some women that didn't get through that early training?

No, not that I know of. Well, I suppose they'd all be hand picked too. They really wanted to do it. No, I don't think any fell out.

What do you think the men thought of you women?

Not much to begin with. Some of them didn't like it. Especially a few

27:00 that didn't want to go away. They didn't appreciate us at all. But as time went on we got on really well with them. We didn't have a great many where we were but it was different when we went out onto the ack-ack batteries there was well when the girls first went out to the battery they said you know that there was a lot of men there then. But slowly as more girls

27:30 were accepted they became less and less and the girls were doing most of it. But we still had men when I went out to do my stint on the battery. There were still men there and when we used to go on guard duty of a night sometimes there might be two girls and two fellas or three fellas and one girl. It didn't matter

28:00 what much who you were you know you just had the little guard house with three palliasses and you just lay down when it wasn't your turn. Got up when it was. It was a bit creepy. Pitch dark with a rifle on your shoulder.

You said you had a rude introduction to Army life with the toilets and showers at Randwick. How did you cope all you girls?

We used to be very bashful. Try and cover ourselves

28:30 up with towels and all that but it was only a few weeks there. It just was natural then. Didn't take any notice after a while but I will admit I was a bit shocked by it. And I've got a friend in Kindee who's an ex-WAAAF and she said the same thing happened to her. She had the same feeling too. Well, we all did really I think. But that was just a

29:00 little part of Army life then.

And that first uniform or part uniform that you were given at Randwick what did that consist of?

Well, I think it depended on your build and what they had. Some of us had a jacket and no skirt. Or some might have a skirt and no jacket and all that. But it wasn't a real long time. They took all our measurements and we got them then. 'Cause we had a summer and a winter uniform

29:30 and it was winter one when I first got mine and then as the summer went on they must a manufactured a few more we got a summer uniform and it was OK. But out on the Batteries we used to wear men's overalls. Men's army boots and a slouch hat. And in the Operations Room we had what we called

30:00 a 'Giggle' Dress that was our work dress and our boots. We didn't wear a hat in there because it was all indoor work. But we had a slouch hat to wear when we went on route marches and things.

So you did your 3-weeks and Randwick and then you were posted where?

It was called Newcastle Operations Room and it was a

30:30 converted school at New Lambton near Newcastle. And, as I said, it was actually an air force base and do you want me to tell you about that now? There was the Operations Room where the WAAAF's used to plot all the planes that were coming. We used to know ahead when a plane left Brisbane. So

31:00 they'd phone ahead so and then we used to work out estimated time of arrival and what height it'd be flying at and all that and send it out to the batteries so they'd be on the lookout for it. And so the air force had this plotting table and our working place was a platform that was built up above that and we could look down

31:30 at the table and see what was happening. And we used to do our computing, as I said, up above and take all the a real lot a phone calls to and from batteries ack-ack batteries all the time and, as I said, we had to learn all this secret work. Code names how to identify planes and learn to

32:00 estimate what speed they'd be doing and when they'd arrive over Newcastle. All that sort'a thing.

Are we talking about Australian planes or enemy planes?

Well, fortunately we never had any enemy planes but we had to learn what they would do and what they looked like, yeah. Plenty of American ones and Aussies, yeah mostly.

Can you describe in a little bit more detail what your actual job was in that

32:30 **Operations Centre?**

Well, firstly we had to learn all the code names of the anti-aircraft batteries cause they'd ring in and they'd say one DC-3 [Douglas Dakota bomber] flying south 3,000-feet or something and we'd have to check where that had left from. We would've already informed them but we had to make sure it was the same one.

33:00 So when we'd get a call could be Amberlea anywhere to say this plane was heading towards Newcastle. We'd get out our little set squares and things computer and we'd have to sort a work out when it was going to come over and then all the Batteries would ring in when they saw it and then we'd have to tick it off and work out when the next one was going to

33:30 come. That was our main job yeah.

And where were the records kept? Were they written on paper or what?

Yes. Yes all written down and ticked off when the plane went over. And then if there was suddenly a phone call come in and that plane wasn't on the paper that it had left somewhere well then there'd be a panic. We'd have to try and work out where it was. I mean you couldn't do

34:00 it these days. They'd be here and gone before you could even think about it. But the old DC-3's and that weren't very fast. And when we were out on the ack-ack batteries you got tuned to the sound of different ones you know. You could sort of hear them before you saw them and know what they would be mostly.

What sort of aircraft did you mainly see?

Mostly

34:30 DC-3's. Catalina flying boats. Lockheed Lightnings. Hudsons [bombers]. Boomerangs. Later on the big American ones. Now what's the name? I can't remember.

35:00 Flying fortress [Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber]. Liberators [B-24 Liberator bombers]. That'd be about the majority of them I think.

And what were these aircraft doing? Where were they going to and from?

Well, they used to go from all over the place I s'pose carrying the troops. I dunno. We didn't know what they were doing. We just knew where they left from and

35:30 what their where their destination was.

And how many people worked in this operations centre doing this job?

Well, we used to have an Officer and either a Bombardier or a like I was to begin with one stripe and two other girls. That was what a shift consisted of and it had to

36:00 be manned 24-hours a day. So we used to work 6-days and then have 1-day off. Round and round the clock and you could save up two. Used to get 2-days a month home leave. So if you were lucky you could and wanted 3-days off you could sort a work your shift and have 3-days occasionally. And

How long was a shift?

8-hours, yeah.

And what breaks did you get?

I think we used to go one at a time to lunch or tea at night whatever it was and that was all. Yeah. Used to have water to drink in between. That was about all.

Can you remember what times the shifts were between?

37:00 I think 7-o'clock in the morning from then 8-hours round and round then. Because I can tell you a story about when I got arrested for firing off a .303. Don't know whether I mentioned that. Well, when we first when to

37:30 the Ops Room we had to learn rifle drill. So at the beginning of this shift at 7-o'clock the one's that weren't on duty in the Ops Room we had to stand round and the sergeant gave us these instructions the first morning how to pull the bolt down point the 303 up in the air and pull the trigger. And then we learnt to

38:00 do that and then he taught us how to take the whole rifle apart and put it all together again as time went on. We didn't learn that the first day. But anyhow the second morning of this rifle drill. We didn't have our own 303's and there was 8 of us to have it this morning and he had 6 rifles that he'd handed round to 6 of the girls and he went away

38:30 and he got another one and he handed it to me and he bellowed at us, "Righto you girls practice what I taught you yesterday!" So we all like this pointed our guns up in the air and I pulled the trigger on mine and it had a round in it and I shot a hole in the wall of this old school where the Air Force and Army Officers were having their breakfast. And there was a hullaballo

39:00 and the window opened and heads came out and said, "Who fired that shot?" And I stepped forward and I said, "I did Sir." And he said, "You're under arrest." And before I knew what had happened an air force bloke come and grabbed me and marched me off somewhere and I was under arrest. Anyway they sent for the

39:30 Colonel Dobson his name was that was in charge of Newcastle Defence Forces and they started trying me for firing a rifle without being given the order to fire. That was the charge and anyway it became very, very complicated. Because here I was an AWAS and it was a army

40:00 man sergeant that gave me the rifle and he had gone and got it from the guard that was guarding the gate to this big secret base. But the rule was that at 6-o'clock in the morning whoever the guard was they took the rounds out of the rifle and they just used a bayonet on the gate.

40:30 So anyway the guard had changed just before that apparently and the air force fellow that went off he just promptly laid his rifle stood his rifle down in the corner of the guard room went off duty and our sergeant just picked it up. Asked the guard if he could borrow it I presume just brought it round and handed it to me. So therefore right they had me under arrest.

41:00 They had our sergeant under arrest for giving me the rifle. The air force guard that went off because he didn't remove the rounds and the air force officer of the guard hadn't come round at the change of shift to see that that was done. So they had four of us all under arrest. And this trial went on all day. I'll never forget it. They'd say, "March

41:30 in the prisoner." And they'd march me in front of this colonel and he'd ask me all the questions, "Why

did I do it?" And said, "I was just told to pull the trigger Sir. And I didn't know it had a round in it." If I said that once I said it about 20 times I think.

Sorry but.

Tape 3

00:30 **Daphne, we might finish this story about your trial.**

Oh right. And the old colonel kept asking me why I fired the rifle and I kept saying I didn't know it had a round in it Sir. And anyway then he'd ask our sergeant why he took the rifle and then he'd give his answer and so this went on all day long and in the end

01:00 bout 5-o'clock he decided it'd become with 4 services it had become too complicated and I was declared innocent anyway. So, but strangely enough my Mum happened to be in Newcastle hospital at the time, and there was a lady in the bed next to her had some visitors

01:30 and they must've lived somewhere near where this camp was because the school was in the middle of a residential area. And this lady came in and told the woman next to my Mum there's women out there at that New Lambton school and the other day the sergeant was yelling at them. And she said, "We could hear him from down at our place and one of them tried to shoot him."

02:00 And my mother said, "Oh, my daughter's one of them." And she said she was real worried till I got on leave to tell her that it was me that fired the shot but I didn't try to shoot the sergeant. But that's how rumours used to start.

So tell us about the first time you ever handled a gun?

Well, it was only the day before that was the first time. And

02:30 I was a bit really nervous the next day when I had to do it again. And I said to the sergeant will you please check that there's no round in it. And from then on we had to learn to do rifle drill and then he taught us how to take the rifle apart and put it together and you had to you know do it in a certain time.

03:00 And then when he was satisfied we could do that we were taken out to Adamstown rifle range to have a practice shoot and it took all my strength to pull that trigger the first time. Because I really was nervous after what I'd done and what I'd been through. And we just had to just lie on our tummies and shoot at the targets

03:30 and cause this sergeant was yelling at us hold the gun firm so it won't kick. Because, gee, some of the girls ended up with big bruises on their shoulders. But anyway, we used to periodically go out and do that but it was only the first time that I had to fire that I was really scared. Once I did it once it was OK. Yeah, and we had to learn to fire

04:00 an Owen gun and do the same with that too. Take it apart and put it together again.

Can you remember how to do that what was involved?

Well, I dunno whether I could do it now but you know you just had to take it apart piece by piece and put it back together again and keep it cleaned. And we weren't issued with one of our own. We never actually had a rifle in the true sense of the word. There was

04:30 just so many there I suppose if the place had been attacked and they'd had to use them but you still had to keep it fresh in your mind how to use it all the time.

And did you enjoy the work you were doing?

Oh yes I did, because it was a challenge. There was a lot to remember and a lot to do and I like challenges and so it was

05:00 good. And the friendships were wonderful. In fact I'm still in touch with some of those girls. I had a phone call from one the other night and I told her that you people were coming and she said, "What a shame", Corb that was. She was our Bombardier and one of my best friends. What a shame she's now got Alzheimer's because you could've phoned one another and you know talked about things that

05:30 happened. Which we could've too. But unfortunately a lot of them have passed away now. And me being the baby. I s'pose I'm lucky to be the one still here.

So tell us about your friends?

Yes, well the majority of us came from Newcastle so we all had homes to go to. This is the first. (interruption).

OK.

06:00 Now what was I up to?

Your friends.

Friends, yes. Yes, we made wonderful friendships and we all well not all but majority of us either had fiancés or boyfriends or something overseas so we'd all be looking for letters and all that and console one another when we got bad news. Which used to frequently happen

06:30 and we used to go on leave together if it was possible. And the one's that lived in Newcastle when it was only the few of us we used to take one another home to meet their parents and all that. And

Where you living in the barracks the whole time?

Yeah.

Can you describe the

07:00 **barracks?**

Well, to begin with, as I said, there was no hut or anything for us. They just put us in one big room amongst the WAAAF's and then they got busy and they built a hut right down the bottom of the grounds where they were when they got some more recruits to join us. And so we increased from

07:30 our 12 to 26 and we had 26 lived in this hut. And we had to teach them all the ropes and that was quite interesting too. And this hut backed onto a private residence and the movie theatre was only about a hundred yards from that house. So of a night,

08:00 this is naughty. Of a night if we wanted to go to the movies which lights out used to be 9:30 and before that they'd come round and check that everyone that was supposed to be there was there. But anyway, the man that lived in the house he put some boxes on his side big 6-foot fence and we used to hop over the fence and go to the movies. But we always teed it off

08:30 that if there was an alarm one of the girls could be there in a couple of minutes and we'd be back in a couple of minutes. But it never happened so. And they'd answer the roll call for us. But we made sure that it was only ever 2 that went so we didn't you know if there was an alarm. Didn't leave a big hole in the people to go on duty.

And was Newcastle blacked out at night?

09:00 Yes.

What was that like?

Well, it was a bit I dunno whether you'd say scary but you had to sort of know your way round. And all the names were taken off all the streets. Railway stations had no names on them. And cars and motor bikes they had to have what they called

09:30 blackout lights. They just had a slit like that in their lights and all the rest was covered over and a hood over the top. So that there only a little bit a light used to shine out and couldn't be seen if a plane was overhead. So people usen't to venture out much at night. And there was trams in Newcastle in those days

10:00 and buses and it was the trains used to go down to Sydney. Sometimes if we had 2 or 3-days leave a couple of us'd hop on the train and go down to Sydney for a few days a couple a days.

And I understand that you had some bloomers that were given a particular name?

Oh yes, these horrible. We used to call them passion killers. They were part of our

10:30 Army issue. They were a red spooky looking, pinky colour. Something like that colour, only a bit paler, and they were real thick melanize. That was what the material was called and they had elastic in the legs and they used to come down to there on our legs and they were quite uncomfortable. But that was our issue so we had to wear

11:00 them. Yeah. And we didn't get any pyjamas issued but we got a few clothing coupons that we could buy our own pyjamas. But apart from that we had all our uniform was given to us and even when you went home on leave you weren't supposed to get out of your uniform. It was pretty strict. They were really stricter on us than they were on the fellas.

11:30 **Did you ever hear about girls getting pregnant?**

Well, to begin with no not very often. But then as the war went on quite a few started to get married and then they'd get out. Actually, that's how I got out too. But yeah, 1942-43 no I didn't then. But as

12:00 '49 came along and things were, well, you wouldn't say not as bad. They were worse really because there were everyone they could get in the fellas were off to the Islands then they'd come home on leave

and the girls'd get married. And so quite a few got out then because there was no pill or anything in those days. And, as I said, that happened to me.

12:30 I'll tell you about that after.

Stop for a second Kirsty [interviewer]. OK. So was it a married woman couldn't stay in the Army?

That's right, yeah. You could stay in if you were married because I got married in February 1944 and I was in there until Christmas 1944. Yes, you could stay in married but once you were pregnant of course you had to get out.

13:00 Yeah.

How much did you know about what was happening in the war while you were working there?

Not a great deal when you read now about things that happened you know now since all the secrecy's been lifted. No there was lots we certainly did not know. And we just sort'a knew what was going on around our own little area I s'pose.

13:30 Because the boys went away they weren't even supposed to tell you where they were or anything like that and all our letters used to be censored that we wrote and they'd cut a hole in it if they thought you were saying anything that you shouldn't say. And my fiancé and I we used to write to one another every day even if it was only half a page.

14:00 Just so I'd know that he was alright and we used to number them like whatever day of the month it was. So you'd know exactly when it was written and it used to be a worry if a week'd go past and you wouldn't get a letter, you know. You'd be, "Is he alright?". And that's why our girls formed such good friendships I think we used to go through all that with one another and some of

14:30 them had their fiancés killed and wounded and all, yeah.

Do you remember a particular instance of that how you dealt with it?

Oh well, we just all used to sympathise and we used to say well talk about him. We used to find that that was the best and used to say, "Oh well, you know. Let's hope he died quick." And all that sort a thing. Didn't suffer too much.

15:00 Yeah.

And what did you think of the Japanese?

I'd hate to say. No we had a very poor opinion of them that's for sure. As a matter of fact I still feel the same. I know it's the young one's that are around it's not their fault now but I can remember I went to Cairns on a holiday with my sister and her husband who was

15:30 ex-Air Force and we were booked in to go on a train up to the Canungra Railway Station, you know the train up there. Anyway, we were in this carriage surrounded with young Japanese and they were all gabbling away and I said at the top of my voice when they're in Australia they should talk our language. And there was dead silence. My brother-in-law said, "Be quiet you'll get us chucked of

16:00 the train. They rule it now." So I didn't say anymore but that did spoil my trip to Cairns because everywhere we went there was more Japanese than anybody else. And we went out to the butterfly farm and it made Jeff and I see red because we pulled up in a coach and then we got out of the coach and we lined up to go into the butterfly farm and a Japanese

16:30 coach pulled up behind us they stopped all of us and let them go in first, yeah.

During the war were there any Asian people in Newcastle?

Very few. Because in those days they interned anyone that they thought were anything to do with Japan Italy or Germany and

17:00 I know a family that lived near my Mum and Dad. There was Mother and Father and they had 2 young children and they interned the whole family and they were really lovely people but they'd come from Germany. Been in Australia before they even had their children but they still interned them. And a thing happened that in the Ops Room we had no windows where we

17:30 worked because they didn't want anyone to look in. Cause, as I said, we were up on a platform and for ventilation they just took a brick out here and there in the wall and one day I was the NCO [Non Commissioned Officer] on duty and the girls were doing their bit and I was just sort of wandering round and I leaned down and I looked out through this brick to the house

18:00 across the road and I saw the glint of binoculars and I thought that's funny. Anyway, I didn't say anything and 2 or 3 times during the shift I did the same thing and I told our Captain a man Officer that was in charge of our. Well, he was in charge of us girls and the men on the place. So he took a look and he saw it too. So,

18:30 I don't know how he did it but anyway some MPs [Military Police] went there and they arrested the man and he was a German. And they confiscated the binoculars and Captain Sinclair said, "I've got the binoculars but after the war they'll be yours." But I never ever got them because we all dispersed in different directions. But yeah, so he couldn't have the German couldn't have

19:00 learned anything because all he would've seen through the brick was probably us about waist height or something because they made sure that our instruments and things were where there was no bricks out. But he was trying to find out anyway. So he was dead unlucky that I happened to see him because he was shuffled off to internment camp.

What did you know of what happened in the

19:30 **internment camps?**

Nothing. No we didn't know anything about that really.

After the war did your parents' neighbours ever talk about it, the Germans?

No, I don't know that I ever saw them after the war really. No, I can still remember their name. Luckoby was their name but I can't. No, I can't say that I did even see them.

20:00 **And can you tell us some details about the kind of computer work that you did?**

Well, it's nothing like a computer what they are now. It was simply we had a desk and we had slide rules and set squares and we had to work out. Like when we got the information about a plane with these things we learnt to work out what

20:30 height it would be flying and what time it would arrive and that's all it was. You had to be pretty quick to work it out the information out and then we used to get on the phone and relay it out to the anti-aircraft battery whichever one was the one that would see it first. And then we'd give them the estimated time of arrival. From these instruments we could work that out.

21:00 And then when it appeared they'd ring back and we'd just tick it off that it had been and gone, yeah.

And how many people worked in the Ops Room?

There'd be either a captain, a man captain or a lieutenant mostly, and one NCO. Which was, or after a little while, when we learnt all of us women and

21:30 two gunners and that was the team if I remember rightly. And, as I said, we used to work 8-hour shifts right round the clock.

How did you handle the midnight shift?

I dunno, you just got used to it. You'd sort of I think we used to do 2-weeks on one shift and then you'd get put onto the next shift. So you

22:00 weren't on the same shift for more than a couple of weeks. But you'd just sort of get used to sleeping in the day and then your shift'd change. No, it was OK. We got used to it.

And what personal items did you bring from home?

Only toiletries I think and pyjamas. Yeah, that was about all. We got all that we got.

22:30 We got 2 towels issued to us and our passion killers and our, I can't remember about whether we got bras or whether we had our own. No, I can't remember that. But I think we had 2

23:00 going out shirts which were detachable collars which we had to starch as stiff as a board. We had a khaki tie. A khaki shirt and a jacket with 2 top pockets and 2 side pockets because you couldn't carry a handbag or anything. You had to just put what you could in your pocket

23:30 and that was all you could carry. Although we used to put a few things in our gas mask bag. It was a canvas bag and we'd sometimes slip something into that. Cause that had to go with your wherever you went.

So you took a gas mask?

Yeah, and a tin helmet everywhere we went, yeah.

And occasionally where there drills?

Oh yes. Yes we used to have gas drill. We used to go into this

24:00 room filled with laughing gas and different stuff. They'd send you in with your gas mask and then go out and take it off and send you in without it so you could see the effect.

And what was the effect?

You'd get tears on your face and you couldn't see from the tears and sneeze and go on. But we never

had any dangerous gas, like only that laughing gas. But you had to do that
24:30 occasionally, just to make sure you know to put your respirator on properly.

And were they heavy to carry?

In weight, I don't know. I don't know. Tin hat was probably heavier than the gas mask but they just became part of you. Just throw it over your shoulder and off you'd go. Even when we went on duty we used to have to take it into the

25:00 room with us and take it back down to your hut with you and had it by your bed.

And what did you eat?

Well, when we were at this air force base I will have to admit we had better food than what we did when we went out to the army bases. They used to have three meals a day. And for breakfast there'd be

25:30 cereal and mostly baked beans or scrambled egg made with powdered egg. That was horrible. And jam we used to nearly always have apple jam and golden syrup on your toast if you wanted it. And you used to have 2 tin plates and a tin

26:00 mug and your cutlery and you used to have to walk along the line and get what you wanted and then when you finished you had to wash it up and take it back with you so you had it ready for the next meal. And we used to have baked meals and I can't remember sweets. I was never much of a sweet eater and then we used to have salads.

26:30 Pretty good food it was really. And I had a pretty good appetite. The girls used to torment me they used to reckon I ate the most but I was the youngest.

How much older were the other girls than you?

I think the next one was a year older than me and then our sergeant. She would've been 8 or 10-years

27:00 older and the two ladies that were made Bombardiers the one I just mentioned she was 4-years older than me. So the majority of them were 20-21-22 when we went in, yeah.

And did you play any sport?

Oh yes. We used to go to tennis which I hadn't played tennis til then. And

27:30 being a hockey freak I actually went and approached the Newcastle Hockey Club because before I joined the army I used to play for Newcastle Royals. In fact I got picked to go to Western Australia but because of the limit on travelling we never got to go. But anyway, I asked if there was any chance if I could get enough

28:00 girls together if they'd supply us with a uniform and let us have a hockey team. And they did. So I as far as I know probably formed the only hockey team in the AWAS. And we didn't win much but we had a lot of fun and the other girls all loved it and we played for 2-seasons with them and a lot of girls went through the team. That was a lot of our trouble

28:30 because you could never get the same ones on leave at the same time. I had about 30 girls that were willing to play. So they just lent us a bright orange hockey tunic so we just had to leave them with the club and then whatever girls turned up we'd just get in and play. And it was a bit of Rafferty Rules because half of them didn't know how to play and what positions and but

29:00 we used to have a lot of fun so that's the main thing. Filled in an afternoon for leave if you were on leave.

Did you have time to train?

No, we didn't because the girls were in different places and we had no facility to train and we had no sticks. We used all the Newcastle Hockey Clubs sticks and tunics. But if we got there early we used to just

29:30 go to a vacant field and have a little bit of a hit amongst ourselves and I'd try to give 'em a few instructions what to do. But, as I said, it was mainly a fun thing. But enjoyed by all.

And were you frightened of a Japanese aerial attack?

Well, that was what we were there for. We sort of hoped it never came but we reckoned we were prepared if it had a done

30:00 we were pretty well trained, yes. And we used to go on practice shoots with the big 303 anti aircraft guns. That was one place in Newcastle, Merriweather beach. Oh, it wasn't a beach it was up on the headland and they had an ack-ack Battery up there and they used to have a plane and tow what they called a drogue [target towed by an aircraft]. Way, way behind it, this

30:30 thing used to float along and that was the target we used to have to shoot at. And I'll never forget the

first one I went to the noise of these ack-ack guns going off, it's unbelievable. And of course we didn't even have a bit of wadding in our ears or anything and a lot of. Well, one girl actually had her ear drum burst and she was

- 31:00 medically put out after that. But we didn't actually fire the guns. Well, we learnt how to but there was a certain number of men that were kept on the thing for that and be assisted by the girls. But we did all the instruments that controlled the guns. The men did the
- 31:30 actual they were worked. If you can imagine a gun it'd be probably the muzzle of it'd be from here to that wall big thing about this round and it came down to slender about that round at the end. And they sat on like tripod things and there was wheels that worked which way it pointed and what height and all
- 32:00 that. Which were done in conjunction of the instruments that we used to work which were called a height finder and a predictor. So if we the predictor was a big square instrument about that square and just had eye pieces about right height and you used to look in there and we had a wheel to turn that was in conjunction
- 32:30 with the gun. So one would be had the plane in view and doing the height and another one'd be doing the wind speed and another one the speed of the plane and it all. I s'pose really these things were early computers that used to work that out. And we just used to train the predictor on it and
- 33:00 the information we got went through the lines of the big guns. So the instruments were there and the guns were round four of them in a semi-circle around us so we were right in the middle and it used to nearly deafen us when they went off, yeah.

And what was the other instrument? You told me about the predictor but the height?

That was called a

- 33:30 TOCI [Target Objective Code Identification]. And that was to identify planes and that had to be manned 24-hours a day too. So we used to have to do shift work for that as well. And it was down in a pit and at nighttime we'd hear a plane and the searchlights used to pick it up
- 34:00 and we had the information where the plane were coming and the expected time of arrival and all that. So if it was anything suspicious or anything we could just ring and there'd be an alarm go off and all the fellas and girls'd come on. But that didn't happen very often. We had one but it turned out that it was some plane that had got off course
- 34:30 and we used to have to get in this TOCI. They'd have a shift and you'd I'm not sure I think it was you'd go on for 2-hours and then you'd sleep and change around all the time. But this TOCI was on the beach and there was thousands of little soldier crabs on the beach of a nighttime
- 35:00 and you'd just get nicely asleep and flop these dash little things'd flop down on your face and crawl all over you. They were awful. And then when you finished your 2-hours you went to sleep while someone else went on. And that was the search lights of course they were doing the same. On duty all night and pick up the plane in the criss-cross of the
- 35:30 search lights.

And tell us about meeting your husband and what happened with him?

Right well, I said briefly about going to the dance and my friend making the sponge cake to take out and he asked me where I lived and I just told him. And the next

- 36:00 weekend he just turned up at my Mother's house and I think we went out the next weekend and we sort of became very friendly. And then I was talking of joining the army, of course he didn't want me to but I said I'm going to. So it was pretty hard then when I was on leave sometimes he didn't have leave and
- 36:30 we just used to meet in Newcastle or sometimes we'd go out to my Mum's place. And of course he lived he was in camp at Hexham, which was way the other side of Newcastle. So occasionally he was a DonR [Despatch Rider] in Sig [Signals] Section of 103 Tank Attack. That was his unit and occasionally he used to get
- 37:00 his motor bike and come out to my Mum's and then he used to take dispatches to the Ops Room when I was there and if ever he came there the message used to get to me quick Sid's at the gate and I used to go out and say hello to him. Then in November all their unit were told that
- 37:30 they were gonna have final leave to go North. That was the saying in those days. You didn't know where North would end up being. So on, I think it was the second of December this great big long train pulled out of Newcastle and that was all the 103 Tank Attack Unit on.
- 38:00 They had anti-tank guns and the motorbikes belonged to the Don-R's and they had a few carriages for the fellas to sit up in and off they went. We didn't know where. But eventually they ended up in Darwin in the middle of all the air raids. So Sid was up there and
- 38:30 that was early 1940. December 1942 and he didn't get home until February 1944. So it was a romance

- by letters you might say all deeply censored. And then when he came home on leave we reckoned we weren't gonna get married until the war was
- 39:00 over because he reckoned it wasn't fair to leave the women, and anyway. My leave I'd saved up 18-days leave and my leave was nearly over and we both decided that we would like to get married. So I went and applied for more leave and they wouldn't give it to me and I also applied for permission to be married as a bride instead of in me Army uniform and they did
- 39:30 give me permission for that. So a cousin of mine in Sydney loaned me her wedding dress and somebody else loaned me a pair of white shoes. And I didn't have a veil I could get from anywhere so this cousin that loaned me the wedding dress lived in Sydney and she said she knew there was a convent
- 40:00 in Ashfield where you could hire wedding veils. So down we went a special trip to Ashfield and they... a Nun came out and said yes I could hire it on condition that I brought it back personally and we had to pay a certain amount of money and it was the most beautiful veil. It was all handmade. And
- 40:30 so I was married in that and I've got a photo there of the girls formed a guard of honour for us in the church and we went up to Katoomba. The night we were married we stayed at the hotel in Great Northern Hotel in Newcastle straight opposite railway
- 41:00 and those dear friends of mine that went to the wedding they took it in turns they came and knocked our door all night. One'd go out and you'd think they're gone now. Knock on the door. And in come another one. We never got one minutes sleep. And anyway we went off to Katoomba on the train the next morning. It left quite early because that's why we stayed opposite the railway.
- 41:30 So we had 6-days honeymooning in Katoomba, which we walked and we walked down into the right down in the valley. Saw all the waterfalls and everything. We spent nearly all our time exploring down in the Jamison Valley and what not. And when I came back home
- 42:00 End of tape

Tape 4

- 00:31 **OK, I'll just back track for a moment. So you went to Katoomba for 6-days?**
- Yeah. And we came back out to my parents' place and my Mum said that the Military Police had been there looking for me for being AWL [Absent Without Leave]. So I said, "Well, I'm going straight back to camp now." So I did and Sid, he still had a little bit of leave left
- 01:00 so his parents lived here in Wallabadah so he came up to see his parents for a couple of days and he had to report back to Sydney to go North again. So when I went back to camp the next morning they marched me in front of the same Colonel that I'd fired the shot with and
- 01:30 he really dressed me down. He said, "You're a disgrace to the Women's Army." And he said, "And routine orders have come through while you've been away that your second stripe was granted," and he said, "You'll never wear it. I'm taking that and the one you've already got. You go back to a Gunner." So I got fined. I lost me stripes and I got confined to barracks for another week.
- 02:00 So it was a pretty strict punishment. So anyway, Sid went back to Sydney and he had a couple a days leave so he came up and all I could do was talk to him through the gate because I was confined to barracks and then off he went back to
- 02:30 Darwin and then in September he came back. He was gonna do a specialist course down at Bonegilla. Do he had 3-days leave and that was when I got pregnant and that was in September and then I
- 03:00 got discharged from the Army just before Christmas December and he went off to New Guinea and I didn't see him again till our daughter was 6-months old. Yeah. So that's what happened, yeah.
- Tell us about that how often did you hear from him?**
- Well, we used to try and write to one another every day. But of course when he was in action over in
- 03:30 New Guinea I didn't get letters every day and it was a pretty worrying time being pregnant and all the rest of it. And I went home to live with my Mum and Dad who thought it was good. And he was in the 103 Tank Attack when he was in Darwin but when he went over to New Guinea he was
- 04:00 put in the Sig Section to 16th Brigade 16th Division and they were right into the fighting. In fact they were in the last battles when the Japanese surrendered at Wewak. So yeah, he came home. If I'd a passed him in the street I wouldn't have known him. He looked so terrible. And
- 04:30 he didn't get out of the army until March. He was on leave till March, it was so much owing to him. And our doctor said to him, "Sid, go, I'll send you down to Concord Hospital." And he said, "You should be

entitled to get a pension before you get out." And he said, "No way." He said, "All I want to do is get out a the b--- army. I've had enough of it" and

05:00 he wouldn't do it. So that was probably...went on from there why he never ever got a pension. But it was a bad time really because he had malaria and he used to have these nightmares and it was a hard time. Should've gone and should got some treatment but he didn't.

So going back a little bit. Did you get morning

05:30 **sickness when you were first pregnant?**

No, I didn't. I was very lucky. I had 4 pregnancies and I only ever had it with one. That was my second daughter.

And how did the Army react to your pregnancy?

Well, it had come to the stage where they had so many women and things were calming down you know. I mean the fellas were still

06:00 fighting in New Guinea but they had the others back from overseas and the girls weren't essential. The anti-aircraft, now I just gotta think when it was. I know it was after I was married they declared that anti-aircraft. Air raids were no longer going to happen in Newcastle Sydney

06:30 and Wollongong. That's where all the fortress the ack-ack guns were. So they broke those, all the anti-aircraft batteries up and the fellows poor fellas got straight away shipped off and we got put into something else that was applicable to what we'd been doing. And I got put in as a plotter in Coastal Artillery. And a case of learn all

07:00 over again then. We had to learn all about ships and plotting the courses of ships and the same thing. What ship was likely to pass and all the rest of it. So I was at Fort Scratchley, which was the main Coastal Artillery place in Newcastle and I was there for a while. And then

07:30 I got transferred to Wipers. Which was a really intriguing part of my army career because it was a radar station and a Coastal Artillery lookout that was in the bush between Stockton and Nelsons Bay. And it was supposed to be another secret location. But anyone that looked from the road to Nelson's

08:00 Bay they could see the radar tower. But we girls lived in, I dunno what you'd actually call it. But it was a 7-storey high building with a staircase that went from floor to floor. And it was a real skinny tall building. Just big enough for 2-beds. We'd got off pallias'

08:30 long time before this and got single beds and it just fitted 2-beds in and there was 12 of us there and the top storey was the lookout. So it was all surrounded with glass and we had these really powerful telescopes so we could identify the ships. And that had to be done 24-hours a day too

09:00 and the men were there to operate the radar. Although we had to learn how to do it just in case some of the men were sick or something. But it was a very basic camp. We didn't even have a shower. We had a out in the yard we had a big round bout this big. Big round bathtub and a copper and it just had a bit a hessian around it

09:30 and that's where we used to have to have our bath and do our washing in the same tub and the men had similar conditions way the other side of the camp. And we had to do the cooking and the men used to all take their turns same as us. And the only vehicle that ever came there was every Monday morning

10:00 the ration truck came brought our rations and our week's mail. And when we went on leave, we used to get one day a week, we had to walk through all this coastal bush out to the road and hitchhike. There was no transport. And the rule was that 2 had to go together be it a male and a female or 2 girls it didn't

10:30 matter. But there always had to be 2 and before we came back. We used to get out of the ferry at Stockton we had to arrange to meet there and wait till your partner turned up and then hitchhike back and we used to get rides with an Army truck. Especially when there was 2 girls it was easier to get a ride than if it was a fella and a girl. And we'd used to

11:00 get rides with. There was a big navy base up at Nelsons Bay sometimes they'd stop and give us a ride and air force. There was and also an American big camp was up at a place called Gan Gan and the Americans used to stop and pick us up sometimes. And then one day one of the girls and I we'd been walking for about a half an hour and not a vehicle had come

11:30 along and we saw this old Chinaman in a cart with a horse that used to sell vegetables so he gave us a ride. Yeah, we used to have difficulty getting there and back all the time. But it was really an enjoyable place. There used to be possums come down into the Mess of a night and we had them all named

12:00 and feed them bread and jam and stuff but there was absolutely nothing to do. The beach was just across but you couldn't swim there. So we used to read books and knit of a nighttime, we'd play cards with the fellas and that was about it. But it was really quite good and a change from the anti-aircraft part of it.

12:30 **Were you aware of rivalry between Services?**

Yes, there was a bit. The air force used to think they were better than us. But they weren't. But yes, the WAAAFs where we were at New Lambton they never really accepted us as friends. They sort of stuck to themselves and so did

13:00 we. I had a, well, embarrassing I s'pose it'd be. The very first day we arrived at this air force base and we were just been granted our pallias' and told to get in this room and we heard this male voice all Army personnel short arms parade. Do you know what that is? Do you?

13:30 Well, I s'pose I can say it on the tape. It was a thing that the men used to have. Apparently they used to stand above a mirror and get checked for VD [Venereal Disease]. It reflected in the mirror. But anyway us girls didn't know what it was either. So they said, "Go on Bail. Go down and ask that fella do we have to do it." And anyway, down

14:00 I bowled and I said, "Excuse me. Do us girls have to go on this parade?" And the bloke burst out laughing and walked away and he said something to all the other fellas around and they all burst out laughing. I went back and I said, "They didn't say we did. All they can do's laugh." So we still didn't know what it was until one of the girls went on leave and asked her

14:30 boyfriend what it was and she came back and told us all. So yeah, so that was a bit embarrassing.

Were you aware of any of the men having VD in the camp?

No, no. But they used to get checked all the time, yeah. So luckily we didn't have to go. But we never ever had any checks either.

And I

15:00 **understand that having VD was a chargeable offence in the army?**

Yes it was.

And you also mentioned that sunburn was?

Yes.

Can you talk to us about that a bit?

Yes well, the most places batteries or whatever they used to have an RAP it was called, Regimental Aid Post where if you had a headache or whatever you could go and get treatment, which was very basic.

15:30 It was just only an orderly there. Very rarely ever a doctor, or anything there, because if it was anything that he thought serious, well, you'd just get sent off to hospital somewhere. But we were all told about sunburn that you'd get put on an A4, which was the name of a charge sheet. So you got sunburnt you just didn't do anything about it. You just put up with it. And when I first went

16:00 out there I had blisters on my face and everything because we were actually on the beach all the time. You went to have a shower or go to the loo it was on the beach. And all our work was on the beach and then part of our physical training was three swims a day. The beach was about a mile from our ack-ack

16:30 battery. So we used to get up first thing of a morning before breakfast on the double, this mile up and have a swim on the double, back and then have breakfast. Our shower and then breakfast and then we'd do the same before lunch and the same last thing of an afternoon. So we were pretty fit. It didn't matter what, you did you couldn't get away from the beach from the sand.

17:00 **So how did you treat your own sunburn if you got it?**

Just put up with it. There was nothing you could do. My nose was always red, yeah.

OK, and back to your first child. Did you stay with your parents throughout your pregnancy?

Yeah, I did and I stayed, then when Sid came

17:30 a home we bought a block of ground next door to my Mum and Dads' poultry farm. And we put all our deferred pay and all our money we had into it and it was also handy because by this time my Mum was quite ill. She died of breast cancer when she was only 43. And I used to have to spend a lot of time helping with her and

18:00 cleaning eggs still. And by that time I had another daughter when Coral was 2-years old. So my Mum had a lot a pleasure out of our two children. 'Cause you know only having my sister and I, and so I was bit disappointed at having to get out of the Army because

18:30 of that reason. But then again on the other hand when I think back I think it was wonderful for my Mum's sake, yeah.

And can you tell us about Sid coming back? Did you know that he was going to be returning

when he did?

Yes I did, because the war ended in August and they were getting the men home then as quickly as they could. And

19:00 they allowed them to notify their next of kin when they were ready to leave. So I got a telegram arriving on HMS [His Majesty's Ship] Implacable, which was a big English aircraft carrier. So I dunno how I found out when it was going to dock in Sydney and.

19:30 But there was no exact word of exactly when he was gonna be here. Just that I knew he'd be here within about a week. And we were all saying you know, hope he makes it for Christmas and all that. Which he the bus pulled up at our bus stop and he got out with all his kit and, as I said, he looked such a wreck if I'd a seen him in the street I wouldn't have known him. He was just

What did he look like?

Well, he was so

20:00 thin. And he wasn't a really tall man he was only about 5-foot-8 and he didn't weigh much more than I did and he was all yellow from Atebrin that they took for malaria. All the fellas that come back looked like yellow because of that and yes, andas I said, he had all these nightmares and things.

20:30 We came up to Wallabadah after Christmas to see his parents because his brother had been killed in New Guinea and he hadn't seen his parents. So that was pretty hard for him. And then we went after we had a bit of a break up here. Oh yes, and they hadn't seen our daughter.

21:00 We went back home and I think he had about a week's leave and then said he'd have to get a job so he started looking for a job. And he got a job on the Newcastle Tramways. Not as a conductor, maintaining the lines. And of course we both used to help Dad with the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and all that all the time as well.

21:30 What did he tell you of his experiences in New Guinea?

Nothing. Very little. Actually, he's told our twin boys. They know lots a things but they don't tell me either. He told them never to, doesn't matter what happens, never join the Army. So that was his instructions. So they tell me. And they said after some of the things that happened we don't blame him

22:00 for saying that and that's as far as I know, yeah. But he didn't come home with any wounds like. But probably why he had such a hard time. He had a bad knee. He got a buster off a motorbike up in Darwin and when he went to New Guinea of course he couldn't

22:30 ride his motorbike. He had to do all his messages on foot and they were pretty good sniper material too. So his knee just kept getting worse and worse. So he had a really bad knee all the rest of his life.

Did he suffer from malaria once he was back in Australia?

Oh yes. When he first came back

23:00 he used to get it quite often. And it took about 2-years before he really stopped getting it. It used to get longer between attacks, yeah.

What were the attacks like?

Well, he'd come out in perspiration'd just really run off him. And yet to feel him he'd be really really hot but shivery. Yeah, it was a bad thing and such a lot a fellas did come back with it. But

23:30 luckily as the time went on it got less.

How did you adjust to having him back?

It was quite peculiar in a way. And especially having hardly seen him all that time and then to have a baby as well, it was a very difficult time I would say. Because living with my parents

24:00 and my Mum sick and by this time my sister was about 19 and spoiling my baby rotten. And Sid hated to hear her cry, you know. He used to get upset. Yeah, it was really pretty crook that first 6-months I s'pose after the war and then it sort a calmed down a bit. After that,

24:30 well, then my Mum passed away and Sid hated Newcastle because he was a real bush-wacker. He loved the bush and he stayed there because of my Mum being sick. I said, "No, we'll have to stay while she's here. I've gotta help." And one morning he said to me just getting out of bed and he said, "I've had Newcastle. You've

25:00 looked after your Mum and done everything you could." He said, "I'm goin' back to the bush. Are you and the kids coming or what?" Just like that. And I said, "Well, of course." But I said, "We'll have to sell our house and all that." So we discussed it and we put our house on the market. And my Dad said, "Well, if you're gonna go I'll put my house on the market too." So he

25:30 sold his place too and he was terrible. In fact I didn't tell you this bit. Sid had to give up his work because Dad just went to the pack and he didn't care whether his WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s lived or died or what happened to them. And he'd get in his car and he'd just say I'm going to Tamworth to see me sisters and off he'd go. We wouldn't know when he was coming back or

26:00 anything.

This was after your mother died?

Mmmm. So that was hard for Sid too because, as I said, he had to give up his job and so we both sold our places and we came up here and soon as Sid's old boss heard he was back in the area he offered him his job back. And so here we were in Wallabadah. And my Dad

26:30 used to come up and stay with me. He never really had a place of his own then. He just used to hop in his car and wander round. He'd go down to me sisters and he'd say to her I'll go up and see Daph and Sid and he'd land up at our place. So anyway, my Mum died in November, but previous to that in the August Sid's father passed

27:00 away and he was only 66 too. So we had his Dad and my Mum died within a few months of one another and my Dad from coming up to see me started to get a bit pally with Sid's mother. And this was a classic, they ended up marrying one another, yeah.

How did you feel about that?

Well,

27:30 we thought it was wonderful, my sister and I, because she was such a lovely lady and so therefore she was my mother-in-law and my step mother. What a title. But anyway she just about took my mother's place. She was really wonderful and her and my Dad had a lot of happy years together and actually Dad died before Mum, and she lived to be

28:00 4-days off 96. So had her for a long...And actually my husband died before her, yeah.

Sometime back you mentioned that your father wasn't pleased about the work he thought you were doing in the army?

Well, men had funny ideas then. Say we've scratched and scraped to give you a good education. Because, as I said, you were really

28:30 lucky in those days to go to high school and to think you're gonna be a cook. He thought that was terrible. But then when I told him I was doing secret work. Well, he accepted it then. So

Did he ask you about it?

No. No. I just said, "I can't tell you Pop. Can't tell anyone." And no, he accepted that.

Did you tell anyone?

No, no. What's the saying, the

29:00 walls have ears, and anything that we heard in that room was never to go. Even talk about amongst ourselves outside, we couldn't, weren't allowed do it. If we wanted to talk we could always have a little chat in the corner because the whole four of us weren't all working at once. And so that was the only time we talked about work.

Did any of the work that you did there concern you in any way?

29:30 In what context do you mean concern you?

Did you ever want to talk about it with people?

No, no. Because the army drills those things into you, and you know, you're not allowed so you don't do it and I'm still pretty good at keeping secrets. Yeah, my family confide in me. Some of my grand daughters they tell me things they don't tell their Mums and.... but you're not to tell anyone and I

30:00 don't.

Did you feel that you were continuing on an Anzac tradition?

Yes, I guess so. Well, my husband was very, what would I say? Disillusioned with the army when he came out and we never went to any Anzac marches or anything like that for many, many years. It was only when he came

30:30 back up here and got with some of his mates that'd been in some of the services and that, that lived here as he did before the war, that he'd even go into the marches. And then he used to get a bit hostile because it all used to centre round the Kindee RSL Club and they wouldn't admit women and that's what he said, "Look, my wife's been in the forces and she's not even allowed

31:00 come here." But it was many years before they ever relented to let women in there.

What did you think of that?

Well, I thought it was a bit disgusting really. But still I was happy for Sid to go. And then when they did open the doors to women I straight away joined up. And I then used to go into the march with him then. And

31:30 I belong to the ex-Services women in Tamworth but I've never marched with them. I always like to march here in Kindee. And I've been down twice to Sydney and I've marched in the big one down there, which was quite an experience yeah.

And did you I've just got to look at my questions for a minute.

32:00 **After you joined the RSL when was that?**

Oh my goodness I can't just think. I know I've got a very low number. Number 178.

We can come back to that that's fine.

32:30 No, I can't even put a place to it.

Did you stay in touch with the Army girls?

Oh yes, I've got... Well, about half a dozen of us we used to keep in contact. Mostly only a Christmas card and a phone call occasionally and I've been down to a couple of,

33:00 probably 5 or 6, reunions in Sydney and I've seen quite a few of them then. But as of now the numbers have dwindled so much at the reunions. The last one I went to there was only 3 of us so I haven't made the effort for the last 3 or 4-years. Because quite a few of the one's that I was in with have passed away or got Alzheimer's [disease]. My main friend

33:30 has, yeah.

And you mentioned that Sid wasn't very fit for work for much of his time after the war?

No. Well, he worked on the property that he as a station hand that he used to do before the war which didn't entail much heavy work or anything. And then

34:00 he got a job with the Sunny Ridge Turkey Farm which was local here too. And he collapsed at work one day when he was only 51 and our doctor said to him. Oh, he carried out quite a few tests and he said, "Sid if you've got wrong with you what I think you've got wrong with you should

34:30 be dead." Course he opened his eyes and said, "Why what do you mean?" He said, "You've got..." I think he said, "Got a hole in your heart which you've had all your life." And he said, "How you did all those years in the Army and worked at a normal job ever since I don't know." So he sent him down to Concord and that was what was wrong with him and the doctors

35:00 down there said it was a wonderful thing for a country doctor to even pick up. And, as I said, he was in and out of Concord I don't know how many times. One time he had a bad turn and they flew him down in the Air Ambulance and they started doing these heart operations and I said to the doctor,

35:30 "Now, couldn't you sort of fix the hole in the heart now?" And he said, "Well, no not really." He said, "Because your husband's lungs aren't very well either because he learnt to smoke in the Army and he was a smoker. And he said, "It would be like putting a new tube in

36:00 an old tyre it'd blow out." So he said, "You know, you couldn't mend the hole in the heart because the lungs weren't good enough." So yeah, so that was the end of that. So he just used to have treatment or be in Kindee hospital a bit. But anyhow, when he was put off permanently unemployable I

36:30 had a part time job and I got a little bit more work and if Sid wasn't well my daughters. Two daughters lived here then. They were both married and had families they used to go and check on him all the time because he would not leave home and go and stay with them. They used to say Dad's pig headed. He'd say, "No, I like me own place best." So we managed alright.

Did you ever smoke?

37:00 No.

And did you ever drink while you were in the army?

I learnt to drink in the army.

Tell us about that.

Well, when the first Christmas I was in the army I don't think I'd ever had a drink in my life. And six of us girls decided that we had boyfriends had gone away and all this and said, "What say we go into the Great Northern Hotel

- 37:30 and have a few drinks?" And we'd been invited to a barbeque. The civilians around Newcastle were pretty good. They'd often invite us to barbeque's and play tennis and things. So we decided we'd go in and have a few drinks because you weren't supposed to drink unless you were 21. So here am I, the only one wasn't 21 and we had
- 38:00 an air force identification card. It was different to anything you had in the army and it had your age on it and a photo and all. And anyway I was sitting next to our sergeant and the Provos [Provosts - Military Police] came in to look at our leave passes. They were men Provos. They went to her first
- 38:30 and she gives me a big kick in the shins and says here take my leave pass. And I sort of took her leave pass and while he was going round the others she said, "Show mine." Anyway, I showed him mine and he didn't wake up that she was a Sergeant and I was only a Bombardier and off he went because I'd a been in trouble for drinking because I was only 18 instead of 21. So that was my first little
- 39:00 experience. But no, we usen't to really drink much, just occasionally we might go and have a meal out and have a beer or something but.
- Was it always beer?**
- Yes, I only ever used to drink beer.
- And did the men have to be 21 as well to drink?**
- I don't know. Well, actually women really didn't drink much full stop.
- 39:30 Nor did many of them smoke. Although, some of our girls used to smoke. Yes, women were pretty what would you say? Backward to what they are now and the things they can do now. And there was not many cars to even learn to drive. And actually I didn't learn to drive until we came up here to live. And,
- 40:00 as I said, my husband got his old job back on a big sheep property it was so we were out of town. And Coral had to go to school and there was a school bus so I had to learn to drive to bring her down to the school bus and there wasn't another lady in this village that could drive. I was the first one when we.
- 40:30 But there was a woman who lived out on a property that had a licence and so she was really first and I was second. But when we left there we moved in here to the village I was the only woman that could drive and it's surprising how many people used to say, "My child's sick would you drive me into the doctor?" I used to be permanently taking women and children in. Cause the nearest doctor was Kindee,
- 41:00 into the doctors.

Tape 5

- 00:30 I forget where we were up to. We've talked so much.
- We had kind of gone through most of your story but now I want to go back and get some more details about some things.**
- Righto.
- I want to go back to the anti aircraft battery and I want you to tell me what the routine was there. Say, for example an enemy aircraft was spotted what would happen?**
- Right. Well, if an enemy aircraft was
- 01:00 spotted the first thing would be that we'd have to check with GOR [General Operational Requirement]. Everything was done by phone. Dunno what would a happened if the phones went out. Hate to think about that. But anyway, and then if it wasn't on the sheet, well, they had a siren and that'd be everyone'd have to race for their lives and take their
- 01:30 place. So once the girls on the predictor got the aircraft in sight they'd say on target and then the men'd repeat it after each one whatever their machine was hooked up to height or whatever. And then there'd be the Officer there and when everyone had agreed that they had everything right he'd just say fire. And the guns'd go in
- 02:00 order. And then they'd, you know, keep on firing. But a course we only did it in practice.
- In your practices how long would that take from the first report to the first firing of the shell?**
- Well, I don't know actually because the Battery I was on we never had a
- 02:30 practice shoot from there. It was only ever done at Merriweather gun site so we just used to all be assembled there and then the order'd just come through and we used to have to take it in turns so we were all sure we could do what we were supposed to do. So it wasn't an exact replica of what would've happened.

Was there an expectation that if necessary the women would handle

03:00 **the guns?**

Yeah. Yeah, we knew how to do it if there wasn't enough men, yeah. Well, as I said, it was a matter of twirling these little things and watching and keeping on the steady on what was on the predictor. So you had to have pretty good eyesight as well. I don't recollect any of them having glasses. Yeah.

Who was looking after the ammunition and fusing the shells and so forth?

Well, the ammunition were quite big shells bout this long that round and quite heavy. Actually, if the girls had to put them in two of us used to put them in and they were sort of at the back of the guns and a pile on each of the 4-guns.

We'll start again with that question. Who

04:00 **was looking after the ammunition?**

Well, one of the men would've been in charge of that. I can't remember what he was called and he would just keep handing them along as they were being fired, yeah.

How heavy were they?

Darn heavy. I dunno how much they weighed. I think I did know at the time but I've forgotten know. But they were also a bit awkward for two women

04:30 too. It was easier for the men 'cause they had more control. Because the gun'd be pointing up like that and you sort'a had to get down and push 'em up that way, yeah.

What sort of maintenance of the equipment did you have to undertake on a routine basis?

Everyday we used to have to go out and check everything. That's why I said we were on the beach all the time. We used to have to polish them and look after them and check that everything was working.

05:00 And the predictor, well, these machines had little windows so all those had to be spotless.

Being near the sea and the sand, was that a problem for the equipment I mean?

Yes. But they were all under camouflage, which was only nets. This Battery I was at was made to look like a fishing village. That's what it was supposed to be mmm.

05:30 And the, I think, we used to have little covers to put over them. I'm not quite sure of that but I think we did, yeah over the fast part, yeah. 'Cause they were only you know so round. Same on the guns.

How many people were involved in a battery?

Well, there had to be enough to

06:00 fire 4-guns which I think they had a crew of about 9. I can't remember off hand. I mean there were 4-girls on the predictor. 2 on the tock-eye and of course the Officer in charge that used to give all the orders. That's when you could hear them above the guns, which was pretty hard to do really. So a lot of it was hand signals.

06:30 **And what sort of shift. Sorry. What sort of shift basis were you working on?**

Round the clock. 8-hours yeah. So there always had to be a skeleton crew on the battery. Cause there'd always be some on leave and people could turn their hand to anything. Like even the cooks. They were able to man the guns and they each did have their duties

07:00 but if it had been necessary they'd been trained to help. It'd be every man on the job.

How did you fill in the time?

Well, we used to, as I said, go for a swim first thing of a morning. Then we'd come back and we'd have breakfast. Shower and breakfast and then we might have

07:30 a bit more PE [Physical Education] or something. And then we'd go out and do the maintenance on everything and sometimes we'd have these practice shoots or go for a route march. Always something to do. And something I didn't tell you. We used to travel around from Battery to Battery or wherever you had to go in the back of

08:00 big army trucks. We used to just sit in a line back to back like that with your feet out and we used to sing our hearts out. I think we knew every song that was around in those times. People used to wave to us. Have good fun.

What are some of the songs you remember?

"You are my sunshine." "Hang out the washing on the

08:30 Zeigfreid line." "I'll remember you." All the Vera Lynne songs. Oh yeah, we knew them all from start to finish. For many years I've been a volunteer in at the aged care centre in Kindee and they have community singing in there and everyone used to say how do you know all those songs? Cause they sing all the old ones. Yeah, that's how I knew them all.

09:00 We used to sing at the top of lungs. And then of a night time we had a piano there and one of the women could play and we used to dance amongst ourselves and 'Knees up Mother Brown' and 'The Lamber Fork', all those old things we used to do till we dropped nearly. Sometimes and you could have a beer then there was a canteen.

09:30 Which, we used to have occasional one. Read a fair few books.

Being on an anti aircraft battery you were considered front line troops or combat troops really.

Yes, I guess we were. Yes, if there'd been an air raid we'd a certainly been right in the front of it. And all the

10:00 ack-ack Battery was completely surrounded with strands and strands of barbed wire and cement and all that sort a stuff in case they landed a ship and wanted to come through that way. They wouldn't a been able to, I don't think.

What special training did you have for that eventuality?

Well, we learnt to use the firearms and we learnt unarmed combat as well. And...

What did that involve?

10:30 Learnt to throw people and hand round their neck and all that sort a thing. Yeah, I thought I might have to use it one night. I was at another place called Shepherds Hill, which was in Newcastle city. Well, it was up near Merriweather actually right up in the heights and I'd been home to see my sick Mum and I got off the tram about 11-

11:00 o'clock at night and I had to walk by meself right up there cause the streetlights and everything was blacked out. And I got off the tram and I saw this man get off the tram behind me and every time I sort of half looked around he was right behind me, and then he started to get nearly up towards where I was going and he's startin' walking a bit quicker and I thought, "Oh gee, I don't like the idea of this much." And I just got near

11:30 a house and the man opened from the house just happened to open his front door so I just went zoom straight in the gate. Before he could shut the door I said, "Excuse me. Would you mind if I come inside? There's a man following me." He said, "No not at all." 'Cause we'd got to know some of the people up there but I didn't know this family in particular. So anyhow, I went inside and he went out to his front gate and looked and

12:00 the man turned round and went back. But anyhow he walked the rest of the way up to the house we were in with me. But that was the only time I thought I might've had to use it.

What chance do you think you would've had with your training if the Japanese had landed?

Well, I don't know. I dunno. Been a bit hard to say wouldn't it? Same with this man. He looked to me about 6-foot-2 and I'm thinking to meself, "Gee dunno whether I can

12:30 tackle him if he tackles me." But he didn't. Oh yes, I mean they do sort of brainwash you. Yeah, that was the main thing you knew you had to do what you had to do and we would a done it. I s'pose if the Japs had landed, well, it remains to be seen doesn't it? Thank god they didn't. We'd a given them a

13:00 run for their money I think.

How did you feel about what you were doing in the AWAS compared to some of the other girls in the AWAS who were maybe working on switchboards or something like that?

No, it didn't matter. We were all in it together. They had to have all sorts'a things. Same as they had to have a lot a men that never saw active service. We were just part of the AWAS and that was it.

Did you enjoy the roles that you had there?

Oh yes.

13:30 It was very good and I was really pleased that I did something a bit different and that I was one of the, what would you call it? First lot in Newcastle. The trial group. Because if we'd a failed, well, they wouldn't of had women on the ack-ack Batteries.

So that was quite a big responsibility on your shoulders?

It was really. So and that was why we had to

14:00 do everything the men did to prove that we could do it. But those things sort of eased off as time went

on and more girls came in and we had to teach them carry on that way. But there was a lot to learn and you couldn't just think you did it because we used to have exams and everything to make sure we did. It was like going back to school again.

What sort of things were you examined on?

That we

14:30 knew all the code names and what had happened. The correct drill that things had to be in order and all that sort a thing. And aircraft identification that was a big thing. You used to have to draw the planes and they'd ask you what it looked like. What else did we have to do?

15:00 **What sort of skills did you need to work out all these predictions and times and arrivals and so forth?**

You had to be pretty good at maths was one of the main things, yeah. Although, it officially it was done on the set squares and things. The computer as it was called but you still had to be pretty quick. In fact the girls got

15:30 better at it than what the men did when we all got stuck into it cause we sort of were a bit quicker with lots of things.

How did your background and education compare with the other girls you were working with?

Pretty much the same but it wasn't so good as time went on. Some of them didn't seem to be as highly qualified

16:00 in their maths and things. But I guess like everything else when you get numbers there's always a few odd ones out. But no, the majority of them were really good.

What was your relationship like with your superiors?

We got on pretty well. Although we had one sergeant. He was a permanent army man this was out at the ack-ack

16:30 Battery and he did not like us girls. He used to bellow at us and give us a really hard time and one day we were on parade and there was 7-girls said they had to go on light duties which was when girls believed they couldn't go swimming at a certain time. And he bellowed at our sergeant, "I won't take that as an excuse. They can go

17:00 on swim parade!" And she stepped out and she said, "Excuse me sergeant. But don't you know there's times when women can't go swimming?" And this poor fellow went as red as a beetroot and every man that was on parade roared laughing at him. But anyway he never asked that question again. But it was only a few weeks after that some people invited some of us to use their tennis court and apparently he was a pretty good

17:30 tennis player. But we had a girl with us, the one I showed you the photo in the wedding gear there who was also a really good tennis player. So before she went on to have a game she whispered to us girls. She said, "Watch my second serve in the third game." And anyhow, we were all there watching and she got a bullseye and down went this sergeant. Yes, she really

18:00 coped him. We were up to all sorts of tricks like that.

What about your female NCO's? What was your relationship like with them?

Yes. We all got on really well but everyone knew you know like we only had one woman Sergeant and we had two Bombardiers and whatever they said you obeyed. But we could go on leave and that together and still enjoy it,

18:30 yeah.

And what about the Officers?

Well, we didn't have any women officers with us. We had a captain who actually ended up after the war married one of the women. He was a nice old fellow. He was like a lot older than us. But yeah, he was good. But then out on the ack-ack battery there was always a man

19:00 Lieutenant in charge there. I don't think they had a captain. Don't remember one.

What sort of allowance were made for you girls that maybe the male soldiers didn't get?

None really. We still had to do everything the men did. Two of us lifting the big shells that'd be about it. We did

19:30 all if you did something wrong you got the same punishment as the men like peelin' the spuds and all that sort a thing. It was a good punishment. 'Spud barber' as they called it. You'd get a whole bag a spuds and have to peel it. It was very monotonous, I can tell ya.

How long would that take?

I dunno. Usually if you got caught out with something straight after

20:00 morning parade you'd be given your penalty and if it was spud barber you used to go straight and start straight away so the cook could have them by lunch time. And you used to all have to take your turn at Mess duty as they called it. Cleaning up the pots and pans cause you all did your own washing up but there was always lots of other things people had to take turn in doing.

20:30 And washing floors and all that. And we used to have morning inspection of our huts to make sure that everything was clean and tidy. Cause we didn't have any wardrobes. You just had to you had a kit bag and anything you could put in your kit bag you did and the rest of the things you just had folded up on the floor along side on top a ya kit bag. Because you didn't have many personal things at

21:00 all.

What about cleaning the barracks and so forth?

Oh yes, we all used to have a roster whose turn it was to do that. They had to be spotless. They were inspected every morning. Make sure your bed was made with hospital corners and all the rest of it. We had two army grey

21:30 blankets and we got sheets after a while when we got into single beds and the army used to launder them for us. We had to do all our other laundry otherwise.

What facilities were provided for you to do your laundry?

Just wash tubs and a copper and an iron, which was always a battle to get your ironing done. Because there was always girls wanted it and we used to have to starch our

22:00 going out uniforms. Used to have to have your collar as stiff as a board. Shirts all ironed. But then, as I said, on the battery when it was cool we used to wear men's overalls and they were men's. The forks used to hang down to here. Used to have to roll the legs up. But in the summertime we had what was called a giggle dress. It was just

22:30 a dress buttoned down the front and we wore men's army boots. Which funnily enough I still don't like wearing light shoes or slippers or anything.

When you were out on the battery what shelter did you have from the weather?

None when you were working. If it rained you still went out. We had

23:00 one of those you've seen army groundsheets? Well, we had one of those, which we just have to put round our shoulders and in the cold weather we had a same army great coat as the men. No jumpers I don't think. We had a jacket with our winter uniform just a great coat.

23:30 Was there in the barracks any misbehaviour amongst the girls?

Wouldn't call it misbehaviour. We used to have a lot of fun and play tricks. Short sheet beds and all that sort'a silly things. No, we were pretty well behaved actually considering that, you know there was a lot of girls together.

What does short sheeting a bed involve?

Don't tell me you haven't had that done to you?

24:00 Well, you just put the bottom sheet on your bed and you pick it up and you put it. That's your sheet and instead of putting it down like that you turn it up like that and then you turn it back over the blanket and when they go to get into bed they can only get half way down the bed. So they got a get out and strip their bed and make their bed. Yes, one night I remember I woke up I could hear a funny noise

24:30 and the girl in the bed next to me cause there was only a little space between our beds she was sound asleep and there was a rat chewing her hair. I knocked the rat down and I woke her up and she had this big bunch a hair gone off her head here. 'Cause there was no gauze doors or anything and I s'pose it must a come in off the beach somehow and hopped up into bed with her.

What would happen if it was felt that one of the

25:00 girls wasn't pulling her weight perhaps?

I don't think we came across that problem. I never remember it happening. I guess that was what Sergeant's were for. They'd keep them on their toes yeah.

What were the things that you enjoyed least about the army life?

25:30 Being, well, if you did anything wrong spud barber that was one. And cleaning grease traps. That was another one you had to do if you did something wrong. And sort of queuing up to get your washing done and your ironing. Keeping the barracks clean was no trouble.

26:00 But I don't think there was anything much that was really bad.

And what were your favourite things about life in the army?

Feeling I was doing me duty and the friendships I made that was a really big thing, yeah. And we did have lots a fun. But we always had that thing at the back a ya mind

26:30 that you might be called on to do something and, as I said, thank god we weren't. But we had good times. We used to, a group of us might decide to go to the pictures and could be fellows. Even though some of the girls were engaged, like I was, and had boyfriends and that, we'd all just go together. Might be half a dozen blokes and four or five girls or something but we'd all pay our own way and enjoy a dance or whatever it was

27:00 and made a lot of friendships both male and female. Towards 19 middle a 1944 when ack-ack was declared not needed anymore we all broke up then and you know we sort of got separated went in all directions. Some of them went to signals and, as I said, I went to Coastal Artillery and we lost track again then. And then straight after the

27:30 war most of them were having babies and all the rest of it. So there was quite a few years there when nothing happened as far as our friendships and that much apart from the Christmas cards. And then the first reunion I went to my husband was still here so that was probably 25-years ago that I went to my first one. And from then on we sort

28:00 of more kept in contact and I was only down in Newcastle and met some of the girls in November. Just a off the cuff one you know just had lunch and a good old talk and all that. So they are friendships that last because that was a long time ago.

When you went to dances where were they held?

There used to be

28:30 in the Town Hall in Newcastle and I can't think a the name. It used to be a skating rink and they turned that into a dance hall and they used to have roller skating there in the afternoon which we used to go along sometimes. And, as I said, civilians used to invite us out to their houses

29:00 sometimes for a meal of a night or a barbeque or something.

How did that come about?

They used to send an invitation to the battery, or whatever it was, and invite say 6-girls or something and we'd work out amongst ourselves who'd like to go and who had leave, and all the rest of it. So there was never any arguments about whose turn it was or anything like that.

What do you think the civilians thought about

29:30 **you and the girls?**

They must a thought we were alright I s'pose or they wouldn't have asked us would they? That was a small minority that used to invite us to their places. But civilians in general I think they thought we were alright. I used to see plenty of my friends that were still civilians and used to get on really well.

When you went to the dances what was the

30:00 **protocol about who you danced with and so forth?**

Whoever asked you. Because you used to nearly get danced off our feet because the men used to be outnumbered. Probably 10 to 1 woman so we were never short of partners. Yes, that went on all during the war actually and then there used to be

30:30 Canteens where only Service people could go to. Like one time we got an invitation for 6-girls to come to the American canteen. There was a special mid-day concert on. So I was luckily one of the ones that went and when we got there it was Bob Hope and Snuzzle Giranti. Francis

31:00 Langford. I can't ever think of the other lady's name, but they just called her 'Ginger'. But I can't think of her right name. Anyway they had been in New Guinea entertaining their troops and they had a forced landing out from Newcastle in their plane. So they put on an impromptu concert at the American canteen. But it all end up it was something terrible. Cause there was Aussie fellows there too

31:30 and some of them were sitting around us girls and Francis Langford, she had so much make up on her face that, you know, you felt you could'a scratched it off and course we girls didn't use much make up. Anyhow, one of the stirring diggers when there was break had to turn round to some a these Yanks and said, "Look at her. She's like a clown, all the make up. Look at these girls. They're better looking than that." And then

32:00 it was on for young and old. They all got into a punch up and we got out as quick as we could and some of the MP's come in and broke the fight up but we were banned from ever going to the American canteen again then. Yeah. But it was a good concert. We saw Bob Hope and he's just like he like on the

movies and that.

What sort of acts were at the concert what were they doing?

He was

32:30 doing his jokes and singing. And Francis Langford sang and Snuzzle Giranti was the pianist. That was all. They only had the piano accompaniment and yeah, it was really good. They were all dressed in jungle greens because, as I said, they'd just left New Guinea. So that was a bit of a highlight.

What sort of tension was there between the Australians and the Americans in Newcastle?

A lot yes.

33:00 I remember once I didn't see it but one night after the movies there was it was like a square in Newcastle. It'd be probably half my backyard out there right out the road quite a big area and somehow an altercation started and they reckon there was hundreds of Yanks [Americans] and

33:30 Aussies all stuck into one another, yeah, having a really bad fight.

Why was there that tension?

Well, I think it was a lot of jealousy on the Aussies part because a lot of the girls used to go with the Yanks. And they had so much money to spare compared to the Aussies. And they were better dressed and not that I ever did go with any of them.

34:00 But if Aussies wanted to get a taxi, which were pretty hard to get in those days, and there was Yanks there the taxi drivers would take the Yanks in preference because they'd always give them a good tip. Or you'd go somewhere to have a meal and they'd always serve the Yanks first because they'd give them a tip. And of course Aussies couldn't afford to do that on 6-bob [6 pounds] a day. And

Well, that's not very patriotic of the Australian taxi

34:30 **drivers is it?**

No it wasn't, that's right. But they were thinking of the doe-rae-me so they probably having a pretty lean time too because petrol was so hard to get. And we had a couple of girls that had American boyfriends and we used think it was alright because they'd come home with chocolates and shared them all with us and all that.

Did you have a certain opinion of girls that went out with American troops?

No, we used to say

35:00 please 'emselves. All girls used to go out. We had one girl who'd particularly would only go out with sailors. She loved sailors so it was a bit of mixed bag really. But, as I said, the majority of us in our group we had our own boyfriends but we used to just go out in groups for the sake of going out.

Was there a lot of pressure from the men when they were out with girls, let's say romantic pressure?

No,

35:30 we always. That was always understood, we're just going out for the night and we all go, "Dutch". That's what we used to say. No, the men used to behave, yeah.

And just to jump back a second. What were your impressions of the American troops?

Well, to be quite honest I never really had anything to do with them. They, to me they were just Yanks. I had my own boyfriend

36:00 and we used to have just our own Aussie blokes and never worried about them. But they really did lord around the place to be truthful. And the, I don't blame the Aussie boys because a lot of them'd be overseas and they'd come home on leave and their girlfriend's gone off with a Yank or something. Used to be pretty upsetting to them I'd

36:30 say.

Domestically how did the war affect your parents as far as food clothing and so forth?

Well, everything was rationed in the food line. I think they got on alright. Well, one thing they had plenty a WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and eggs. And my Dad used to always grow vegies and

37:00 so they didn't do too badly I don't think. And we used to have Canteens where we could buy chocolates and an odd packet of cigarettes and my Dad used to smoke so if I could sneak a chocolate or cigarette I'd take it home to Dad and not use it meself. Which, they used to like that. No, I don't think food wise

37:30 it was ever too bad. Clothing wise you didn't have many clothes but people used to remake things all the time.

What about you, did you ever go to a restaurant or something?

Yeah, we used to occasionally when you could save enough out of your 4 and 8-pence a day. Oh well, the one's over 21 they used to get 6-shillings. And then when I became a Computer Specialist I

38:00 got 6-shillings so that was good. But you really didn't have a lot to spend your 6-shillings on because you got all your clothes and all your food so really one day leaves and you could have a good time if you wanted to. If you didn't want to save any.

So if you got 6-shillings a day what for example would a beer cost?

Not very much. I can't

38:30 remember now. As I said, I didn't go in for it very much. Probably 6-pence or something like that. I just couldn't say for sure.

I'm just trying to get an idea of what 6-shillings would buy you, say at a restaurant or something like that?

Probably for 10-shillings you could just, at a guess, you could probably have a really good meal. What there was 'cause the cafés and things had it hard too to get too much

39:00 and there was none'a this rice dishes and spaghetti and all this that our new folk have bought in. It was virtually only fish and chips and steaks and when they could get them. So you went out if you had a steak you'd think that was pretty good.

And what sort of thing were you getting for your 3-meals a day in the army? Take us through from breakfast lunch and dinner.

39:30 Well, they were good wholesome meals, put it that way. You'd probably have cereal and mostly baked beans or spaghetti on toast or horrible, as I said, scrambled egg made with powdered egg. And then lunchtime we'd have a midday meal it'd be meat and vegies and some sort of sweets. And then of a nighttime it'd mostly be

40:00 a salad and or you could make yourself sandwiches or something like that. Usen't to get anything between meals just the three bare meals. And all we used to get to drink was tea which I didn't drink tea. So I just used to drink water. No fruit juices or anything healthy like that.

40:30 **I meant to ask you what was your nickname?**

Bail

Why?

'Cause my surname was Bailey so they just shortened it to Bail.

Nothing to do with cricket?

No. No.

Alright, we'll cut that tape there.

Tape 6

00:30 **Once it became clear, let's say 1943 or early '44, once it became clear that there wasn't really any danger of an air attack on Newcastle, was it hard to maintain your interest?**

Yes, a bit of the spirit did go out of it I suppose you could say that. But then we got shifted onto something new so the process began all over again. Had to learn

01:00 all about the shipping and that then.

How did this realisation that you were never gonna get to use those guns how did it affect morale in the battery?

Well, I think we were all just so glad we didn't have to was the main feeling yes. Well, that's good we didn't have to do it. Yes, I don't think we were down hearted or anything. We were more down hearted about the unit being broken

01:30 up and all gettin' sent here there and everywhere. So we all sort of missed one another although I still went to Coastal Artillery with some of the girls but none of the ones that I originally started off with. They were all ones that came in later but we had also been working together before that so it was good.

Was there ever a feeling that, you know, just once maybe

02:00 **some of you'd have liked to see a Japanese plane fly over?**

We used to kid ourselves I think. So in reality we didn't want it but it would'a been interesting I guess just to see what happened. Because we knew the submarines were out there sinking our ships. And that was what they were afraid of, that they'd bring an aircraft carrier down. But it never eventuated thanks to the battle of the Coral Sea and that

02:30 was when things turned around. They give 'em such a bashing then they weren't able and that was when they started to consider breaking the anti-aircraft units up and making better use of them in something else.

OK, so at what point was it that you got moved to the coastal installation?

I think it was about March

03:00 or April 1944 I think, yeah. As close as I can remember. 'Cause I went from Wave Battery, which was the battery I was at to Coastal Artillery. Yes, it was sometime at fairly early in '44, I think.

How did you feel about moving further away from home?

Well, it wasn't much different really. It was still Newcastle Coastal

03:30 Artillery. It was just the other side of the harbour. Where the battery I was on the other side of the harbour too. So really, virtually only moved up the road a few kilometres to this big Fort Wallace.

And what did you do there? What exactly was your role?

Well, they had a plotting room like we had at our what the air force had at the

04:00 GOR only we had a plotting room where used to do the same thing plot the ships. And they had the same system used to report out to their other guns at the other places that were round the coast. Nobody realised actually how well fortified Newcastle was. There was all sorts of things around. Ack-ack batteries and search

04:30 lights and Beauforts and tanks and everything. Yeah, they were gonna defend it if possible I think.

What sort of like Coastal Artillery guns do you know of were there?

Well, we had our big 3.7's and then the big Coastal Artillery ones they were 6.2 even bigger than our

05:00 anti-aircraft ones. And we knew through anti-aircraft where there was a couple of batteries of Beauforts guns, yeah. And then we knew where all the searchlights were because they were sort of part of ack-ack. And this was all this codes we had to learn cause they all had a code name.

Can you remember some of the code names?

Well, yeah. 'Harry-3' was

05:30 Stockton. 'Harry-7' was where we used to go to Merriweather. 'Wave Battery' was another name. Just can't. They sort of you know sort of made up a name.

How many Batteries were there around Newcastle of 3.7's?

06:00 Now you've got me thinking. There's Wave, Merriweather, New Lambton. Tomico. 'Bout 5, I think, with the big 3.7's, yeah.

And at what stage did you move to the radar unit?

That was

06:30 when I went to Coastal Artillery and went up to this place called Wipers. Oh yes, and when I was up at Shepherds Hill when I said that man followed me that was a radar station too for the Coastal Artillery. Not planes. No, didn't have anything to do with the radar on the planes.

07:00 **So the one that you said was in the 7-storey building whereabouts was that?**

It was a place called Wipers. It was on a bush track towards the ocean between Stockton and Nelsons Bay.

So that was much further away from home for you?

Yes it was a bit, yeah. Especially when you had to hitchhike. Yes, that was I dare say that was the furthest

07:30 away I got. I did do get down to Sydney a couple of times. I did a school down at North Head once and I did an NCO's school when I was granted me second stripe I didn't get. I did that down in Sydney too. But apart from that it's only Sydney or Newcastle really. I didn't get to

What was it like living in that isolated installation?

08:00 Actually, we all quite enjoyed it. Because you could really relax when you weren't on duty and we used to read and knit and talk and play cards and

08:30 all that sort of thing because you were there 6-days out of 7 and you worked an 8-hour shift everyday. So you had a lot a time really on your hands and we had to do the cooking and do your washing and ironing all that sort of thing. No, it was quite good and luckily they were girls we all got on well together and the guards were old men they used to call old and bold. They were the old diggers from the First World War and the men that were operating the radar they were Australian Army men, yeah. So it was a bit of a mixed lot

09:00 of us but it was quite good. But had to try and make the rations thin out for a week and things like that, you know. It was all sort'a fun and someone'd which...there was no cooks amongst us. We used to ruin things and get all the backlash from it and all the fun and all the rest of it.

What sort of things would the ration truck deliver to you?

Enough meat for a week and vegetables for a week

09:30 and bread for a week. So we used to toast our bread by the time the week came around. The only way you could eat it. And the vegetables that used to nearly always get eaten the first 4 or 5-days. By the time Sunday came around we'd be all hanging out for some fresh vegetables on Monday.

Where were we?

I don't know.

We were

10:00 **talking about the rations on the radar station on the coast there?**

That's right. Yes, so we used to have to try and make our own cakes and our own puddings and thing.

How did you do that? What are some of the recipes the standard recipes that you used?

Now you're asking me something. I've done that much cooking since I couldn't remember what we used to do there. I know I

Cause the ingredients must have been quite basic

10:30 **that you had work with?**

Yes, yes they were. But not being a cook meself I s'pose we must've had someone amongst us that used to instruct us what to do. And wash up and all that. Sometimes the men'd give us a hand because there'd be quite a family by the time you had a few guards and radar men and the rest of us.

When you say that you got meat delivered for example was it

11:00 **fresh meat?**

Yeah. Sometimes there'd be corned meat and I think we had a kerosene refrigerator to put it in. Yeah, I think it would'a been. We did have electricity though. Maybe we had an electric fridge, I don't know. But we had a fridge of some sort anyway which it was choc-a-block on Monday

11:30 and it slowly got emptied.

What was the relationship like between the men and the women in this isolated place?

We used to get on really well, yeah. As I said, we used to play cards. That's where I learnt to play cards. Feed the possums. Tell stories and yarns

12:00 and I also did a lot of fancy work for my glory box there.

What do you mean by fancy work?

Well, you used to have covers for your, dunno whether, no I've got all bought ones. That's a bad recommendation isn't it. But used to have these doily's that people used to put on their tables and fill them all in. There'd be a design on it with flowers and

12:30 what not, and used to do it all in coloured cottons. So that we all used to do a bit of that for our glory boxes.

Was there a lot of time to fill in at this place?

Yes. Because we'd have, as I said, 8-hours on and even when you were doing your shift there weren't very many ships come and you'd spot the ship you'd do your

13:00 bit reporting it and then it'd take ages to go right past and it might be hours before another one came in sight. So it was really very boring if we couldn't have done that. There was no objection to us doing it I don't think. Cause no one used to come and check on us or anything. We just did it and that was it.

How often would you get home to see your parents?

Once a week. We used to have one day

13:30 a week off and we'd often ,as I said, two of us go together and if it was someone that didn't live nearby I used to take her with me out to my parents place and then we'd stay probably till lunch and if we got there in time for lunch. And then we'd go into town and probably go to the movies or something and that would be our days leave gone.

14:00 **What sort of movies did you like to see?**

All those old Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. All the good old movies that used to be on then. So different to these silly things they have now. No language. Sappy love stories. You always knew how it was gonna end up. But pretty women.

14:30 Yes, it was what our sort of leave day consisted of. Or maybe go to a dance if we didn't go to the movies.

And what might you buy yourself to eat say for a treat?

A steak, as I said, one thing. I wasn't a sweet tooth. Lots of the girls used to love to try and find

15:00 nice cakes and things like that but I wasn't one for cakes. Used to try and buy a little birthday gift for my Mum and Dad and Sister. Apart from that didn't have that much else to spend our money on. Couldn't send me husband anything.

15:30 **Why?**

Well, they were the same as us. There was nothing they could use and the Red Cross used to send them Christmas cakes and things like that. My Mum used to do that too. If she was well enough she'd make a Christmas cake and send up. Which lot's a people used to do.

What sort of fears did you have for your fiancé and then husband when he was away up

16:00 **North?**

Well, I used to think you know, well, I want to spend the rest of me life with him and it'd be awful if he came home one leg missing or something, yeah. That was the fear those sort of things everybody had. But it was all part of living in those days. You just carried on and enjoyed yourself as best you could. Put that at the back of your mind.

16:30 **Were you more frightened of him being wounded or of him being killed?**

Being killed, yeah. If he'd a been wounded and come home I'd a still looked after him. Yes, which lots'a poor fellows did.

How long was he up in New Guinea after you got married?

He went up in February-March and he came home

17:00 Christmas 1945, yeah. No sorry, he didn't go in March. He went in September.

Of what year?

1944. He went back to Darwin after we were married and then he came back to do a school at Bonegilla down near Albury. And then he went to New Guinea from there, yeah. September. When I said I got pregnant.

17:30 Then didn't see him until Coral was 6-months old.

What pressure did that put on you having a new baby?

It was pretty tough but she was a spoilt baby. My sister and my Mum and Dad between them all she was really spoilt. But, as I said, it gave my Mum a lot a pleasure.

18:00 Yeah, there was lots a women had lots a kids and still had to do that by themselves.

Now, I believe there was a point when there was some bushfires or something when some of the Army personnel were helping to fight bushfires? Is that right?

Yes. I wasn't amongst them. But it was just a story that was told amongst us that one of the girls fell off the truck and was killed, yeah.

So that wasn't

18:30 **somebody you knew?**

No. Somewhere round it was round Newcastle. So I guess it was true, although rumours used to be very rife in those days.

Now when you committed your big indiscretion and lost your stripes what did that seem fair to you what had happened as a punishment?

I thought it was a bit tough but

19:00 I did wrong so I s'pose I had to take me punishment and I s'pose they were probably making an example of me in case someone else got the same idea. 'Cause I think I was the first one to do it that I know of anyway.

What had you expected to happen?

Well, I just though I'd get fined and that'd be it. But I got the whole works. I got fined. Lost me stripes and confined to barracks as well. So it was a pretty

19:30 tough punishment but I s'pose the reckon the punishment fits the crime so I had no say in what happened.

While you were away on your honeymoon with your husband were you nervous about what was gonna happen?

Yes, I was a bit. I kept thinking, "Oh gee I'm AWL. I'm AWL." Didn't really like it.

20:00 **What did your parents think about this?**

They weren't very keen on it either. They didn't mind me getting married but my Mum didn't like it when she said the Military Police came knocking on the door.

And what about your husband? How did he feel about you getting into so much trouble?

He wasn't worried. He said we had the time together. We deserved that and actually

20:30 he went AWL before he went back to Darwin and got caught too and got fined a couple a days pay. And went off again. That was when he could only come and talk to me through the fence.

You mentioned right earlier on

21:00 **when we first started talking that guard duty wasn't much fun during the night?**

No. As you know, everyone had blackouts and this anti-aircraft batteries was the only places near was our quarters where we used to sleep and everything was jet black and we used to only have a gate to guard because the battery was surrounded with

21:30 cement and barbed wire and entanglements and we used to have turns on guard duty. There'd be 4 people go on and there was a little guard hut and 3 pallias'. So you'd have 2-hours on with a .303 and have to challenge anybody that came. If it was someone on leave they had a password that they had to tell you to let them in and then in the day time

22:00 used to still, had to guard the gate and used to take the rifle away and only have a bayonet. And still people only could get in that had the password. But it was a bit creepy of a night. All you could hear was the waves on the ocean breaking and not a sign of anything else. Everything was all blacked out. And then of a

22:30 moonlit night it wasn't too bad too dark. Then in the wintertime it wasn't very good. Wind off the ocean'd be freezing cold.

How did you stay awake?

If you got a bit sleepy you'd just walk backwards and forwards across the gate. And you'd have your little sleep there down on the pallias while someone else had a turn for 2-hours.

23:00 **You mentioned also that the Battery was camouflaged as a village? How was that done?**

Well, they had camouflage nets all over the amenities block and the guns and then being right close to the shore they had a just so it just looked like houses on a fishing village.

23:30 Hopefully that's what the Japs [Japanese] thought but I bet they didn't. They knew it was there. Because from above apparently you couldn't see anything but the camouflage nets.

So were the houses real houses?

Yeah, they commandeered a few houses for us. They were just across the road from the beach. So when we were in the house that was the only time we weren't on the beach. And then if you had time

24:00 off through the day which would only be your day off so you'd be away. We had sort of a where we had our Mess huts there was Recreation Room it was called. So that's where we used to go of a night. Do our dancing and singing and just talk whatever. And lights out

24:30 were 10-o'clock. Had to be in bed by 10-o'clock. Used to have a roll call about half past nine. Come

round and check everyone was in bed. But we usen't to sneak out from there cause there was nowhere to sneak to.

In the event that the Japanese landed on the beach what were you told your job was to be?

Well, to be quite honest

25:00 I don't think we were ever told because I think the idea was that they'd think that they wouldn't be able to get through all this entanglement and stuff. They wouldn't had to come in landing barges to do that and it was pretty rough sea. Wasn't like it was like a beach. There was an unguarded beach mile up further where we used to do all our swimming but I don't know whether they

25:30 could've landed there but if they'd a come from the sea to our ack-ack battery I don't think they would've got through.

Would you have been able to move the guns?

Oh no. No they're cemented in. Well, they would've weighed tonnes and tonnes. But actually Australia did really well to get all those things made you know and installed and everything so quickly when manpower was

26:00 so short. And they had tunnels and all sorts of things in the two Coastal Artillery Batteries, Fort Scratchley and Fort Wallace where they used to have all their stuff in under there and all their ammunition and that.

So being in an Artillery

26:30 **Unit would you have been able to abandon your guns?**

Well, all we could shoot at was aircraft so if there was no aircraft well I s'pose we would.

Back to when you were in the gun operations room. Were there any false alarms any time about aircraft movements?

Occasionally someone

27:00 from the battery would ring up but we could very quickly find out you know where they'd left. And most times it'd only be if someone made a little mistake and identified the wrong plane or something like that. But really I can remember there being one alarm one night over at Wave Battery. There was a radar station not very far from there

27:30 and there was a milkman that used to come at. 'Cause everyone was s'posed to do things the same time so they'd know. That used to come to the houses around where this radar station was and apparently he changed his time and he came real early and the radar picked him up and it was a false alarm of course. They didn't know to this day how they instead of pickin' an aeroplane up, it picked the milkman

28:00 up. But that caused a bit of a scurry for a little while but it was all false alarm.

Hopefully no shots were fired at the milkman?

Oh no, no, no. There was no planes to find just that the radar picked something up and it couldn't be identified but that's what it turned out to be.

The milk bottle tops perhaps?

I dunno.

What about aircraft crashes? Do you remember anything like that?

Yes, there was a Lockheed Lightning

28:30 crashed not very far from another place I was at. We used to still work at the Ops Room but it was while they were building our hut they confiscated a couple of cottages down near what they call the gully line in Newcastle and there was a Lockheed Lightening crashed right there. Not very far from where we

29:00 were. Pilot was killed unfortunately and the plane caught on fire. But that was a very bad accident. That was the only one I really saw.

When planes that you were plotting landed did they just disappear off the radar or what happened?

No well, we didn't actually have the radar. We were only concerned with them when they were over Newcastle. Once they came into that

29:30 area and the air force down below us they plotted them and we only knew by communication with our ack-ack batteries where they were.

And that was just done purely visually?

Yeah, on these TOCI, as I said, really powerful telescopes, yeah. And well, you really could sense a lot of them by sound and used to have to estimate

30:00 how high they were flying and what speed and all that sort a thing so it was pretty easy to keep track of them.

How did you estimate how high they were?

Just that we were taught, you know, look so far up's a thousand feet. And by lifting your head up like that how far you put your head back. I dunno whether it was very accurate or not but it seemed to work.

It would depend on how tall you were wouldn't it?

Well, probably yeah.

30:30 As I said, the planes were only slow old things. It'd be nothing like they'd go on now because by the time you say Jack Robinson, they're gone.

Tell us about where you were and how you heard about the Japanese surrender?

Well, I was home out of the army by then and it just came over the radio,

31:00 yeah. And everyone that could went rushing into Newcastle and all the people were dancing in the streets and singing and going on yeah. And that happened to be my husbands birthday and I can remember the letter I got written that day the best birthday present I've ever had in me life. The war ended. Yeah, 11th of August.

And what about you? You were pregnant at this stage?

No I'd

31:30 had my baby by then.

How did you celebrate?

Well, I didn't really. I didn't even go into Newcastle I was just so happy to be home and know that it was over. 'Cause there was no TV to look at it or anything like that. And the next morning everyone was grabbing for the newspapers to read all about it. And course the atomic bomb was dropped just before that. And there was lots a people

32:00 were against that. But personally I wasn't because I don't' know how much longer the war might'a went on if that hadn't happened. So it was terrible for the Japanese but it bought an end to the war which was good.

So what did you know about those sort of things like the atom bomb?

Only what we read in the papers which was

32:30 very scanty I think to what really happened. The government usen't to let much information out about anything really and they always used to make us think we were winning as much as they could. Until something bad happened and it had to come out when they lost something. And of course getting the paper

33:00 with all the casualty list on that used to be a terrible thing during the war. You'd always find somebody you knew just about.

How often did the casualty lists get published?

I don't know bout whether they used to come every day. I can't even remember whether there used to be newspapers every day. But I know if anyone was on leave and they bought a paper

33:30 they'd with the casualty list in it we'd all study it. To be honest I can't remember how often they came out. And then if one of the soldiers were killed sometimes the Minister or Priest, whatever'd go and tell the family and sometimes the first they'd know it would be a telegram, or see it in the paper. Yes, she was grim old times.

Were there people you knew who were killed?

Yes, I had a few. A couple aa cousins. I had a friends of, more my sisters friend than mine. He was in the Army and he had twin brothers were on HMAS Perth and

34:30 they went down with the Perth and then he went off to New Guinea. Came through New Guinea and he came home and he got a job with the PMG [Post Master General] delivering telegrams on a pushbike. Only worked for about a week and got knocked off his bike and killed. So the mother lost her three sons, yeah. There was lots a things like that.

35:00 **How did that affect you knowing that your husband was still over there? Hearing about losses and reading about them in the paper?**

Well, you just sort'a thought about it quite often and just hoped that the letters'd keep coming and he wouldn't be one. But I also did know that the Sixth Battalion was right in the thick of it so I knew that he was there right in it.

35:30 And then up in he was up in Darwin in the air raids but I don't think there was too many casualties in those after the very first surprise one, which he wasn't there then.

How long did it take to get letters up to your husband and back again?

They were always at least a week behind because you didn't have any address

36:00 to send them too. You know it was just Sig Section Sixteen Brigade 6th Division Australia. So it was a pretty hard job for them to sort them out I mean someone might be injured and sick sent home and then his letters'd probably go to the unit and follow then back and that sort of thing used to happen I s'pose quite a lot. And as I

36:30 said, we used to number our letters. Sometimes I might get a stack of 5 or 6 together and then there wouldn't be anymore and be thinking the worst and then along'd come another big stack a letters. A lot of them'd only just, well, a few times he did miss out but he had a mate that used to write me a few lines. He'd say 'Sid's OK, love Bluey' and that'd be it, the days he wasn't there to send a letter. So I was really very

37:00 fortunate I had a letter nearly everyday. Be they in heaps sometimes but they came.

How often did you write to Sid?

Same. Everyday, yeah. Same thing even if it was only just a couple a lines. Lots a people used to do that. Good way of keeping in touch and it used to make the fellas happy that were over there.

What did it cost you

37:30 **to send a letter?**

4-pence. We used to get half price yeah that was all it was. That was air mail. They were always air mail because Darwin was air mail and New Guinea was air mail.

So you always found time to do that every day?

Used to make time. Didn't take

38:00 very long. Sometimes had bits'a times to spare even used to address half a dozen envelopes and then it was just a matter of popping a few words in if you were busy. Then other times make great big long letters and just be careful it was nothing in it that the censors could cut out.

How did you get around the censorship?

38:30 Well, there was nothing really to say that you. You couldn't say where you were. What you were doing or anything like that. Just mainly say you'd been on leave or been on duty. You could say that you were on duty and tell something funny that had happened or someone's fiancé's home and all that sort a thing.

What sort of things would be censored?

Well, if you mentioned where you were or what you were doing

39:00 or mentioned any other unit. Like if you said, "Tom's home from New Guinea from whatever Unit he was in." That'd be then very quickly cut out. But you knew what you could write and what you couldn't. Very rarely, Sid said, there was ever any cut out a mine. Same with his. He learnt what he could write and what he couldn't.

Who was doing the censoring?

39:30 One of the Officers that knew you that was the worse part. So you couldn't really say anything because he knew all your personal business so. Yeah, it was always the Officer of the.

How did that make you feel sort of working with somebody who was sharing your correspondence with your husband?

Yeah. It was a bit of a funny feeling. I s'pose it all went over their heads had to do so much of it.

40:00 Probably read some funny things I don't know they never used to talk about it either.

Were all the girls that you worked with attached to somebody?

Yes. The majority were yes. Round in 1944, gee wiz there was a real lot of us got married. All the fellows seemed to be coming home, yes. I went to so many weddings and a course a wedding was a bit

40:30 hard to do too. Food was still scarce. I remember my Mum got a friend to make my wedding cake and she had to take it to a bakery to be iced and the icing was still wet when they went to pick it up to bring it to our reception. And alcohol was very hard to get. But we had a canteen at our

41:00 ack-ack battery and the lieutenant in charge of our ack-ack battery got some beer for us. So that was a help. And I dunno how we had a few bottles of wine but didn't have much because it just wasn't available.

Tape 7

00:30 **OK, do you want to tell us about your wedding day?**

Righto. Well, we were married in St Peter's Church at Hamilton in Newcastle and it was the 22nd of February, one of the hottest days of the summer. And we had I think about 70

01:00 people there including a lot of my army friends. I can't remember how many, and only a couple of Sid's that he could get cause they were home or gone, you know, here there and everywhere on leave. And we had a possibility between Sid and I of 8 grandparents and we had 7 of them at our wedding and they were all in their 80's. But

01:30 within a couple of years all but one of them had passed away. But it was something, you know, it was really good. And that old fellow lived to 96 so he did well. There wasn't very many wedding presents that people could give you in those days because there just wasn't the things to buy with all rationing and stuff. And so most of the

02:00 people just gave us some money which we put away for our home later. But I do remember Pyrex dishes were the thing. Here were we both in the Army and we got about 4 Pyrex dishes and mirrors. I remember I got 3 wall mirrors. And apart from that it was mostly only money. And we

02:30 had the reception and then we had dancing afterwards. And I remember one of my army friends, she was getting married a couple of weeks after us and her husband to be's name was Mick but she used to call him 'Mickey'. And he came up and he gave me a big hug and a kiss and she bowled up to me and she said, "If you can kiss my Mickey I can kiss your Sid." Course everyone cracked up

03:00 to hear her say that. Oh yes, I had an experience with her when we were playing netball used to be one of our things for PE too. Or basketball, yeah. I can't remember which we used to call it in those days. Cause they've changed it now. It's netball. I think. We used to play basketball. Anyway, I bent down like that to pick the ball

03:30 up and she went to grab it too and as she did her mouth was there near my head and I bumped up like that and ruined her two front teeth. Poor thing, she was a really attractive girl and these two front teeth went black cause it killed the nerves in her teeth. And I had two teeth holes in me head but that was a bad experience. But she is one of the girls that

04:00 I never ever heard of after the war and I don't really know what happened to her.

Did you hear of many of the Australian girls actually marrying American Servicemen?

Yes, I know one girl that was in with us did and she went over to America as a war bride and she came back. They had a reunion of war brides here some time ago

04:30 and one of the girls from Newcastle told me that she'd seen her and rang up and said she's quite happy in America. She considers herself you know that's her home now and but she was glad to come over and she saw 3 or 4 of the girls that she was in camp with. But that was the only one I knew off. I know another one used to go out with Americans but she didn't I don't know what happened to

05:00 her in the end. She didn't marry one or anything.

And did you ever wear make up when you were working?

Lipstick was about all we ever used. Because you weren't supposed to use much make up and only light lipstick and we all had our hair cut short. That's how the Americans and the Aussies come to get into an argument when I was telling you about Bob Hope. He said, "Look at these girls,

05:30 they're all natural. And look at her you could scrape the paint off her face."

What about bobby pins?

Yes, you could use bobby pins. I never needed too because I just had mine cut short.

OK. And what did you think about the Brisbane Line?

Yes, we were a bit upset about that but you know everyone used to

06:00 say, "Well, if they let them there how could ever we stop them." No one in the forces could really see how it could be done. But luckily that was something else that didn't eventuate.

Was it talked about much?

No, not really. I don't think it was general knowledge really. I can't remember how we come to find out about it. But I was on a coach trip. This is in

06:30 recent years. Going over to the coast and there was a man sitting in front of me and I heard him tell his wife that he was in the army during the war and he pointed out there's a point in the range where you go over very narrow up to. I'm not sure whether it was Glen Innes or where it was. Somewhere up there and he said that they had that

07:00 road all mined ready. If there'd been an invasion they would've blown it. And he said that was only one of many places like that that was hoping to stop the Japs getting...if they landed to get from the Brisbane Line. Well, see people that didn't know anything about that. Only the one's that did it. I s'pose they were like us sworn to secrecy that you didn't talk about things like that. So I guess it was probably done here on

07:30 the Murrarundi Range and all that as well.

And how did you handle following orders?

It didn't worry me at all because I went to very strict school and then the office I worked in we had a pretty strict boss. So orders didn't worry me at all seen I was so keen too.

08:00 **What contribution do you think the Second World War made to the change in women's social position?**

Heaps. Because most women had just lived at home and very few of them actually went to work unless it was pretty mundane work. Of course there was teachers and nurses but they were professional women and the others just

08:30 seemed to get married and have their families. Whereas this sort of liberated women so much to be able to go in the Services. Not only the army but the other services as well. And even the women that went into the munitions factories. See, that was something that had never been done before. Women never worked in a great force like that. I mean they might be together in a shop or something but

09:00 there wasn't even many factories of any sort in those days. So they didn't sort of congregate together very much.

And how did you adjust to civilian life again after your service time?

It was a bit hard to begin with and actually I still get up early. My kids tell me I'm silly gettin' up when I don't have to. But no, well, as I said, I came back

09:30 home and I didn't really have a lot of time to think about it because my Mum was ill and my Dad still had this dash poultry farm so I was and I was still fit. Even though I was pregnant I was still able to help there quite a lot. And I had my Grandma and Grandfather who I used to love to go and visit just for a few hours in the daytime. They lived a few miles from

10:00 us. I used to hop on a bus and apart from that I never went anywhere really to movies or anything else just had a very quiet life.

Can you tell us about the men who didn't want to go away to war? What did you know of them?

When we first

10:30 came to Newcastle there was a couple of fellows said. "Oh yeah, now you sheilas'll take our job you know." We'll have to go away and all that but after a little while they just sort of didn't say anymore and we used to get on alright with them. But then they were coming and going all the time so whether they got sent away or not I don't know. But

11:00 there was a real lot of Air Force men that used to come to this place for 3-weeks training and there'd be about 300 Airmen and there was probably 20 or 30 WAAAF. About 20 male personnel army Searchlight and whatever that were with us and us 12 girls. So there was

11:30 heaps of men compared to the women. So we really got so used to men it didn't worry us. We were just one of the mob.

Did they ever try to push their luck with you?

No. No, not really. We just used to make it clear right from the word go. Well, I used to flash me engagement ring and say, "Righto we go out for a night out we go Dutch and that's it." And that was

12:00 all the girls. Well, the majority had the same opinion but lots of them that didn't have attachments they used to go out. But they mostly go they'd go out singly you know. We wouldn't see them but mostly when I went it was never by meself with another bloke it was always 2 or 3 of us at least together.

And do you remember what the protected industries were around

12:30 **Newcastle during the war?**

Well, there was the steel works where they used to make all the ammunition, or lots of ammunition, and I guess they'd be making submarines and ships. I don't really know what went on there. And of course coal mines round Newcastle, a lot of coal mines, which was very essential to keep the factories going.

13:00 And well, I don't know, that'd be the main...

Do you know of any cases where people were given white feathers in those industries?

No, I can't say I ever knew a chap it happened to. But I have heard, you know, someone say, "Oh yeah someone got a white feather." But no I didn't really know anyone personally. But it went on, yeah.

Did you know of any

13:30 **men who were opting out of the war effort at all?**

No, I can't say I do off hand. But one thing there was a bit of a black market going on with petrol and stuff like that and everyone that could get it and sell it

14:00 at a profit. 'Cause cars were only allowed, well I dunno about all cars but I know my Dad, even though he was in the protected industry on the poultry farm. He was only allowed 2-gallons of petrol a month for his car. But what he used to do, Esmarelda we used to call it. It was a little old car and he used to start it with petrol and then he worked something with the motor that he could run it on

14:30 kerosene. And so he was able to get around a bit like that.

So how did he go about getting black market petrol?

He didn't. He just could manage on his 2-gallons by doing that with the kerosene. And I don't think kerosene was rationed because so many people didn't have electricity they had kerosene lights and things so you could get the kerosene.

And what other goods were

15:00 **available on the black market to your knowledge?**

Well, I had an experience with clothing. I wanted to buy myself a jacket, ready for when I became a civvy again and I saw this nice a winter jacket it was. This nice jacket in the window, and one of the other girls came in with me and I tried it on and it fitted and

15:30 like a lined jacket was more coupons than what an unlined jacket was and this was. I can still remember it. It was a herring tooth jacket and it had grey lining in it, and anyway, the lady wrote out the docket and everything and she said, "Could you call back and get it tomorrow?" And I said,

16:00 "Oh no, I won't be on leave tomorrow. I won't be on leave till next week." And I said, "Why can't I take it now?" And she said, "Oh, the buttons are a little bit loose." She said, "I'd like to sew the buttons on properly." So I sort a thought that's funny. But anyway, off my friend and I went and I went back to collect it next week and the parcel was all wrapped up and I got back to camp and she'd taken the lining out of it.

16:30 Yeah. So they used to do things like that so I s'pose she did something else with the lining. I felt really diddled. Me nice jacket was only half a jacket. So there was a few smart cookies around.

Do you have a message of any kind to Australians who might be watching this in the future about serving your country?

17:00 Well, I suppose I can just say I was very proud to do it. I was very proud to have a soldier husband. We had bad times but we still had lots of good times and it's a part of my life I'd hate to have missed. That's about all I think. Is that enough?

17:30 **Your husband and yourself both suffered health wise as a result of the serving in the Second World War and in your opinion was it still worth it?**

Yes, I'd say it definitely was. I mean it was a job that had to be done and if we hadn't of done it someone else would've I suppose and that was

18:00 about all there was to it. You did it and that was it. But as far as my health's concerned apart from my skin cancer's it didn't affect me in other ways. So I was lucky that way. And no it was one of those things that millions of people did through the war that had to be done. Same as the fellows are doing now I s'pose, the ones that go.

18:30 It's just that it's not the same numbers and once it came when the Japs bombed Australia I think that's what woke Australians up and realised well, it's here. We've got to do something about it and everybody got in and did their bit, yeah. This is just a little tiddly bit but thinking about friendships I'd forgotten all about

19:00 this. It was just nothing at the time but when I went down and met some of my friends the end of last year one of the girls said to me she said, "I always remember one good thing you did for me." And I said, "What was that?" And she said, "Remember when Noel came home from New Guinea and we were gonna have the weekend together?" And she said that I had this lovely

19:30 soap that someone had given me and I said to her, "Here you take this nice soap so you'll smell nice and wash the Army off you." And she said she remembered that all these years and yet I hadn't even thought about it more than just giving her the soap. Silly little things like that, you know, that happen, I s'pose that people remember about someone else.

What other toiletries did you take with you apart from nice smelling soap?

20:00 I don't think there was ever even deodorant in those days. Just toothbrush and brush and comb. Toothpaste, that'd be about it, I think. And lipstick. No, I don't think we had anything else. Cause, as I said, we had no bag to carry anything in you just had to use your pockets. So when you went on leave

20:30 of course you had your kit bag you could put things. But to get anything if you were going on leave you had to go home first to get it and then go on leave which didn't work that way.

What voluntary work have you been involved in since the war ended?

Well, I've always been in the Red Cross all me life and I've now got

21:00 medals for 60-years service and I'm still in it. Actually, we have to do catering for a funeral tomorrow and I haven't been in the CWA [Country Women's Association] all that many years only about 6-years I think. And I was a volunteer after my husband died at the Nursing

21:30 Home for many, many years. And I belong to Kindee Cancer Support Group, which we meet once a month. I belong to my Church Guild. What else? Ex-Servicewomen in Tamworth. One day probably about 15-

22:00 years ago a lady from Tamworth who I didn't know rang me up and she said she heard from someone in Tamworth that knew me I was an ex-Servicewoman. And she said, "There's 7 of us that started to meet at the Longyard Hotel." Which is right this end of Tamworth, and she said, "And we have a little get together lunch. Would you like to

22:30 join us?" And I said, "I'd love to." So I drive up and I met them for lunch. Didn't know any of them til then and we had a lunch and decided that we'd do the same thing the next month. So I got thinking about it in between times and I thought well there must be more than 8 Ex-Servicewomen around. So I put the idea to them I said, "How bout if I put an ad in the Northern Daily Leader,

23:00 that's our Tamworth paper, asking if there any Ex-Servicewomen who would like to join a group and just come to the Tamworth RSL Club on whatever date it was?" And we couldn't believe our luck 33 turned up with ourselves. So we sort of decided that we'd meet there again in another month and then it went on from then. We formed an actual group

23:30 and we had a reunion once in Tamworth where girls came from all over NSW. Yeah, it was really great. But we've never had another reunion since but after we have our meeting once a month we just have lunch together at the RSL Club. And there was a big

24:00 memorial for Ex-Servicewomen opened in Canberra 4 or 5-years ago near the War Memorial. So a group of us went over and we were there for the official opening to that as a group which was good. And what else do I belong to?

24:30 Why are you so active in the voluntary work?

Well, all through me life when the kids were at school I used to be Secretary of the P and C [Parents' and Citizens' association] sometimes and other times just a member and I used to always help with their sports meetings and all that sort a thing. I've just I don't know just carried on from the army. I've just always been into public things because I like it and I feel someone's got to do it and

25:00 it's a good way to keep friends and all that.

And what was your involvement in having Servicewomen recognised by the RSL to march on Anzac Day?

I dunno what to say. I just thought it was very unfair of Kindee RSL where we couldn't even go there and have a meal even or anything. They just didn't recognise us. But

25:30 I don't know how it came about but eventually they did. My husband used to go to the meetings and he said, "Oh well, you can come to next Anzac Day and you can join the club." So I did and been in it ever since. Yes, that's right. I'm another voluntary thing. I'm Treasury Secretary of our Legacy Widow's Social Club in Kindee.

26:00 Which we meet once a month and then we have lunch there at the RSL Club too. You can see I get about a bit. And yep, I think that's about all the things I'm in, which is enough.

INTERVIEW ENDS