Australians at War Film Archive

Jean Kidd - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:49 **Thank you to begin with. Thanks very much for being here today and generously donating your time. From everyone at the office and us, thanks very much for being involved.**

You're welcome.

To begin with, we need a bit of a summary as I mentioned,

01:00 **an introduction, so could you tell us a little bit about where you were born and grew up?**

Well I was born in 1922 in Rozelle and soon after that my parents moved out to the West, as it was then, that was opening up at Bankstown. That's where I spent my childhood and schooldays and then, of course, my brother went to the war and I wanted to do something, so I went into munitions and after that

01:30 I also went into aircraft, just forget what I did there now but anyway, electrical bonding, that was it. Then on discharge my husband met me, and two years later we got married, had a family of four children and had a wonderful life. We've been married fifty six years, and here we are now, getting towards the end of the road but

02:00 we've had a good life.

A couple of questions about, still in that summary, what were you doing before the war after you left school?

Well, you didn't have a choice as to what you wanted to do, so my mother found me a job as a milliner and I made ladies' hats. I never enjoyed the work but still I did it for so many years and got through my apprenticeship, that's when I went into munitions.

Where did you work in munitions?

In munitions?

02:30 I went first to Melbourne, to Maribyrnong, and we did a three month training course there, that was in 1942. Then we came back and we were sent to a place called Dunheved, at St Marys, and we opened this big ammunition place there, very big place, and I worked there for two or three years, and I don't know why but then I changed to De Havilland's which was

03:00 almost on my doorstep at home. Maybe the travelling got to me, it was a long trip going up to St Marys each day.

Did you enjoy the work?

There was a lot of fun to it, although there was, I suppose I enjoyed it, yes, yes.

And whereabouts did you settle after you married?

Bankstown, where I'd been raised and yes, we stayed

03:30 in Bankstown for many years. I was there for about seventy years in Bankstown before I came up here to Copa Cabana.

You must have seen a lot of changes in that time?

Yes, a lot of changes. It was a very good place to rear your children. The schools were good, the churches were good, the transport was good. The trains came out to Bankstown, I was reading recently, in 1902 trains came to Bankstown. Think it was 1902,

04:00 might have that mixed up with electricity which came about the same time. Yes, it was a very good place to live, very good.

We'll come back and talk about Bankstown and your childhood there in a moment, but could you tell us about your children? How many children did you have?

Yeah, I had three lovely sons and a beautiful daughter. She was the icing on the cake, so to speak. They've all had very successful marriages, very happily married, and they each gave us

04:30 two grandchildren and now we have five great-grandchildren, so we've done very well.

And you mentioned you met your husband after the war, but could you tell us what he did?

What he did before the war or ...?

Both.

Both? Apparently he was apprenticed to an engineering trade and he did that until the war came and he enlisted, I think, at eighteen

05:00 and went into the air force as a, in that field of engineering and he drove a lot of trucks over in New Guinea. I believe they used to have to collect the bodies and transport them to the hospitals and things like that, wasn't very pleasant apparently. But after the war he was, what do you call it? Not retrenched, that's not the word,

05:30 discharged, discharged, that's the word, and by then I had gone back into a millinery shop just selling hats and renovating hats, and as I said before I did never really like the trade but you didn't have much choice, and I did that and he came in to visit a friend in the neighbouring shop and he said, "oh I can't find any of my mates, the world's changed, I want somebody

06:00 to go out with tonight," and she said, "Well the girl next door might go with you," and she brought him in to introduce him and he said, "Would you like to go to the speedway in the city?" and I said, "Yes," and that's how we first had a date and we courted for two years before we got married. Yes, it was a lot of fun.

What was his career after the war?

He went back to his engineering, went back

06:30 to his engineering and did very well at that, managing the business he was in, he worked for. They sent him overseas on a couple of trips and he did a lot of woodworking machines, I understand, I'm not very knowledgeable about his side of the business. Yes, he did very well. What else can I say?

07:00 **I think that's pretty much the summary we were looking for, that touches on all the areas we're going to talk about today, and the first one of those we'll go back to and start with a lot more detail. Today's pretty relaxed so we can talk about things for a while and we've got, as I say, all day and there's no hurry to get through it now, but now we've got that summary we can use it to go back and go over those things. You were born in Bankstown?**

No, I was born in Rozelle,

07:30 Rozelle. We lived in Springside Street. I often wish I'd taken a photograph of the little house because it was a cute little house. You'd step from the footpath, one step, and open the gate and you're on the veranda, there was no front yard. There was very little back yard, but I remember there was an apple tree, or something, in the back yard and we used to love to sit under that and pick the fruit from

08:00 the tree and throw it at each other when we were kids, 'cause I was one of eight children, and we often went back to visit Grandma, who lived in the house. When I was born my parents were living with her parents and I was the fourth child of the family, so there was always plenty to play with. And there were no cars in those days, we could play in the street. You'd just step out, one step you're on the footpath

08:30 and another step you're on the road and we'd play hopscotch and cricket and that in the street, no danger of traffic, it was lovely.

What was the area in Rozelle like? Was it a working class area?

Oh yes, very much so.

Can you describe the kinds of people that lived around you there?

Well much the same as ourselves, all hard working people,

09:00 what shall I say? The Callum Park Hospital was just down the end of the street, a lot of people worked there. It was a very busy street, I think it was called Victoria Road, the main road that went along there, over a bridge. Just can't think of the name of the bridge. But anyway it was very busy traffic there and there was a little shop on the corner, Miss Ivy's shop. We used to love that, to go in

09:30 and get a sweet every now and then from her.

How old were you at the period that you were in Rozelle, what age?

Rozelle, well I think I left there before I was two from what I understand because, as I said before, they were opening up the land out towards the west there and my parents wanted to, of course, to have their own home and

10:00 I don't know what they paid for it but it wouldn't be very much in today's standard, but I know how much my mother struggled to pay for it. In later years I can remember her, the man used to come around for the payments, I think she was paying about five shillings a week, for that land, and they build their home, and going back to Bankstown, there wasn't much there then. We didn't have neighbours.

10:30 It was about an eight minute walk to the railway station, but the school was just down the end of the street, it was very handy. Again we had plenty of space to play cricket. In the empty paddocks we built cubby houses. We had a lovely childhood. We didn't have much money and not much in the way of food, I mean the food was very simple. We very often played barefoot, we

11:00 didn't have shoes, we had a good pair of shoes but they were kept for Sunday, for Sunday school or going to school, you wouldn't play in those. You'd play in the street and the bush barefoot, but everyone was in the same state, and it was really rather happy.

What did your father do?

My father did a bit of bookwork I think, for

11:30 a timber company at first, at Pyrmont. I think there was a timber company called Goodlet and Smith and he worked there. But later on, in the Depression of course, he lost his job, as everybody did, and I think the council gave them work, I think once a fortnight they'd get so many days. I just haven't got the details of that

12:00 but I know they had a terrible struggle, especially with eight children. And later on he got work as a caretaker at different timber mills and places. He even at one stage was caretaker at the Governor's Country Cottage at Sutton's Forest and we'd go down there, well that's going back to about 1930-something, I suppose, because we'd go down by car. I guess

12:30 I had a boyfriend with a car and we'd go down there and have nice weekends at the Governor's, not in the Governor's house but in the caretaker's house. It was lovely. Dad did a lot of odd things, I think, but he kept the family together doing that, he was a hard working man.

What do, how would you describe his personality?

13:00 My father's? Well I suppose you'd say he was a good man, but he was a very argumentative man and, dear, he had a fiery temper, I would never cross him. And at mealtimes, the children, 'You don't talk at the table,' you wouldn't dare talk at the table. And if you did something terribly wrong he wouldn't hesitate to hit you with his strap. He'd

13:30 take off his belt and he'd hit you with it. But I don't know, discipline never did us any harm. There was eight of us and I think every one of us would say we were bought up well and discipline didn't do us any harm.

What would you get into trouble for as a young girl?

That's a hard one. One of the jobs I had to do as a small child, I suppose

14:00 when I was about eight or ten, was to sit every Saturday morning and cut the newspapers to a certain size, and then put a hole in the corner, with a nail, put a string through it and tie this wad of paper to the back of the door of the toilet 'cause that was the toilet paper. There was no such things as the tissues we use today and if you didn't do the papers correct, you could get a smack for that or if you didn't come and feed the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s when you

14:30 had to. We'd take our turns at feeding the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. We'd have all the scraps from last night's food in a bucket and then you'd have to add the bran and pollett, stir it with a stick and carry the bucket up to feed the ducks and WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s, and there was a mulberry tree and a pomegranate tree growing in, all just near the poultry run and the fruit would fall, and it was all

15:00 squashy and, as I said before, we were all barefooted and you'd be walking through this squashy mess. You'd have to go over to the ducks' water dish and in the winter time that would be frozen over so with a stick or a stone you'd break that, break the ice, so that the poultry could get a drink, and in the other dish you'd put the food that you'd mixed up. Sometimes in the winter you'd mix it with hot water, so that was lovely for the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s to have a hot

15:30 feed but, oh yes, those days are very strong in my mind.

Can you describe the house that you lived in, with this WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK pen and what was around it?

The house that my parents built? Yes, I've even got a photo there I can show you later. Just a weatherboard house, a little veranda at the front, there was only the two bedrooms to start, later

16:00 on they added a veranda at the back and that became another bedroom. It wasn't enclosed for a long time, you could still see the beams on the inside but as a child I often slept on the front veranda, winter or summer you'd sleep on the front veranda and believe me that was cold in the winter. You'd have a fire in the lounge room, a little wood fire or a poke fire and it was nice and warm there

16:30 but when it was time for bed, you'd have to go out to the front veranda and get into the cold sheets. There was no electric blanket, no flannelette sheets, just get in there and huddle. And you'd be icy cold and really shiver for five minutes before you warmed up. But the house itself was quite roomy. The back room where we ate had the copper and the tubs and the kitchen, that was all one room

17:00 'cause many years later Dad converted it and that became the kitchen only and the laundry was put outside. And then we got a gas cooking stove and I remember the day the war ended, we got the first fridge my mother ever had. Previous to that we had an ice box and the man would come around the street calling, 'Ice, ice,' and you'd run out and

17:30 put you hand up if you wanted a block of ice and he'd carry it in with a hessian bag over his shoulder, this cold block of ice, he'd have a hook thing stuck in it so it wouldn't fall off his shoulder, carry it like that, and Mum would open the lid and pop it into the top of the ice box. The lounge room had a nice fire in it and a mantelpiece, it was a very nice lounge room. It was just a little wooden

18:00 weatherboard house, front door …

Where did eight children sleep? Was there room?

I suppose, yes, well we managed, I don't know where. As I said, one or two of us on the front veranda, two or three in the bedroom there, two or three in the back room, I suppose

18:30 but, of course, they came after a period of, I think my eldest sister was born in 19 – what? – 17, and the youngest was born in 1936, 37, so it was twenty years, so we weren't all eight there, little ones.

Can you tell us about the sisters or siblings that you were closest to, growing up?

Well I was closest to my brother that was two years older than me,

19:00 Russell. Yes, he was the one that went to the war just before me. Older than him were the two girls, there were the two girls, well yes, we're still very close I suppose you'd say, or keep in touch at least. Russell died twenty five years ago, or something like that, twenty seven I think, to be exact.

19:30 And the younger ones, well the girl younger than me, there's ten years difference, we're very close and the boys have drifted a little bit. But when I was thirteen I had to leave school because the youngest came along and my mother had her hands full I suppose, although my sister might have been married by then, I can't remember that, whether she was still at home or not, but I know

20:00 I practically nursed my younger brother. I used to sing him songs and really nurse him to sleep, change his nappy. He used to hold his breath, oh that frightened me. Have you ever known a child to hold his breath, catch their breath and they go blue in the face? I used to put him under the cold water tap, just hold him under the cold water tap and just splash the cold water on his

20:30 neck and he'd catch his breath again, but it was rather scary at the time. No, we got on well enough. My mother wanted us all to have a taste of music somehow. My eldest sister played the piano beautifully, beautifully. I think she got her cap and gown when she was about eleven, she was very, very good. That

21:00 was Clare. The second sister, Rita, she was put to reciting and I was also reciting. We would have to stand in a certain position, our feet in a certain position, our hands in a certain position, and she would recite a little poem called 'My Little Rosa', and she'd have everyone in tears, it was so sad. I don't remember the full poem.

21:30 But when I was, say, about ten or something, I don't think I'd do it as I got older, but my father was well into his Union and Lodge, and he'd have us go to his Lodge and perhaps say these little poems and he'd have me stand there saying, "Please give me a penny sir, I have no money for bread," and they'd all toss in pennies.

22:00 Oh gosh I can remember that. I don't think I was ever embarrassed, I just looked upon it as fun, but the things they had us do. My sister reciting this sad poem and if relatives came, I can remember if Auntie Liz or Auntie Clem came, "Come on Clare, come on, play your latest piece," and she'd have to sit at the piano and play her latest piece

22:30 and Rita would have to stand and say her latest piece, oh dear. I don't know what I did.

Do you remember any of the music or the poems from the time?

Only that one, that was all. No, I don't remember them through, no. I don't think I was a very good scholar at anything. I wasn't particularly good at school or particularly good at doing recitations or anything. I took it all as

23:00 a big laugh, I think. Then the brothers, one was a drummer, one played the saxophone and I don't recall

that Russell was musical at all, but eventually the two younger brothers had a band. They used to go around doing dances. Of course rock and roll came in, that's what ruined my sister's piano playing really. She was a classical pianist,

23:30 she used to play beautiful things, like 'Lebensraum' and Strauss waltzes and lovely music, but as she became a young woman and the Depression hit, she needed money, and she had the opportunity of going to play for dances, and rock and roll came in and jazz and she got into that. She could just hear a tune and sit down and play it,

24:00 she was very clever like that, but today she is a music teacher. She's still teaching a little.

In what ways did the Depression affect your family life?

Ways? Well it must have been a terrible struggle. I can remember my mother, she was a machinist at this stage, and a friend had a factory

24:30 making men's ties, and my mother would sit there into all hours of the night machining ties. And we would sit, take it in turns I suppose, and sit at the foot of the machine and as the ties came through we'd snip them, snip the threads off and that. And that brought in some money, because she couldn't go out to work and leave the children.

25:00 We used to get coupons from the council I suppose, the government, that helped buy clothing and food. I wish I had some of them today to refresh my mind as to their value, to what they bought, but I don't remember but I do know we had the coupons. And I can remember as a child, my mother at one stage said to me,

25:30 "See what money I've got in my purse, Jean," and I went to her purse and she had two pennies, and she said, "Take the billy-can and go around to the corner shop." And I went around and this Mrs Sullivan gave me a good billy-can, two or three quarters, full of milk for two pennies – you wouldn't get much today would you? – and brought it back and my

26:00 mother would make a hearty custard or something to feed us. But I never went hungry. We would have a lot of soups and stews, although stews are lovely today, and soups, but I suppose there wouldn't be the quality in them then that we have now. We had fried bread, which people laugh at when I tell them we had fried

26:30 bread with pepper and salt, but it's lovely, I used to love it. We'd go to school with perhaps a jam sandwich, but with no butter on it. Very often I'd come home on a Monday for lunch, 'cause school was just down the street, and when I'd come home for lunch Mum would have the table stripped because she'd scrub everything. The table would be actually

27:00 scrubbed with a scrubbing brush and the floors would be scrubbed and by the time I got home at lunch time she'd have a paper tablecloth and paper on the floor, as stepping stones and so nothing got dirty and if you ran through the washing on the line, oh gee it smelt lovely, it was lovely and fresh, lovely. And of course the man would

27:30 come with the clothes prop. He came around the street trying to earn a bit of extra money too, calling out 'clothes props, clothes props'. It would be like a sapling, I suppose, with a fork on the end, and you'd put that on your line and push it up and it would hold the clothes up out of the way. So we used to have fun running through the washing, chasing each other through the washing,

28:00 but when I came home after school those papers would be gone and a fresh tablecloth ironed, back on the table, the floor had been polished, all the work was done. She was a scrupulously clean woman and the Depression, Dad would have a few, as I said before, WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s and he would kill one or two, he'd chop it's head off and hang it on the

28:30 line. Oh I can still see those WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s dripping and dripping blood from the line, oh it was terrible. And then he'd get the hot water in the copper and he'd put the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK in the tub with the hot water and he'd start pulling all the feathers and quills out of the WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s. We'd help him sometimes but that was a horrible, sickly smell. But when you had a nice chicken dinner, that was lovely, nice compensation.

29:00 We never went hungry and as I say Dad used to get the occasional work, just kept us going, and somehow Mum kept a roof over our head. And where we have plastic cards today and a lot of people go into debt with them, I don't think my mother ever went into debt, but their way of getting along was a man would come around with a time payment system, I can't

29:30 think what it was called, and she'd pay that off each week, she'd have her money to do her shopping, can't think what they were called in those days, but I think I'll have to have a drink of water.

Go ahead and have one whenever you want. You've mentioned a couple of people, the iceman and the clothes prop salesman, these are characters that don't

30:00 **exist in Australia any more.**

Oh no.

What other services came to the home or people that did services around the place?

Well much later on, of course, even after I was married, we'd have the salesmen would come around, such as Walton's would come around with a big bag full of sheets, and towels and clothing and he would come into your house

30:30 and show them and if you liked something you could buy them and pay them off with this time payment system, I can't think what it was called and, but at that time when the clothes prop and iceman came, oh we'd have the 'rabbit oh'. Men out of work would perhaps go out into the country a bit and kill the rabbits and they'd come around with their horse and sulky selling rabbits,

31:00 calling out as they went down the street, 'Rabbitoh, rabbitoh,' and if you wanted something out you'd go and get a rabbit from him. There was also a lot of charity work. People would come around, I remember a Mrs Mannell in our area, she came around with a horse and sulky with a big soup urn and where there were a lot of children like us, and families

31:30 were finding it hard, she'd give them a billy of soup, hot soup or something, and for the children they might have a sweet, give them a lolly, and then, of course, the lolly man used to come too. You could get a bag of boiled lollies for a penny or tuppence and they'd come around selling, 'lollies, lollies.' I can't think of any others at the moment.

Were you conscious of

32:00 **being poor?**

No, no, I don't think so, no. No, the word didn't come into your life, 'poor', no. If someone had more than you, you might say, 'Gee she was lucky,' but no, never thought of ourselves as being really unfortunate, no, no, but it used to make my father very cranky,

32:30 of course, that he couldn't do better for his family. He and my sister used to argue, my eldest sister, would argue quite a lot. I'd get out the house. I couldn't stand the loud voices and the shouting, he was a very argumentative man, but I never knew him to hit my mother or anything like that. And he used to like his drink, which was sad because really he couldn't

33:00 afford to drink, but he used to like his drink. But sadly that's one of the things people always seem to find the money for, isn't it? And because, during the war he became a warden. He had to go around the streets of a night and make sure that all the windows were blacked out. You used to seal them up with brown paper and

33:30 stuff. He had to go around and make sure there were, no lights were showing and of course, on the top of the hill at Bankstown, the top of Wattah Heights I think it was called, they had the floodlights for anti-aircraft and we'd hear planes coming over, never heard any enemy planes of course, but we'd hear planes flying over and the anti-aircraft lights

34:00 would go up and pick them up and identify them.

uite a spectacular sight?

Oh it was, yeah.

We'll come back to the wartime questions in a moment, just a couple more questions about your home environment, you mentioned the ritual of having to cut up the paper for the toilet, what was the sewerage system, how did you work that?

Oh it was pathetic.

34:30 Well it was a little room way down the back yard with a wooden seat and a hole in it and we had a service every week, what we called the dunny man. He used to come and again he'd have a sugar bag, a hessian bag, over his shoulder and he'd come in a clean pan and he'd go out with a full pan. And you'd keep out of his way because it didn't smell the sweetest.

35:00 With so many children, Dad used to say, if you were going to bed at night and it was dark, he'd say, "And you girls go in the garden, don't go filling up that pan," so we'd all squat and wee in the garden somewhere, because you'd be filling the pan if you didn't. And of course, in the corner of the toilet there was always a bottle of Phenyl. I never used it. I think Mum and Dad used to squirt it

35:30 in the pan every now and then to disinfect it. And my brothers would call out, sometimes you'd be in the toilet and my brothers would call out, "Hurry out Jean, the dunny man's coming," and you'd have to get out quick and it wasn't the dunny man at all, they were just having you on. You never wanted to get caught in that position. Oh yes, got up to

36:00 a lot of tricks they did.

What did you do for fun as a young girl?

Well we'd play hopscotch in the street, always had a skipping rope, and I had a friend down the street. She's still my friend today, Beryl, and we used to

36:30 sit together and we picked, oh this might have been a little bit later on, we'd pick a, 'cause I don't know what year films came in, but when films came in there was George Formby, Joey Brown, you wouldn't know those names, old fashioned people, we'd get together for something to do and we'd pick an initial and we'd say 'J', alright, and we'd sit down with pencil and paper and we'd write out how many film stars or

37:00 actors we could think of with the letter J. We'd give ourselves half an hour or an hour and then we'd check to see who won, who got the most names. That was one way.

Still play that game today.

Do they? We didn't have card games that I can recall, we didn't have card games. I had a doll, one doll.

37:30 I think it was a hand-me-down from my sisters. I know it had a big hole in the back of its head. It was the only doll I had. I didn't have much else in the way of girlish things because my older sibling was a boy and the younger one was a boy, so I think I followed boy things and I'd be in the paddock helping them to build a cubby house or play cricket in the street,

38:00 things like that, but we had a lot of fun though. In 1932, I would only be ten when the baths opened, just down the street, the local Olympic pool, and that was a treat, it was great. I think we were all allowed in free, the first day or two, and the council, I suppose it was the council, or the manager of the pool, they'd throw in a

38:30 handful of coins and you could dive in and get the coins, you know, little pennies or half pennies. Oh we loved the baths, that was a lot of fun. And my parents used to take us out. I can remember, there's one photo there too, of me in a swimming costume, if that's what you'd call it, they used to take us out to the river. George's River wasn't too far away and I don't know how we got there, because my parents

39:00 never had a horse and sulky, whether there was a bus took us a certain distance, but we used to do a lot of walking, I know that. We'd go to the Vale of Varr and camp and have holidays there and we did that for many years, prawning in the river, until when I was about twelve, a girl my own age was taken by a

39:30 shark and that stopped it, no-one went in the river ever again, it was terrible. She lost, I think, both arms. Beryl Morren her name was, she lost both arms, it was a terrible tragedy. So we never went there again, but we used to walk all the way up to a place called Black Charlie's Hill and we'd have races, you'd get a boiled lolly if you won the race, just the boiled lolly.

40:00 But just simple things, we'd have a lot of fun with just simple things but Mum would pack a little picnic basket and we'd go up there and a couple of the neighbours would go with us and we had fun, we did.

Just stop there, have a glass of water, we just have to change the tape.

Tape 2

00:31 **We were talking about Bankstown, you mentioned a couple of local places like the pool, how build up was Bankstown in those days and what sort of area was it?**

Well I could walk from the station right through to Brandon Avenue, and that was, it's hard to explain, the street was a swamp, just swamp, low lying swamp

01:00 and there was an open drain. Where they put the swimming pool there was an open drain, quite wide, storm water channels really. They built the pool over that, they enclosed it all and the railway came through. It's hard to explain how low lying it was, so much so that when my elder sister got married and was looking

01:30 for a place, my father said, "Don't buy any of the land there in that Greenwood Avenue, that will sink later, it's just been filled in," but of course, it's prize land, isn't it?

Where was your school?

School? Well the school was at the bottom of our street and it's hard to say, the Bankstown Memorial Cricket Oval is right next

02:00 door to it, where our famous Steve Waugh plays and but of course now, there was a lot of open paddock there too, I'd walk through to get to the school, now that's all taken over by high school and extended and I think it's just a girls' school now.

What was that school like in the days that you went to it?

02:30 Well it was considered very good and I thought it was very good. You'd only go to sixth class. You'd do your QC, I think it was called, QC, then you'd go on to higher education, two years was perhaps the leaving certificate. It's all different now.

What did you enjoy about school?

Not very much.

03:00 Looking back I wish I had taken more advantage of school. As I said before, I thought everything was fun, just to be enjoyed, nothing taken seriously. I can remember the music teacher, she'd take her little fork, tuning fork or something, and say, "Hit it: me, me, me, me," and we were all supposed to hit that note and if you got if wrong she'd throw the thing at you. Oh dear,

03:30 that was the music teacher. I didn't mind arithmetic so much, didn't like algebra but I think I could have done a lot better, put it that way.

What was your mother like? We talked a little bit about your father,

04:00 **you said she was obviously hardworking and had a bit of a struggle during the Depression, what sort of woman was she?**

Well it's hard to explain, what kind of woman was she? She was a very loving woman, although I often think I see my daughter today affectionately being swamped with love from her children, I don't think we got that love from my mother, mainly because

04:30 she had eight, how do you spread it around? If you hurt your toe or anything, she was always there to kiss it better and bandage it but there was no time to waste, you had to move off while she got on with the next job. Yes, she worked hard. She always tried to help the charity side too. She liked her church and, when war broke out,

05:00 she took other women, they took a lot of children, like younger ones, down to the Burrigan Valley, evacuated the children in fact, out of the cities for safety's sake. She was always there to help in any way she could. But my picture of my mother, yes, she was hard working, loving and

05:30 it's hard to explain all of a sudden but I loved my mother, I really did and when she died I think I lost my best friend but then I found my best friend again in my daughter, so life goes on like that, doesn't it?

What had your parents done during the First World War?

First World War? No, I don't think they did anything. They were married in 1915,

06:00 I think. I can't recall them saying much about that at all. He must have just worked on in the timber business that he was in. Don't recall much about that.

What, if anything, do you know about their history or where they came from and how they came to be here?

Oh well, I'm sorry.

06:30 I have a nephew that did the genealogy of the family, I could have looked that up for you and I didn't. On my mother's side they came from England. My mother's mother came from England. I have a letter written, that would be my great-grandmother, wrote a letter in 1893 to her daughter who had migrated

07:00 to Australia and married Tom Nicholson, this Scotchman who was my grandfather who came from Lerwick in Scotland. He was an adorable man, I loved my grandfather. He had a moustache and he used to sit me on his knee and tickle me and sing, 'She's my lassie, my bonny, bonny lassie.' What was the, I can't think of the other song, but

07:30 he was a sweetie, he was lovely. And this grandmother wrote this letter saying how much she would have loved to have seen her first grandchild but she never did. I've still got that letter. Yes, so they migrated out here. He was in the navy, I think, or on a sailing ship anyway, he worked his way out here. Met his wife Jessie, they married out here, I

08:00 think. And then my mother and father, I've got photos of them, with their groups at picnics, with their old fashioned big bonnets. She always wore a big bonnet, a hat, even to a picnic and he'd wear a tie and a boater type of hat and then photos of their wedding of course, their beautiful

08:30 wedding.

Australia was much more strongly tied to the British Empire in those days, how much did you feel that connection in your family?

No, I don't think I ever felt a great strong tie like that, a connection, but I wouldn't think of it as a strong tie although

09:00 I would have loved to have gone back to see the places they came from. I did get to England but I didn't get to see where they lived, where they came from.

What celebrations do you remember from your childhood?

From my childhood? I remember the baths being opened in 32, that was very impressive. Yeah, that was great.

09:30 The Harbour Bridge being opened, that was a very big celebration too. Was that about 1932, wasn't it? I'd be about ten.

What happened on that occasion for you? What happened on that event?

We didn't go to see the opening or anything, but I remember reading and hearing about it. The wireless was very good. We used to sit glued to the wireless and hear all the, all that was going on, about the fellow that cut the ribbon that shouldn't have and

10:00 so on. Can't think of other things.

What about things like Christmas or Easter or Empire Day or annual things?

Empire Day was a big day. We used to be weeks building our bonfire in the empty paddock and saving up pennies if we could for crackers.

10:30 Yes, oh the bonfires were great. Again I'd be with the boys doing all that and at school we had to learn to sing the songs but I don't think we did a maypole dance but we used to do dances. But school was good in those days. We had physical education before we started our lessons,

11:00 we'd do exercises, we'd get our, but that's not what you're asking me but I remember now we used to, a drink of milk each morning, a bottle of milk. Empire Day, yes, it was a special day.

Tell me more about those exercises if you like, what were they all about?

Well they were good at school, I used to enjoy that. At assembly, we'd all be at assembly, especially cold

11:30 winter days, they'd have you stretching and knee bending and all that type of thing and it warmed you up some. It was good and it was good for you. Kids don't do enough of it today in my opinion.

What about Christmas? Was that a big a celebration as it is today?

No, no, no it wasn't because

12:00 we didn't have a big tree, we never had a Christmas tree, as far as I can remember, as a child. We'd hang a pillowslip on the end of the bed and you'd get a toy, or a gift, can't recall any of the things, but they'd be simple things. It wasn't the big thing it is today.

How religious was your upbringing?

12:30 **What influence did you have from the church?**

Oh yes, I had to go to Sunday school every Sunday and we'd have a little grace at the dinner table, we'd have grace. My father was President of the Presbyterian Church that we went to for ten years or something. My mother belonged to the Guild and later on I remember I used to cook cakes and put them in

13:00 the cake competition. No, I always liked my church. I don't go religiously every week, but I liked my church.

Where was the local church that you went to in Bankstown?

Well they built a new one, the United Church, became the United later on but at first the old little War Memorial Presbyterian Church at Bankstown.

13:30 As I say, they became united then with Methodist and Congregationalists and now we have a nice new church there but since I've left there I haven't connected with a church up here, unfortunately.

Was it always known as the War Memorial Church, in your memory?

The Bankstown one was until it united.

Memories of the war, the First World War, were fresher in those days,

14:00 **was there any men you remember seeing that might have come back from it or any kind of influence at all?**

From the First World War? No, I can't say I do.

You mentioned the Harbour Bridge. What, if any, did you see of the city of Sydney when you were growing up?

Not much, not much in the city, no we wouldn't go into the city. We'd

14:30 travel from Bankstown to Rozelle a great deal and sometimes we'd be at Balmain, but no, I didn't get into the city, not as a child. It wasn't until I started work and, of course, I was only fourteen then, but my eldest sister, well both of them, were already working in the city and my eldest sister, Clare, she would have been the one, I think,

15:00 to take me in and show me where the station and the business was and so on.

We'll come to that in just a moment, but what method of transport did you use to get around if, say, you had to go to Rozelle?

To Rozelle? Well we'd take the train from Bankstown to Canterbury, Canterbury we'd get a bus to Rozelle, quite good.

15:30 **Before you went to work in the city, you mentioned you had to stay home and look after your brother, what else do you remember about that time?**

What else do I remember about that time? Well the last two boys were very close together, there's only about sixteen months or something between them, so I guess I was more or less minding two.

16:00 Oh I don't know. I just helped around the house and did general things. I can't recall anything that I could tell you.

What about the decision to go to work? How much did you have to do with that decision and how much was it your parents that made it for you?

It was just automatically when you got to fourteen you'd

16:30 go to work if you weren't staying on at school, so I knew I had to go to work. Actually my mother got me the position with a relative. A cousin of mine was the manageress of the Shepherd's Manufacturing place in Kent Street, Sydney, so I was able to get a position with her, which was very fortunate because job's weren't easy to

17:00 come by and therefore I used to do that, day after day, in there and of course, I'd start with making a cup of tea, or unpacking the artificial flowers that shop hats were decorated with. I'd have to unpack those things and get the ribbons and things out that were required and then I was gradually

17:30 taught how to sew the hats and pin the hats and steam the hats and model the hats. There was never two hats made the same in the model industry. Later I went to a warehouse where they did the hats that were made, say by the dozen, repetition, but at this place, at Shepherd's, they only made model hats, never two alike. Very exclusive they were.

18:00 And as an apprentice I also had to do the delivering of hats, so we were down at Kent Street, near Market Street end, and if I had to deliver a hat way up to Snow's or Mark Foy's up the other end, Liverpool end, I'd carry these big boxes and I'd hold the string, the boxes would be swaying, maybe four or five hats in it,

18:30 and I'd save whatever the tram fare was, maybe threepence each way, and I'd save that and I'd run like mad up the street and deliver the hats. But the trams weren't easy to get onto either with the big boxes because they had the running boards, the foot board along the side.

Can you describe those trams for us?

The trams? Well you sat facing

19:00 each other in compartments, they didn't run the length of the tram, they went crosswise. I suppose five or six people would sit in each side, but on the outside they'd be a running board to step up from the street onto that and then into your compartment, and the ticket collector, of course, was working his way up and down, that all the time, to take your ticket, buy your ticket,

19:30 sell you the ticket. And the driver in the front had his gears to work it and the bells would clang if you were coming to a crossing or stopping. Yeah, they were quite unique.

What was the busiest part of the city in those days?

Oh much the same as it is nowadays I think, George Street and Pitt Street, but of course it wasn't a mall like it

20:00 is now, there was traffic going right through Pitt Street. I think it was even busier then from, say, Wynyard end right up past Martin Place and up to Liverpool Street, just as busy. But a lot of the shops then, going up towards Liverpool Street, would be furniture places.

20:30 There was a big furniture place called Beverfall's on the corner of, the Town Hall corner. There are lots and lots of furniture places in Pitt Street. George Street was nearly always eating and picture shows but Pitt Street was shops like furniture places. They've all kind of gone out to the suburbs now or different shopping malls.

21:00 But it has changed and of course dear old Mark Foy's has now the judges' centre, what do you call it? A court house.

A court house, yeah. You mentioned Mark Foy's, that was a very impressive institution in those days.

Oh it was beautiful.

Can you describe that for us?

Beautiful. When my children were little I used to take them to Mark Foy's roof top, they had the most wonderful

21:30 Christmas experience for them, rides and Santa Claus and toys and it was a wonderland, it was beautiful. I used to enjoy it myself, lovely. And each floor was lovely. If it wasn't food it would be furniture, it was beautiful. But that wasn't the only store, that had the beautiful setting with all stairs

22:00 at the front and the windows, it was beautifully set up, it was a lovely store, but Anthony Hordern's was a wonderful store too, but it was an older store and it was a gloomier store but you could get anything in the world you wanted in it, and Snow's was another place, on the corner. It was very nice but not as big, not as glamorous.

22:30 **Where would you take the hats when you delivered them, say to Mark Foy's?**

Oh I'd take them to the despatch area I think. You're asking me something I can't quite recall.

That's alright. I'm just wondering, it would have been an interesting part of the store that not many people would have got to see.

I'm not sure if I went to despatch or whether I went to the millinery section?

While we're talking about places that you remember in Sydney, because a lot of them aren't there any more,

23:00 **it's very interesting for the archive to have your memories of them. Are there any other places that you recall from those years when you were working there in the thirties that were interesting or exciting?**

Well up Oxford Street was a nice shopping area, too. There was a place called Wynn's, that was a big departmental store. And it was quite different to today, although I haven't been there for many, many years, so I'm

23:30 only imagining what it's like there today. There were big stores up there too. They had a big fire, it was burnt down, Wynn's, I think. Yes, such a shame 'cause it was a lovely store. In the city, well Beverfall's of course was a great spot on the corner there for a meeting place. It was, later on I can tell you how I used to meet people there.

Where was Beverfall's?

Right on the corner,

24:00 it's Woolworth's now, opposite Town Hall and where the big Citibank is, I think, on the corner now, was Walton's, a big Walton's store. That was a nice big store too. No, the changes, it's a shame, everything changes, but Beverfall's was a great place.

Where would you or what would you eat for lunch on a working day at the milliner's?

Milliner's?

24:30 **At the millinery?**

Well we used to take our sandwiches. We'd take our sandwiches and make a cup of tea and go in there. If you bought anything it would be a milkshake. Milkshakes were very popular then, if you could afford it, and a piece of fruit. We certainly didn't have Kentucky Fried or McDonald's, nothing like that. There was no fast food like that.

25:00 If, when my children were growing up, if I bought them anything I could buy them a little penny ice cream cone, a smallish version of the ice cream, about a penny. It was very cheap and then hamburgers came in. When my eldest son was about twelve, I think, you could buy a hamburger. Oh that was delicious, that was something really new, a hamburger, but you could always buy chips but they'd be rolled in newspaper

25:30 and you'd just tear off the end of it, put your hand in and take the chips out that way, didn't have paper bags or plastic cups.

When you started getting pay for the first time, what did you do with that money?

Oh yes, that was already planned. My mother would say, "You bank a third, you give me a third for your board and you have a third," so

26:00 if I got seven and sixpence or something as a first wage, I'm not sure what it was, that's what happened to it, and you bought your fare out of that third, so you didn't have much money to waste.

Was there anything you remember being able to buy for yourself for the first time?

No, I think Friday night

26:30 shopping was in and my girlfriend and I, Alma, used to go to the State shopping block there and there was a milk bar. I think it's still there, probably a coffee shop today, but it was a milk bar then, and we'd have a milk bar, that was a real treat, have a milk bar, have a milkshake.

Tell us a bit about Alma? She was your friend from the millinery, is that right?

Yes, yes, yes.

Tell us about her?

27:00 Oh she was much the same as myself. Had three sisters I think and came from Arncliffe and she was there before me, so I more or less turned to her when I needed advice, "How do I do this?" or, "Where do I put that?" Yes, we were great friends. What did we do? We didn't do much, I'd visit her at her home or she'd come visit me at

27:30 my home. We didn't do much in the way of going out, go to the pictures occasionally perhaps. Luna Park was very popular, we'd go over there.

When did you first become interested in boys?

I suppose about fifteen, I see I've got a photo there of the first boyfriend so I guess I was about

28:00 fifteen. But, oh yes, then we started going to dances at the, the local dances of course, and then later on then was the Trockadero and the Marrickville Town Hall. I didn't have a steady boyfriend at that stage. You'd just meet up with someone and they'd dance with you. Chaps would come up and say, "Would you like this dance?" and you'd have

28:30 this dance. And maybe if you had another and another and you kind of liked each other, he'd say, "Oh, I'll see you home," and he'd come on the train with you to Bankstown and by then it would be midnight, or after midnight, and he'd say, "Well I can't walk you home, I've got to go back, this is the last train, the last train for the night." So he'd go back to wherever he

29:00 was staying or living and I'd walk on home and you know, didn't have a care in the world walking through that un-built-up area, just walking through a path through, it wasn't bush, but it was like parkland to get to my street. I'd just take off my high heels and swing them over my shoulder and sing along and up the street and if you met anyone you'd just

29:30 pass in the night. You wouldn't think of worries like you do today. You wouldn't do it today, but no, yes.

You mentioned Trockadero and a couple of these places were very big, especially during the war, so I'd love to come and talk about dancing and that culture a bit more later on in the interview. You mentioned Luna Park, though, can you tell us about a trip to Luna Park in those days?

Yeah, we used to take the ferry over from the quay

30:00 and you'd walk in through this huge grinning face at the entrance and there'd be all kinds of things to swing around in and you'd go right up the end to Coney Island and I think for another fee you could go in there and you could slide down and you could spend a few hours there, no trouble at all, with a girlfriend, just watching

30:30 and enjoying. You didn't have to go on everything. You were just watching and enjoying. It was a fun place to be.

How much did you work in the millinery? What were your hours like?

Well it was a lot earlier than nine, I know that. I don't know what time we started, probably eight,

31:00 possibly eight to five. Yes, 'cause the train was nearly an hour getting in, thirty or forty minutes or something getting in then, they weren't as quick as they are today, and then you'd have a little walk from the station to work and, yeah, it was a pretty long day and you only had your break for lunch.

Was there a rush hour, as there is today, coming in to and from work?

31:30 Yes, I'd say so, yes, yes, there was always crowds in the station, getting off and walking up the stairs and along the streets, yes.

What would people wear to work, generally, in those days?

Well in our case we always wore hats, 'cause that was our business and we had to wear hats.

32:00 Well we dressed as well as we could. We weren't as casual as today of course, no slacks were ever seen, they were frocks, didn't really have that many skirts and blouses, they would be frocks, and hats and gloves and handbag. You wouldn't be seen without your gloves and your hats.

32:30 **What about make-up?**

Yes, we used to put on a little bit of lipstick. Not as intense, of course, as today with foundations and liquid make-ups today, we didn't know of anything like that, it was just plain lipstick or powder. And, of course,

33:00 for the weekends when we went to the beach, we never knew of sunscreen. In fact, we used to encourage the burning I think, by putting on olive oil and Vaseline and stuff, yes, I think that encouraged the burning and I used to burn a lot, being fair, and then a few days later you'd be peeling it off. Your skin would peel off and another week or two you'd go to the beach again and put on all

33:30 this oil and burn again. It was stupid wasn't it, really stupid. No wonder we have the cancers we have today.

When did you start going to the beach?

Well, as I said we went to the baths as from when I was ten, so that was very popular. Later on we'd go to Brighton

34:00 but even before we went to Brighton, the Brightly Sands, my mother's sister, she was married to a chappie who inherited some land at Bateman's Bay and that was known as Denim's Beach, they were the Denims, and if we could get down there we got free holidays. That was beautiful. The train went down to Nowra and

34:30 then a bus would take us out. So we went to Bateman's Bay a great deal but that wasn't until I was a teenager. Before that I think it was only the baths. I don't think I ever went to Bondi or any of those beaches as a child. I'm forgetting one thing, my father's union would have a picnic every year. We took a boat to Clifton Gardens. It wouldn't be surfing, that's only harbour side,

35:00 isn't it? We'd have a picnic there and we'd go in to swim, of course, a lot of races, three-legged races, the sugar bag races, oh we had a lot of fun, but that was once a year.

What was your father's union, I know you mentioned it before? Do you recall what that was?

Since he was in the timber business, so it must have been something to do with that, I should think.

35:30 **And his lodge you mentioned, was that a Masonic lodge?**

No, it wasn't a Masonic lodge. I think it was MUIOOF [Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows], no, what was that? No, I can remember seeing those initials. Manchester Unity, Manchester Unity, no it wasn't a Masonic lodge.

A Friendly Society or something?

Yes, think so, he was in that, yes.

36:00 **These were annual events and there were trips to Bateman's Bay, are there any other trips you took as a family?**

No, can't think so, only down to Grandma's, Rozelle.

We might just stop there.

Tape 3

00:31 **Okay Jean, I'd just like to pick up and talk a little bit more, I mentioned during the break that apprenticeships are really difficult to find, even these days, so can you tell me what was involved in your apprenticeship at the millinery?**

Yes, they were difficult to find then too 'cause I was very lucky that it was a relative that gave me the opportunity.

01:00 See, I didn't know what my cousin did, I was only a child, I wasn't interested, but my mother had put my eldest sister to millinery but she, I don't know what her arrangement was at all, but she worked just in a little shop. But my second sister, Rita, she went into dressmaking and somehow the relative must have mentioned the millinery having an opportunity for an apprentice

01:30 and Mum grasped it and then I went, I was sent. There's no two ways about it, you don't say, "I don't want to do it," or, "What's that?" or anything, there's a job and you're sent to it so that's where I went, off I was sent. And I remember I used to get hay fever something terrible, I'd take perhaps ten of my father's big handkerchiefs and by the time I got to the city they would be

02:00 all drenching wet from the drainage of my nose and I'd put them over the steam pipes in the workshop, the workroom, the pipes ran down the side of the room so that the outlets, you got the steam where you could hold your hat over it, the steam would dampen that felt or straw or whatever and then you would

mould it to how you wanted it,

02:30 so I would get in and put my handkerchiefs over before everyone was ready to start work and dry my handkerchiefs and then iron them, so I could start afresh and the hay fever would dry up and I remember that was agony. And you asked, yes, there was a crowd going in, you were always lucky to get a seat on the train and I don't think they were air conditioned like they are today. They were very cold, the trains. So anyway,

03:00 the work, if I wasn't making a cup of tea or sweeping a few scraps off the floor, I think it was a three year apprenticeship and I think I was paid about seven shillings or seven and sixpence, but we worked Saturday morning as well, it was a five and a half day week so we worked long hours but no one thought you were hard done by, that was the way of life.

03:30 Life was hard, you just got in and did what you had to do. Then, of course, I did the delivering of the results, the hats, and I'd put the flowers out for the selection, for the milliners to take their selection for their models. And then I was gradually taught to sew, how neatly to sew, they were all hand done.

04:00 And then I got onto the pressing and steaming and shaping and modelling and you could get some nasty burns from the steam vents. You'd have this heavy wooden shape block and you'd put your horrible felt thing over it and you'd dampen it over the steam and then you'd sit it down and you'd do your moulding and pulling and your cutting and stitching and gradually make something out of it. And if you did a good shape

04:30 you were commended and if not, it would be given to one of the seniors and she'd have to make something out of it. But that was apprenticeship, so I gradually got through that. I think after I finished my apprenticeship, then I went to another warehouse, which was called Ferrin and Payne, but they didn't do modelling, they did wholesale work. It was repetition work and

05:00 someone would do all the cutting, someone would do all the pressing, someone would do the stitching. A lot of stitching was done machine, on a machine. Not as exclusive of course.

Usually the idea of an apprenticeship is that your boss is your mentor and teaches you the trade, I'm just wondering if that was the case for you?

05:30 Yes, although the boss was my cousin, I didn't actually sit by her, she didn't actually teach me, but one of the other senior milliners would. I'd be told to, 'Sit over there with Cecilia,' or someone and she'd show me this or that or the other. Yes, you learnt from your seniors, that's for sure.

06:00 **And I'm also wondering, at that point what type of guarantee it was for you, in terms of security, I guess?**

What kind of guarantee? I don't know because millinery was a fashion and not long after, with the war coming, people never thought about hats and after the war they just didn't wear the hats. The bottom fell out of that trade so there

06:30 was no guarantee that you could make a livelihood at it. But they guaranteed they'd teach me, which they did. Somehow I wasn't a good student at school, but I think I was a good milliner. I consider myself to be a good milliner, so they guaranteed to teach me the trade, and they did, I got through it.

07:00 **And how difficult is it to make a hat? I imagine it's quite difficult?**

Well a model hat, yes, a model hat was quite difficult. You had to have the design in your head in the first place, you've got to create something. Since it's a one-off thing, you're not copying, you've got to create it and

07:30 very often you'd have something in your mind but that didn't work out so you'd turn it around and make something else out of it, but that was being creative, I suppose, wasn't it? I enjoyed that aspect of it, I think.

Would you be given designs to work to, or how would you know what style of hat to be making?

No, well you would be told they

08:00 wanted a little cocktail hat or they wanted a hat for the races or they wanted a big hat or a summer hat or a winter hat, you were given guidelines type of thing, but you weren't actually told how the design would be. You were left pretty much to yourself how you did that.

How did you keep up with the fashion, and what was the fashion,

08:30 **what was the type of hat in fashion at that stage?**

It's a tricky one. Well I suppose you didn't do much in the first year except the watching and learning and then you'd get into it, but by the end of the third year you knew what you were doing, you were accomplished at it and fashion, well I suppose we just followed trends in the magazines

09:00 and papers and write-ups of fashionable things from overseas, fashions, parades and that overseas. We

must have got our ideas from things like that, I suspect. In the summertime we handled straws and different lightweight things, but in the winter it was mostly the felts and the heavier stuff.

09:30 **It's very interesting. I'm wondering if you can recall any of the magazines that you read looking for ideas?**

No, I don't think so.

And what about, 'cause often these days big stores like David Jones have parades, I'm wondering if you can tell me if you went to any of those during your apprenticeship?

10:00 No, I didn't, no I didn't get to any of those at all. But I guess in the showroom of our establishment they would have these books, coloured pictures, that we could look at and get ideas from, but I didn't spend money on magazines in those days, no we didn't.

10:30 But there was always something there to look at in the showroom. And of course, the 'Women's Weekly' was very prominent. They were always to the fore with what was going on, weren't they, fashion wise?

And as you've mentioned, it was a different time and it was important to look good and go to work with your hat and

11:00 **gloves, did you make yourself a hat?**

Oh yes, yes, you wouldn't go without a hat. You wore a hat to work, you wore a hat everywhere. Hats were the thing, like gloves and handbag, you didn't go without, as you can see in some of the photos. Some of them were terrible by today's standards but they were hats.

What type of hat did you make for yourself?

11:30 Oh well, it's hard to say. Mostly smallish hats, I don't think I wore much in big hats or flowered hats although I went to the races once. When I was in Melbourne doing munitions, we girls, a group of us, went to the races at Flemington

12:00 and we wore, I had a lovely hat and we had beautiful shoes, we wore lovely clothes and it teemed, it teemed. I remember Derby Munro won the race, the main race, the Melbourne Cup, and of course we all cheered our lungs out, but we took the hat off, I took the hat off to protect it, we took our shoes off because we were paddling in water and they were beautiful expensive shoes.

12:30 Everybody did, just not me, it was a dreadful day, the place was flooded. I remember I had a nice hat for the Melbourne Cup.

Can you describe it? Sorry, was it one you made yourself?

Yes, I think I only took one hat, one or two hats down with me.

Well perhaps you could describe one of the hats that you made for yourself?

13:00 Well one was what we called a little cloche, I was very fond it. It always felt very snug on the head, it sat close, that type of hat suited me. I wasn't one for the big brim with flowers, but this little cloche one suited me. I can't remember the colours at all. I mostly had smaller hats.

13:30 **It's very interesting to hear the type, just to get an idea of the fashion of the day.**

Well yes, it's hard to describe, but for the shops we were making every kind of hat, big hats with flowers and ribbons. A lot of veils were worn in those, the veils you don't see now

14:00 but maybe they are coming back in again, but we had eye veils and we had long veils, we had veils teased up into bunches, a lot of veils. Veiling came by the yard, by the metre, yard, I'm still in the old system, but we'd cut if off as we wanted it. Some of them had black, almost like coin spots, quite big spots on them and they'd hang over

14:30 the person's face, like black spots here and there. That was fashion.

And how, well I'm just wondering how affected, do you think the fashion of that day that you're talking about was affected by, I guess, shortages during the Depression and also the oncoming war?

15:00 Well we didn't seem to have any shortage. I'm just trying to think where they would come from, because we didn't have the overseas trade. I think that the flowers and everything were homemade, like Australian made, beautiful silk flowers and the veils were lovely. And then, of course, there was a place, someone had an idea and put a shop in the city

15:30 called 'June Millinery', I don't know if you'd remember it? June Millinery, it was right in the heart of the city near Dymocks, somewhere there in Pitt Street, and you could go in and you could buy, and that did a lot of harm to the millinery trade because instead of paying pounds for a beautiful hat, people could go in, they could buy a cheap little shape, they could buy a piece of veil, they could buy the flowers, they could buy the ribbons,

16:00 they even had someone demonstrating how to put it all together, make your own hat. And that became very, very fashionable. June Millinery was well known, 'Oh go into June, you'll get anything for your hat.' That did a lot of harm to the trade, in my mind anyway. I suppose when I left Shepherd's, after I finished my

16:30 apprenticeship, I went to a place called, as I said before, Ferrin and Payne, which is just repetition work. I don't know why I did that. Probably being young, wanting a change I did, I went there. But it was no more entertaining or enjoyable than Shepherd's, it was just a change I suppose and it was from there I left to go into the munitions.

17:00 So I must have spent a couple of years there.

And where was Ferrin and …?

Oh that was in the city too, probably York Street, probably in York Street. Most of those places were down around Kent or York Street.

Well

17:30 **we'll come back to your joining up with munitions in a minute, but I'd just like spend a bit more time talking about you during your teenage years, during your apprenticeship. You mentioned, well first of all, I guess, what kind of expectations did you have as a young girl?**

18:00 I don't know that I had any plans, any dreams, expectations. I don't think we did so much, life went on, you were enjoying yourself, you were just happy with your lot. You just didn't expect a war, that was for sure, it changed everything. I don't know what I had planned

18:30 for myself. There was a lot of young people in my life, my brothers and sisters had a lot of friends and I knew young chaps and we'd go dancing and we'd go hiking, we did a lot of hiking. If I was in the city we'd go to the pictures, we'd go and have a milkshake, we'd go to a dance, there was a lot of life. I think that was as far as

19:00 I thought about life, certainly didn't plan anything.

I'm just wondering, just trying to get a picture of the social attitudes of the time towards women and whether you had an idea about a working career or whether you thought otherwise?

19:30 I might have had a plan to perhaps have a shop of my own because later on I did for a little spell, after I was married, but it wasn't very successful so I gave that away. No, I don't think I had any thoughts. Just every day came and you enjoyed yourself and that was it.

20:00 **And what about the expectations that others had of you? I'm just wondering what your mum and dad might have expected you to do?**

Well if they had any plans or dreams or expectations they never said anything. They seemed to be happy with the way I was

20:30 going and I can't think of anything to add to that. I suppose they might have given up on me because they'd put me to musical things, as I said, they put me to piano too,

21:00 but I wouldn't concentrate, I wouldn't do that. They might have given up on me, whereas my sister, who was a pianist, she was doing wonderfully. My other sister, who was a dressmaker, everything she did was beautiful, everything she made was beautiful and Russell, he went into a bank, he went into the Wales, Bank of

21:30 New South Wales, Wales I think it was called. They were very proud of him and I was the next in line and I was doing alright as a milliner, so no, I don't think they had any plans or expectations beyond that.

Well I'm just wondering if you, well it's fairly normal that young kids will want to

22:00 **rebel a little bit and break out, was that the case for you and, if so, how did you it?**

No, I was the most placid person, I can remember that word being used a lot, "Jean is so placid." It wasn't till many years later I thought, 'Placid, why was I so placid?' I don't know, nothing seemed to upset me. And neighbours,

22:30 my friend Beryl I mentioned, her mother would say to me, "Oh, you're so placid." Nothing seemed to put me out. I was easy going. I can't remember anything really explosive happening until I got into explosives. That's a funny word to use, wasn't it?

23:00 **Well you did mention that you had your first boyfriend when you were fifteen, I'm just wondering what was the general kind of sex education you might have got at that time?**

Oh none, no, sex education did you say? I didn't even know the word. You don't talk sex, nothing was said. Nothing was said to me even when I got married.

23:30 No, it was all very innocent with the boyfriends, very innocent. We just went to a dance, well at fifteen we didn't go to the dance I'm sure but we'd perhaps just go to the pictures or have a milkshake and he'd go home and I 'd go home, that was innocent enough, with that boyfriend anyway. Later on it might have been a bit more intense but I don't think we

24:00 even kissed. No, sex never came into my life at that stage.

Well as you say you were quite young, fourteen, fifteen, it is quite unusual for a kid of that age to be out in the world without a chaperone?

Yes, but I'm not talking late nights or anything. The pictures and that would have been a Saturday afternoon or something like that.

24:30 Still there he was and there I've got it on, first boyfriend at fifteen, so I don't remember much about him, don't ask me, so he wasn't very impressive, didn't come to much. And then later on my mother used to

25:00 take me every month to the Scottish dances, the local dances. It was a Scottish association she belonged to and I'd go there, and my brother. We used to dance and do the quadrilles and the different Scottish dances and that, but that was entertainment on a Saturday. Other than that and the pictures there wasn't much else.

25:30 **What about any sporting activities?**

No, other than the baths, going down to the local baths, that's the only sporting activities. No I didn't, not until I was married did I take up tennis, that was when the house next door had a big vacant land at the back and they put a tennis court there so we

26:00 started to play tennis but that was much later on. No, I didn't have any sporting activity, cricket in the street, that was all, but I don't suppose I played that at fifteen, probably thought I was too big, a young lady then, didn't play cricket.

Was there anything that was considered un-ladylike in your eyes?

No,

26:30 we weren't considered unladylike, just tomboys if we climbed a tree or helped build a cubby house. You were just known as a tomboy. Played cricket with boys and they chased you around and you roughed and tumbled with them and you were just a tomboy, not unladylike. I don't think that was mentioned. I remember

27:00 Sundays we used to walk to church. As soon as you came home you'd have to take off your clothes, 'cause I'm going back a bit now, to when I was little. You'd have to take off those Sunday clothes and put them away, they were your best, and your shoes, take them off and put them away for best. My mother used to do all the sewing, she used to make our clothes and that kept her busy and, of course, I'd wear a lot of hand-me-downs but

27:30 when I started work, I remember I got a lovely skirt and twin-set, it was lovely. It was mostly at Christmas time she'd try and get us a new frock, every Christmas we'd get a new frock. And every winter time we'd get something woollen. It was the only time of the year that we really got new clothes, everything else was handed down.

28:00 **And you mentioned that you did a little bit of swimming, can you describe your swimming costume?**

No, I can't actually, not at the, no, the one I had in the photo as a small child, when I was only about two or three, that was a square necked thing with a little sleeve and a

28:30 little trunks on it, but at the baths they weren't bad. They were cut away but not cut away like today, of course, but there weren't any legs, legs weren't on the costume. They were a normal swimsuit, with straps. You'd be well covered but at the same time you weren't over covered.

29:00 Can't remember what my swimsuit was like, but I used to have a lot of fun there.

I'm just wondering about the, I guess, the modesty of the times and whether you were modest and covered up or ...?

No, no, I wasn't covered up any more than anyone else.

29:30 No, that's a hard one.

And you've mentioned that you were, or people called you a tomboy, why was that?

I suppose because I had so many brothers and I just did the things they did,

30:00 did a lot of boyish things, running around. There was a girl next door and she was the only girl and she

wouldn't come and play with us, she was a lady, ladylike, not a tomboy like me, she was ladylike. She was friendly enough but she wouldn't come out and get dirty, she wouldn't come into the cubby house, she wouldn't,

30:30 no, nothing like that. If you went onto her veranda she'd talk with you and things like that, no, she was a lady, that was the difference between her and me, I was a tomboy. I think I had the fun, I don't think she had the fun I had.

But still, even though you were a tomboy you went off

31:00 **quite happily to make hats?**

Oh yes, yes, I had to settle down then when I got to fourteen and go to work. I had to become a little bit more ladylike then. I guess I reined myself in a bit and started to, because then I had to wear a hat too, you see, because if you're in the business you had to wear the hat and I had to have the gloves and handbag and walk like a lady and act like a lady so I became a little more like a lady,

31:30 yes, put away the tomboyish things. I don't suppose I ever got into their cubby house again after that. Probably by then there was a house on the block anyway, yes, because things were changing so fast, vacant lands were being built on, things like that.

Well I'm just wondering if you can tell us a

32:00 **bit about how you felt in that change from, I guess, the freedom of being a tomboy to now being a young lady?**

Can't remember myself how or when the change came. I was probably pleased for it to happen because I knew I had to grow up

32:30 and I had my sisters and that brother before me that were adult and I was going to become an adult. Then my girlfriends too, face it, they were also starting work in different ways. Beryl, my close girlfriend at that time, she went into a clothes factory as a machinist and she also had to start wearing,

33:00 well she was never the tomboy I was, she didn't have brothers at all, she only had two sisters, but we all just had to grow up. We knew we had to grow up, that was life.

And who were your pin-ups, you know, in that change to being a lady, who were your favourite pin-ups?

Well I just adored Clark Gable. I don't

33:30 know from what age Clark Gable came into my life, but I had photos of him all over the bedroom. My sisters, because we shared the room, they used to go crook, Clark Gable was everywhere. And there was another one, Tyrone Power, oh he was so handsome. Film stars, film stars we used to, Beryl and I used to go to the pictures and we were very keen on our film

34:00 stars. And as I say we'd play a little game, we'd pick a 'C' and we'd write down all the names of the actors and actresses we could think of starting with a C, and Clark Gable was always at the top. Oh I adored him.

And what about the women film stars?

Women then, there was Greta Garbo and Jean Harlow,

34:30 I remember Jean Harlow, she was a blonde bombshell, yes, she was really nice too, but the men really apparently struck me.

And why was Clark Gable such a favourite?

Oh he was just so handsome. He was a devil, he had that devil in his eye and he just fascinated me.

35:00 **Can you remember seeing a film with him in it?**

Oh yes, lots, yes, 'It Happened One Night' with Claudette Colbert, I don't suppose you've ever heard of them, have you? That was a lovely movie. Oh he was in lots with Spencer Tracy. They did 'San Francisco, San Francisco', that's when San Francisco had the earthquake. I think Jeanette MacDonald was in it, if I remember rightly. Oh the movies were marvellous,

35:30 the movies were marvellous and, of course, in the younger days when we went to the movies they had serials and you'd watch a part this week and a part next week, like they have 'Superman' today, we'd have someone, I can't think who we had, but you'd watch part this week and part next week. And I remember when my husband was courting me, there was a great

36:00 favourite of ours, was George Formby. He had buck teeth and he played a guitar, not a handsome fellow at all, but we enjoyed his movies, and Joey Brown, big mouth, great comedian, some of the old ones were really great. I was really keen on the movies, very keen on the movies.

And where did you first go to the movies, I guess?

First go?

36:30 Oh I don't know where first but in Bankstown they had a theatre and before I started work I'd meet my sister, who was working, my elder sister, and she'd give me the threepence, or whatever it was, to go to the movies. And I'd go to the movies and for a penny you could get a bag of lollies. Beryl and I used to go to the movies.

37:00 Come to think of it I must have only been ten or eleven or twelve and I don't know how my mother let me go at that age, 'cause you wouldn't let your child go now at ten, eleven or twelve by yourself, but I guess going with her was acceptable, I don't know, I don't remember.

Well during your apprenticeship you were working in Kent Street, I'm wondering if you then started going to the pictures in the city?

37:30 No, I didn't go so much in the city unless I went with this boyfriend of a Saturday afternoon. We didn't go nights, that's for sure. Well you'd work and go straight home. No, we didn't go out nights then. But Friday night was a shopping night and sometimes we'd go to this State Theatre, coffee shop now, and have a milkshake, that's all, and then we'd

38:00 go home. I remember we were there the night the war broke out. I remember the night the war broke out, we were there at the coffee shop and everyone was saying, 'Have you heard the news? Have you heard the news?' And I went home and I think midnight the paperboy came up the street, selling the paper that said 'The war's broken out, we've declared war'. I remember that.

38:30 I never kept that paper.

And before that night what kind of awareness did you have, do you think, of the possibility that that might happen?

Well there were some very gruesome stories around that we were hearing about Hitler and the dreadful things happening. Never dreamt for a moment that it

39:00 would affect us but in Europe, yes, it was dreadful the things that were happening, that we were reading about and hearing about on the radio and that, which was frightening. And then when this paper came out and said 'War is being declared, we're in the war', it really hit home, war, war, 'cause then things moved quickly then.

39:30 Before I knew it my brother signed up, brother-in-law went into the navy and then the district would start saying we all had to prepare in case there was any threat to us and these anti-aircraft gun places were built on the top of the hill around us 'cause we were around Bankstown Aerodrome too and that was the highest point.

40:00 **We might just stop there and change our tape.**

Tape 4

00:55 **Okay we might come back and talk about the outbreak of the war in a minute but before**

01:00 **we do, when we were having a break then you were just telling me about your first ball that you went to at a young age.**

At Mark Foy's ballroom, they used to have a beautiful ballroom and my sister, being seven years older than me, she and her, well he became her husband anyway, Clare and Ron, they were beautiful ballroom dancers and she started taking me to the

01:30 balls with her and, yes, it was lovely and Mum would make me some lovely ballroom gowns. But I don't know what got me onto that thought, that line of thought, but drinking I suppose. No, we didn't drink, even at the balls, we didn't drink. We only had the lemonade or something, no, didn't drink, no I didn't,

02:00 I was very anti-liquor.

Well you have talked quite a lot about your father and his alcohol, I guess, consumption and issues and that turned you off a little bit, but I'm wondering just generally what the social acceptance or unacceptance was of women and alcohol?

I'm not aware at that stage of any women who drank at all

02:30 but the men liked their beer and of course the hotels closed at six o'clock in those days and I think they used to call it the 'Six O'Clock Swill' because the men would try and drink as much as they could before they had to leave. Yes, that was awful, because husbands would come home rolling drunk, it's tea time

03:00 and you've got the children to attend to and they're cranky and annoyed because their pleasure's been stopped and made a difference in a family and that's what got under my skin and, as I said before, my father was very argumentative, you only had to say a cross word and he'd want to fight you. But alcohol was, that's

03:30 the only time it entered my life. But at the balls we didn't have, I don't know if we had liquor at all, but I'm not aware of it if we did. And I used to go to a lot of balls with her then, they were lovely.

Well can you describe the Mark Foy's ballroom for us?

Well the band, it wouldn't be a disco like today, we'd have a full band,

04:00 at least three, four. Of course the Trockadero, when we went, there would be something like twenty in the orchestra, it was beautiful but the ballroom dancing, they'd have quite a number in, the musicians [?], and lovely old waltzes and things, you could dance all night. It was just a dream and then you'd just sit down and talk a while and get up for another dance and some food would be passed around at some

04:30 stage, until perhaps one o'clock in the night and then we'd go home. Yes, it was lovely, the atmosphere was lovely. I can't recall what Mark Foy's looked like but it was just an elegant, lovely building and ballroom.

And where would the musicians be sitting?

Oh they'd probably sit on the stage at one end or an alcove at one end

05:00 and we'd be at different tables, distributed around the room according to how many you were with. They were lovely.

And you went with your sister who was older than you?

Yes.

How would you be approached to get up and dance?

Oh I'd have a partner at a ball like that, you wouldn't be

05:30 approached, but at the Trockadero that was different, you'd go as a single and a young man would ask you if you'd dance and you mostly said, "Yes." I don't know what you'd do if you said, "No," but I'd always say, "Yes," and you'd have a dance and, as I said before, sometimes if you had more than one, several, and you liked each other, he'd even see you home, escort

06:00 you home as far as he could. And then he might say, "I'll meet you Saturday night." "Alright, where will we meet?" "We'll meet at Beverfall's corner," and there are all these young couples used to meet at Beverfall's corner, it was a favourite place and you'd think, 'Is that him? Oh no, oh no, I'm not going with him,' and you wouldn't go,

06:30 stand him up, be awful wouldn't it? But that did happen and yeah. One young man I met at, I don't know what age I would be then, but before I was married, of course, he was into sailing and he said, "Come over to Manly," perhaps, I don't know where it was, "and we'll go sailing." So

07:00 I went this weekend and I took a, because you didn't have backpacks and things in those days, you took a suitcase. If I went for a hike down in the National Park I'd take my food and things in a suitcase, a little Globite bag. So this day I was going sailing and I took my Globite bag with, one of the girls said, "You could stay overnight at my place," so I had a few extra clothes and had my Globite bag, so there was a

07:30 a group of us. We got on the boat and we went sailing on the harbour, it was lovely, but somewhere along the road they said, "Pull that rope," and according to the wind you'd pull that rope and I think it was myself and pulled the wrong rope and the boat went over, the sailing boat. Well, of course, my Globite bag went to the bottom, didn't it, and everyone was in the water and anyway the patrol came and picked us up,

08:00 like a water police or something picked us up, but I was scared stiff of sharks, so the chaps were saying, "Sit on the sails, sit on the sails," 'cause the mast would hold the sail just under water level, but it didn't go down, so we'd just sit around on the mast and the shark wouldn't come, they said. Oh dear that was quite an experience when I went sailing, the one and only time

08:30 I went sailing on the Harbour and that happened. Thought I'd better stick to dancing after that.

Well just going back to dancing, can you describe a dress you might have worn? You mentioned your mother made you a dress?

One was white, like a white taffeta and she kind of box pleated all

09:00 around the yoke. I remember it was lovely, right around the yoke. I think it was just off the shoulder too. I always thought that was beautiful, it was lovely. Full length of course, gathered at the waist and yes, oh she made me some nice clothes.

And what would you wear on your head?

Well flowers and things were very popular,

09:30 just a bit of flower there or flower there, very popular, maybe I did, I can't remember. But my mother was a good sewer, as I said. She wasn't a trained dressmaker or anything, but I'd say to her, "Oh, I saw this lovely frock," so she'd come to town with me and we'd look at the shop, look at the frock in the shop window, then she'd get the material and make it for me. I'd think I was very smart in

10:00 this lovely frock that was copied from some exclusive shop, she was very good like that, very good.

Well earlier on you, oh actually before I ask that question, just to finish a bit more on the fashion, what would you wear on your feet?

10:30 Oh I think sandals and high heels were in. High heels and not quite as high and thin as they are today but we had stilt heels, High heels, yes, I'd wear high heels, strappy shoes.

And what about stockings? They were probably a bit hard to get?

Oh we had stockings with suspenders to hold them up, not pantyhose, we'd wear a little girdle

11:00 with suspenders. Ever seen those? Yes, that's right. It wasn't until after the war, I think, a lot of American soldiers introduced the nylons and I think pantyhose followed soon after that but before that they were silk stockings. Yes, we'd wear nice shoes and sandals,

11:30 somehow with little money as we had, we used to get nice shoes, dressed rather well.

Yeah, it's amazing what you can do, even in trying circumstances.

Yes, because everything was so much cheaper to buy.

12:00 Can't think what we'd pay for shoes, haven't got a clue, maybe ten shillings, if I was earning seven it would be more than a week's wages, that would be expensive, wouldn't it? And when you think I only had a third of that money to live on, two pound five or something, I'd have to save up for those shoes. So if they were ten pound that

12:30 would be expensive. And that's just a guess.

Well I'm wondering, you mentioned that you were in the city when the war broke out and things started to change quite quickly, how did you react, I guess, to that news of

13:00 **war being declared?**

Well it was frightening of course and then it was worrying because, as I said, my brother quickly signed up. That distressed my mother and all her thoughts went into that then. And then she, I don't

13:30 know how soon after, but she went into the VADs, the Voluntary Aid Detachment, at the hospital, which would probably be Concord Hospital. She did that all through the war. Dad became a warden to patrol the streets. My sister married Reg who went into the navy.

14:00 Clare was married by then, I expect. Russell had gone to the war and I'm the next, so I went into munitions. Yes, things moved hurriedly alright, pretty quick. Boom gates went across the harbour, in case we got intruders, searchlights went up everywhere,

14:30 all street lighting and that was cut off, turned off. Can't think what else. That meant the theatres at night, if you went to the theatre you had to go in the darkness. I can't recall what I did.

What did your mother tell you about her work as a

15:00 **VAD?**

As a VAD? Oh she used to come home and tell us how she was rolling bandages or I don't know what else she did. There weren't wounded soldiers there at that time, not yet. No, I don't think I listened to a lot of her stories about what she actually did.

15:30 There were other ladies with her, of course, and she belonged to a group that played tennis at that time too, she'd taken up tennis as a little relaxation and two or three of them went with her into the VADs. Later on when they, fifty years later when they gave us these certificates for our service in the munitions and that,

16:00 Mum was given an Order of Australia medal, I think it was, posthumously, I was given that for her. That's how she spend her war years, as a VAD.

I'm just wondering if you recall seeing her in her uniform?

Oh yes, I had a picture of her but I haven't got it now. I gave it to my younger brother to keep with the Order of

16:30 Australia medal, because when I'm gone I would like him to have it, so I haven't got the photo of her here. Yes, she was in a white uniform with a hat and had the 'VAD' on it, or something, buttoned through the front. Did I touch that again?

17:00 **Do you recall the year that your brother signed up?**

Signed up? I think it was '41. One photo I have there is, no, just a moment, it must have been before that because I have my little bible there, New Testament he sent me from Jerusalem

17:30 in 1940. I was eighteen and he was in Jerusalem, so that's 1940. So he probably signed up in '39, early '40, quite early in the piece.

And what do you recall of seeing him in his uniform before he left to go overseas?

I was very close to Russell and we went out to

18:00 his passing out parade at, I'm not sure if that was at Moorebank, Ingleburn, out there, we went to see him at his passing out parade and then we went down to see him early one morning as they boarded their ship. It was heartbreaking really, very sad.

18:30 Yes, we were very proud of him. Mum was very upset when he went off there. Fortunately, or thank God, he came home unscathed. We used to get letters from him and hear about how things were going but they had a terrible [time] in Egypt, I think it was. Then he was sent to,

19:00 he came home I think, then he was sent to Cyprus, and there they were fighting when they were told to retreat and I don't know what year that was, but he wrote and told us how they were retreating and they got to the wharf,

19:30 or something, the ships had been taking the men out as quick as they could and they got to the wharf and they were told that this was the last ship that could get into the harbour because the enemy had backed them back to there and this was the last ship and he and his mate Bob made a jump for it and Russell managed to jump onto the ship and Bob missed, he was taken a prisoner of war.

20:00 And later on he wrote us a story about this which my sister-in-law has. Yes, he laid on that ship, it was loaded, there was nowhere to go, they just had to lay where they were on the ship and watch the bombs falling, hoping to God they didn't hit the ship, which they didn't and he got away safely but then he found out later that Robert

20:30 was picked up and taken a prisoner of war. He came home years later but he was a shell of a man but thank God Russell got out alright. Yeah, it was a terrible time. But when I was in Maribyrnong filling these twenty five pounders and so on, and

21:00 then they announced that the Japanese were bombing Darwin. We tried to do our bit anyway.

I understand that it's quite emotional thinking about some of those memories again, but why do you think even now, today, that the memory is so raw for you when you remember saying goodbye to Russell?

Well,

21:30 I don't know, went so deep I suppose, the feeling, and of course he's passed on. Yes, it's very emotional. No, it was a sad time, a very sad time, 'cause it was sad for those that lost their boys. We were very lucky that we got him back.

22:00 **What about, one of the things that started to happen on the outset of the war was, like your mother joining the Red Cross, other charity work that started up during that time?**

What other charities were there?

22:30 **I'm wondering if you were interested at all in any kind of voluntary sort of work?**

Well I did a lot later, a great deal later, but at that stage I hadn't, I hadn't. I guess – what was I? – twenty. I guess I'd just been enjoying my life up to then, I hadn't thought of anything.

23:00 My mother evacuated the children down to the Burragreen Valley. She took some of the children from the church, with other ladies to get the children away from the danger of the war here because, well, it could have been a dangerous place, it wasn't but it could have been. The children were evacuated to country areas but where Warragamba Dam is now,

23:30 that was the Burragreen Valley, it was a beautiful holiday place. We used to go there for picnics and holidays and I went there once with Clare, my eldest sister, and her husband and we had a camping holiday there and we went, he used to do a bit of shooting, so he had his gun and we went rabbit shooting or something. When we came back the pigs, the wild pigs had got into our

24:00 camp and they'd eaten all the labels off the tins and we didn't know which was cream and which was baked beans, it was a mess, but we used to have lovely holidays there. But when Mum went down to the

boarding house and evacuated with so many children from our church I used to go down weekends, in fact I had my twentieth birthday party there.

24:30 They had a cake for me when I went down at the weekend. I have fond memories of that. We could walk out in the morning and pick mushrooms galore, used to shoot up everywhere. It was lovely, 'cause so many years later they closed all that and filled it in with water, that's how we have our water supply.

Well as you say,

25:00 **I guess in 1939, when war was declared, things didn't change too much to begin with, but then when the Japanese entered the war …?**

Oh yes, that came close to us, yes. Yes, until then the war was over there and a lot of our men went over there to fly planes and fight and all that type of thing but

25:30 it didn't strike at home as much as it did once the Japanese came in, oh that was horrible, horrible. And then, of course, our men were sent then to Singapore even and New Guinea, so it was getting close, wasn't it? Singapore we read about, that was very close, that was frightening the things they

26:00 did there.

Can you tell me, I guess about being a part of the home front and you mentioned a bit earlier that one of the signs of war for you was Bankstown Airport. We'd just got to the end of the tape when you were talking a bit about Bankstown Airport. Can you tell

26:30 **us what you saw there?**

Bankstown Airport was just, well, over the hill, type of thing, and on top of the hill was where they put the anti-aircraft gun establishments and, yes, I guess the aerodrome was used, quite a bit of transport and all that although Richmond, further out, was used even more I think

27:00 than Bankstown. And of course I didn't see what went on at Bankstown, I wasn't that close, although it was strange that I was brought to Condell Park when I was about two to live, then we moved to Bankstown and then when we married we lived at Bankstown and then we bought another home back at Condell Park, so we

27:30 did the circle really, didn't know that would happen in seventy years. But Bankstown Airport during the war, can't recall just what they did there, but it would have been used as a base for something, for sure. I remember one night Bondi, I think, was shelled

28:00 by the Japanese and I could hear the planes taking off and that would have been from Bankstown. You could here the planes taking off, oh it was tremendous, the drone and drone and drone, don't know how many took off. The next morning of course, we heard on the radio that the Bondi had been shelled. That was the closest it came, it was terrible. I think we all woke up and

28:30 Dad was out and I said, "What's going on?" and he said, "Planes are taking off." The anti-aircraft lights were all around the place. That brought it close, but that was really the nearest experience I had to it.

Well how nervous do you think it was in Sydney? You've just mentioned that your mother took part in the evacuation of some children,

29:00 **young children, was there ever any consideration of yourself and any of your family children being evacuated?**

Oh I guess my young brothers probably went with her, they would have gone with her, but not working people, they didn't, life had to carry on.

29:30 And then I was twenty when I joined the munitions, so I guess I was looking for something to do in the war, well everybody had to think about doing something. I did join what was called a signalling corps for a while. I've got a photo of myself there with the uniform, but that was like Morse code, 'dah, dah, dah, dah, dit, dit, dit' and I learnt all that but it

30:00 wasn't taking me anywhere and then this came up in the paper about munitions and I thought, 'Oh that's a bit adventurous, wouldn't mind doing that,' three months in Melbourne, I'd never been to Melbourne, so I signed up for that. I was supposed to be twenty one but I got away with it. Actually

30:30 by then, that was twenty, 1942, wasn't it? By then I was engaged. I became engaged to a young man who was in the air force also and he had a friend living next door to me, that's how I met him, and he liked to dance, we used to go dancing a lot, to some of these balls with my sister and that.

31:00 And he was sent away to South Australia with the air force, to do training and all this, and I signed up and went to Melbourne, then I met him in Melbourne also, he was down there for some reason. So we're onto the Melbourne bit, aren't we?

Well, we'll get there in a minute, but just what happened to that engagement?

31:30 Oh that fizzled out after the war. People change and while he was away I used to, another girlfriend I

had, Cath, I used to go and stay with her. He didn't like Cath and when he came back he was very possessive, didn't want me to spend the time with my friends, very possessive, so that didn't work out. I wasn't ready for that kind of thing

32:00 so that broke up. That would be about 1945, '42 I was engaged, yeah, the war finished in '45, so I guess when he came back, we broke it off. It was a year later before I met my husband, yes, I was just going quietly on that bit but still it happened.

Before we move

32:30 **on to talk about your own signing up, I'm just wondering if you could tell us other visual signs of war that you could see around Sydney, where you were, in the city maybe?**

No, except for the darkness, everything was dark. But then of course, I wasn't out much after dark. You'd come home from

33:00 work and that was it. It cast a gloom over your life, that you didn't do the things, you didn't think of going to a dance or a ball or anything. Pictures were still on I think but no, we didn't go to anything in that short period between the war starting and me going to Melbourne. I didn't do anything exciting then, it cast a gloom. And I suppose because nearly everybody had a relative

33:30 who'd been sent over or something like that, it changed the face of everything.

And what about newsreels? I'm wondering if you saw any newsreels?

Oh yes, you'd have newsreels at the pictures, yes. Oh yes there was a lot of doom and gloom there, some horrible sights

34:00 and crashed aircraft and injured men. It was very gloomy, everything was very gloomy. But still it had to be seen, didn't it?

What could you do to keep up your spirits during that time?

Oh I don't know.

34:30 I don't know that we did much else, just sit in your house where everything was blacked out and just try and be cheerful for the little ones' sake but I think you kind of live in a suspended atmosphere,

35:00 waiting for what's going to happen next. But I'm sure we didn't do much. Weekends we'd go to Burragreen, because my boyfriend then had a car, by then we had a car, an old T Model Ford that took us around.

And what would you, if you can remember, what would you use to put up on your windows to black out your house?

35:30 I think it was brown paper and draw the curtains. My father, as I said, he was a warden. He had to walk the streets at night, and others, he was only one, and check and if there were lights showing he'd knock on the door and tell them, they'd have to blacken that spot or something, no lights could be seen.

36:00 **And once you had blacked out the windows, what would you use for lighting inside the house?**

Oh you could light the house, yes, we had electricity then. I remember before we got electricity we'd have to buy a little gas mantle, I'd be sent around the shop to buy a gas mantle and it was a very soft white, feathery thing like that.

36:30 If you shook it, it shook and you'd think, 'Oh goodness,' and if you dropped it, it would just break. You had to be very gentle and careful with it and then Mum would put it up in the gas light. So it was a big thing when we got electricity. "Oh Mr Ellis is coming," I remember the name, "Mr Ellis is coming to put the electricity through." A wonderful thing to get electricity.

Well just going back to

37:00 **why you wanted or you felt like you wanted to do something for the war effort?**

Just for something different I think, adventurous, although I felt that I wanted to do something and Mum used to say, "You're not going in the Army, not going in the Army," and of course you did what you were told, even at twenty. Your mother said, "You're not going in the Army," you wouldn't go in the Army, well I wouldn't anyway. But

37:30 so I guess I was looking for something that I could do that was worthwhile but therefore I went to the signalling but that didn't do much, it wasn't leading anywhere. I don't know what they would have used me for there.

And where did you do that signalling course?

That was over at Hurstville way, I think. I remember the girl I went with, she was from Hurstville, but I don't quite remember, we went to a hall,

38:00 there were several of us and this chap used to talk to us and push the Morse code thing and teach us. We all had one.

And did you want to join one of the services?

I wanted to do something, didn't know what, didn't know what. Mum said, "You're not joining up, that's it,"

38:30 'cause my brother-in-law, my sister, Rita, by this time was married and her husband was on the Canberra and I think they'd been sent to Western Australia for his training, so she was away too. That was another one of the family gone, so her life was very much changed, upset by it all.

39:00 So anyway I saw this and I applied and I got it.

Well that's a very good place for us to stop for lunch.

Tape 5

00:32 One thing I recall, a lot of things changed as regarding as buying something. There was black market on everything. If you wanted something, you could get it if you paid an extra twenty pound or fifty pound or something. When my husband and I went to buy a block of land, that applied. We looked all over for this block of land in Bankstown. When we decided what we wanted, we found the owner and I think it was eighty pound

01:00 but they wanted a hundred and eighty pound, we had to pay to get that block of land otherwise you just didn't get it. That was one of the bad things that came out of it.

How long did it take you to get the material together to build a house on that block of land?

That wasn't so difficult to get the material, but to get the money was hard. When we decided to get married and build a house,

01:30 we approached the building society and got a loan for what we thought we could afford, that was okay, they approved it. And we had a builder lined up, but about a month before we were to start, he decided he needed another thousand pounds and we couldn't raise that, I mean it's a pittance today but we couldn't raise another thousand pounds. So we stayed with my parents for four years, but at that time then we had the second

02:00 child so we had to move. We put up a pre-fabricated house, that's the photo of it there, pre-cut I should say, and my husband, brothers, fathers, everybody who wanted to got in and helped and we built this lovely home, a lovely three bedroom home. Yes it was lovely and that was a pre-cut home.

When you say pre-cut, did you all just put it together in a day or how long did it take?

02:30 Oh no, no, no, it took, no it took many months, a long time because there wasn't a professional builder on the job, we were all just amateurs. Jack's father had worked on the Sydney Harbour Bridge as a carpenter, I think, and Jack was an engineer and my brothers weren't carpenters or builders but they all pitched in and helped.

03:00 But we didn't have a front veranda, such as that, for a year or two because if we opened the front door, you'd step down into a pit. There had to be cement laid. Yeah, we couldn't afford that for a long time so we didn't have a front entrance for a long time. But the house was a good house when we finally finished it.

While we're talking about that, around that time there were a lot of young couples doing the same thing, I mean this was part of the reason it

03:30 **was so difficult. What was the atmosphere in that post-war period do you think?**

Things were improving all the time, they really were. Work was getting more plentiful, women started going to work, where they hadn't before, yes, it was a hopeful future that we had

04:00 although I remember at one stage Jack was only getting about eleven pounds a week, but I was raising two or three children on that but quite happily. I think it was a very optimistic future we faced from then on.

We'll come back to that time towards the end of the interview as well and we'll go over it then.

Oh your curtain fell.

I knew it would fall sooner or later.

04:30 **You mentioned just a moment ago, rationing and black markets, when was the first time during the war that you noticed rationing and when did that first become apparent?**

Oh I can't say I remember, probably in the first year, the first year.

05:00 It was always sufficient. You'd do a lot of swapping, perhaps, with your friends, if you wanted something and didn't have enough coupons and they wanted something else, you'd do a bit of swapping with your coupons, clothing or food or whatever it was. No, it worked out alright.

What things were rationed?

05:30 Oh dear, you've got me thinking now. I can't, specifically rationed, 'cause we didn't have a car, it wasn't petrol. I don't know what it would be, food, food.

06:00 I don't know, probably the main things like bread or that, you could get, no I really don't know, I really can't remember.

I'll ask that question a bit differently. Maybe you can remember something that you wanted and couldn't get during the war?

Yes, material for nice underwear or clothing was scarce because I remember

06:30 towards the end of the war, this John in one photo, he invited me to Ballarat to meet his family and my mother made me some lovely pyjamas out of a parachute. That was quite common for people to get an old parachute and it was good silk, really good silk and she washed it and made me a lovely pair of pyjamas out of parachute

07:00 silk, and I remember that, it was hard to get nice material to make anything really nice.

Were there any other luxuries that you missed out on during war time?

No, I don't think so, strange that I can't think of any, no,

07:30 can't but there must have been, but I can't think of any.

Speaking of luxuries, it was common at the time to send parcels overseas?

Oh yes.

What can you tell us about that?

Well we were forever sending things to my brother, knitted socks, scarves, warm clothes, fruit cake. A fruit cake Mum would make and send. Even my husband used to say he'd get a fruit cake from his

08:00 mother. To make the fruit go further she'd put chokos in, instead of apple, chokos in whatever she was cooking in place of apple 'cause she could grow the chokos and they were a good substitute. Yes, he'd get fruit cakes and my brother would get fruit cakes and I can't

08:30 think of anything else.

How much did you hear from your brother once he left for overseas?

I can't think how often, but looking back it looks as though we were very fortunate in the contacts we had. I've got the gifts and the photos and that that he'd send. It wasn't too bad.

09:00 **Can you tell us a bit for the archives about those gifts and when you received them?**

Oh yes. Well the little Testament, the New Testament he sent me, with the carved wood cover, that was for my eighteenth birthday. I was thrilled to get that and I've kept it in beautiful condition for all those years. And then he would now and then send home little scarabs

09:30 and little mementos like that and the bracelet, I think he brought home for me and a handkerchief, and so on, with my name embroidered on it. We didn't get much in the way of photographs and the news was very good. We'd get, through the wireless I mean, and through the newspapers you'd get daily write-ups.

10:00 But it sounded as though they were in a very grim situation there with Rommel coming through the desert, it was horrible. It didn't seem at the time to be too long before hearing from him.

You mentioned there was news of a grim situation over there, how much anxiety was there in your family about your brother overseas?

10:30 Oh yes, it was very worrying, very worrying. Well any day, you lived from day to day thinking, 'Any day,' and any knock on the door was going to be bad news. I think all families that had anyone in the services lived with that fear, it was just there all the time 'cause the newspapers were writing about

11:00 those who were killed and lost and we felt for them too. It helped a lot, I think, that we went to church and prayed a lot, did help us a lot you know.

How did it affect your mother?

Well she was very strong, very strong, she must have worried a lot quietly. She wasn't one to cry

11:30 or sit down and moan about things. She was always cheerful because I suppose having small children too, she had to keep the stiff upper lip, so to speak. And then she was busy, she never had time for much else, family, feeding, clothing, looking after them, going to the VADs. I think she went nearly every day, it seemed to me. Get the kids off to school and off she'd go,

12:00 she was so hardworking.

Where did she nurse or help out with the VAD work?

I think she was at Concord Hospital, I really do think it was Concord because we didn't have a hospital at Bankstown at that time and I don't think she went to the city anywhere. I think it was Concord. It's strange isn't it? A lot of things you just take for granted in your life, I hadn't asked about that but

12:30 this friend I spoke to you about, she might talk to you at length about VAD, she'd tell you.

What about your sisters? You mentioned they were also involved in the war effort?

No, no, I don't recall they were. Rita, she was married to a man in the navy and she and Reg went to live in Western Australia and then they did come back a few years later. He was on the Canberra then but

13:00 for a long time they were away, and Clare got married too, somewhere around that time and, of course, the younger ones were too young to be involved, so it was Russell and I really, the ones that were in it.

Was there volunteer work that they could get involved in or you got involved in? You mentioned something already?

Well me, although I was in munitions I joined the

13:30 Weekend Servicemen's Club at Haymarket and some girlfriends and I used to go there and we'd have cups of tea and sandwiches or something like that for the men. Any of the servicemen were welcome to come in and there was a little floor, if we played some music with records, we only had records then, no CDs or

14:00 discs or anything, we'd play some records and if they wanted to have a dance we'd have a dance with them and just to take their minds off things, just for a few hours. What else did I do? That's about all I did for the way of volunteering.

Before we come to talk about munitions we might talk a bit about that, because this was something new that really happened after the Japanese entered the war, the

14:30 **amount of servicemen around in Sydney, can you tell us a bit about what that was like?**

Oh there was a lot around, even before then.

Where did they come from?

Well there were a lot of Americans here and we had Italians too, Italians because we used to meet them at the Trockadero, even though you didn't understand the language, you could still dance together and smile and maybe one or two words would pass.

15:00 The Americans, of course, you could talk to and then, as I said, we'd meet at the Trockadero or sometimes meet again at Beverfall's corner and go to Luna Park or the pictures or something.

What was the reputation of the American servicemen among the young ladies that you knew?

Well they seemed to bring an excitement with them somehow. You know, 'The

15:30 Yanks are here, the Yanks are here,' it was really exciting. But I never really became attached to an American. They didn't, didn't, I liked the Australian servicemen.

What in particular did you like about the Australian servicemen?

Perhaps just because I understood them better and then, of course I got engaged in

16:00 1942, so he was an airman. No they were a good, clean cut, honest young men.

What was the difference between the different branches of the service in terms of their reputation in the young ladies' eyes?

No, I didn't make any distinction between any of them. They were all welcome at the Servicemen's Club,

16:30 we treated them all the same. We danced with them, chatted with them. The Englishmen were a bit more, I think they were a bit quieter somehow, maybe because they were alongside of the Americans and the Americans were so outspoken and boisterous.

Can you tell us about anything at the Trockadero

17:00 **during the war when all these servicemen were around?**

It was just so lovely, the music was just so beautiful. If you liked to dance it was a beautiful place to be. There was a band, a big band called Brent Coglan's Band and oh the crowds that got there. But the music was beautiful, the floor was beautiful to dance on and it was just a lovely atmosphere, a lovely place.

17:30 **It's not there any more?**

No.

Hasn't been for many years, can you describe what it was like in the 1940s, what it looked like?

I just remember it was wide and then it had a big oval piece over the door with 'Trockadero' written across it, like that, in an oval, 'Trockadero', and the lights used to flash and attracted you in.

18:00 But it was nicely presented inside. There were cloak rooms so you could cloak your uniform or overcoat or anything there, someone to look after them. I don't think we had liquor, we didn't have liquor there in those days or anything. We didn't need liquor. It was never amongst my friends, liquor. We must have had soft drink, must have had something to drink, I forget.

18:30 But you were just there to dance and be happy.

Were there tables and a refreshment area as well?

Yes, we had tables around, yes, tables and chairs and you could sit down between, more or less long tables, not little two or four seaters, they were bigger tables.

And how would you meet people at the Trockadero while the music was playing and a dance was going on?

Well if you

19:00 didn't go with your partner, you'd go with a girlfriend and you'd be sitting at the table and you wouldn't be sitting long and someone would come up and say, "Would you care for a dance?" and you'd say, "Yes," and get up and have a dance. So there it went and there it followed. He might ask you for another later on, or he might say, "Can I have the next one too?" and you'd say, "I'd like to sit one out," you'd have to be very tactful.

19:30 **Were there other excuses or getaway plans?**

Oh yes, you'd tell little white lies, you'd say, "Oh I've got that booked." If you didn't like him you'd say, "Oh I have got a friend here, he'll be expecting me to dance with him." Sometimes it's necessary to tell a little white lie, I mean you don't want to hurt someone's feelings, do you?

Obviously it wasn't a formal dance card or anything,

20:00 **but could someone book you for later on really?**

Yes, they did, they would say that. They'd say, "Can I have the next jazz waltz?" or, "Could I have the next 'Pride of Erin'?" or whatever it was, and they mightn't come back up for four or five dances and then lo and behold you'd see him coming back across the hall, "Here he comes, hey Jean, here comes that guy, hey Jean, here he comes, he's coming."

20:30 **What were the particular advantages of a jazz waltz or a 'Pride of Erin', what would some men like to dance particular dances with you for?**

Well of course, to do a jazz waltz you're dancing in closer proximity to that person which is, I suppose, more romantic, but the 'Pride of Erin' is swing your arms and swing away, oh

21:00 they're different altogether.

How many sorts of dances, different dances, would you be able to go through in an evening at the Trockadero?

Oh gee, I couldn't guess how many, you just danced endlessly. At that age you've got plenty of energy, might do twenty or thirty and not think about it. You get a little break in between but not much.

21:30 **And what was your particular favourite?**

Dance? Oh I think I liked the jazz waltz. Yes, I liked the jazz waltz. There was another one called the barn dance, of course. It's still danced today I think and the 'Lambeth Walk' came in, very popular

22:00 then, during the war. Yeah, they were popular too.

Were there modern or American influenced dances happening around this time in Sydney?

No, when you say American dances do you mean like square dance?

No, I'm thinking like jitterbugging or that kind of thing.

No, well I think that came in later. I think that came in a bit

later, I was never one to do that, jitterbugging and that. My husband was never one to dance, and as I said I used to go to all the dances, I loved them, and when I met him he said, "Well you can still go dancing, I'll take you." I said, "No-one's going to ask me to dance when you're standing there watching,"

so he said, well he didn't mind, no, so I stopped going to dances. It was my choice but I preferred that I just gave dancing away, but after a while in came, or you mentioned jitterbugging, but in came what they called 'the twist', I don't know if you're familiar with it? And if we went to a wedding or we went to a party

and my mother might be minding the children, we were free to have a good night out and they'd bring on the twist, and, do you know, my husband started to do the twist, and he loved it. I'd say, "I've got to sit down for a while. I'm tired and I've got to sit down," but he wasn't tired, so he'd say to the next girl, "Come on," and up he'd go and he'd be dancing, he'd dance with everybody and I'm trying to catch my breath. And I was the dancer, not him.

The tables had turned.

Uh?

The tables had turned.

The tables turned alright, yes.

Just a couple of more things about the Trockadero. Where would you be able to go to be away from the crowd at a dance like that?

Oh you could go to the foyer or the ladies' room. The foyer I suppose if you wanted to have a chat with someone, you mean?

Well first of all, the ladies' room in a lot of clubs today is a place where young ladies tend to congregate, was that the case at the time?

Oh no, I don't think so, no. You'd go there if you wanted to talk about a certain boy, "How did you like him?" or, "I didn't," or something, go in and powder your nose and have a chatter but you'd have to come out and face them again.

And if it was late enough you'd say, "I'm sorry, I've got to go home now."

What about if you wanted to spend more time with a partner, for example, just talking or have a bit of a more intimate time with them?

You'd just sit at the table and have a chatter, or as I say, he might say, "Can I see you home?" and chatter on the way home in the train or something

but whenever they took me home, they always had to go back because it was the last train.

Was that ever an annoyance for you, the fact that you lived at Bankstown and the dances were in the city?

Oh it was a little bit because they used to torment me and say, "You live out in the sticks," which it was regarded as then. It's like, where shall I say now, like Campbelltown or somewhere now. There's nothing wrong with the place but it's a long way out, isn't it, to

see your girlfriend home? "Oh you live out in the sticks."

We talked a bit about what you wore to these dances and stuff already, were there any other big dance halls like the Trockadero, or was it one of a kind? What else was there?

Oh yes, that was outstanding in it's way, but there was the Marrickville Town Hall I went to quite a bit too. And there was another place at Newtown, now what was the

name of that? Newtown, oh there was another one at Strathfield, can't think of the names of them. Yes, there were several around.

What was the Town Hall like in comparison to what we discussed about the Trockadero?

Oh the Town Hall wasn't so much, well the dance floor was lovely but it wasn't just for dances, it was more for balls. Had balls there, grand events, which was

much more expensive for a ticket. You just wouldn't go for a dance like you would at the Trockadero.

What other occasions might you take a date out on, say a serviceman or if someone asked you out somewhere where else would they ask you to, apart from a dance?

Well we used to go for a lot of hikes if it was a daytime thing, so

27:30 maybe we'd go for a hike on Sunday. We'd take the train to Waterfall, I think it was, walk through to Gairie Beach or something like that, have a little swim, but as I was saying earlier, we didn't have backpacks, we'd take a suitcase, which you look at it today it looks rather strange carrying suitcases around. Yeah, we had picnics like that, what else did we do? We had Luna Park,

28:00 that was a great favourite. You could take a ride on the ferry, Manly Ferry was always there, that was interesting. Oh I can't think, oh we had the skating at the Glacierium at Broadway in Sydney, there was the Glacierium, that was a very popular spot too, hire the boots and skate around, not that I was very good at it but we did do it quite a bit.

28:30 **The Glacierium, I've heard people talk about it before. It was a huge institution like, a bit like the Trockadero. It's also no longer there.**

That's right.

Can you tell us a bit more about what it looked like and what you would …?

What it looked like? Well it was big, very big and you'd go in to one side and get your boots and of course if you weren't a good skater your feet would fall one way or the other,

29:00 or you'd go and change your boots but you still didn't have a good balance. Oh it was hilarious to skate around, you really needed a strong shoulder to hang onto someone. Yes, I was never a good skater but you would have a lot of fun there.

What special clothes would you wear to go skating?

Well we didn't wear slacks in those days, so it was always a woollen skirt and

29:30 jumper and jacket perhaps, of some kind, warm socks.

I've heard that stockings were hard to come by during the war?

Oh silk stockings were.

How did you get around that?

You could buy woollen stockings and that, but there again you had to have coupons. There's one thing, you had to have coupons for, warm stockings. What were you saying? How would I get the stockings?

Yeah. What would you do if you needed a

30:00 **pair of silk stockings?**

Just, well we'd darn our stockings too. If we got a ladder in our silk stockings, you'd darn it. There was no disgrace to wear a stocking that had a darn in it, if it was neatly done. Nylons came in which you didn't have to darn, didn't have ladders, but to get silk stockings? Well you just hoped

30:30 your supply lasted out. But a lot of serviceman bought stockings as presents for people, whether they came from America or not, I think they did mostly. If you got a pair of silk stockings you thought you were lucky, they were very scarce and as I was saying before to Kathy [interviewer], they weren't pantyhose then, we'd wear a girdle with suspenders and they all had to be hooked onto the suspenders,

31:00 a bit different to today.

Do you have any friends who formed a stronger relationship with foreign servicemen during the war?

No, I don't know of any now. At the time I remember there were one or two that married and went over to America, but I never kept in touch with them,

31:30 no, no I didn't.

Were there many wartime weddings in your circle of acquaintance?

No, I never went to a wartime wedding, but you would read about them and hear about them, but they were very quiet affairs, they weren't elaborate or anything. It wasn't the time really for spending money on big weddings,

32:00 just quiet things.

What happened to your fiancé, where did he end up going? Was he in Australia the whole time?

Oh yes, he never left Australia, he was in the air force and he was sent to South Australia, I think a place called Quorn, something like that in South Australia. Then he came down to Melbourne on a break, I saw him there and then I saw him when he came home again, when he was

32:30 retrenched, not retrenched, when he got out of the air force.

Discharged.

He was there nearly all the time in Adelaide, didn't go far afield.

Was that a concern for you that you were engaged to someone you were not around?

No, we wrote a lot of letters but I don't think absence made the heart any fonder

33:00 and I had a lot of girlfriends and we used to, as I said, go around together and I'd go to this one's place and stay, Alma's at Arncliffe and Kath at Wentworthville, they'd come and stay at my place and when he came home from the war that was pattern of my life. He didn't like that. He wanted me to be there with him and I wasn't ready for all that,

33:30 settling down. Just didn't work out.

That's an interesting point because it was a time where young women had a lot more freedom than they had had in many ways, how did you feel that at the time? Did you feel like you were being set free in some ways during the war?

Being what?

Being allowed more freedom, being set free in some ways?

Oh yes, yes. Yes it opened up,

34:00 especially after the experience of going to Melbourne for three months, yes it opened up my life, yes it was a great time of feeling freedom.

People have also commented that that changed the moral standards during the time, how much do you think that's true?

Well it may have been the beginning of the changes, but it didn't change anything in me, I don't think.

34:30 I don't think the people were any different then, not in my circle anyway, things weren't changing. But I guess as the war ended people felt a great relief, a great freedom,

35:00 a great outgoing of, 'Do what you want now, the war's over, we can, it's a wonderful world out there, you can try anything.'

'Cause it was also a time of excitement not knowing what would happen next?

Yes, yes, but it wasn't scary, you didn't think much about it like that. I left munitions then,

35:30 They must have been slowing down then, I think, must have been slowing down. We had a big stockpile 'cause I left munitions then and I went to De Havilland's to work on aircraft 'cause that was closer to home, too. See Milperra was near Bankstown, well still in the municipality of Bankstown, and I didn't have to travel so much. In fact I got to know a chappie then who had a motorbike and he'd pick me up each morning and I'd go to

36:00 work on a motorbike which was ….

When was this? Before the end of the war?

Yes, I think about the end of '44, I think, getting close to the end of '44 anyway. And I did electrical bonding on the Mosquito bombers and we met American airmen and a lot of Australian airmen. A chappie from Melbourne is my very

36:30 dear friend still, he and his wife. He worked at De Havilland's and it saved all that travelling. To me it was really great so it gave me that sense of choice. After the cartridge bungling ball, I think it was about that time I left.

37:00 I can't think where I was going then, where my thoughts were going.

Well that's alright, we'll come back to that, we've sort of got onto talk about the end of the war but we may as well go back to the beginning and start your story because we haven't heard about the cartridge bungling at all yet. You were first off sent to Melbourne? How much did that change your life, being sent away from home for the first time?

Oh I grew up.

Can you tell us about how it came to pass in the very beginning?

It was just a little piece in the paper,

37:30 I think, 'Women wanted for munitions'. You had to be twenty one to thirty five or something to go to Melbourne for three months' training. I'd left Shepherd's, where I did my apprenticeship, and I'd gone to Ferrin and Payne, which was millinery on the assembly line, type of thing, didn't do much for me and

I was looking for something else.

38:00 So my mother didn't want me to go in the army, so I thought, 'This is a good opportunity to help the war and at the same time it's an adventure.' So I put my name down, had an interview and was accepted and so my eldest sister Clare took me to the train. I think my mother must have been away with the evacuees because she didn't come to the train. Clare put me on the train and I met this older woman who

38:30 became a friend of mine, Mabs. She's passed away now, she was much older than me but Clare put me in her hands, she said she'd look after me. And the old train was just the old carriage with the seat opposite each other and I think we got off at Goulburn and dashed out and bought a drink or something to eat and back on the train again and sat up all night to Melbourne

39:00 and then we went to this lovely old two-storey house in Malvern or Prahran, the photo's there with the address on it, that was lovely. There was a lot of girls there, oh thirty or something girls there and a cook to do our meals and someone to do the housework and we just got up each day and went to do the munitions,

39:30 walked down the street and caught the train and then we were taught all we had to know about munitions.

Okay we'll change over and you can tell us a bit more about what you were taught.

Tape 6

00:33 **Jean we'll just pick up your story. You were just telling Chris [interviewer] earlier on of how you came to sign up and go to Melbourne for munition training. Where did you go when you got to Melbourne?**

We went to this house in, I think it was Prahran or Melbourne, I don't know where it was. It would be on that photo, I should have fished it out

01:00 then when we had a break. Yes, we were boarded there for the three months, the three months. Weekends and that we went and had a look at Melbourne. We went to the races, I told you we went to the races one day and we'd go out to St Kilda and we went to the Gardens and generally had a good look at Melbourne. We were in a group and it was quite enjoyable and safe and, you know. I can't imagine what we were paid but it must have been

01:30 quite good then compared to what we were getting, and so three months of that was great and we were home for Christmas.

Where was, did you go to a munitions factory?

At Maribyrnong, at Maribyrnong

Can you describe the place that you went to?

Oh only that it was big, a big factory and we went in and there

02:00 were different sections for twenty five pounders or another section for trench mortar bombs, another section had little hand grenades. We'd have to pour, as you can see in the photo, pour the liquid explosives in but they weren't detonated until they went somewhere else. We didn't detonate them, but there was still a certain amount of danger to it all and we had,

02:30 we were assembly hands but when we went to St Marys we became charge hands, so we watched over others doing that.

Well I understand that you didn't spend very long in Melbourne, it was only three months, but perhaps you can just tell us a bit more detail about what you learnt in that training period?

03:00 Well we used to have a lot of lectures on danger. I daresay we had lectures on what the liquid was made of but I couldn't tell you on that, couldn't tell you that, but we would have been taught all that and the danger of it and how to be precautious

03:30 using it and so on, but yes. What else? And then there was the canteen where we went for lunch and then when we left at the end of the day we had to take the cap off, the gown off, put them on the hanger and swing them up in the air, bring the others down and dress in those clothes, swing our legs over to the dirty area and put our

04:00 shoes on, so you had to keep those sections strictly separate, the dirty area to the clean area. Yeah, I don't know if I can tell you much more about the work in detail. Twenty five pounders were about that size.

You're now talking about when you were at St Marys?

No, this is Maribyrnong although there were the same procedures at St Marys, but this

04:30 was at Maribyrnong.

How many girls were training with you?

To my knowledge there were about twenty. I think somewhere there I had it written down. There were fifty in that house, a big house for fifty, I wish I could find it, put my hands on it,

05:00 but they would all go in different directions, they might not have all been for Maribyrnong. I think there was about twenty of us went to Maribyrnong.

Well, you mentioned, I want to backtrack a little bit, you mentioned that you saw the original ad in the paper, do you recall who you contacted?

No, some department.

05:30 No, I don't, department, no.

Well I'm just wondering where you initially went to, before you got send down to Melbourne?

Yes, who I applied to, I don't know who it was, defence department or what, like that you mean? I don't recall who actually employed me. I should imagine it would come through the

06:00 Department of Defence. I don't know that.

Well you did this off your own back, by yourself, it was quite, I guess, an unusual thing?

Well they were unusual times, unusual things were happening.

06:30 Friends were going in the army and that kind of thing, and it was unusual times. I think I just said to my mother, "I like the sound of that," she didn't disapprove, so I applied. Then they asked me to come in for an interview and I did and

07:00 in due course they said I was accepted and I suppose they also said, "Here's your ticket, get the train at such and such," and I did. I kept a lot of souvenirs but I didn't keep the train ticket or that notice from the paper, would have been interesting. No, I don't remember those details.

On reflection why do you think your mother approved of you going to work in munitions but disapproved of

07:30 **you going into the army?**

I suppose she thought with one overseas I might have been sent over too far too and be lost. I don't know. But she apparently didn't think that was too far away and it was only for three months, I'd be back home again which I was, fortunately.

What about your dad? What was his reaction like to your idea?

I don't know if I even asked him.

08:00 My mother probably told him but I can't remember him having any objections. No, he didn't mind. Sounds like a dangerous job to you does it?

Well it's certainly not a traditional kind of a job?

No, true, but they were

08:30 unusual times, everyone had the feeling you had to do something. I couldn't go on being a milliner in those circumstances and anyway people weren't interested in hats any more, where are you going to wear a hat? You were hiding at home mostly, just listening to the radio, social life, such as wearing nice hats,

09:00 just fell apart for the average person anyway. I didn't think of it as being that unusual.

And how much did they explain to you what was involved when you went for your interview?

Oh yes, they did, I remember, they did tell us it would be dangerous, could be dangerous, could be dangerous, yes and you'd have to be careful.

09:30 But I didn't really know what I was going to do, I didn't really have it explained to me what I would be doing so I didn't know. But anyway there we are.

Well when they said it would be dangerous, did they explain what type of danger?

No, I don't think so, they just said it could be dangerous but then you'll be

10:00 instructed in every phase of it, it will all be explained to you, what you'll be doing, so that lessens the danger somewhat, which it was, it really wasn't that dangerous. It would be carelessness if, I mean if

your hand slipped and you poured it in the wrong place, I suppose that could be,

10:30 I don't know, I don't know, I don't think it ever happened. We were very careful. Everyone was very careful and serious about what they were doing. There was no frivolity and there were charge hands all the time, making sure that you were doing the right thing and, of course, no one dreamt of having a smoke or anything. There was nothing like that

11:00 which would have been the danger had anyone tried to have a cigarette near you, but no, none of that.

And why even, I'm just wondering after having had that interview and having had somebody explain that it would be dangerous, why then, when you went away and thought about it, did you agree to accept?

I don't know, I suppose you'd say just at that young age, twenty,

11:30 I thought there was an element of danger and didn't scare me a bit, didn't scare me a bit. I might have gone off more apprehensive about the train trip. I'd never travelled so far from home. I didn't know any of these people, I think that would have been more my worry, rather than the work ahead of me,

12:00 and then to be taken to this big two storey house, dozens of rooms, corridors and people and strange city, that was more, you know, worrying to me, not actually worrying but on my mind. I wasn't worried about the work a bit.

It is interesting though

12:30 **because I guess it was a leap from making hats.**

Oh yeah, it was a bit change, yes, a big change and, but then wouldn't joining the army or anything be just a big a change. Women went on the land, who'd driven tractors before? – nothing, they might have been in the library and then they've gone to drive a tractor. I mean at that time everything was changing, everyone was doing something different.

13:00 No, no, it wasn't as alarming as it appears to you today.

And what did you tell your girlfriends, if anything?

I just told them that exactly. Some of them thought I was crazy, they'd rather stay doing their hats but yeah. No, just nothing.

13:30 **None of them tried to stop you?**

No, no, I don't think so. One came down with my sister to see me off, to wish me well, I remember that. Miss Mabs took over then as the older woman, she took over and mothered me all the way. She was always there for me if I said, "I wonder what's happening at home?"

14:00 or anything, she was great. It was a lovely time.

Well you mentioned you were a bit nervous about the train trip and going so far from home, how was it in reality, how did you find that trip, what was it like?

Good, I think just tiresome, such a long trip sitting there and could only get off once or twice to go to the shop

14:30 to get something to eat or drink and it seemed a long way down to Melbourne. Then we'd sleep a bit and talk a bit and I gradually settled down and that was alright, no big deal.

Well you mentioned the boarding house that you went to, can you tell me a bit more about that?

15:00 Just that it was lovely, it was so big and it was lovely. The grounds were lovely and the gardens and we'd come down to a good hearty breakfast and good meals and that, which was a change from home cooking, Mum trying to make do with scratchy meals. It was all so different, it was a great experience.

15:30 I'd never been in such a big house, big staircase. I can't remember now whose home it was, but it was a lovely home. It might have belonged to some church or other, I don't remember but it was very nice.

And how different do you think, I guess, was Melbourne in terms of war and being in the middle of a war as compared

16:00 **to Sydney?**

Well Melbourne, at that time, didn't seem anywhere as big as Sydney. It was no different, no different, just not as big. I expected it to be bigger I think, wasn't as big as Sydney, but mind you it is now. I've been back recently and it's quite a big place and I love Melbourne.

16:30 But then, no, didn't seem much different. We'd go into town weekends, go to the Shrine or down to St Kilda but that was strange there were no beaches there, no beaches like Sydney, no harbour, just the river. No, it was nowhere as big, nowhere as fascinating as Sydney.

17:00 **And what about signs of war, people in uniform, did you see much?**

It was just the same really as Sydney. Wherever you went there were men in service uniforms and if you went in the shops the women were still rushing round trying to get clothes with their coupons and things like that, it really wasn't any different.

17:30 **Well what were your first impressions when you went to your first sort of class of training for munitions work?**

Oh I was very nervous about that I remember, very nervous. I was twenty. I wondered if I could cope, I wondered if I had the intelligence to take it all in and they started on these lectures and what the TNT [trinitrotoluene] was made of and we could take notes,

18:00 but just the same I thought, 'Oh dear, I don't know if I can stick this out,' I was very nervous. But then Mabs used to say to me, 'Don't worry dear, don't worry.' She was very helpful and she had it all written down, she was taking notes, she had it all written down. If she'd been alive today and you asked her, she'd probably tell you what it was composed of, but I never did take that into my brain.

18:30 But yeah I was nervous there for a time but I settled down to it, I got on alright. They said I did alright, so they sent me back to St Marys and I was a charge hand, same as everybody else, so I guess I did okay.

And training is often a time when things might go wrong because you're not quite sure what you're doing to begin with, I 'm just wondering if there were any little accidents or problems that might have happened during training?

No,

19:00 there wasn't actually, because we were all extra, extra careful, very careful. No, there was, no-one ever had an accident that I knew of. Maribyrnong wasn't as big as St Marys. When we came back to St Marys, I was amazed at the vastness of that place, it was huge.

19:30 But Maribyrnong was just like a factory among factories that we went into, it was big but there was more factories around it too, as I recall, but St Marys was a factory itself, alone. The ground around was all ground and every so often, way down there, they'd have a

20:00 dug out and in it they'd have a building where the ammunition was stored, so if anything happened to that, if there was an accident and anything damaged and that exploded, it would hit the sides of the mounds which would, I imagine, stop a lot of spreading. But Maribyrnong I don't think had that, it was just the factory

20:30 and where the bombs and things went from there I don't know.

And you've mentioned Mabs, but who did you gravitate to? I'm wondering if anybody else came down from Sydney?

Oh yes, there were different girls in the photos, I don't know what I've done with them. Oh yes there were others but we didn't keep up the connection after. I often felt

21:00 sorry about, I wish we'd kept in touch and kept like a union for each, every year to have kept in touch, but we didn't. Mabs was the only one I kept in touch with, until she died. I don't know where they all went to.

I'm just wondering if there was anything else that happened during that training that you'd like to …?

21:30 No, I think that covers it all really.

What happened at the end of that training period?

I can't, I don't remember any event that strikes me at all, they just said, "You're finished at the end of the week, you've finished the three months and you'll be going back to Sydney," and we started to pack up

22:00 and at the end of the week we were all transported back to the train and home. Nothing exciting, no celebration, no nothing, no speeches, no nothing like that. So then I don't even remember when we

22:30 first started at St Marys, I suppose it was within a week or so we probably went there, had to report to so and so. But I remember Mabs and I, she came from Marrickville, I came from Bankstown, so we met the trains at Parramatta and went on from there. I had to get up about half past four in the morning to get there, it was

23:00 cold and dark. That's about all I can tell you about munitions I think.

Well we'll move on now, you finished your training in Melbourne and started working at Dunheved at St Marys, I imagine that

23:30 **the factory's not there any more, can you describe where it was in St Marys?**

It was at a place called Dunheved but I know that was in St Marys, but when I say 'Dunheved', it's not in the postcode and people don't know what I'm talking about, but that is what it was called, Dunheved. Yes there was acres and acres of it, open space. I don't know what's become of it

24:00 now, I'm sure, don't know, I've never been back to see, probably factories or a lot of other little things or something.

Well how easy was it to get there by public transport?

How easy? Well I had to take three trains and then we'd get out and walk up the steps and we were there, that was it,

24:30 just walk across the road and into the change room. But the train took us right in, maybe it was a little branch line just at the time, maybe it was just a little branch line at the time to Dunheved, I don't know, but I know that was the name of it. Yes, it would be interesting to see how it's changed, but that was a big

25:00 place. That's where I met that chemist, industrial chemist I think he was, John.

Well can you describe, you mentioned you got up at four thirty in the morning, can you just take us through a day, starting from getting up?

Well I'd get up at half past four and have a bit of breakfast and it was always cold I remember,

25:30 or very hot, and I'd have about a seven minute walk to the station, railway station, and then we'd get a train from Bankstown to Lidcombe, change platforms, get a train from Lidcombe to Parramatta, change platforms again and get the train to St Marys. And when we got to Parramatta I would meet up with Mabs and we got to know the station master

26:00 there and if he was on duty he'd let us come into his office and we'd make a bit of toast and stand around the warm fire he had and make a bit of toast, it was lovely. But then we'd get back in the old steam train, as it was then, and off to work. Then we'd meet up with the other girls and we'd do the same over

26:30 again that we did at Maribyrnong, we'd do up at St Marys, just fill the containers. But we didn't actually have to pour, we would be charge hands. We'd watch to see that it was done properly or correct something or check something, check the numbers perhaps, different things like that.

27:00 What else can I say? We had a lot of fun there though, we'd put on concerts, at lunchtime we'd put on a concert and sing, not that we were good singers, but we'd entertain them in the canteen for a while. I remember once I dressed as Carmen Miranda with some bananas and fruit on my head and danced around. We had a lot of fun.

27:30 I don't know what else I can tell you about that.

Well you were showing us some photographs earlier on of how you'd arrive with a whole, a whole group of you would arrive in the morning and go through the process of moving from a dirty area to a clean area, can you just take us through that and why that was necessary?

Well it was necessary because if any grit or any foreign matter got into

28:00 the area where the munitions were, it could cause a friction. Say if anyone slipped on the floor, on that bit of grit, or a bit of dust or anything got into the liquid you were pouring, it could be dangerous I suppose, or cause it not to function as it should. But when we'd arrive we'd come in in street clothes and we'd

28:30 have to take off our shoes and put them in this little square area that was allotted to each of us. Then we'd swing our legs over that seat and then we'd stand up and take off our coats and outer gear, which we'd put on a hanger on a rope and that would go up to the ceiling and hang there all day and you'd put on your overall and a cap to cover your hair and that's called a clean area

29:00 and outside there was the dirty area. And you could only take in what was necessary, a handkerchief or your lunch money or something. I don't think we were allowed to take any make-up in, very little, and from there on you'd go to your work station and do what you had to do and of course,

29:30 from then on you never walked on anything gritty or dirty. It was all kept, it was all paved and washed every day, sterilisy clean, no grit, no small stones or anything like that.

What would you wear? Can you describe your clothes?

What, the uniform? Should have had a look at the picture.

30:00 I think it was an overall that we stepped into and buttoned up, like the old men's – what do they call them? – like overalls, just overalls, that's all. They had a sleeve, were sleeved and the cap would come right down over your hair like an old mob cap to cover your hair.

And what type of

30:30 **shoes would you wear?**

I think, if I remember, they were black, the uniform was all black or navy blue too, oh I'm knocking that, and the shoes were dark and I think rubber soled tie-ups, just like a plain tie-up shoe. Nothing slip on, you couldn't have anything that might get loose, they had to be firmly tied to your foot.

31:00 That's about it, I think.

You mentioned that you were given a job as a charge hand, can you tell me what was involved in being a charge hand? Sorry I'll just rephrase that, what is a charge hand, can you tell me?

Well a charge hand, you were put in charge of a group, it

31:30 might have been, I don't know, there were a dozen people working in that section. You might have only had six people or something to watch over, I really can't be sure of the figures now. But you'd walk around and actually watch them doing their work to see that there wasn't any slip up in any way, no spillage, no,

32:00 I don't know quite what we were watching for, but you know. But we were responsible for that group, type of thing, and then there'd be a senior over us, a chemist. If we had any questions about what we're pouring today might have looked different or smelled different or something, we'd query it with the chemist and he'd come and explain

32:30 or test it or something. That was about it. I suppose you really could have thought of that as a boring job because it was just repetition all the time.

I'm just trying to get a picture of what the factory looked like inside and what the people that you were overseeing were

33:00 **doing, what did it look like, were there benches or …?**

Yes, the bombs would come through in a shaped container next to each other, like an assembly line, and they were built up, the tables were built up to chest level I suppose you'd say or waist level, a comfortable level for working at

33:30 and you'd get your liquid and just stand there and pour it in one and that would move on and you'd pour the next, up to the marking where it was to come to, and so on and they would just keep on coming. I can't remember where they went to.

So this was a moving conveyor?

Belt type of thing, on the top of the table.

34:00 **And how quickly, or slowly did that move?**

Oh not quick, very slow, very slow, nothing had to be jolted. Couldn't jolt everything, everything had to be carefully moved. I've no idea how many we did

34:30 or that. Then the next lot that might come in might be twenty five pounders or they might be trench mortar bombs. You never knew what was coming through.

Well what type of, you've mentioned your uniform and the cap and your rubber shoes, but what other types of protective equipment were you able to use?

35:00 No, that was all, that was all, we didn't have anything else. I don't think we wore gloves either, don't think we did.

Well you've described a very sterile, clean work space, what did it smell like?

35:30 Well there was a smell to it. I can't recall now what it smelt like but I know we got quite accustomed to it so it didn't affect you, you got accustomed to it, you just didn't worry about it anymore. No, can't quite remember, it wasn't acidy

36:00 wasn't a strong smell, wasn't a strong smell. Know it was a greyish colour, greyish coloured liquid, but the smell didn't worry me.

I was going to ask you whether, if yourself or any of the other workers were affected by the smell?

No, no, it never worried me.

36:30 And yet I was one to be affected by smells if anything did trigger off my hay fever but I was always pretty good working there. No, can't help you.

How well ventilated do you think the work area was?

Oh it was very well ventilated,

37:00 I think those doors there were open. I've got a feeling the doors on that side were open. There were no windows, must have been ventilation up there, tricky one.

And what type of lighting were you working under?

Tape 7

00:36 **Just picking up on one point we mentioned before, you were talking about how they had clean areas at this factory and how very important they were, what sort of hygiene did they have, to keep your bodies clean as well as your clothes?**

No, they didn't have anything really for that.

Hands and ...?

Oh just the tap for washing our hands, that was all. We didn't shower

01:00 there or anything like that.

We just saw during the break some photographs taken that were put in, I think it was, September 1943 issue of 'Pix' magazine, do you remember the day that the photographer and people came from that magazine to take it?

Oh vaguely.

Was it especially exciting or ...?

Oh yes, I suppose it's always an excitement

01:30 about having your photo taken in the paper, yeah, it was exciting.

You featured quite prominently in that magazine?

Yes, I don't know why. Just lucky, the one to be picked.

And what did your friends and family think when they saw you in the pages of ...?

Oh gee, I don't recall now. They wouldn't have said anything particular to me, it might have gone to my head.

In those pictures it shows you

02:00 **wearing a uniform, you had leathers on your arm and a number, can you tell us about those?**

I dare say they would be in case of identification if there was a disaster, just another means of trying to identify people. It may have been my number for getting my pay too, I really don't recall.

02:30 **How did you wear this number?**

I think it was on chest, pinned on my chest there, sewn on or something.

It also shows you with leathers on your arm, what were they?

'SC' was, I think, that was a senior charge hand because if we'd had the experience of going to Melbourne, then we were put in charge of the

03:00 assembly line, that's all, no big deal.

Was that a special or particularly difficult thing to be responsible inside the factory?

Well I didn't feel it was, no. I felt equipped. I'd been taught, I knew what should be done and what shouldn't. It was just a matter of seeing that it was carried out.

03:30 **Again from that magazine article, it lists the ages of the women working in the factory, from sixteen to sixty, what do you reckon was the average age of the people you were around?**

I don't recall anyone being sixteen, that was very young. They may have been in the clerical side of things, I don't know. But sixty, they would be perhaps in the canteen. Mrs Mason, she

04:00 was like a mother to us, ready to help in any way, come and talk to her if we had a headache or you'd go to sick bay or something. Sixty to me was old and I don't, old then, it's very young now, but then it was very old and I don't recall anyone being that age in my circle of work.

They are no doubt exaggerating as the media is

04:30 **prone to do, but what about in your circle of work? What were the general ages and backgrounds of the girls of that factory?**

Oh I think only twenty to forty or something. Even Mabs, who I looked on as an older woman, she would only have been about fifteen years older than me I think, twelve or fifteen years older and that would only bring her –I was only what? –twenty, she'd only be thirty four, thirty five, wouldn't she? Twenty to forty would be the age group that was surrounding me.

05:00 **What were the diversity of backgrounds like with all the women coming to work for the war effort?**

Oh we were all much the same. Just went to Government schools and looking for something to do as a war effort and worthwhile job because everyone had to do something worthwhile and,

05:30 laughable as it is, it was well paid, six pound something a week.

Who was your best mate at that factory?

Oh I'd have to say Mabs because, yes, she was always there for me.

We talked a bit about when you met Mabs, but can you tell us a bit more about her in a bit more detail?

06:00 Oh she was just a older very intelligent, to me, type of person who I could turn to and talk to comfortably. She never married as far as I know. I used to go down her home at Marrickville

06:30 quite a bit and have a meal with her or we'd go to town and do a bit of shopping or pictures. I didn't know anything much about her than beyond that. She had a brother and a sister I know, who I met. They were just nice people.

How did she help you out in the factory?

Well she was a source of strength to me first. When I got on that train I was feeling quite a bit of excitement, I suppose. My sister put me on the

07:00 train but then as we got into the night and the journey was long and I was tired, I think I might have felt a bit of apprehension, 'Was I doing the right thing or not?' and she was there to comfort me and then a day or two into it I thought, 'I don't think I can handle this,' and I'd tell her that and she was a tower of strength and she'd say, 'It will come to you, it will come to you,

07:30 let it sink in, let it settle in.' Yes she was always there like that for me, a good friend.

When you went back to the factory you were a senior charge with a slightly more responsible role, did any of the younger or less experienced girls look up to you and were you able to pass on help to them in any way?

Well I expect I did, I expect maybe they did look up to me, I don't know,

08:00 didn't think much about that. I felt the responsibility of it, that's for sure, made me grow up a lot. But I felt confident.

What other friends or interesting characters still stand out in your mind from that production line?

08:30 Oh dear, that's a hard one.

You mentioned Mrs Mason? Mrs Mason?

Mrs Mason, yes.

Who was she?

Oh she was a lovely old lady. Well she did seem old to me then. She was a lovely old lady and if some of the young girls did have a headache or a pain in the tummy or they weren't feeling well, we'd send her to Mrs Mason. She was lovely.

09:00 Or if they, oh I don't know, if they needed a stitch in their stocking or something, she always seemed to have the needle and thread. She was, always had the answer to things that the girls needed. She was lovely.

What was her role within the factory exactly?

I think only to be there for our comfort, our pillow to put our head on, yes,

09:30 to turn to.

You mentioned she could provide some medical assistance, what kind of …?

No, I never knew of any injuries but just, as I say, a headache even, maybe a late night someone had and

didn't feel the best, she was there to help. No, I don't recall any injuries.

10:00 **Would this liquid, for example, be something that would burn if you touched it with your skin?**

No, I don't think so, don't think so. Suppose I should remember the answer to these things but no, I'm sure it didn't.

Who was the boss, who was the person ultimately in charge?

Well there were always senior men, always seniors

10:30 above us we could refer to if there was any trouble with the assembly line or the liquid wasn't there to flow or anything, we'd turn to them.

Were they ultimately responsible for keeping the girls in line if they got out of line?

Well not immediately, that would have been our worry I think but then we would have, no doubt, referred to them if it had of been needed,

11:00 but it never came up. No, the seniors I think they were, there were a lot of chemists there. I don't know where they worked but they had their section where they were testing and things all the time, I suppose making sure the liquid was up to standard, or whatever. No, there was always

11:30 plenty around we could turn to if we needed assistance.

What little disciplinary problems might you have had to deal with in a factory full of young women?

I don't know, I can't recall anything like that, I can't recall ever having to face anything like that.

12:00 **Highly possible everybody was just very well behaved, I think that's likely.**

Probably all aware that there was danger there if we weren't careful, that was the predominant thought in our minds I think, to be careful all the time. You walked carefully, you touched things carefully, you did everything carefully.

There were

12:30 **men working in the factory, were they all chemists? What role did men have?**

Mostly the chemists, mostly the chemists, they had their own section. Then there were a lot of seniors checking all the time to see, I suppose, that nothing disappeared or anything because we did a lot of – what do you call it? –

13:00 inventories, I can remember doing those, checking, checking, weekly I think we checked. I'd go down to the storage area with a senior and we'd have to check off everything. It would be under lock and key of course, but checking all the time.

Would the girls be searched, for example?

No, we weren't searched.

13:30 **What sort of things would you be keeping under lock and key, are we talking explosives?**

Oh I meant munition wise, munition wise. As I said, the storage was kept away from the main factory in these areas that had these sunken ground dug out, and the buildings were in those areas and we often, I think weekly, and he'd unlock and we'd check everything. The inventories were checked to make sure

14:00 nothing was, well someone could have got in and stolen something, a quantity of this or that, it all had to be checked all the time.

During the war it was important for soldiers on active service not to tell anyone where they were, for example, because they were targets for all sorts of things. Was there ever any sense the munitions factory was somehow a target and you should be careful who you talked to?

14:30 Yes, there were little jokes and poems and things that were, I can't recall any, that said watch your tongue and watch what you said and all that kind of thing. I can't recall exactly but it was a time of being very careful about everything.

15:00 **The girls at the factory, a lot of them lived in the hostel, can you tell us a bit more about that, where it was and what the set up was?**

Well the hostel wasn't far away. I don't know whether they walked over or came over by bus. I never went to the hostel but we used to be working with them, of course. They'd tell what a great party they had last night, or a dance

15:30 or something. Well they had time that they could relax and enjoy themselves, we're going home for nearly [?] hours and try and get some sleep and come back for two hours so a lot of our time was just travelling. Yeah they had a fairly good time in the, and of course they'd be for people, if some of the

workers were brought from interstate perhaps, I don't know, could have been.

16:00 **You were travelling to and from work and working very long hours, what were you able to do to relax when you got home?**

Really didn't, just had a nice hot bath and go to bed, no, don't think we ever went out at night or anything like that. Chatter with the family, sit by the fire for a while and go to bed, that's all. No, it was a quiet

16:30 time. I daresay that's why I left in '44, I'd just had enough of all that. See I would have been twenty two by then and thought, 'Well okay.'

How long was the period you worked there for? From '42 to '44, two years.

Mmh, about two years.

In '44, before you left the St Marys factory,

17:00 **there was a pageant, a Victory Girl Pageant, can you tell us about that? How did it come to pass, what was it all about?**

I'm not sure, that was fundraising, fundraising, I'm not sure what. But ours was called the 'Cartridge Bungling Section' and I was nominated to be their contestant and

17:30 we had raffles and things. In the lunch hour we had the raffles and tried to make a bit of money. I don't think we got sponsors as we do today, it's easy today, they get sponsors. We'd put on concerts in the lunch hour. As I said, once I did my turn as Carmen Miranda. Someone would be passing the box around and they'd put their odd coins in it and

18:00 yes, so this ball came up at Sydney Town Hall and being one of the contestants I had to go in it, so there you are. So I, my Mum and Dad and different friends, as you can see in the photos, came and two or three chaps I knew in the air force, Mabs' brother was one, he came, she came and yes,

18:30 but I didn't win it.

Can you describe the occasion and what you had to do?

Oh I had a lovely ball gown and there was dancing and then there was a presentation up on the stage and you go up on the stage. The one that raised the most money was the Charity Queen or something, I don't know. Did I have a title? What was I? Can't think.

19:00 Can't think.

There was something you showed me before that said 'Victory Girl'?

'Victory Girl', that's right, I was the Victory Girl, well I don't know, it was so long ago I forget, but it was a lot of fun, a lot of fun and we raised some money and had a good night.

You certainly had an impressive sash in the Cartridge Bungling Section. Was that a competition between different sections of the factory?

Yes.

How did it work?

Yes different section. Well each

19:30 section was raising money, of course, for the charity. As I said, one girl raised so much money she actually became the Queen of the night. I just remember we went up on the stage and I don't remember who presented it or what. We got flowers and it was quite enjoyable.

20:00 **In 1944, as you were saying before, you became a bit disenchanted with the travelling and you decided to move to somewhere else.**

Closer to home.

How in an industry like that, where you are committed to working for the war effort, do you go about changing your job?

I don't know how I did that, or why or how I did it, I must have just applied to De Havilland's and was accepted, so then I would have said to the others, "I'm

20:30 transferring to…," I guess because I was going into another essential industry it would make it easier for me to get away, I imagine so. But I can't imagine, I don't know how I did it, don't know.

What was the new situation at De Havilland and how did it differ from what you'd been doing?

De Havilland's then, I could get there in a bus in ten minutes, made a lot of difference to the hours

21:00 I worked and then they put me onto cartridge, no, electrical bonding and I'd have, oh dear, I can't quite

remember how I did it now, a tin of something or other and this electrical gadget and you'd put some of this on it,

21:30 this grease or whatever it was, and I'd go to the electrical part and they had to be joined together, mortared together, gee you're asking me something to remember, how I did that. But we used to get up into the tail end of the Mosquitos and do this wiring, yes, electrical bonding the wires together.

With a soldering iron?

Yes, soldering, that type of thing.

So what did you see, can you describe the seating at the De Havilland factory?

What could you see? Well there were planes everywhere. It

22:00 was a huge place, parts of planes, they weren't all complete, parts of planes, they had to have this work done. There were air force men everywhere. I think perhaps that was the part I liked, there were airmen from all over Australia and England and, yes, it was very, very social that work. You could intermingle with the men and the girls and we'd have a laugh and we'd go from one plane to the other and meet another airman

22:30 and have a chatter and it was very enjoyable. Yeah it was very enjoyable work, that.

Obviously planes can't be put on a production line like munitions can, how did you work?

Actually then, they did move the plane out and another come in and that would go to another hangar and something else would be done to it. They were on blocks,

23:00 wheels and blocks and they moved easily enough.

Who did you work with or did you work on your own?

Just trying to think who there was, there was another girl named Jean I remember. I can't think of her other name, Jean, and there was a Beryl. I didn't keep up the friendship with those

23:30 after either, no, it was quite enjoyable there. And one of the men there said, "Well I come to work by motorbike, come past your street, so I'll pick you up each day," so he picked me up each day and I'd go to work on a motorbike and that was fun. Yes, I used to get on pretty well with the guys.

I'm sure you did. Air force men were quite popular

24:00 **I imagine?**

Yes, yes, and then I used to have them home sometimes. I'd say to Mum, "Let's have a party." Parties were a very popular way of entertaining and I'd have, maybe a dozen of these airmen come home and we'd have fun. You'd think we were crazy if you knew some of the games

24:30 we played then, stupid, stupid.

Do tell, please.

I don't know if I can quite explain how it went but we used to play a kind of a kiss in the ring game. You'd call a number and whoever had that number would come out and kiss you.

25:00 Oh dear, we had a lot of fun. It was silly, silly things. No, I can't remember much more about those, but it was fun. They were very happy days.

What did your mother think of all these airmen?

Well as long as there was plenty of them and not just one I think she was happy. My mother always said there was safety in numbers and yes,

25:30 and of course I didn't have a serious boyfriend, I used to just enjoy them all. Two or three of us, we'd say, "We'll all meet at the Marrickville Town Hall at the dance," or something and that's how it was, we didn't have to depend on each other. The one with the motorbike used to sometimes take me down to Marrickville. We'd dance with them all and have a good time,

26:00 it was very popular there. That was about all I think, and then I remember the day that the war ended. My mother got a new fridge and it was delivered, or to be delivered, and they said, "We can't deliver it, we can't install it, the war's come to an end, no-one's working today." And it was true, nobody worked that day, we all went to town. Mum and Dad said, "Come on," we got dressed and into town,

26:30 the whole city went crazy.

We'll come to those celebrations in just a moment. That was a very good point, that people didn't know the war was about to end so they had to order their fridges. Just back on the work you were doing at the De Havilland factory, how did you know what to do, how were you told?

Oh I was taught then, someone showed me but I didn't have a training session like we did with

munitions, just a one-on-one thing, you take the –

27:00 what did you call it before? –

Soldering.

soldering iron, yes, yes I forgot, and you do this and you do that and it was just repetition. I did that on wherever I was told to do. It would be marked, I think it was marked where I had to do it. I just looked for the mark and did it.

Were there any dangers in that job? I know soldering irons can be quite dangerous.

No, no, not really, no, no,

27:30 the dangers were in the flying of the plane. I remember one day a pilot was test flying a plane and it crashed not too far away and that was disastrous, we saw the smoke and everything, really saw it go down, it was really sad. Of course he was killed, don't know why.

What happened on that occasion? Was there …?

I don't think there was any fault in the workmanship, certainly not mine,

28:00 I'm sure. No I don't recall.

Was there a service or anything that you recall?

Oh yes, well not amongst us, we didn't go to anything but they would have had, yes. I think it was an American serviceman.

Before the war ended in Australia and the Pacific, the European war had come to an end, what do you recall about that time

28:30 **and the end of the war in Europe and VE [Victory in Europe] Day?**

Oh just the great happiness that everyone felt to think it was over at last and the men would be coming home, a great celebration.

What had happened in your brother's career to this point?

I think he was back. I can't remember when

29:00 he came back, I think he was back. I think he was back 'cause he went to, as I said, went to Cyprus. I don't know where he went after that. I think he was home at the time the war ended, still in the army but home.

29:30 **The immediate end of the war was preceded by news of the atom bomb.**

Oh yes, that was terrible.

How did that news get received?

Hiroshima wasn't it? Oh it was terrible, terrible, don't think it should have happened myself. All those innocent people killed, nevertheless,

30:00 yes, it was all just terrible, just wonderful when it came to an end that's all I can say. It wasn't long after that that the Pacific war ended, was it? August or something? And of course we'd had MacArthur here and we'd had Bob Hope here to entertain the troops.

30:30 A lot of things like that happened in between. I wouldn't say it was exciting but it was big events.

Well let's talk about that big event you just mentioned. Your mother had ordered the fridge but no-one was coming, what did you do after that?

Well it was exciting because it was the first time that she could afford

31:00 a fridge, she'd only had an icebox. Anyway she got this new fridge. I just happened to remember because it was the day the war ended and celebrations were on and that's what they said to her, "We can't deliver it," or, "Can't install it today," and so we all went to town.

Can you describe the scene in town that day?

Oh chaotic, everyone was

31:30 crazy, I mean strangers that were shaking hands and punching each other on the shoulder and, "G'day," and grins from one end of the city to the other, jubilation, really was. No wonder that chappie, I don't know what his name was, went dancing through the street.

[interruption]

32:00 **And what were you doing with yourself in town that day?**

I just went with my parents and my young brothers and sister just to go and witness all the excitement, that was all, but you couldn't help but get caught up in it because it was so exciting. People were hanging out of shops, you know, up the shops and waving flags and,

32:30 oh, anything you could do just to make a noise or cheer or, 'The war had ended,' it was a marvellous, marvellous feeling. You could live again you know, you could start to live again, it was wonderful, I remember that. It was great and of course all the servicemen that would be coming home, that was a

33:00 predominant feeling amongst adults, sad for those that didn't come home, but it was great.

It was a while though before that happened, there were a few months before everyone started arriving home. What happened in the interim for you and at the aircraft factory?

33:30 Well I think it, I don't know about closed down, but I think we were retrenched almost immediately. That was the end of that, I mean, everyone just had plans to get on with their life, you know, move on. That wasn't, you weren't going to stay there, why would you want to? Even if it was there for you, why would you want to? You were still young and your life's ahead of you, so

34:00 you kind of make other plans. So I went back to look for a job in millinery because that was my trade, that was what I knew, but millinery had more or less died in those years, so what did I do? I think I went into a little shop in Bankstown, although that might be jumping the gun a bit because that's 1946,

34:30 the war ended in '45, didn't it? No, that would be about right. I went into the shop and I got a job in this shop. There was a baby wear next door and this one was like a dual shop. That side was all baby wear, where my friend worked, Pat, and this side was ladies' hats and gloves and handbags and accessories and things. So I got the job there. I didn't actually make hats, there were a lot of, they'd

35:00 be bought in like assembly line hats, not model hats, and they were for sale. But a lot of people would perhaps bring in a hat to be remodelled and I started doing that and I got very busy doing that, remodelling hats. They'd want a big hat made smaller, a veil put on, re-trim it, do different things and it was quite an industry in that. So that's what I was doing

35:30 at the time I met Jack but I think just before that anyway I also was working as an usherette at night, so that gave me a little bit of extra money and occupied time and so on. I had broken my engagement, I was free and I wasn't going dancing so much because I wasn't associated with the group that I was going with.

36:00 The end of the war broke a lot of friendships I think, strong ones like Mabs and I, we kept in touch, but all the other casual ones went their way, we went our way, so I didn't go dancing so much then.

Some people talk about, especially some women talk about the end of the war being a period of great excitement and then a little bit of depression when the rug was pulled out from under them?

Well yes,

36:30 I suppose that might be what I felt a bit too, because I went into the millinery shop, which was humdrum, boring, every day the same, not meeting the people, not having the young ones to talk to like I had. It would be an older woman brought a hat in to be redone or something and all the local people would just be shopping people, the life had changed,

37:00 big change in your life. I had more, not excitement, but more interest when I went ushering at night because I had the other usherette to talk to and you'd meet people and you were active and the movies were exciting. I saw 'Waterloo Bridge' twenty seven times I think, that was a lovely movie. Those were the days. But then I think I found, as you said, life was a

37:30 bit of a let down, a bit of a bore and I went back into the city after a while and I got a job with another millinery firm, Newton's, and I worked with them until I married, I think, so that would be nearly two years. I was with them and I was in charge of their showroom which was back in the city, the hubbub of fashion and excitement and other girls to relate to and all that. And I was in charge

38:00 there, I suppose the two years, then I got married.

Before we go on to talk about getting married and what came after, you mentioned that everyone was excited about the men coming home from overseas, what happened and what memories do you have of soldiers coming home?

Well their parades in the street for one thing and, as I said, I wasn't sure whether

38:30 my brother was home or not but he was in the parade and Mum and I, I don't know if the others were with us, we went in to see the parade, very exciting, and I remember we were behind barricades but it didn't matter, I ran out and hugged him, I was so glad to see him marching in the street. Yeah it was lovely. The bands played and all this. Oh there was a lot of that type of thing, local ones and

39:00 city ones, parades and because the papers were full of joy again and lovely photos of people coming home and re-establishing themselves. And then there were the sad pages too, where some families lost

two or three sons, heartbreaking, but we had to get past that. Yes, that was an exciting time. The lights went on again and

39:30 anti-aircraft establishment was closed down and windows could be cleaned and the papers taken off. There was a lot to do. The shop windows came to life, especially at Christmas time, wonderful Christmas things in the windows, it was good time.

At that note we'll stop, have another break and we'll finish up.

Tape 8

00:32 **Like I said Jean I'd just like to go back a little bit before we talk more about the end of the war. Because you were a woman working in a very untraditional field of work for a woman, I'm just wondering what you knew of the Manpower effort? Had you heard of Manpower during the war?**

No, no,

01:00 but I mean, I agree with you, it was probably always looked on as a man's world, isn't it, munitions or anything relating to war, but it would never have struck me that we were doing anything that different, not when it was unusual circumstances, the war, isn't it?

Well I'm wondering, in your time in the munitions work

01:30 **and then after at De Havilland, whether you received any comments or what the men's attitude was generally towards your work that you were doing?**

Oh they just accepted us altogether, no two ways about that. I never ever felt that we were intruding or not welcome or that any man ever felt

02:00 that we shouldn't be there, no, never, never had any feeling like that. I suppose just the war itself would just make them realise that women had to come in. I never heard of women of course in the First World War doing anything, so I suppose it was unusual in that, but times are a changing then, even as they are

02:30 now. No, we were accepted alright.

And you've given us a great lot of descriptions of the work that you were doing and the factory and the very high percentage of women working in the munitions factory in particular. You had been used to working with women in the millinery?

Yes, always women.

03:00 **I'm just wondering whether when you got to the munitions factory whether there was any kind of divisions, I guess, between good girls and bad girls and who to hang out with and not to hang out with or ...?**

No, no, I never thought about that angle, no. We were just surrounded by women and we were all in just the same situation.

03:30 No. I guess if there was anyone I didn't take too, I just didn't bother any further about that people, but that's my attitude all through life, I think. If you like someone you get friendly, if you don't you just pass them by. No, I never found anyone I didn't get

04:00 on with or, you know.

Well how well do you think yourself and your female colleagues adapted to the work in the munitions factory?

I thought it was wonderful, but then I asked myself, 'Would men have ever done that work? Would it have ever been done before?' There wouldn't have been such a place in peace time would there?

04:30 It would be something new opening up and women were the ones to do it. Manpower was short here, wasn't it? So we weren't intruding on any man's field, it was open to women. Mmh, I always felt comfortable enough doing it.

And I'm just wondering

05:00 **what kind of, I guess, appreciation your bosses gave you, or indeed after you finished the work, what kind of ...?**

Oh, I can't recall being made any fuss over or complimented or anything, no, I don't remember anything like that, not individually or as a group. I don't remember anything being said. We must have just all left quietly and that was it,

05:30 no words spoken. I mean you don't get a reference, not like when you leave millinery, perhaps you'd get a reference, but no, not through munitions. You do it, that's the end of it, that's it.

And when you mentioned you were retrenched from De Havilland,

06:00 **I'm just wondering, these days when you're retrenched you get quite a good package ….**

Yes, well it wasn't really looked on as retrenched. I don't think that word probably existed in that situation. It was a war effort, the war came to an end so that just fizzled out. The Mosquito bombers then would have to be finished

06:30 but more in a civilian capacity or as a stockpile for the air force but not as a necessity for a war, right? So they were no doubt finished off at some leisure pace but we were doing them was no longer needed. I don't think the word retrenched came into it, we certainly didn't get retrenchment payments or anything,

07:00 those things weren't talked about in those days. You didn't get compensated for anything. It was just came to an end and that was it and I think we all left then, all the women, the girls. The air force men that were there, they would have to stay on until they were kind of discharged or sent back to base or something.

07:30 But we girls we just finished up. I don't know if we went to the end of the week or whether we just finished up then and there at that day. I really can't recall, but it wasn't looked upon as retrenchment. What's that?

Has that got water in it?

No, it hasn't, just don't worry about it at the moment. Different then, you couldn't walk away

08:00 from a job now without getting compensated.

And how sad were you to leave that kind of work?

I think the joy of the war coming to an end overcame any sadness, I don't think there was any sadness. And the Air Force fellows that I had befriended used to come home,

08:30 like for parties, that friendship continued quite a while, because they used to come home and see Mum and Dad and we used to go to the beach. I've got photos of us there going to the beach. Ray, he lives in Melbourne, he came to our wedding, he knows Jack as well as he knows me, we've been friends all those years. He rang me up just this week to see how Jack's health was. The English fellow

09:00 went home to England, got married. He kept in touch for a while but then he died. So it was no big deal, no, there wasn't any sadness attached to it.

Well you mentioned that you needed to look for another job and you did and you found another job,

09:30 **but I'm wondering what was the kind of pressure, well maybe not pressure, to return to family life?**

Well family life was always there. That didn't interfere with that but you had to support yourself, you had to work, you had to have some money and you had to have a job, so I don't

10:00 know if I let a few days go by or if I immediately went, but I think I just applied in the shop for a position and they gave me one, there was no big deal. I didn't want to go back to the city at that stage, but I don't know if I was only there a year perhaps, it was a bit boring, slow, dull, whatever you like to call it.

10:30 And I was what? Twenty four. Well I thought, "I'll go back to the city," and then of course fashion was coming back and hats were coming back, although it never came back to its full intensity that had been with gloves and hats, people didn't wear gloves and hats anymore. Handbags more or less became

11:00 shopping bags and hats were on the downgrade, but there were still some places that were doing hats like Mark Foy's, Snow's, Anthony Horden's. They still stocked hats and therefore they had to be supplied and I got this job which was good, I was there for the two years until I got married.

And what type of expectations, I guess, did you have

11:30 **of continuing a working career or did you see your future as being married and having children?**

No, I hadn't thought too much about getting married. I'd just had a broken engagement, so I really wasn't prepared to, I wasn't looking for that. I'd had a lot of boyfriends, but we did in those days. You danced and you had to have a partner. My sister would take me to a party or a ball

12:00 and I'd meet people and I knew a lot of young people but no, after the engagement I wasn't looking for anyone. I just don't know what I thought I'd do with my life, I hadn't really planned anything, but I settled down to work in the city again and then before I knew it, oh I had met Jack, that's right, I'd met

Jack and

12:30 I went back to the city to work and then I'd meet him at the weekends or a night or two and it grew and it grew and then we got engaged and married, I think that's the next step. My mother had been all those years in the VAD, she did the whole war through.

13:00 Dad, as I say, after the Depression he got work with the council. I don't know if they did one week on, one week off or two weeks in six. The council used to distribute the work so that the men were getting a little income, and then after that he got a steady job as a caretaker in some timber business

13:30 and then later on again he got the caretaker's job, I think I told you, at the Governor's home, country home at Sutton Forest and things were picking up. The three older children, the four of us, were working. I think the younger girl was working by then, Shirley, there were only two or three little ones at home.

14:00 Dad enclosed the back veranda, knocked a wall down here, put a new laundry on, the house was made more modern and you seemed to get a bit more money all the time and life was getting better, it really was. Life was really getting better. And as I said, then Jack and I planned to build our home but that fell through so we stayed home for four years.

14:30 **Well you got married in 1948, that was not that long after the war?**

Three years.

Can you tell me, we've had a look at your wedding photos today, but can you tell me how difficult it was to get together a great wedding outfit and how did you go about that?

15:00 Well my two sisters had married but neither of them had a wedding, so to speak. My elder sister had just eloped with her fiancé and got married, much to my mother's sadness. The second one got married, my parents weren't in favour of the wedding, so she

15:30 got permission from the court, I think you do, and she got married anyway. My brother was in the bank, no, he was married too by then, he married Norma, and he was married and so I decided to get married and she wanted a nice wedding, wanted a nice wedding, so I had no trouble having a nice wedding and Mum and I had gone into evening college and learnt cake decorating

16:00 so she made my wedding cake. A girlfriend made my wedding gown, which was lovely and my mother paid for a nice wedding for us. We had a caterer into the RSL Hall and that was lovely. Yeah we had a lovely wedding. We went to Kosciusko for our honeymoon, it was called Kosciusko then. There was only one hotel, Kosciusko Hotel, and yeah, it was lovely.

16:30 My younger sister was bridesmaid, one brother was best man, his brother was groomsman, so there it was, very nice. Mum was pleased. She had a nice wedding in the family.

You told us today about Jack being in the air force, what did he tell you about his war time?

Yes he told me quite a bit about

17:00 the war up there. He had a gruesome job. He had to drive a truck and they'd have to go and, he and another I suppose, and get the bodies and transport them, I don't know where, perhaps from the airport to burial ground or from where they were killed or something to the airport to be sent home,

17:30 I'm not sure just how, but it was a gruesome job. He didn't talk about it a great deal. He was up there for a couple of years.

Well I'm wondering if he had any lingering effects from his wartime service that affected your relationship with him and how you had to care for him?

Pardon?

I'm just wondering if he had any effects, like whether he had any

18:00 **nightmares or any bad effects from his wartime service that, when you first met him?**

Oh no, no, not really. No he didn't seem to dwell on it, didn't seem to worry him. No, he didn't speak much of it then at all. It's only really more recently that he, we might look through photos or something and he'll start talking about things.

18:30 No, he was never one to talk in detail about it, mostly I think because he didn't consider it very pleasant.

And what about malaria, did he suffer malaria?

No, he did not, he came out very healthy, fortunately.

19:00 I dare say they had the tablets for malaria and other things. They did, but he said his mother used to send him fruit cakes and that, apples pies and I think he said she used to used chokos to make the apple

go further because you didn't know the difference in the taste, never tried it myself so I don't know.

19:30 No, he doesn't talk too much about it and he wasn't one to go to reunions. He never went to any reunions, which I think is sad, but still he didn't. I don't know if there's anything else I can tell you about that.

Well you have mentioned your brother…

Russell.

20:00 **And I'm wondering what he, maybe even in later years, told you about his war time?**

Oh yes, he used to tell us things, especially about his boat trip when they left Cyprus, I wish I had that story but I haven't, he wrote a story about it, not published or anything, just a story for the family but 'cause [course?] his wife has

20:30 it. I didn't know this was coming on 'cause I could have got a copy and told you. No, it was a terrible experience for them, I think, retreating in Cyprus. Oh it must have been scary, just imagine yourself. And then getting to the wharf and being told this is the last boat out. But the Middle-East, I think he was

21:00 a bit, oh gung ho, young and dare devilish in Cairo and places like that. He used to write, but I think he took all that in his stride, didn't worry him. Bit more enthralled with all the things he saw, I think in Jerusalem and places.

Well when you look back

21:30 **on your war effort with the munitions factory and De Havilland, how do you think that time changed you?**

I think after that I did change a little to the effect that I thought, 'Well I'd had such a free, carefree life,' and after

22:00 I settled down into marriage, my mother was doing such a lot of charitable work and she'd started the Auxiliary for the hospital. She and a few friends were the foundation members who started the Auxiliary and after I had a child I joined with her and I'd been [doing] charitable work all that time really and I think before the war ended that would never have occurred to me.

22:30 But I think you need to be a certain age to wake up to the fact that you need to give something back if you've had a good life and up to then it was all enjoyment. Even through the war I didn't, there was the sadness with my brother and that but there wasn't a lot of worry or upheaval or

23:00 sadness in my life, I was very fortunate. No, I don't know how I would say it changed me, I just grew up.

I'm just wondering if there were any skills you might have learnt through your wartime experience that maybe you wouldn't have had an opportunity otherwise?

23:30 No, skills, I don't think so.

Even in how to deal with people or …?

Yes, I may have learnt that, how to, oh I don't know how to answer that.

24:00 **You've mentioned that you adjusted quite well and moved on when the war finished and got other work and then got married, but I'm wondering now, looking back, do you feel like your war effort has received due recognition.**

24:30 Oh I don't know. I suppose a certificate is sufficient, I didn't expect anything more than that, it was a dangerous job. Other than that, well I don't know what I would have expected, I don't know that I would have expected more. Are you finding it a bit hot in here?

25:00 Everybody all right? I'm finding it a bit warm.

Would you like to stop?

I think I'll stop for a minute.

Jean, just before we break then, you were telling us about receiving a certificate of recognition for your work in the munitions factory, when did you receive that?

The fiftieth year when they sent, it's on the wall around there, I think it was fifty years after the war they sent them out.

25:30 That's when they sent my mother the medal, Order of Australia I think it was, and Jack got one too for being in the air force, that was all we got, but it's something. So many of us, you can't expect to be awarded for things.

Well you have been awarded other certificates for your …?

26:00 Oh yes, I'm quite pleased. After that, as I said, I joined the Auxiliary with my mother and we did fundraising. We used to have raffles. I used to make a hat and raffle it or something and, but they were things I could take the children to, bus trips, so I did that for forty two years. It began in '48 and we came to an

26:30 end in '98, so in the fiftieth year the hospital put on a little luncheon for the remaining members. There was only a handful of us then, all getting too old, and we got a certificate for the forty two years we had been fundraising for the hospital. The Mayor at the time gave us a certificate for our volunteering work and in 1956,

27:00 Australia Day, the City of Bankstown presented me with that award for Citizen of the Year of 1995 and I had also started doing the telecross work for Red Cross. Are you aware of telecross, where you ring someone every morning at a certain time, between half past seven and eight, to check on their health?

27:30 Some people are very lonely living alone and that, they need a cheery voice. Other people are in ill health and if they need anything we see that they get that assistance. So I did that for ten years, which took me up to this year, then I took ill, so I had to give it away.

Which hospital were you mainly raising funds for?

Bankstown, Bankstown Hospital always.

28:00 And then the Red Cross gave me this nice badge for the ten years I'd done telecross for them. So yes, I've got some nice certificates and things, that's nice to have. But I don't do it any more, look after my husband now. Yeah, I think that's about it now. So we had

28:30 our fiftieth wedding anniversary then, in '98 and we had a lovely celebration and then we decided to move up here, so we knocked down the little holiday house and built this one. And in the meantime I learnt to do a bit of china painting, as you can see, a lot of the things on the walls are mine,

29:00 and stitching, I belong to a little craft group. Life's pretty full, been very good to us.

Well when you look back on that war time, are there memories that stand out for you as some of the strongest?

Oh

29:30 yes, seeing my brother go away and come home, very strong. I suppose going to Melbourne was a big thing in my life. I don't know if I can mention any other things.

30:00 Course, having the four children, that's been the big thing in our life, four wonderful children and I have three lovely daughter-in-laws and a wonderful daughter, wonderful. And then eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, so we've been blessed really, very good,

30:30 yes, that's enough reward.

Along the same line I'm wondering if there is perhaps, from that period of time, a saddest memory?

31:00 Well I'd say losing my dearest friend, my mother, was first the saddest thing and then I lost my brother which was very sad, about three years later, very sad. I suppose you'd say we have been blessed because your parents have to go, you have to expect that.

31:30 We haven't really had any great tragedies in our life, as I say, God has been good. But about three years ago we had a very, very great shock that our little twelve year old grandson, my daughter's boy, Jamie, he was diagnosed with A Plus Anaemia, which is a rare blood disease, and he was rushed off to Westmead Hospital and he was there for nearly two years.

32:00 They lived with him, they lived there at McDonald House with him, day and night, one or the other. But he was very fortunate that his sister, who's two years older, was compatible with her bone marrow and she gave her bone marrow to him, or the amount they wanted, and he's recovered fully,

32:30 so that's a blessing. Yes, we haven't really had a lot of tragedy, no great shocks.

Well that's good to hear. I'm wondering just, you told us the story early in the day about why you wanted to speak with us today and participate in the archive,

33:00 **I'm just wondering if you can tell us why you wanted to do that and why it's important to talk about the stories?**

Well I didn't know that you were going to talk about my life story, I thought you only wanted to know about the munitions and I was really so pleased that I had kept the old papers and photos, why, because they're about to fall apart and I thought

33:30 you might like to photograph them and they'll be there for eternity. That was the only point of it really. I was surprised when Elizabeth started asking me questions about my childhood and then following up right through to now. I was amazed at that, I thought it was just to be about the munition period, just a brief little something or other. I didn't know it was going to be like this.

34:00 It was quite a thrill, really, because I have often said, 'I wish I could write my life story,' and another thing came to me recently. A dear friend is in a nursing home in Alice Springs, she's my age, and I haven't heard from her in a couple of years. I do ring her sister in Sydney and she tells me, 'She's doing alright, she's still alive,'

34:30 and so on. Anyway, out of the blue I got this phone call, you ring the 101 number, and it said a call came through and I said, "Who's that?" so I rang the number and it said, "This is Chris Boyd, I'm the son of Nancy Boyd, I'm looking for Jean and Jack Kidd, who live on the Central Coast. If you were a friend of Nancy Boyd, would you please contact

35:00 me on, I'm her son, on this number." And I rang and he was in Alice Springs and he is the pilot for the Inland Mission and he lives there, and his mother's nearby in the nursing home and he said, "I'm making a video of Mum's life," only the photos though, there's no voices. He said, "I'm making a video of Mum's life and you're in it," you see, "Your photos are in it." He said, "I wonder if

35:30 you'd like a copy?" I said, "I'd love it," so he sent me a copy of Nancy's life photos. So I said to my daughter , "Oh gee, I wish I could do something like that." I never dreamt this was going to be from one end to the other. I'm quite pleased.

And we're very thrilled to have your story.

Oh really? I'm glad it's been that interesting for you.

I'm just wondering,

36:00 **we are coming to the close of our session today and we are making a record of your life, as you've said, are there any kind of messages that you would like to put down on record for future generations?**

No, it's a shame the changes have come so vastly different

36:30 to, although we didn't have the things the children have today, but I think we had a better life. They don't have the discipline and the guidance that we had in our days. I don't know what advice I can give them because I think life's going to go on changing, changing even further again, so I don't know where it will end. Thank God I won't be here to see it.

37:00 But we've been blessed with four wonderful children, the whole family is wonderful. I don't know that I can add anything else to that, just appreciate your friends and enjoy life while you can.

And I'm just wondering if you wanted to record any last thoughts about war and your wartime experience?

War? I hope to goodness there never is any more

37:30 but I think the next one will be a disaster for the whole world, really. I don't know if I can add anything really, I'm not a person of wisdom. No, it's a good life if we can only appreciate it.

38:00 **Well it's been a real pleasure talking to you and hearing lots of your stories, is there anything else you'd like to say in closing, or anything you feel like we might have missed out?**

No, it's good to look back, good to look back on those periods. I'm pleased that you encouraged me to talk about them, because I don't think I could have done it without you,

38:30 but it brought out a lot of memories and, yes, made me appreciate it has been a good life. Yes, it's been great. No, I don't think I've got anything else I could add, thanks to you Chris and Kathy.

And thank you for speaking with us, it's been a pleasure.