Australians at War Film Archive

Mary McKenzie - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:30 **And if I could ask you first, now that we are recording, if I could ask you to give me that brief summary of your life so far.**

Well, my life so far. I was born in Launceston, Tasmania. My father was a Church of England minister, and I was the second child in the family, a girl, and they had five children altogether

01:00 in six years. And what do I remember next? I don't remember much about Launceston at all. Do I look at you all the time?

Yes.

Then we went to Devonport. Lovely place. The rectory was just not far from the beach and we had a really good time there, until I was about six.

01:30 We used to have to go to the river, in a motorboat, to go to school, which we enjoyed. My brother didn't. He was caught wagging school [truant], and he was caught by my father getting off the boat and had a big whacking, I believe, so he keeps on telling me.

02:00 **That's probably a little bit much detail at the moment. Just keep it brief at the moment, and I'll come back and get those stories later.**

Oh, well, nothing much about Devonport then. We mostly stayed four years wherever we went, and we went down to Hobart then and stayed in Goulburn Street, Church of England there, for four years, and then we went out to Newtown,

02:30 which is a convict-built place. Very interesting. And we stayed there for 17 years, until I went nursing. And then I don't know much about my family, from, you know, not that much of my family from then onwards. We were working 12 hours a day and that sort of thing.

03:00 And I nursed in Launceston, that's right. Oh, I'll give you details later. And then, after having done my nurses training there, I went and did my midwifery in Hobart, and then I decided I needed a holiday, so I took myself for a holiday and I was called up before the army to say, "Wasn't I working?"

03:30 So I had to get a job up in Wynyard, the hospital in Wynyard, and from there I applied, after some time, applied to go into the army.

And where were you stationed?

I was stationed at a good many places. First it was down at the old hospital, at the back of the old Royal Hospital,

04:00 and we slept in what had been the old nurses' home there. And that was quite all right for a while, until I went out without my uniform and I was caught. I was sent out to Brighton Army Camp, where I didn't spend all that much time

04:30 before I was sent up to Oaklands. That's in the middle of Tasmania, and that was most interesting, but you don't want me to give you any detail now. So I stayed there until I was called up to go overseas, but I didn't go overseas because Malaya had been taken over.

05:00 So I went up to Northern Territory, Adelaide River. From Adelaide River, I always seemed to be on, what do you call it, always on relief. So I was sent up to - what's the first place? Darwin.

05:30 Then I went down south to Katherine for a few weeks, and then I went to Larrimah, where I stayed for quite a while. And then the unit that I had gone to was a New South Wales unit, so they were all coming down south, so they picked us up at Larrimah and took us down south to Adelaide.

06:00 From there we went to, I haven't told you anything about staying at the Lady Duggan, waiting to go

places. But I'll tell you later.

OK.

So we went back to Tasmania and I got married. Oh, before I started, I went up to Campbell Town. And then my husband came down and married me. And all in between this,

06:30 I was sick on and off. I had a lot of pain and they didn't diagnose me. They even called a psychiatrist to look me over. By that time, oh, I mustn't go into detail. Any rate, my husband, he went up to New Guinea, and he had very bad dermatitis.

07:00 He came out of the army, and we both got out of the army at that stage and we went to Hobart. No, no. He came from Portland, and we went to Portland to live for a while. We lived there for about 12 months and then we went to Hobart.

07:30 And my father used to know all sorts of places, shops and whatnot. So we went into a shop there. We took over a shop, small grocery; weighing up all the sugar and flour and six pounds of potatoes for sixpence, ten pounds of potatoes for sixpence and 20 for, no.

08:00 Look, I keep on stopping because there's a whole lot more I want to tell you.

It's hard isn't it? How long were you in the grocery store for?

Oh, a couple of years I suppose. But I was keen on having children, but by that time, no, not then. Oh, it's hard to get it in order. I discovered that I had two -

08:30 no, that was when I was in Portland - I found out myself that I had my two kidneys full of stones, and that was the trouble, and so I had, it was a whole lot of stuff, trying to have children, losing children. And that was in Hobart.

09:00 Donald, all the time, was working in the shop and I came over to Melbourne to have my operations, and then I lost my kidney. No, no. I had a child, had my eldest boy, and then discovered I was pregnant again, so I thought, "I'll have this one." Even though one of the doctors said, "No." So I got very sick with that and I lost that one. No, I didn't lose that one. I was told not to have it,

09:30 but I did have it. See, I am getting mixed up. So I had this child and it was soon after that that I had this great big stone in the kidney, and they tried to get it out but I haemorrhaged and I lost the kidney. So there was I, with two little children, and pretty sick. I'm talking about us this time.

10:00 Well, more or less this is us, because we're married, and we were living in Newtown at that time. My father got us a house. You had to go to a court to get permission to get a house at that time. So we got the house, and they wouldn't let me go in until I had someone to look after me, so we went into Newtown then and we stayed there for four years,

10:30 and then we went over to Lindisfarne, which was the most marvellous place. We were hoping we would always stay there, but there was a depression or whatever you call it, and he had to come over here or lose his job. So that's that far. And we've been here ever since in Melbourne, and my husband, he was always working for the newspapers.

11:00 It's a lot to tell. When he came out of the army, he was working in the meat, that was a big industry in Portland, meatworks. And then of course all the time he was in Hobart, he was in shops and he was delivering his own papers

11:30 and that in the morning. And then he was offered a job at the Mercury [Hobart newspaper]. He stayed there until they had this, what do you call it, not a depression?

Recession?

Recession. And he had to come over here and work for the Herald and Sun [Melbourne newspapers] over here, and he stayed in that until he retired. He retired early I think,

12:00 because of me, which he told me the other day. And so that's, oh no, we came back to Melbourne then. That's right, we had to come back to Melbourne for the job. That's right. And then my son's marriage broke up and his wife couldn't look after the child, and so I took the child on.

12:30 Very, very angry little child. And more or less looked after him for four years, until he went home to his dad. And then, when he, oh, this is getting into detail. There's a hell of a lot of detail there. And so, I never went back to nursing after Portland. I was nursing in Portland but I never went back after that because I had too many up and downs with my health.

13:00 Now, where am I up to? I'm up to enough, I think, aren't I? I've told you about my family.

That more or less brings us up to date, I think. You were in Portland, and then Hobart.

Hobart.

And then Melbourne, and been in Melbourne ever since.

Yes. Yeah.

13:30 **OK. That's great. I'll take you back to the beginning now, and now you can go into as much detail as you like. And tell us about your childhood and growing up with a father as a minister.**

Oh, I was very fond of him. I thought he was wonderful. We weren't all churchy, you know. We objected to going to church on Sunday and Sunday school

14:00 and that sort of thing. But I don't remember him much in Devonport, because I was only six when we left. We had a really good time at Devonport. My mother had a lot of relatives up there on the northwest coast. She had relatives everywhere. They came over and settled on the land. They're everywhere, spread along the northwest coast, so we always had a wonderful time there.

14:30 And then we had to move when the church said you had to move. Now, there's a lot I have to tell you now, you can cross it out, can you, and do things with it. I have to tell you about the school. The school, yes, it was over the river, and I don't remember much about myself at school. Only Andy. And he was a real devil. All the time he was a real devil. So he got into all sorts of trouble.

15:00 But we had all sorts of relatives. I went to my grandmother after school, and she had this box of Cracknell biscuits, and I've never heard of them since, but she used to give us these things after school. And she died soon after we came down to Hobart. And then, I'm getting out of order, but down in Hobart we always had our grandfather at home living with us.

15:30 He was a nice old man and he decided at an early stage that I was going to be a nurse. So he used to bring me into his study and teach me all about the insides of a rabbit. So I don't know whether I wanted to be a nurse, or whether I didn't want to be a nurse, but I ended up being a nurse. And I didn't, I had two clever sisters, and I was good at sport,

16:00 but I wasn't good at anything else much. There were no sport when you left school then, so there was nothing to do, so I went home and looked after, helped my mother look after the parish while I was waiting to be called up, which was at 18 then. And I had failed in my Leaving [Leaving Certificate], or whatever it was called then,

16:30 and I did a couple of subjects, which I failed one of them. And that was French, oral French, because we had a Russian teacher teaching us French, so we never learnt the oral French. Two of my sisters seemed to. Well, I was all right, going up to Launceston,

17:00 because I was quite good compared to what they were. They only had to go up to Matriculation, I think it was then, which is the first year after primary school. And I would have gone to Hobart Hospital had not Donald disliked the man who was in charge, Dr Rattan.

17:30 And he wouldn't let me go to Hobart, so I had to travel all the way up to Launceston. It was all right up there, except we only got two holidays a year, two fortnights a year to come home, which was pretty hard at first. I stayed there for four years, and there were lots of wonderful things, and lots of things that no one would ever have known

18:00 or hear about before or since. When I was very junior, I was sent over to the mental ward. What they were doing was assessing these people before they went to the asylum. And I went over, I was on night duty, and it was a small stone building and it had two cells,

18:30 which you couldn't open the door. You had to just look through the holes. I was on my own, and I had three locks on the door, which I had to unlock, and I was pretty scared then about this. And we had a small stove, and I sat in front of that and kept myself warm all night. Bit it was the most

19:00 18th Century thing that you could ever imagine. And then I was sent back to the ordinary wards. I broke my arm skating; they weren't very happy with me at all. And they were short of staff, and they sent me back to the babies' ward a week after I had my arm broken.

19:30 **We're probably getting a little bit ahead of ourselves. I want to hear a little bit more about your childhood and growing up in…**

Oh, oh, my childhood. Oh, of course we are.

What sort of things did you do for fun?

Oh, I had a wonderful childhood in lots of ways. My father, oh, we were still in Devonport. We'll go back to Devonport. My father had the parish in Devonport. He had a horse and cart, and in those days they had parishes,

20:00 but on the Sunday they had to drive out to all different areas, to preach at all these different small churches around the area. So his Sunday was very full. And I remember that one day I went into the stable and found the horse lying dead on the floor, and that was a pretty harrowing business. And we had all the land in the world.

20:30 Life was so different. You didn't have to worry about anybody coming in your back door and breaking in,

or anything. It was just so peaceful. And I had relatives right in the area that had a farm about 10 minutes out of Devonport. And I was always down there,

21:00 and the matron of the hospital, the general hospital, she trained when I did. I'm going back. She became the matron of Launceston General Hospital. What else in Devonport? I can remember, oh, my grandmother lived in Latrobe. Do you know Tasmania at all?

Not very well, no.

21:30 No. I'm not talking well, I know that, and my father was teaching in Devonport and she was in Latrobe, so he used to go backwards and forwards between the two places, and I had an aunt who I was extremely, extremely fond of, and she died of diabetes. And I can remember coming back from down the beach, I must have been about four, perhaps,

22:00 coming back from down the beach and they came to tell us Auntie Eva was dead. I can remember crying out loud and making a big noise because I felt that's what I should do. And I've just got these memories of being on a rocking horse, that this auntie, this is another Auntie Eva,

22:30 had on the farm, and I told you about my grandmother, going after school to my grandmother. Nothing much about school, because it was too early. I'd only been for a year, I think, at school there. What else? I can remember getting off the train.

23:00 I can't do it. I'm no good. Getting off the boat and seeing a big house on fire and that was really something exciting. I'll never forget that. Well, life was, oh, no. I had scarlet fever. I had very bad scarlet fever, and I was put in the Devon Hospital, which was outside Latrobe,

23:30 and of course I couldn't have visitors, but once a week they used to drive past in the horse and cart and wave to me. I was six weeks in that hospital. I often wonder now what results occurred from my scarlet fever. No one ever talks about it, and no one ever knew about it. But I read a book by the

24:00 Trapp Family Singers [Family von Trapp, escaped Austria before World War II], and she had scarlet fever and she got kidney stones after it. I was wondering if it had something to do with it. You don't know. One thing goes on to another. That was a big highlight in my life. But I was six when I left there.

What was the school like in Devonport? How many kids were there?

Look, I don't remember any details. I mean, I'd have been in… No, the school. I can remember the toilet. I can remember the toilet very vividly, because I was eating a lolly and one of the girls came in and she said, "You'll go to hell if you eat lollies in the toilet." And that's all I remember. I don't remember anything about school whatsoever.

25:00 You'll get a lot of that. So I thought about that for quite a long time. I didn't eat lollies in the toilet. No, no, life was full and life was full of people, relatives. But I didn't have much to do with the church or the school.

Was your father involved in World War I?

25:30 I'll tell you how my father was involved in World War I. He had to go round and tell people that their relatives were dead. And he got to such a stage that he was strangling Mother in bed. He'd wake up and he'd have his hands around her neck. Finally, he solved the problem, by wearing a flower.

26:00 I don't know whether it was when he didn't have anyone to say they were dead, but he wore a flower, whatever, so people would know, because they would run past him in the street. They wouldn't have anything to do with him. So that was his contribution to the war, and it was pretty drastic, I think. So I don't think. I think he was given a white feather [white feathers were given to people avoiding conscription or perceived as being cowards]. I think they all were.

26:30 **He was given a white feather?**

Yes. I can't remember anything else about it because I was born in 1917, which is right at the end of the war.

Did you have any uncles, or were there any men around, who served overseas in World War I?

I had,

27:00 families were all mixed up in those days, because there was a lot of death a terrible lot of TB [tuberculosis]. People were dying right and left, and there were second families everywhere. But one family from us had a, it's only a second cousin we've got, and he died in the First World War and she's a Legacy [ward of the Legacy Club]. They put her through, got her a job

27:30 and looked after her, but that is the only one. That's the only one. Because they were a bit removed from us.

Did you learn about World War I at school at all?

Oh, yes, and we used to have the flag every morning, and go out on parade and have the flag and sing

the United…

28:00 oh, what's it called. Oh, what is it now? It was…

God Save the Queen [then the national anthem]?

Yeah, yeah. And we used to learn things about it. And I was a guide [Girl Guide] and we used to march. There was nobody else marching, no soldiers or anything much, not very much at all, so all the girl guides and boy scouts marched on Anzac Day. Oh, you brought that up, didn't you?

28:30 Yes, interesting.

You'll be surprised how much you remember.

Yes, that's in Hobart though. I'm getting a bit older then.

What sort of things did they teach you about the war?

About the war?

Yeah.

Oh, how terrible it was. How people died in the trenches. All sorts of things like that. That's it mainly. Mainly the trenches. It's a bit horrifying.

29:00 Wasn't as horrifying to me as the Second World War, when they opened up Auschwitz [concentration camp]. That was the most terrifying thing, I think. So no, I think that's all I can tell you about the First World War.

Now, tell me a little bit more about your mother. What sort of woman was she?

She was a very strong woman.

29:30 She was, and she had a strong woman for a mother, too. My father died in 1914. Grandfather. I'm getting mixed up. Grandfather died in 1914, and we used to still keep on going up to my grandmother. Every winter holidays we went up to my grandmother.

30:00 We had to go in the train and it took all day. Very exciting. We loved Latrobe, because that was the most exciting thing that ever happened to us. We had a hill, a hill not far from us, about four doors from us, a hill that had all sorts of wild flowers, and we used to climb up there, and we used to put pennies on the railway line, so that we could hear the train coming.

30:30 And my grandmother had the most wonderful garden. I think it was probably her husband's garden, because he was dead by then. And she was a pretty good gardener, too. And there were acres and acres of it. There were camellia beds and houses for cherries and wire houses to cover the cherry trees, and she had, we went and saw it,

31:00 my brother and I, not lately, but lately enough. It's still there. All the office buildings are there. Beside the house, which was beautiful, there was a walk over to the washhouse, which had a bath in it. A washhouse, and beside that was the office, his office, grandfather's office.

31:30 He was a surveyor of roads. He started work at nine in the railways, and he became Chief Surveyor of Roads for Northern Tasmania. He surveyed the roads, did the roads, all the roads on Flinders Island and we had a lot of Killiecrankie diamonds that he got there. And he had the office there.

32:00 We used to love playing with the slates and school, and that sort of thing. There was another building there, and then a huge building where all the wool was kept. And then there was a mangle room. And they're all still there. And the front garden was quite big, and that garden was quite big, right down, and gooseberries, and blackberries, and every sort of fruit. Asparagus beds, and everything you could imagine.

32:30 And then we went right down still further, and she had her fowls, and she kept the raspberries in the fowl house so they could get all the manure, and there was a big gum tree. And we used to swing on the bough [branch] of this gum tree. Oh, just beside the railway line. Oh, gee, we'd go down by the railway line there. Oh, I don't know, it was just heaven. So I don't know,

33:00 I can probably remember lots of things. I was just growing up and I can remember going to the pictures with a boy for my first outing. That was at Latrobe. We used to go up and play with, and stay with those people. We used to stay at all sorts of places. So, there we are. Latrobe.

Was your father a strict man?

No, he was a softy. He was a softy. She was the strict one.

33:30 She wasn't that strict, I suppose. We had a lot of trouble, because Kath was born, that's my sister. I haven't started with my family, have I? My sister Kathleen, my eldest sister, we won't go into too much, because she was killed when she was in her twenties, and she was a lovely person. She was a teacher.

34:00 Then there was my brother and he was a real rebel. He still is, quite different from everybody else. Up to everything. Oh, yes I told you about him, didn't I? Coming home on the boat. Then there was my sister, Kathleen. Now she's the wife, the widow, of the last Gallipoli man.

34:30 He's Alec Campbell. And she has got cancer at the moment. But she looked after him. I'm not telling tales because I think she tried to keep it…but he was not with it for many, many long years. And she looked after him, and he was a handful until just before he died. You see, they put pictures, you know, about of these people like Alec,

35:00 they make up about, you're not going to make up anything about me, are you? Because she used to answer all the questions, and in the paper it was what she said, not what he said. But he was a lovely person. He really was. He had a big family from his first wife, and then he married Kathleen, and he became a sailor.

35:30 And you know all about him because you can find it in any paper or records about it. But it was only two or three weeks before he died that she put him in a home. And she's getting very frail. And my brother, other brother, he died in the war. He put himself in, got his mother to sign, you know,

36:00 and he went over to Timor, and was sunk in one of those ships. My brother's looking into those ships that got sunk there. Apparently, we always thought there was only one ship, but apparently there were four sunk by the Americans. And that was…ended him. So that's my family.

Now did you have many friends when you were growing up?

36:30 Oh, yes. Because we were the parish, you know, and we were in all the parish things, but we all had our own friends. My friend was Gwen Lawson, and we used to have our own special place up on top of the roof of the shed at the back, and we used to lie up there and tell all sorts of secrets and things.

37:00 Wonderful things happened. Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, but Girl Guides were really, really wonderful. And we lived in a convict-built, oh, I've got a book here with the convict-built rectory we grew up in, over in Newtown. There was a convict-built church and we used to have the Sunday School, it was up near the cemetery.

37:30 We used to play after it was dark outside, and this time they all came rushing in, "There's a ghost. In the cemetery, there's a ghost!" And it was one of the old men from the old people's home, and he'd wandered out. They had the old men's home, and these were all convict-built old men's homes and the old ladies' homes, and it spread over, oh, a great area.

38:00 They had the TB Sanatorium up there. And there were no houses much where we lived. It used to take a tremendous walk to school. Now, what else, we're up to school, are we?

Yes, you went to, well you spent, how long did you spend in Devonport?

Four years.

38:30 **Four years in Devonport. And how long in Hobart?**

Well, four years in Hobart itself, and the rest in Newtown. In Hobart itself, I went, changed from state school to go to Collegiate school, a private school. I changed school because my auntie, dear Aunt Eva, left money for Jean and I, the two eldest ones, for our education,

39:00 so we went to Collegiate, and we enjoyed it there very much too. Kathleen got to the same school later. I have to tell you about Kathleen. That's going back. Kathleen, it wasn't discovered that she had dislocated hips until she was five.

39:30 And by that time it was far too late to do anything about it. And my mother took her over to the children's hospital over in Melbourne, and they used to put her in plaster. You know out here, and then gradually in, and she learnt afterwards that that did absolutely no good for her at all. She's been, you know, a really bad cripple all her life. But we were on our own, you know, all those times, that they were over in Melbourne for quite a long while, and quite often

40:00 we had all sorts of housekeepers. One put cardboard down our legs so she wouldn't - she used to love hitting our legs - so she wouldn't do that. And we had another one who tried to poison us with some sort of stew. So well, that was, we still got on. They're still not bad memories. We had our aunt, I thought, now

40:30 all this cannot be perfectly true because I thought our aunt lived with us, too, but I found out that she only came for the weekends. And that was only the aunt, woman on my father's side. She played the piano and she made our lives happy too because she was a pianist

41:00 and she used to play for us every evening. Lovely. And then mother got terribly jealous of her being with us all the time, and I was with them when the terrible row happened.

Tape 2

00:30 Right. Yes, Kathleen didn't go to school till very late. And then she went to Collegiate like me. And by that time I was a prefect, and I must have been a pretty smug prefect, because I remember telling her off for swinging on the branches with her neck somehow. And I thought I was saving her life.

01:00 But she couldn't, she was really good. Because I used to drag her around, she was always crippled, and I used to drag her around to go to the swimming with me, because I was as active as anything. I was just full of beans. I was captain of the school basketball team. You're given one gift. You don't have them all. But she was very good.

01:30 She's got a lot worse since she was at school, of course; it gradually gets worse. But she became a Social Service worker, and in those days the only place you could become a Social Service worker was in Sydney. So she had to live in Sydney for a couple of years. And then she worked all over Victoria, then, and then she came,

02:00 no she didn't. She had met Alec then. She met Alec outside a shop, and he kept on waiting for her. And she said, "Look, there's a…" I suppose I shouldn't say this, "There's a funny looking man waiting for me." Of course it was Alec, with his Bell's Palsy, and he was a lovely man, Alec.

02:30 Anyway, it wasn't long before she was going with him and living with him and he built the house in Lindisfarne. And then my husband said, "I think you ought to get married" because that was the days people should get married. But you had to wait five years,

03:00 I think it was five years those days, wasn't it?

If you were in the services, are you referring to?

I'm not in the services. I'm out now. I've gone way ahead. You'll have to spin it way back. What was I talking about? Isn't it funny how a break… Now, I was telling you about my sister's life.

03:30 Well, that's my sister's life, as it is and as it was. I can't tell you much more about her.

That's OK. You've told us quite a bit about your family already, which is fantastic.

Yes. Well, George. George was a placenta previa. He was a very, very sick baby. But then he became, he was no good at school. I think he must have had some brain fault, damage, so my father got him into a farm.

04:00 He wanted to be a farmer, so Dad got him into a farm. This is the one that was killed in the war. And he wasn't at all happy in the farm. So that's why he wanted to join up, I think. And he used to, he was in Darwin when the riot was, and they smashed all the windows of the post office, and the town.

04:30 **What was that riot about?**

I'm not too sure. But it was the army rioting. I think they were up there too long. It was when he was up there, because he sent us home pictures of the damage done. There was a lot of discontent up in the Northern Territory. I haven't got into the army yet, have I?

No, that's OK.

05:00 A lot to tell you about that.

Yes, I look forward to it. Can I ask how did the Depression affect your family?

Oh, the Depression. We were all right because we had a stipend. We didn't lose anything but it did affect us in that we always had somebody around for a meal and we were always taking a meal around to so and so, you know,

05:30 helping as much as we could. We used to have a housekeeper. Her name was Mrs Stubbs, and her son was going around with a wheelbarrow, trying to find some sort of job or other. We used to feel very sorry for Mrs Stubbs. She was a little tough old lady and she used to get down on her hands and knees and scrub all the floors.

06:00 Not like they do these days. That's what everybody says. But she was really, really good. We were very sorry, and we all wanted to do something to help. I've forgotten his name. However, we did what we could. I was only young, then. I was not 10, then. And that's about all I do remember about that.

06:30 **You must have seen a lot of sustenance workers. Sussos [people working/looking for food] and swagmen.**

No, not so many swagmen because we were in the city. There was just people calling around, and they'd ask us if they could have a meal. They were pretty desperate people.

07:00 **Were a lot of them on alcohol?**

No. No. I don't remember anything about alcohol then. There was no alcohol in our house. It's only these decadent days you have alcohol.

What about the soldiers from World War I?

Well, I didn't come into contact much

07:30 with any soldiers from World War I. No. I must have, I must have. But you're in childhood, I suppose. You pass these things by. We were terribly sorry about the trenches, but what happened afterwards, they all got jobs afterwards. It was the best thing ever happened. I mean, people got,

08:00 there were no houses. When we first came out of the army, there were no houses. You had to go to court to get into a house, even though it was yours, your house, and that was a pretty hard thing to do, to take somebody out of their home. But I had the two babies at the time.

08:30 We lived in, oh, there's a lot there just after the war. Dad got us into this house, into this shop, and we could only live in two rooms of it, because there was another family had the other part of the house. And he was a little devil, that boy in the other part of the house. He was a haemophiliac.

09:00 **Haemophiliac?**

Yes, and he didn't have that long to live, but he was a dreadful boy. I remember the shock when he came and pulled my skirt up to have a look when I was doing some gardening. I was a bit of a prude in those days, I think, and well, they had the other part of the room.

09:30 We had the side veranda. No, that was later on, we had another side veranda. No, we had a bedroom and we had a sitting room and a little kitchen. That's about all. And we used to have to do all the, as I told you before, all the butter and sugar. It was hard work. Everything had to be weighed up and packaged.

10:00 And one time we got a box of sultanas and they had weevils in them. So Donald and I sat down night after night after night pulling all these weevils out of the box of sultanas. Oh well, they were sold and nobody was any the wiser. And it seemed to be my job to do the potatoes, because I remember that very well.

10:30 And it was everything to everybody, the corner shop. They used to come, and even in those days they were given a few lollies and things like that. We had part of the garden. I used to work in part of the garden. But it was at that house that I tried to have a child,

11:00 and I had kidney trouble and a temperature of 107, which killed the poor baby, and I carried it for two months and then I lost it. It was a boy. And we gave Donald's mother a big shock, because she lived in Portland,

11:30 and they tried to take the baby but I was getting too weak, so they sent me home and I carried on, and she didn't know. She thought I'd lost the baby. So when we went to Portland I had labour pains, and I went into hospital and lost the baby. So we gave her a terrible shock. What now? What's after that?

12:00 I'm getting terribly tired, you know. That's part of this disease. What was I up to? I'm getting into; I'm going to get worse as the time goes on, you know. My voice is not; I'm going in the voice and my throat and my cheek.

Just a second (Interruption). Now, your schooling.

12:30 **Tell us about your schooling and how you wanted, or how you got interested in nursing.**

Well, how I got interested in nursing was way back, when my grandfather was looking after us. I wasn't interested in nursing. There was nothing much for anybody to do in those days. You were either a nurse or a teacher or a secretary. That's about the only jobs there were.

13:00 So my sister became a teacher and she was good at it. She wanted to become a teacher, but I just drifted into nursing, which I enjoyed very much. I had some wonderful experiences, and it changed my life considerably because I met my husband there. But I suppose that's what happens. (Interruption). Go on, tell me again where I was.

13:30 **You were talking about how you got interested in nursing, and your schooling.**

Oh, my schooling. I left school and nursing was the only thing that was put before me, and so I stayed home and helped my mother until I went up there. And there were four or five of us who went at the same time. We remained friends through the whole lot. But it was tough, because we worked 12 hours a day, six to six,

14:00 and then if you had two hours off during the daytime, like in the morning from nine to 11, or something, you used to work till nine o'clock, so it was pretty hard work. And we had those great long wards, you know, 60 in a bed. Night nurse, like Florence Nightingale, you used to sit at a table in the middle of the ward with your light,

14:30 and go around all your patients. I don't know how you ever got round them. But I got through my first night. (Interruption)

15:00 Well my first job was in a children's ward, which I was very thankful for. Some of them got in a men's ward first, and they knew they were newcomers and they ragged [teased] them unmercifully. So and every time you went home for a holiday, you had to go to a new ward. So you spent all your time in the train,

15:30 had to go in a train up there, spent all the time in the train wondering which ward I was to go to. But it was fairly uneventful until, oh yes, you never knew what was going to happen. The time in the mental place was sprung on me rather quickly, and (Interruption).

16:00 Now, I'm sorry. I can't…

You were talking about your first job.

Oh, my first job, yes. I don't know. Everything went uneventfully, but I'll tell you the things that really stuck out.

16:30 One was, I told you about my arm, didn't I? Broke my arm. My wrist it was. That was a pretty painful time, because working all through it. Oh, no. I fell for the doctor before then, thought he was wonderful, and got him to take the plaster off. It was very, very painful.

17:00 And he got into terrible trouble for taking my plaster off. But any rate, that's enough of that. I'm sorry. Now, there was, I was there during the big polio [poliomyelitis] epidemic.

17:30 And I was sent down there to nurse during the polio epidemic. We nursed there 12 hours, 12 o'clock midday to 12 o'clock midnight. And we used to get out of the bed, and the other person would get in the bed. And the only time I burst into tears was when I found a lice on my bed.

18:00 I was most upset. But it was a terribly harrowing time. It was most shocking. You certainly wouldn't want to have polio. You'd have your children immunised. It's a shocking death. And one time I nearly broke up, because there was this nice young man and his wife had just lost a baby, a stillborn baby,

18:30 and somehow I knew that man was going to die. They all, not all died, but I knew he was going to die and I was terribly upset. And he did die. And there was this great big ward, like one of those 60-bed wards, ordinarily, and there were, all down the middle were respirators, and all round the side were beds. And there was nowhere to put,

19:00 at one stage I held a dead baby, while they found somewhere to put the child while they cleaned out the refrigerator to put somebody else in. And all I can say is, it was pretty terrible.

How did people react to the polio epidemic, socially?

Socially, I had no social life. If I went out, very rarely I went out, I was told to walk in the middle of the road

19:30 and because anybody approaching me at all just hurriedly walked the other way. But you never got it yourself. You never got any of these things yourself. And it was a really terribly harrowing time, because so many children died. I don't know when that finished. You're just, one day you're told to go somewhere else, you know, so you just go somewhere else. But the epidemic was finished before I went somewhere else. Most of it was over.

20:00 I went down there again once into the polio ward. And we had to nurse this little boy called 'Little Bill'. He was Little Bill, and he was in a terrible state. He was just so shrivelled up and he used cry all the time he was bathed. And I used to sing this song, "Little Bill went up the hill, leading little sister,

20:30 she fell down and broke her crown, he picked her up and kissed her." And I used to sing that song, and he used to wait for me to sing it. And do you know, I went over for a 75th anniversary, and I met the physio [physiotherapist] who was nursing Little Bill with me and we used to sing this song together. Now, isn't that incredible after all those years. So Little Bill died soon afterwards, anyway. He had no future.

21:00 But there was all those children in those splints. They were all around later. Boards and things hanging out like that. I've got pictures of them. That was a really terrible time. I think that's all I can tell you about that. I nursed from the very beginning,

21:30 where we had to put them on bed racks on the floor. On mattress racks we had. And we had to put them on the floor. And then in the end, we had to just put them on the mattress racks. There was nowhere else to put them. And they all had lice. All the children had lice. Well that went; that was part of me.

22:00 I'm very glad they found the cure for it. My mother had a little sister who died when she was five. She's in the picture over there and mother always reckons that she had polio, by the symptoms. But that's one thing we don't have to worry about. And of course, diphtheria.

22:30 And of course, scarlet fever. I just don't know about that, because it just disappeared and nobody even

knows about it, do they?

Tell us about diphtheria. Was there an epidemic with that as well?

Yes. No, not like this. Diphtheria was there all the time. And you know, you either had it badly or you didn't. When I was nursing later on

23:00 we had several, you know, you had to slit their throats to allow them to breathe because they couldn't breathe if they got it very badly. It was a terrible thing. But that went too, with all the injections. So people who don't inject their child should go back to these days.

23:30 But yes. I seemed to spend a long time in infectious wards, when you come to think of it. Putting me out of the way, putting me in the infectious ward and the mental ward. Yes, well, most of it was ordinary things. I'll tell you one thing, every patient who came into the medical wards, we had to take their blood for syphilis.

24:00 And I got very adept at taking blood.

How did all this affect you?

No, you just take it all in your stride. The polio epidemic affected me, but most of it you were so busy. And you were hoping a patient wasn't dying in your,

24:30 or just as the bell was going or something, because you'd have to lay them out. It was counted as the time before, so you had to count them. You had to lay them out and everything after your time was due to go off duty. I can remember that. I remember the first time I laid somebody out and that was a bit of a shock. I was a very young nurse then.

25:00 I somehow giggled. I somehow giggled all through it. And every time since then, I giggled. It's just a nervous thing, I suppose. But when I was up in, oh golly, these places, in Wynyard, when they sent me up to Wynyard, I was the senior nurse up there. And I was the one on night duty.

25:30 I was on night duty at this time, who had to take the bodies out into the morgue, underneath all the pine trees and whatnots. Oh, I'd pray and hope that there wasn't a body still in the morgue. Oh, dear. I didn't like that very much. But that's part of nursing. They don't have to do it these days. So that's one part of nursing that's gone out,

26:00 thank goodness. And I enjoyed that. I enjoyed being up at Wynyard, because it was right near the beach, and you could go out for a walk after night duty, that sort of thing.

When did you first work in a psychiatric hospital?

I didn't; there was just that ward and I was very young then. There was no psychiatric hospital, as you'd call them these days.

26:30 It was an asylum. And it was in the south of Tasmania, so anybody who needed to be assessed where they needed to go into an asylum, went into those wards until they were assessed, because there was no mental wards or anything. We used to, if we had one in the ward who wasn't too bad but was bad enough, they used to give them some awful medicine.

27:00 It used to make the whole ward smell. It was horrible. But no, things have changed considerably since then. There are no asylums now, and it's rather frightening. It's frightening, because at night duty sometimes, I found a man not in his bed. I didn't find him, but he was not in his bed, and I had to look everywhere

27:30 and didn't know where I was going to find him, but they found him under a bed somewhere else. It's scary for young people, you know. I was old enough, I suppose, but people were younger then and, yeah. So that's about all. I'd take things in stride. No, there was another thing one time. A young man,

28:00 a really nice healthy-looking young man, and he came in with an infection in his throat, and I was given the job of minding him, looking after him and seeing that his throat was free, free of anything. And he haemorrhaged all over everything, and he was dead, just like that, and that was pretty terrifying too. You had to be pretty,

28:30 I mean, these days they have to be pretty tough, the nurses. I wouldn't like to be a nurse these days, because they've got so much technical stuff. There, you went in not knowing a thing. You went straight into the wards, and you didn't know anything, and you learnt by making mistakes. I'll never forget. There was a woman, a sister we had in a ward who was very strict,

29:00 and she had the habit of, if you were on night duty, she would find something wrong, something small that you hadn't done, but she wouldn't call you over to the ward then. She'd wait an hour or two and then she'd call you back to the ward. So that was a tricky one, that one. I was glad when I left her ward. I was called over once, that was all. Yes, some tough things.

29:30 What else can I tell you about it? I don't think there was anything else particularly startling. Most of it was just a hard slog [hard work].

When you were working in the psychiatric ward, were there any diggers there?

We're talking about my training now.

Yes, but were there any diggers from the First World War?

No, I don't remember anybody being from the First World War. No.

30:00 That was 1935 I went, which is getting close to the next world war. No, they were terrible things that we left over from the First World War. The gas and everything. But we must have nursed them, because there were a lot, yes, there were a lot of gas cases, which bring me onto another thing. I went into the bathroom

30:30 where they had all the vases in the cupboard, and there was a man cutting his throat in front of the mirror. So, I didn't know what to do for the minute, and I yelled blue murder [as loud as possible]. They killed themselves, if they wanted to kill themselves, they used to take Lysol [cleaning fluid], which used to burn their middles out, you know. It was terrible.

31:00 But I don't know afterwards. You never knew what happened afterwards. I just yelled and they came and got him, and that was all. I never heard anything else. So…I can't think of anything else.

And, now, you said that was 1935.

31:30 That's when I went in, yes. The war was declared before I got out.

Now tell us where you were when war was declared.

I know exactly. I was lying down on the floor in the sitting room in the dark with the lights out, because I knew I shouldn't be out of bed. Oh, that's another thing too. We had to be in bed by 10 o'clock, and the matron happened to come past.

32:00 "What are you doing out of bed? Get up straightaway. I don't care if there's a war. Off you go!" That was how I heard about the Second World War.

Were you expecting it?

I think so. I think so, because they were just appeasing. I mean, Chamberlain [Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain prior to World War II], it was just putting off, that he went over there.

32:30 I think everybody did. At that stage, everybody did.

What were your beliefs at the time? Were you, how did you see the Empire?

Oh, when I was young, well, Empire and God and King and Country. America's got nothing on to what we did. Oh, that's how we saw it. Everything was wonderful, and I can remember when we went to the zoo,

33:00 when we were children, and no, that wasn't the same. Oh, yes it was. I'm telling you about, there was a zoo over there Dad used to take us to every Saturday, and when Kath was home she was in this long trolley thing because she had plaster on her legs and that. And he used to take her to the zoo too. And there were two lion cubs called

33:30 Lillibet and Margaret Rose [named after Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret]. Lillibet and Margaret Rose were the princesses, who were little girls then. So I nursed them, their namesakes. Read everything about them. We used to love going to the zoo. The polar bears were our favourite. I'll tell you what was at the zoo when we were there. The poor old last Tasmanian Tiger [thylacine: Zebra wolf carnivorous marsupial, now extinct].

34:00 We used to feel very sorry for him. He had a little old cage and he looked at death's door, you know, wandering around. So there's not many people have seen that last Tasmanian Tiger, have they?

No. Tell us what it looked like.

Well, it just looked like the pictures I see now, although I can't remember the stripes being so bright. But it was such a scruffy looking thing. It really was.

34:30 **Was it small?**

No, it was taller. No, it wasn't really small, no. Oh, it was so thin. It was so thin, and it must have been on its last legs, I think. But it was a Tasmanian Tiger, as you see today in the pictures. They talk about the last one was in the Hobart zoo.

35:00 **So, being a Tasmanian itself, how important was the Tasmanian Tiger in the Tasmanian culture?**

Oh, I think it was important, yes, very important.

Were you told stories about them when you were young?

Well, having seen one, we knew they weren't extinct. But when we were little we just didn't know much difference.

35:30 It was just a Tasmanian Tiger, but it's not what the myth is really. Not lately. Not later on in life. Didn't have. I suppose it did, because I didn't live at home in Hobart very much, only on and off, when I went to Launceston. No, it was still there, and they still thought about it. That's about all I can tell you, yeah.

36:00 Yes. Oh, something came in my mind then, and I forgot. Oh, well, it will come back. One thing brings on another. Yeah.

Now, we're at the beginning of the war. Now, tell us about your social life then, when the war had started.

36:30 **You had a boyfriend at the time I take it?**

No, no.

No?

No, I didn't have a boyfriend at the time, but I used to go down to the Seamen's Union, and they used to have dances down there, and dance with all the seamen. That's when I was nursing. Yes, round about the time I started nursing down there. Oh, yes. It was quite a good,

37:00 everybody was sort of full of life and hope. No, nothing dull then. It was enjoyable. I went there with a man, out with a young man. He was younger than I was. That's the one that I got sent to Brighton for going out. Seamus O'Donohue, I can remember his name. Oh, we were always having a good time then, I think. You know, nobody thinks,

37:30 I think in the modern days, it's become known more what war is really like. I mean, war has changed at any rate and from being in the trenches. So, no. And in between wars, the only things we did was go in the marches. That's about all we did. And we were patriotic, as I say. (Interruption).

Tape 3

00:30 **All right. We're rolling now.**

Well, you were talking about the war before. Well, Donald and I had entirely different upbringings about wars or anything else. We were brought up entirely English, going to the private school over in Tasmania, and we were taught, everything we learnt was English poetry,

01:00 English everything. He didn't, I didn't learn, know any of the Henry Lawsons. I didn't learn anything of that. We discarded Australia. England was the thing. So that's the difference between the two of us. Absolutely different.

So Don learnt more about Australian culture?

Yes, he had a lot of Australian books and Australian poetry and things that he learnt.

01:30 He learnt English too, but more Australian.

Were most people around Tasmania, were they of English origin, or Irish or Scottish?

Yeah, I think so. I would say so.

Mostly English.

Yes, there were a lot of English, lot of English. Yeah. I don't know where the convicts went or anything,

02:00 but no, very English. Of course, I might have been different if I'd gone through a state school upbringing. But we never learnt one bit of poetry of Australia. So that is what I wanted to say when I went out.

02:30 **Well, it's an interesting aspect of Australian history, that particularly before World War II anyway, that Australia didn't really have much sense of itself. It was still very English.**

Very English. Motherland and, yes, that's right. Yes. But Donald is quite different. He's an Australian boy.

03:00 Where did you grow up?

I grew up in New Zealand actually.

Oh. Very English, New Zealand, is it?

Oh, fairly English, but it still has a strong sense of itself, and more so now.

Yes, it's changed now. Well, everything's changed now. Because the First World War, well,

03:30 the Second World War involved everything, everybody, everywhere.

Now, while we're on that subject, can you tell me a bit about how you felt about the monarchy, and how your family felt about the monarchy.

Oh, well, I always read the New Idea [magazine] and the pictures, looked at all the pictures of them. Oh, no, the monarchy. I don't really think much really of the monarchy.

04:00 In a way, it's how they were brought up. I watched a picture, a TV [television] show on Princess Margaret and the way she was brought up, and she never relaxed, she never relaxed being a princess so she was a lonely old woman. And I, well, I suppose her sister's much the same but not as bad.

04:30 Very sad, in a way, that they have to think of themselves as royalty. They've got the same flesh and blood. But they give you something to read about.

What about when you were younger, though?

When I was young, yes, we were very much English. But it must have been a very strange thing,

05:00 living in a country and thinking that the other country overseas mattered more than we did, somehow. Gave you not very good thoughts, I mean, opinion of yourselves, really. But I'm glad it's changed. Yes. Well, I suppose all the planes and things. It seems strange now that you would have had to come out by boat. Yeah.

05:30 **Growing up in Tasmania, were there many different races at all. You said most were English. Were there any Aborigines at all?**

They used to teach us that there were no aborigines. That Truganini was the last Aborigine and she died [last full-blood Aborigine in Tasmania], but and when I nursed on Launceston I knew there were Aborigines on the islands, because we used to get all the Mansells [common surname for Tasmanian Aboriginals].

06:00 And that's a common name among the Aborigines up in the islands the Flinders Islands. And they used to come to Launceston Hospital. So I wasn't a bit surprised when this Mansell, the last one, was coming out as a Mansell, because the name's so familiar. But Launceston is different to Hobart.

06:30 Tasmania is cut into two. I couldn't tell you what Launceston people think. But I could what Hobart people think, I think. But, now I've lost track.

When you were talking to Sergei [interviewer] before, you barely got up to the point where war was declared. Were you working, you went and worked as a midwife for a while?

07:00 Yes, I trained as a midwife, yes. And that was quite interesting, too. We had an old dragon of a matron, and we had so much to do because all the nurses went off to war. And I had, when I went into the nursery I had twenty-five babies to get out. You know, change their nappies, get out, get them back, weigh them. No, they were weighed before they went out.

07:30 Weigh them when they came back. Complement them if they hadn't had enough milk. And Tuesday mornings she used to come up to the nursery, and if the babies had lost any weight, we were dressed down. But of course, I found out later it's quite normal for babies to lose in the first week. So you could never win. I got to the stage where I felt

08:00 that I had to catch up with something. So I got out the window at five o'clock in the morning to go to work early and I was caught. They weren't very happy about me. That was just before we had to go to exams. We had to go up by train to Launceston for exams. And I did pretty well in exams, but not in other ways. But the little prems [premature babies] didn't live.

08:30 I mean, really and truly, the prem room was, it was about an ordinary toilet or bathroom or something. And they had all the prems just stuck in there. No humidicribs or anything. You just had to go and feed them and change them, so I daresay most of them died.

09:00 Most of it was just ordinary, but they were just things I picked out. And nine months I had to do the training. That's when I thought I'd like a rest, you see. I wasn't allowed to have one, so I went up to Wynyard. And I'm not sorry I went, it was quite good, and I had one of these lots of relatives up there, you know, that I've got spread all round the place. I could go and stay a night there. So I used to do that.

09:30 **So whereabouts is Wynyard?**

Wynyard's on the north coast after Burnie. Oh, no, before Burnie.

So it's still in Tasmania?

Yes. There's a couple of big hospitals, but Wynyard is one of the big hospitals up there.

All right. So, tell us a bit about Wynyard and what went on there.

Oh, well, I don't know much about the place itself, because I didn't go into the city.

10:00 Well, I suppose it would be an ordinary country town. But it's just got this beautiful beach that goes right along the front of it. I bought my first radio when I was up in Wynyard. I had money for the first time, because when I was doing my midwifery, I got seven and six a week [seven shillings and sixpence], and I had to pay for my lectures, so I didn't have money to buy anything. So I used to go home sometimes for a couple of hours during the morning,

10:30 and I used to have to get the tram, and then I used to have to rush through St David's Square, from one end to the other, and get back afterwards. Pretty fit in those days. Yeah. And so Wynyard was where I decided. I didn't know what I wanted to do next, and I was thinking of going into the army, so I applied and got in.

11:00 **And how old were you at this point?**

I was 23, I think. 23, yes. They weren't letting them in until 24. 25 to start with, but they were getting a bit short by then.

And this is 1940?

1941, I think. 1941,

11:30 '40 to '41. I don't know. Yes, I had to go down to Hobart to see about things, and then when I got the news. I haven't told you about, I told you about Oatlands, didn't I?

No. We haven't come to that yet.

Oh, well. Oatlands is before that. No, Oatlands is the army. No, leave Oatlands out, yet. I went to…

12:00 **You went to the old Royal [old Royal Hospital], didn't you?**

Yes, we'd done that first, it was before then. Wynyard was before the army. So I went down there, and the person who was in charge down there

12:30 was the person who was in charge of the Infectious Diseases Hospital up in Launceston. She thought I was wonderful. But really and truly I had very little training in theatre, so she thought she'd put me in theatre because I was one of her wonderful Launceston trained nurses, you see. So I got into all sorts of trouble, and this Doctor Rattan who Dad didn't like, he had me tying knots around his finger.

13:00 Because we had to assist in operations, like they do these days, you know, in M*A*S*H [television series about an American field hospital in the Korean War]. In those days, they didn't. They had two doctors. And then the nurse was just somebody running around and doing odd jobs.

Why were you tying knots around the doctor's finger?

I was assisting the doctor.

13:30 **So it was an accident?**

No, it was just an ordinary operation, but I hadn't assisted the doctor before. I'd just handed them instruments or something. I hadn't tied up any knots in anybody before. So there we are. But yes. Oh, that was before. I had done it before and that's once before up in Launceston Public Hospital.

14:00 And a man had to have his leg off, and I assisted one night because it was an emergency. I'd done it before. But that's the once but only the once. I was still handing out instruments then. No, I'm getting mixed up. Sorry. And that's all about that I think. What's next?

Did you ever get queasy?

Yes, when I was watching my first operation, and we used to watch

14:30 behind a glass door, to watch the first operations, but when you're doing it, you're doing it. You're mind's entirely on what you're doing.

You didn't get worried or nervous when somebody was having their leg taken off?

I was so concentrating on doing the right thing for the doctor. And I'll tell you about the doctors in those days.

15:00 Even the house doctors, you used to have go up to them, put your hands behind your back, and say, "Excuse me, Sir," before you spoke to them. And when I see the way the doctors and the nurses cohabitate more or less in hospitals now, it's such a different life. We thought they were gods. Well, we were trained to think they were gods. So it was funny.

15:30 **So at this time, you were treating all sorts of, or working doing all sorts of different kinds of work?**

Yes, you'd just be sent to one ward and you did what had to be done in that ward. Sometimes they used to show you, if there was someone round that could show you, otherwise they said, "Go and do this." We used to have lectures, but very few lectures.

16:00 I mean, in a way it was good, because it was nursing. You went in and you nursed people. But these days they have so many gadgets and things they have to work with, so much they have to know, and they have to learn more. They have to go for these lectures all the time. I wouldn't like to be a nurse now,

16:30 because you've got so much responsibility for all the, I suppose for all the machines which are around you, which I don't know anything about. I still like the idea of nursing, as nursing.

OK. Just to clear up, this time we're talking about, this is at Wynyard.

No, we're away. Oh, yes. We're going back to Launceston then.

17:00 Oh, no. Wynyard applies just the same. Though I was trained at Wynyard. I was a head nurse at Wynyard. So you get the situation.

Yeah. I'm very concerned. So you were nursing at Launceston first.

I trained at Launceston.

Yeah.

And I trained in Queen Vic [Queen Victoria Hospital] in Hobart for my midwifery. So I'm a double certificate nurse.

17:30 **Yep. And then you went to Wynyard.**

Then I went to Wynyard, and then I went into the army.

OK.

And then I was given the word. Oh, no. I'm way ahead of myself. I was down behind the Royal, that's right, and we lived in a long dormitory thing there. And I didn't stay there very long. As you know, I went out without my uniform, so I went out to Brighton.

18:00 And I was in charge of outpatients, out there in Brighton.

Now Brighton, is that still in Tasmania?

Army camp. That's the big army camp in Tasmania. And it was very nice because there were lots of men, and they used to ask us round for dinner and that sort of thing. It was in a picture theatre then, because it had been a bit of a town before.

18:30 Did anything exciting happen there? I can't think of anything exactly, except my brother came to visit me. No. No, I can't think of anything.

What sort of work were you doing at Brighton?

I was at outpatients, syringing people's ear out and their noses and throats,

19:00 and you know, just things that the doctor said had to be done.

Just be careful with the microphone. It's very sensitive, so even if you're rubbing your shirt there, it picks up.

Oh, I see.

(Interruption) OK. So we were talking about Brighton,

19:30 **working in outpatients. How did you get on with the other staff, the other nurses?**

I really didn't have much to do with them. They were orderlies in the outpatients, mostly orderlies. I had mostly to do with them.

And were you a head nurse, by now?

No. Well, it was only outpatients. It was only one outpatient's nurse, so I was it.

20:00 I didn't get very rapid promotion.

And how long were you at Brighton for?

Oh, not very long. I would say about six weeks or so. Then they sent me up to Oatlands, and that's a little town. And that's, the main hospital by then, was in Campbell Town,

20:30 which is not far from Oatlands. Oatlands is a CCS [Casualty Clearing Station]. What do they call it? I think they called it a CCS, the camp. It was only a small place, and it was in a bank building, and I slept

in the local hotel, a little alcove with a lovely doona on it,

21:00 and whatnot. It's a terribly cold place. And I had one nurse with me, and then she left, and then I was the nurse. And then the doctor of the town left, he was doing all the doctoring, and there was no one except me. And of course we had a motorcycle accident, a young man with head injuries,

21:30 and all I could do was let Campbell Town know that I had him, and then I had to watch him all night to see how he was going, and I rode in the ambulance next day and dropped him at Campbell Town. So I wasn't there very long, when I was given the call to go overseas. So we went over. There were

22:00 two of us from Tasmania, and we went over to Melbourne, and we stayed at the Lady Duggan Hostel, which was somewhere in Toorak. I think they're still using it for those sorts of things now. So we waited quite a while there, for the plane to come and take us. So it was a beautiful home.

22:30 Tennis court, everything. It was just lovely. I don't know how long we were there. We were just waiting. And then finally we got the call and we went out to Essendon. And we got this plane, they were usually DC-3s [Douglas Dakota DC-3 transport aircraft] then I think, and we flew to Adelaide. No. We didn't. I don't think…

23:00 We went to Oodnadatta. No, we must have gone to Adelaide before Oodnadatta. I can't remember. But any rate, and we stayed the night in Alice Springs. These planes were ribs on the walls inside, and packing cases that you sat on. And we stayed the night in Alice Springs. And it was pretty cold there, too. And then we went up to Adelaide River,

23:30 and we stopped at - I was so sick by then, I didn't care whether I got there or not - and we got to Batchelor Airstrip and got out of the plane. It was so hot. And then we went to the hospital. Got out, settled in. and then we were put to cutting the legs off pyjamas. I spent about three weeks cutting the legs off pyjamas

24:00 and most disgusted, of course. And in that three weeks, Batchelor Aerodrome was formed, and before that time was over, I was still cutting legs off pyjamas when I first met Donald. They used to put notices up on the board, "Would so many number of nurses, would they care to go for dinner?" Well, I thought, "I'll put my name down", and that's where I met Donald.

24:30 And he said, "Would you like me to take you home," and I said, "Oh, yes." Got out there, didn't know what or who about anything, went out into the bush, all trucks everywhere, and you get into this truck, and we didn't know our way to the hospital so we finally ended up among the tents with all the nurses getting ready to go to bed.

25:00 But any rate, I didn't think I'd see him again. But then he used to appear indoors when he could and we got engaged not long after. We were still in Adelaide River. And I don't know, he didn't have such a good job. He told me since, I mean, he was a lieutenant, but they were cutting down mangroves for landing places,

25:30 for our ships or something, or whatever, up to their necks in mud. And that's how he first got his dermatitis. He was getting it when I was with him up there. And then, of course, he went up to New Guinea. But any rate, I met him, and we got engaged and then I was told

26:00 to go down south to Katherine. So we got in a train, which were like cattle trucks, no seats or anything, just openings along the side, you leaned against the side. And we got on there and we went down as far as, I think it's Pine…what's the name? [it is Pine Creek] Oh, doesn't matter. I better not lose my voice.

26:30 Pine Tree Gap or something, and that takes on a bus to Katherine. And that's where I first had my meeting with red dust, because we were red all over our hair and whatnot. And I stayed there about three weeks, two or three weeks. Not any longer. And it was there that I first started to get the pain and they said it was period pain.

27:00 Didn't worry too much about it. So I went on. The next trip was to Larrimah. But the hospital was a big boarded shed thing, and the place where we had our lunch was a boarded shed. But the place where we slept was a tent, a tent in among tall grass. A different climate from where I had been,

27:30 so in the middle of that, down there at Larrimah, I got another attack of this pain, this awful pain, and the doctor came and said to me, "We're not going to keep you off work for period pain," and he wouldn't do anything. I was wandering around in the grass all day, in tremendous pain, and I asked one of the nurses for an injection, and she gave it to me.

28:00 And apart from that we had some wonderful trips. We had a trip to a lake with blue lilies. Water lilies. And we used to jump off the cliff and into the water. And oh, you know, wonderful trips we had. We had to go through miles and miles and miles of sand in the back of the trucks. It's very uneventful.

28:30 Oh, no. It wasn't uneventful, because I was told to go out and pick up a baby that had been sick, out in the mulga somewhere. And we had a driver, and we had a young doctor, and we had me. And we got there and we didn't think the baby was all that sick, but we thought we ought to bring it into hospital. So we got the baby and the mother in,

29:00 and on the way back we ran into an ant hill. And we didn't know where we were, and so we had to stay the night out, and the baby was crying all night, and things weren't too good. So I got out in the back of the truck and it was so cold, and I didn't have a cardigan or anything. Nearly froze. And in the morning we got up. We must have got home somehow.

29:30 Someone must have done something. I can't remember. But when we got back to the hospital the sister in charge said, "What have you been doing?" We said, "Well, we got stuck in an ant hill." "And you've been out all night with a man?" And that's all she could think of: "You've been out all night with a man." And he was wandering off in the bush somewhere, and I was in the back of the truck. So that was what you'd call an adventure, I suppose.

30:00 We never saw the baby again. But when we did have Aboriginals in the hospitals, the whole tribe came and parked outside the hospital. And we didn't have, I wasn't, I was working in the officers' ward up in Adelaide River, so I didn't really get to know. Oh, I haven't told you a whole lot, I cut out a whole lot. Go back to Adelaide River.

30:30 For a few days I noticed that there were some monks, not monks, nuns, Portuguese nuns wandering around the buildings, and I didn't think much of it. And then one morning when I was on night duty, I was told to go down to an empty ward and take the temperatures of the people who were in there. And I lifted up the net, flywire net, and there were all these little children,

31:00 Portuguese children, and I had to take their children [nuns and children were refugees from Timor]. I never saw them, of course, after that. But I did hear about it. Oh, no. Before then, I'll tell you. And then some of the soldiers, what were they called, the landowners, no, the ones that were up in the hills. The, what were they called?

The Independent Company [soldiers evacuated from Timor]?

Yes. They were up in the hills.

31:30 And they hadn't eaten bread for 12 months and all they wanted was bread. They hadn't eaten bread. And I chased them all up because I knew George was in Timor, so I wanted to find out anything I could about it. They told me no one ever escaped, but they could see the prisoners, they used to see the prisoners down in Dili, because they were all up in the hills.

32:00 **This is your brother?**

My brother. Up in the hills and he could see them all. So I thought, well, there's a long chance but I might as well ask. It was soon after that that I found out that all the children were going south when there wasn't a moon, because they bombed every time there was a moon, and the soldiers went south,

32:30 by plane or train or whatever, you know. Straight south. Yes, that was quite peculiar, and I left all that out.

So the kids were from Timor?

Yes, Timor. All from Timor. Nuns were from Timor, and the soldiers were from Timor.

And the nuns and monks were evacuating the children?

33:00 No. Well, I don't know. I didn't see them together. See, the end of night duty and all I was done was told to take these temperatures, which I did, and handed it over, and gave my report, and went off. I didn't see anything more of them. And so somebody told me afterwards that they'd sent them down south by boat. And they could be those early, not prisoners of war,

33:30 early settlers that came in, the very early ones. Perhaps the ones that they want to send back to Timor now. You never know. Well, there were a lot of them. So I left Adelaide River after that, pretty soon after, so I didn't hear any more of that story. Fancy missing all that out.

Oh, well, there's plenty of time. We'll try and take you back and go over things.

Yeah.

34:00 **I'm interested to know, as a young Tasmanian girl, what were your first impressions of the mainland?**

Oh, I'd been over once before. My sisters and I went over. And we were very brave in those days. We went over by the boat, and then we went up to Sydney and stayed at Kings Cross. And we even went down to one of those underground sub [subterranean] places, where you get coffee and whatnot.

34:30 Don't know what else you got, but they were all candle lit and everything. We thought we were terribly brave. Oh, yes.

What was Kings Cross like in those days?

Oh, well, I think, I'll say much the same, but pretty crowded. Pretty crowded. But much the same I'd say. I haven't been there since, so how can I say? I don't know. I didn't travel very much. I did travel

when I was about 14.

35:00 The family sent us on a Young Australia Tour, and we went to Canberra, no, we went to Melbourne, and we went to Sydney, and we went to Canberra, and that was an interesting trip, too. Because, what did we do in Melbourne? We went to Cinesound, and we were in a film called The Silence of Dean Maitland. And they cut out the part I was in.

35:30 I was just waving them goodbye, and they cut it out. I watched till the end and nothing. Oh, yes, it was an interesting trip that. Canberra. To go to see the pictures at Canberra you travelled miles and miles and miles through empty country to go there. And they had the first swimming pool in Canberra so we had a swim in a swimming pool, which was wonderful, marvellous.

36:00 But that's all it was, as far as I could tell: just Government House, Parliament House and all empty land. Yeah.

And a swimming pool.

Well, being in a film was interesting, too. It was at St John's Church, Toorak, and that's where the wedding was.

36:30 **And how did you get mixed up in the film?**

In the film?

Mmmm.

Well, we went to see the Cinesound Studios. They wanted a crowd for the film, I suppose, and they just asked us on the spot. All in our school hats - I can see some of the - not school hats, hats that we had to have to wear, to go.

37:00 **So you went to Oatlands, and then to Melbourne, and then briefly to Alice Springs and up to Adelaide River. I'm interested to know, when you went to Adelaide River, what were your first impressions of what was there?**

Just the heat. Overwhelmed by the heat. Excitement. Yes, real excitement. You don't know what's going to happen next. And I didn't think I was going to cut the legs off pyjamas for three weeks.

37:30 **It's a small town, Adelaide River?**

It's not a town. Well, as far as I know, there was a hospital and there was the nurses' home, and that's all as far as I know, there's not a town. Nobody told me about crocodiles, and I used to sit down by that river and read. God's on my side. I've lived this long.

38:00 Oh, no. In the wet season - we went up in the wet season, and it was hot and wet, and that's about all I can say about it. It wasn't wet all the time, but it was wet every evening. And I was sitting up on a hill reading a book just, you know, in the hospital buildings, when some of our side

38:30 decided to have a practice, I suppose. It went right through the hostel. It knocked over a few things on the matron's desk, but that's about all.

Sorry, what went through the hospital?

The soldiers were practising. Donald was in the, I don't think he was quite in the same thing, but it went through the hospital.

They ran through the hospital?

39:00 No, no. They were just shooting. Shooting, yeah.

Crikey. Was anyone hurt?

No. Only a few things on the desk in front of…not a matron, a sister. Yeah.

That's most strange, soldiers firing on the hospital?

Well, I don't know. Donald would probably tell you more about it. Could probably tell you more about it than me.

39:30 But, I mean, I was just sitting there reading a book, and I could hear this gunfire. Now what else was I telling you. I think I've got past that, haven't I?

Well, Adelaide River, you were there about three weeks, is that right?

No, I was there for about six months or so.

And apart from cutting up pyjamas?

40:00 No, I then went to the officers' ward and I can remember we were going to have a bigwig [senior officer], general or something. He had something wrong with him, and we had to do this room out for

him. It was only a tent, but it was done out as well as we could expect. And all he had was a sore finger when he came in. So he wasn't in for very long.

40:30 Another thing happened too. We had a case of botulism while I was up there. And I don't know whether he lived or died, because I left before he, I knew about him, but he opened a tin of beetroot and ate this beetroot, and it was bad. And he was really bad.

41:00 He couldn't swallow or breathe. You know, he had tubes in. So it gave me frights about botulism after that.

Hmm. Kept you on your toes.

Yes.

Tape 4

00:30 Well, next I got the word to go to Darwin. Can't remember how I got there. It must have been by train, I think, or bus, either one or the other, and we stayed in the hospital. Terrible, terrible mosquitos, which the mosquito nets didn't seem to keep away.

01:00 And I nursed dengue fever cases most of the time I was up there. And Donald happened to be up there too, so we had a good time together. I went to…what's the place, the big meat factory.

01:30 Oh, I've forgotten the name. Anyway, the officers asked us there for dinner. And we had a lovely dinner there. And all the time we were there we were on, oh, I thought about it all at lunch and now I've forgotten. We were on [alert, notice to move], we had to be packed, ready, cases beside our beds. So I couldn't go and see anywhere. The only place I could go was along the beach. But we couldn't go along the beach really.

02:00 We went along the cliff top, because the beach was all covered with barbed wire. It was very nice to see the beach. And one night we had an alarm, and we had to go down into the trenches, and I couldn't find my shoe. So I went down without my shoe, and the next morning they discovered a big black snake in the trench, so I never went down without my shoes again.

02:30 What else can I tell you about Darwin?

As a lieutenant…?

Yeah. I was a lieutenant.

How did it feel to have that authority? Especially when women at that stage in history were still limited in their career opportunities.

Well, we all were. We all were lieutenants automatically.

Mmmm.

No, it just felt like being a sister, you know.

03:00 You have your sister, and you went on doing the same work. Well, we ate with everybody else, you know, it wasn't like an army.

But you had male soldiers had to salute you?

Nobody saluted me.

I heard that that used to happen with nurses, that privates and sergeants would salute nurses.

03:30 Yeah? That didn't seem to stick with me, because I can't really remember. No, as far as I can remember, it was just a job. It was just the same short of job I was doing before I went into the army.

Would you be referred to by your first rank?

Sister, usually, especially in the wards, just 'Sister'. Mostly just 'Sister', yes. Not like being in the army.

04:00 As a matter of fact, when we got down to Campbell Town, I was on night duty, and, I seem to remember what happens when I'm on night duty. And they made us get out of bed to have practice marching and we all rebelled. And we said, "There's no reason why we should be marching at all." So we ignored it, and that was the end of the marching.

04:30 So I suppose we had a bit of authority. Yes.

What about, when you were up in Darwin, you would have had a chance to meet, or did you have a chance to meet, American soldiers?

No. That was later on. I'll tell you about that later on.

Right.

No. It was very limited. As I said, the only place I could go to was the beach. The hospital itself had all the damage done to the walks,

05:00 as you went from one place to another, it was all damaged. But inside didn't seem to be damaged so much. A lovely view from the verandas where we slept and all that. It was a very beautiful place. But I wasn't there long enough to find out, at any of these places, except Larrimah. I was a long time at Larrimah. So, yes.

What was the atmosphere like in Darwin?

05:30 Climatic atmosphere?

No, in terms of the people. How were they feeling as a result of the air raids?

I didn't meet any people. I was just in the hospital nursing dengue fever cases and I didn't come across any civilians really.

Most of them were Australian soldiers?

Yes. Yes, mostly Australian soldiers.

Did they give you medication up in Darwin?

No.

06:00 **Antimalarial medication?**

No. They didn't seem to have malaria there, just the dengue fever. But they didn't seem to give the people anything for dengue fever. I don't know whether they still do. It was all very ordinary, apart from those two aspects of it.

Did they ever give Atabrin or quinine?

No, no.

06:30 You'd have to be going to New Guinea to have those things. I think they have got it there, but not in the army. We didn't have to take anything. No, some of them took salt tablets and things like that, but that's all. Yeah. So we were just ordinary.

Was Darwin still in a state,

07:00 **at that time, was Darwin still in a sort of state of panic?**

No. There wasn't anybody around. As a matter of fact, I didn't go anywhere. I couldn't go anywhere, so I can't tell you. It was very frustrating. I couldn't go into the town at all. I couldn't go out of the hospital. The only place I could go to was that place on the beach. So that's all I could tell you about it.

What about through word of mouth, when you talked to patients, or other sisters?

07:30 They were in the same, they'd all been Northern Territory soldiers. They all had the same tale and discontentment as all the Northern Territory soldiers did. It was a pretty bad place to be in for months and months and months, knowing everybody else was overseas and whatnot.

08:00 Yes, one time when I was in Adelaide River, I went out to a dinner, one of these dinners that you pin up on the wall, and we were in the middle of our dinner when the ordinary soldiers, they started pelting stones all over our roof. And they said then, they were very discontented.

They were throwing stones?

Yes. Throwing stones on our roof, mmm.

08:30 So, it wasn't a very good life up there. Yeah. That's the only time I've ever sort of been in among it. But we didn't get any of it. It was just right in the middle of our dinner, which wasn't very good for eating your dinner. So, apart from that, Darwin to me is dengue fever cases, wandering around the ward in various stages of getting better or bad in bed, and that sort of thing,

09:00 and that was what it was. I'm sorry. But I was not allowed out. Yes. And I was only there about three weeks. See, I'm only there a little while at all these places.

How big was the hospital?

It's a big hospital. Mmm. Big hospital. Lovely veranda where we slept. Beautiful. Great big veranda, and you had your beds all along the window

09:30 and you could see right around everywhere: all the boats that had been sunk, all around the wharf. You could see all that as far as that went, but as far as anything else, no. Donald could tell you more. He was

up at Larrakeyah Barracks while I was there, and he didn't leave when I left, either.

What did you do, in the limited spare time you had, what would you do?

10:00 What did we do? Well, we had lounges and we used to lounge on the lounges. That's all you could do. You couldn't go out. You couldn't do anything. He just came and saw me of an evening. We did what newly engaged couples do. Yes. And I don't know how long he stayed there after I went down to Larrimah.

10:30 It was just, you know, conversation by letter then. And that was, what do you call, crossed out [censored]. What do you call that?

Oh, censored.

Censored. Yes, that was all censored. He did come all the way down to visit me once.

11:00 And they gave a dinner for me, and this is the ward, the hospital. And Donald and I disappeared in the middle of the dinner. We didn't want the dinner. We just wanted to see each other. So that was the end of that. And we had to go five miles in to ring up home. And you used to have to wait and wait and wait for hours and hours to ring up. But that's Larrimah though.

11:30 I wasn't in touch with anyone at Darwin, except Donald. You didn't get a chance. Unless you wrote, you didn't get a chance to get in touch with people much. You couldn't ring them up. Wouldn't want to do that every day. Got there about eight o'clock. And I think it was about one o'clock when we got home. Yes. No, well, Darwin,

12:00 I just went from day-to-day and then one day I was told, "You're going south now, so pack your bag and get on the train and off you go to the next spot."

Where was the next place?

The next place was Katherine. And we went, I think I got up to then. We went down to Pine Creek on the train, which was just like a cattle train, and then we got onto a bus and went to Katherine.

12:30 And I didn't see much of Katherine either, because I was only there for two or three weeks, too. And I missed out going on the one trip they went to, down the gorge [Katherine Gorge], but I suppose everybody goes to the gorge now, so it doesn't really matter. But there were several soldiers in my ward from Donald's unit, so I asked them who they liked best as a lieutenant,

13:00 and they said, "Donald," so I can remember that. (Thunder). Ooh, I got stuck in the toilet when it went like that. It was just as if. Ooh. Yes. You don't mind thunder? What does that do to the sound?

The recorder? Oh, it's fine.

That's all right, yes.

13:30 **Just so no one gets hurt.**

Yes, that's right. So that's all about Katherine. I can't tell you anything about Katherine. I can tell you about Larrimah. Now I've told you, I can't remember what I've told you and what I haven't. But Larrimah, I did tell you, was everything, but the tents were our homes.

14:00 I was horrified when I saw the toilet first because it was only, there were only three nurses to the whole thing, I think, and they had these toilets, you know, in a row, about four or five toilets. I don't know who was going to use the others. That surprised me somewhat. And there wasn't any surgery. As far as I remember, there wasn't any surgery much going on there. It was mostly diarrhoea down there,

14:30 very bad diarrhoea, because nobody was getting hurt, because nobody was getting shot at. We did have several lots of Aboriginals there, and the rest of the tribe came in. But I told you about the time I went out to pick this little baby up, didn't I? Now. Yes, I wasn't in charge then. Golly, I was one of the lowly ones.

15:00 **What was the condition of the Aborigines there? Their living conditions?**

Well, they were tribal. You know, just living in their tribes, and I think they lived all right. Probably better than before we took over. But they weren't, later on they seemed to become working on the properties and things, but there was a property that we went to

15:30 when we were living in Larrimah. I can't remember the name of it now. It was some big station, and we were asked there to afternoon tea, and we had a proper English afternoon tea. And we had Aboriginal maids with their uniforms, and white caps on.

16:00 They came in and served us for afternoon tea. And that was very interesting. We didn't see much of the property, only the afternoon tea. Yeah. We did a few things there. Not much, though, except going down to the blue lake. And I'll never forget. I've heard of so many blue lilies these days, but no one had ever heard of blue lilies before that. Swimming among them was lovely. But I never, ever enquired whether there were crocodiles anywhere.

16:30 Nobody thought about them, and yet our padre, up at Adelaide River, was supposed to have been taken by a crocodile. He went out one day and he never came back, so they presumed he was. So I suppose, they're up there, and I could have been too. What else did we do down there?

17:00 We didn't do very much.

Were the Americans down there?

Oh, that's right. I have to tell you about the Americans. We had no X-ray in our hospital. It was only another one that they call a CCS, which is a camp like a hospital. And the Americans invited us to dinner, and they put on a lovely dinner for us, until they got to the jelly.

17:30 And they put the jelly out and it hadn't set, so they were mortified by the jelly not being set. But that's the only time you saw them. I never took a patient there to be X-rayed. All I did was to go to dinner. They were very nice and hospitable, and they were a fair way away from us. But that's what they did. The only ones I ever saw. They were there.

18:00 **Did you know about the tensions between Australians and Americans?**

Yes. Yes. Down south, down south. Oh, well. No, no. It was just talk. Just talk. When I married, which was, I have not been married yet, have I? No. Oh, I'll have to tell you when I get married, and I'll tell you all about them then.

18:30 This is the only Americans I met up there, and they'd be few and far between. So, when I'd been there quite some time, I got the word that the unit was coming down. And it was a New South Wales unit, but the whole unit had to move together, so the unit moved south. We were the first people that had gone down by road to Adelaide.

19:00 So we, yes, we hopped on these trucks and off we went. The nurse knew I had been sick, ah, the matron of the hospital knew I had been sick, because she came up to me and said to me, "I'm sorry, I didn't know. I didn't hear about you being sick. I would have brought you back and had you looked at." But she apologised very devoutly about that,

19:30 and we went down south. And the nights were very cold and we had nothing but summer uniforms. And we had a marvellous time, because we stopped at various places. The first day we had lunch at a station place, and they gave us a rodeo afterwards, to entertain us. And if we stayed at a camp, a soldiers' camp, they gave us wonderful meat and that sort of thing.

20:00 We went to, had a lunch, underground, for us, and what else happened on the way down. That was as far as Adelaide River, that we were going, and it was all just an open truck. And as I say, we were filthy. We didn't have much to wear. And finally, we got to…can I describe anything else?

20:30 No, I don't think so. Finally we got to Adelaide, ah, Alice Springs and we stayed there for the night. I saw more of Alice Springs then than I saw when we were going up, so of course we'd go down the town and see everything then. But we were off again the next morning. No we weren't. No we weren't. We didn't go down south by bus.

21:00 Delete that. We went down, when we got to Adelaide River, ah, Alice Springs, we got onto the train, the old Ghan [train running between Alice Springs and Adelaide; named after Afghanistani camel drivers] and the one they say you could get out and pick daisies and get back in the train again, and it hadn't started, something like that. And it took us days and days to get down there,

21:30 and the only places we stopped at down there were, I don't think there was food on the train. I think we must have stopped at places where you could get food. But there was something happened before then, too. We went to a place that is quite well known and they had clothes without coupons. Now, what was the name of that place? I can't remember. That was in the bus.

22:00 We got out of the bus, rushed up the street, and bought all the clothes we could possibly find. That was when we got some clothes, that's right. I knew there was something about clothes. Yes, and then we went by the train, which was terribly boring. I can't remember about food at all, but we finally got into Adelaide. And the matron of the Adelaide Hospital was down there to meet us, and she took one look at us

22:30 and was so horrified at what we were wearing, which was still our summer uniforms, and you can imagine what we looked like. So she took us to the hospital and had us outfitted, and bathed and whatnot. And from there we went to our various places. Like, I went back to Lady Duggan and was there quite a while before I went back to Tasmania. And then, I was sent up to Campbell Town Hospital.

23:00 And was there for quite some time. And that is where I mostly met wounded soldiers. They were ones that had been sent back, you know, badly wounded ones that had been sent back from places where they were, and that's what was mostly in the first ward I went into.

23:30 So, yes. I got married soon after I came down there, got married in Hobart, by my father. And my mother, she had a wonderful spread for us, considering she had coupons and whatnot. I had a marvellous time.

24:00 And that's the time we met the Americans. We went to, we stayed at Wrest Point for a few days and the place was just packed, absolutely packed with, you could imagine how the Australians would resent them. They just took over everything. There were only the two places. There was the place when we came back to Melbourne, and we stopped at the Esplanade Hotel, at St Kilda, and that was just absolutely chock-a-block [full] with them too.

24:30 So that's the only times I've seen Americans. So we got married. We had a honeymoon down at Blackman's Bay.

What year was that?

That was 1943 we were married. And then, we only had two weeks, two weeks leave, and we went up to Launceston and we got in the train, and we had to go down to Western Junction,

25:00 where he went one way and I went straight on to my hospital, and it was very, very sad. I was crying on the train. And back to work. I was there for quite some time. And I got that awful pain back again, and that's the time down there that they called the psychiatric nurse, because they didn't know what was the matter with me.

25:30 Anyway, after that, this is all after I'd been to Campbell Town for a fair while. I'll have to tell you about that, yes. The ones that were well enough in the ward that I was in, used to what they called 'go over the pipeline' to the pub, of a night, and it my job to tuck them back into bed when they came back from being over the pipeline.

26:00 It took quite a while to get them back into bed and stop them talking. They used to just 'yabber, yabber, yabber, yabber', and they were supposed to be in bed hours ago. But that was your routine; routine evening duty that was. And that was the biggest thing they did over there: walk the pipeline. And another night, there was a riot.

26:30 And I can't remember who was in the riot. Whether it was the nurses in a riot. I was the nurse there that was all in among it, and I had to call the head doctor to come down and calm the riot. He was like - he used to remind me of Napoleon or someone like that. He was a little tough little man, and he quelled the riot in no time, but apart from that it was mainly routine.

27:00 It was very, very cold. I was freezing cold, and when I came off duty I used to have rum and raspberry to warm me up every evening. And yes, well, finally, Donald, all this time, Donald had gone back up to New Guinea again, and become so sick he nearly died, with the dermatitis. So he came home in a hospital ship,

27:30 and he was still very sick when he was over on the mainland. So I don't know whether I got out of hospital first or whether he got out of hospital. But we both got out much at the same time, invalided out, and there we were. So we went to Portland for a while, where Donald comes from, and we lived in Portland for a year.

28:00 He worked in, where he was before he went to the army, in the meatworks, and I wasn't working because I wasn't too good. And he came home one day and he said, "I've been given the job of head of the freezer." And he said, "You've got to tell me now whether you want to go to Hobart or stay in Portland."

28:30 And me trembling, you know, I said, "We'll go to Hobart", which we did. And that's where we stayed until we came over here, to Melbourne. And when we were going to Hobart, oh, that's when my father got us the shop, the grocer's shop, and we had half the house.

29:00 And the little - I've told you all about this, haven't I - the little haemophiliac boy. And I was trying to have children. (Thunder). Can you stop when this is on, or not?

Oh, no, no, it doesn't matter.

You just laugh. Oh, I was all the time trying to have children, and not having them there. But I had one.

29:30 I had one there. No, I didn't. No, we stopped because we couldn't get into a house. We lived in the house with the shop. Well, then we moved down because we sold that one and got another shop. And we moved down to Sandy Bay, and there we lived in a room, one room with a veranda, and all the old ladies lived there, and they all cooked in the same kitchen.

30:00 And I used to get all the complaints from all of them, in the kitchen. You know, they told me everything, everything that happened. But it was a nice place. It was near the beach, and I lost my engagement ring down there in the sand. You know, putting my hand in the sand. Never found that again. And I had the one baby down there, and then we had to move out because we couldn't live in one room. So we lived in one room, after that,

30:30 we lived in one room, we lived in a veranda and a small sitting room and a bathroom, and a kitchenette type thing. Very, very small. And we had the baby, the one baby. Lovely baby. He's 55. He'll be 55 this

year. He's got, do you want me to tell you about his jobs or anything like that, or not? You don't want that?

31:00 **Well, in brief you can.**

Just briefly, he's done very well; he's in charge of the superannuation of the postal department. He has Meniere's disease [fluctuating hearing loss, tinnitus and aural fullness], which is making him deafer and deafer, so he's going to have to stop work soon. He's the first one. And then I discovered that I was having the second one. That's in that place on the veranda.

31:30 And I got very sick with my kidney and I had to go into hospital. And then when I came out, I had to put my eldest son into a home, because my mother had gone into a hospital to have an operation. So I went to this terrible home and they're dreadful places. They took him off the bottle, put him on a cup, and they weren't allowed to have toys or anything like that. They stood up in bed and they poked them with a teaspoon of vegemite,

32:00 and things like that, these poor little things. And they weren't allowed to have toys in bed, nothing at all. And I used to go, I used to stay there for the night, and I used to go in and put him to sleep, to bed at night, and one night I had an appointment with the doctor, and I was late. He knew I was late. He was only about 11 months. And he took it out on me. He kicked me, you know,

32:30 and he wouldn't look at me after that for about a couple of weeks. He came good, but it must have affected him, you know, I felt bad and it must have affected him, I think. So, then we were having the second baby and I was pretty sick. So we went to live with my mother and we lived with her. We had the second baby all right.

33:00 I wasn't allowed to live, oh, that's when Dad got us this house, but we had to go to court to get into the house. Then I wasn't allowed to go into the house until I got someone to look after me. So we got into that house, and the baby, he was all right. There was only 15 months in between the two of them. And then I discovered I got stones in my kidney again,

33:30 so to make a long story short, I went over to Melbourne, and I had it taken out in St Vincent's, my kidney, because I haemorrhaged too much. And then I had these two tiny babies, one was 12 and one was 15 months, to bring home and look after, so that was pretty much hell.

34:00 But we got through it. We got through it. And Donald still worked in the shop, but he felt it was too much with me and the kids and everything, so he moved out of the shop and went to move into the Mercury paper, and he worked in there until there was the recession, and we couldn't stay there. No. No. That was further ahead. No.

34:30 We lived in that house and stayed four years until Donald found a beautiful house in Lindisfarne on the water, with a jetty in front of us and everything, and we stayed there for four years until he had to come over to the mainland. And that was the story, more or less, of our life.

So tell us, I'm going to go back a little to more general questions on the war experience.

Mine was very limited, wasn't it?

35:00 **Not really. Different kind of war.**

Different kind of war all together. Yeah.

We've been interviewing people who had experience in munitions factories and that's all they did for the war.

Yeah. My sister was in a munitions factory for a while.

Everybody's got their little place somewhere.

Yes. Yes. They have, haven't they?

35:30 She was a teacher and she went into a munitions factory. Yes. Well, you wanted to know more about the war.

Yes, well, tell us how you felt about the Japanese at the time.

At the time. Oh, at the time, I don't know. Nothing seemed to be as bad as Auschwitz,

36:00 when they first opened that up. I didn't think that anything could happen as bad as that. But this was different somehow. I was worried about George, but couldn't do anything about it. Wasn't my world. I could only live my world. About everybody altogether.

36:30 When I was in the army I had a good time. I had, mostly, and looking after people, well, I was doing that. That was part of the job I went on with before. It was not as if I'd gone into anything new. Things I've gone through, things that you know, have hurt me very badly, like the polio epidemic and things like that,

37:00 were some of the worst things that could happen to anybody, I think, in that sort of field of nursing. But see, I wasn't in the war. I wasn't actually in the war. I was on the fringes of everything and I was enjoying myself too. I got married. I got engaged. I mean I got engaged and got married,

37:30 and about the Japanese, well, I hated them. But I tell you what made me more angry than anything in this whole world, when people voted for other people's sons to go to Vietnam, because I had two sons, two sons that were to be voted in. And I think that was the most terrible thing people could do to anybody.

38:00 **Did they end up going, did they?**

No, thank goodness. Thank goodness. But you went through all that time. I mean, for 15 months, there's 15 months difference between them, you went through all that time waiting and wondering and not knowing. And he, my eldest son, he's spoken up in several court cases, spoken up for people with that sort of thing. There was so much feeling at that time.

38:30 Dreadful. How would you feel about it? You'd be younger wouldn't you? How old are you?

Oh, I'm 27, so I was born after Vietnam had taken place.

Yes.

But Colin [interviewer] probably would be.

Were you there in the Vietnam War?

No, I was born in '69.

Oh, you were born in '69. Yes. My sons were born in '48 and '49.

39:00 So you can imagine, it was a terrible time. We were so lucky. Yes. But about the war itself, you're talking to me about war, it's dreadful.

I suppose, more with your own experience as a nurse.

As a nurse.

Did you see people who were wounded as a result of,

39:30 **you know, being involved in combat?**

Everywhere, in all the hospitals you go to, there are. Yeah. I mean we had them when we were down at Campbell Town, ones that had come down from up there somewhere, and they were pretty sick but they weren't acute, because they'd been sick for a long time.

40:00 They'd had their wounds for a long, long time. They were just pretty bad with them and I don't see that some of them would have had much of a life with them either. But, it didn't touch me as war. It didn't touch me. It's the Japanese more. I was more concerned with George.

40:30 Isn't it funny? You sort of live in a little hole. But we were terrified with him. All the time before, and all the time he was in Timor as a prisoner, and it was a year or so before we found he'd been sunk in the ship. So, that took my war over, more or less.

How did it affect you?

41:00 It's just always on your mind. Always on your mind. Never goes. I'm always still thinking about him.

Tape 5

00:30 **All right. So, we're recording once more. And I'd like you now, if you can, to just tell us the story of your brother and when he joined up and where he went and what led to him being a prisoner.**

Right. George was, he, I told you he was not much good at school, and Dad found him a job on a farm.

01:00 And he wasn't terribly settled on that. The first farm he liked, and just to learn different types of farms. And he was living with an old man and he wasn't very good to him, I don't think. So, I suppose he's like any young fellow, without a job, and he got my mother to sign so that he went in early. He wasn't as early as me. The last time I saw George,

01:30 I think so, yes, the last time, we went on the back of a motorbike. He got a motorbike, his pride and joy. We went for a ride, he and I, and we came around the corner into another car, and he went over the front and I went over the back. And my legs were badly bruised, but his head, he was in hospital with concussion and whatnot.

02:00 So, that was the last time I saw him. And the bike just stayed there, you know. Nothing was ever done about it at all. Of course, it must have been so hard for my mother, because I was in the army. I was in Hobart, I think. I don't know. What year did he go away? I can't remember the years. No. And then he, of course, went like everybody else to Darwin,

02:30 or the Northern Territory. He sent us a lot of postcards and a lot of photos with the same sort of views of the bush, and the views of the riot in Darwin. I can't tell you much about the riot, but it was the post office, and all the windows broken and that. He was there a long time,

03:00 but I wasn't home, so I didn't read a lot of his letters. And I don't know what he did, of course, and then, of course, the next time we heard he was off, going off to Timor. And I have read the book since, The Doomed Battalion, so I know more or less what happened to them.

03:30 It wasn't very long before they were just - all those battalions, you know, the three of them, the ones at Rabaul and the other ones at Borneo - and they were just all wasted. They never fought. They just got there and never fought a shot. But I did, afterwards, I did meet a person I know, a friend of his, and he said, "George looked after me when I was sick." That's the only word I got apart from a few letters to Mother at home.

04:00 And so then we had the notice to say he was a prisoner of war, and we didn't hear anything for a year, two years. And then we got this notice to say he was sunk in a ship on the way to Japan. So that's George. He was a placenta previa baby and he was very sick when he was a child. And he was always a great favourite among us all

04:30 because he was the youngest. And yeah, that's a very sad story. Right.

Did you write to George in that time?

No. No.

Sorry, we just had to pause for the phone. So you were saying you didn't actually write to George?

05:00 No. No, it wasn't that sort of, he was the baby. I don't know, he was just, I just wanted to hug him. He wasn't the sort of person you write letters to. It's very hard to say, but he wasn't. I just wanted to hug him.

05:30 **During those two years, when you didn't hear anything, you must have been terribly worried about him.**

We were all worried. We had, it was worry from the time he went away there, and I would say it was only weeks, or it might have been a couple of months or so, I don't know, time goes,

06:00 but you worried every minute until you hear something. I think there was something he wrote. No, I don't think he wrote. Yes, he did. He wrote cards when he was a prisoner, several cards that Mother has. But it was always to Mother, and it was always done through us all, you know. We all wished him our love and all that sort of business, and yeah.

06:30 **What sort of things did he say in the cards?**

He was always cheerful. Never said anything much about what was happening. That's a long time ago now. And they're home. All the letters are home. All the letters from Darwin and that are at home. He was not a scholar. Perhaps that's why we didn't correspond very much.

07:00 Yes. So, yes, what can I say. Just wasted. Because everybody must say that, mustn't they. But they were. They were put there and wasted. Don't they waste a lot in war? They don't think. They just thought that we were going to, that we were going to, I don't know. What was I going to say? I don't know. I've lost it.

07:30 But they just thought that the Japanese were wanting to take Australia, and they were saving that. But they were quite wrong. They have such wrong ideas. We were worried all the time up there. As soon as they came down into Singapore, that was just one constant worry to everybody here in Australia, I would say.

08:00 And all that must have taken a great deal out of people, because that went on for years. And nothing much you can do about it. I didn't feel like writing to him, because he knew I was there, and I used to send messages in Mother's letters. Don't make me feel bad because I didn't write to him.

That's not what I meant.

I'm sorry.

08:30 He didn't write to me. He only wrote to Mother.

I can only imagine it must have been terribly hard to have any kind communication with anybody at the time.

Yes. It was. One person was really quite enough, and you said everything you could into one card. And when he was a prisoner they were just very short. I suppose you've heard about them lots of times.

09:00 Nothing much. Just a few notes you could put in. Cross out things. Yeah, weren't very many of them.

I don't think anybody could actually write to somebody in a prisoner of war camp.

Yeah. That's right. No, they had a card. Didn't they have a card? Yes, when he was a prisoner of war, I'm sure he had cards.

09:30 **I've heard sometimes they had a proforma and they just ticked the box.**

Well, that's what I'm trying to get out. That's what I was trying to get out.

'I am sick', 'I am well'.

Yes. Yes. It would be.

At that time, did you know, or did you hear, much information about prisoner of war camps?

I followed every bit of it.

10:00 European prisoner of war camps were quite a different kettle of fish, I felt in my mind. When they had Changi and all those places, that was very bad. And Donald's sister's husband was on Rabaul. He was one of the ones who owes his life to the fact that he escaped and went over the island.

10:30 He's got a notebook. He wrote all his, I think they might have it in the army. I don't know. His name's Harry Maloney. And he escaped across the island, breathing through tubes in the water and all that sort of thing. And when he came home - he got off the island off the other side, and I don't know the details of it - he was just like a Belsen person [thin, like a person in Belsen-Belsen concentration camp], you know, he was so thin,

11:00 and then they sent him up to New Guinea, which I think was terrible to do. Any rate, he's died in the last couple of years. He had Alzheimer's disease. Nice fellow. Yes, you asked me if I knew anyone else, and I didn't. That has just come up. I didn't know about anybody else. Most of them were all Donald's friends from Darwin, and of course,

11:30 I didn't hear much. He was in hospital for months and months up there and I didn't know it. I was sending him letters, and he was sending me letters, but he wasn't saying anything, you know. And consequently, I wasn't saying anything much, so yeah. You forget. Look, there are parts; you go through lots of things in your life. But you don't forget that.

12:00 Anzac Day I don't go and march; I used to as a Girl Guide, but that's all. But he's always there. And there's no more 20th/40th Battalion marching now. They're all gone. So I can't even watch the battalion or whatever it is, now.

You mentioned before about the fall of Singapore.

12:30 **Do you remember where you were when that happened?**

No. I was just nursing and things were happening, I can tell you. Yes, I can tell you. I was coming up the steps and I was nursing in the hospital in Hobart, and one of my friends, nursing friends, told me, that it had been taken. And I burst into tears. I can remember that now. Isn't that funny? Yeah,

13:00 she was going up or down the steps. She was coming up, I think. Mmm. So, that's what happened.

Along with…

There was a terrible fear. Everything was overpowering us. That was the worst, when we felt the worst was coming, you know.

13:30 You lost your confidence then.

I was going to say, along with the attack of Pearl Harbor, it really changed the war around so it was much more closer to home for Australians.

Yes. But we were so foolish, I mean, to let them come down by bicycle. We were the English who were unconquerable.

14:00 That's what I tell you about being brought up English. We were unconquerable. Let them come down on bicycles, those…I don't know. I've often lost confidence in them. Oh, dear.

I was just reading in the paper about a Japanese soldier who lived in the jungle for 30 years, after the war,

14:30 **didn't know the war was over. When he came out he said, "We lost the war? How could we have been so sloppy?"**

Oh, gorgeous. Oh, dear. Oh, well.

I guess, being at Darwin, the threat was very real,

15:00 **and most of the air raids had taken place just before you arrived there?**

Oh, no. that was what? That was 1942, wasn't it? 1941 or '42, I can't remember.

I'm not sure.

No, I think it was '40. I don't think it was that long, but our hospital was the 119th AGH [Australian General Hospital] that I was nursing at, was bombed at, I've got a picture of it. I've got The War in Australia [historical book]

15:30 and I've got a picture of it, and that was Berimah or Banks or one of those suburbs [of Darwin]. And this was a new hospital built after that. That's why the nurses were all sleeping in tents, and it hadn't been finished when I was down there, and a lot of the wards were tents. So it wasn't that long afterwards, so yeah.

How did you feel to be moving into what was pretty much a front line?

16:00 Well, I had no fear then. No. It was just a job. I didn't fear the Japanese then, because they'd moved on. They didn't want to come for us and they were up in the sky all day. You'd see them up there. I couldn't believe it because they'd only said that they'd bombed Darwin on such and such a day. But every day they were up there.

16:30 But they never bombed me.

So were they Zeros [Japanese fighter aircraft] that you were seeing? Fighter planes or bombers?

I don't know. I think they must have been, no, they must have been lookout planes, because they never bombed in the daytime, I don't think. It was a moonless night they used to bomb.

17:00 Yeah, they never bombed, or I never had any fear of them. I suppose I did at first, but they became quite a familiar sight. You've finished, have you?

No. Sorry about that.

17:30 Will you be long?

(Interruption) OK, now, I wanted to ask you, in your time in the Northern Territory, were there plans for evacuation, and did you do drills at all?

No.

18:00 **Were you aware of the Brisbane Line?**

The Brisbane Line? Yes, that's the one they were going to go to and they were going to give it away, weren't they? Was it something like that?

Yeah. Retreat down below the Brisbane Line.

Yes, that's right.

Give away the top part. Did you know about that at the time?

Yes, I think I did, but I didn't take much notice of it, because I didn't believe that. I didn't believe it was going to go that far.

18:30 When did that come up, because at that time I must have been feeling alright. Not when they took Singapore, no, I don't know. I was aware of the Brisbane Line, but by the time, I don't know. I don't know; it doesn't ring a bell. I mean, it does, but not my emotions.

Now you were seeing Don whenever you could.

19:00 **How often were you seeing Don around this time?**

Around which time? Well, whenever I could. It's in Darwin, I saw him and then when I went down to Larrimah, he came down that time, and…

19:30 **Was it usually at night?**

Yes, it was usually at night. That's the only time he would have off.

How long were you at Larrimah for?

I can't tell you exactly. I would say round about four months, I don't know. I ought to have my notes.

20:00 No, I don't know. I don't know. We came down in April. No, it wasn't very long, because I was still in

Adelaide River at Christmas time, and all these things had happened since then. That's pretty hard to say, isn't it? All these things, one after the other.

20:30 No, I was only up there from November; I wasn't there a year. I was there from November until the end of April the next year. So I went to all those places in that time. They must have just wanted someone to plonk here, there and everywhere.

21:00 **Right.**

Times I don't remember mostly, but I just fit in with other times.

I'm just going to refer to my notes for a moment. All right. I'm going to ask you some more general type questions.

21:30 Mmm.

About all of your time in the war. You were in fairly difficult circumstances, and everyone was doing their bit, but at times it must have been difficult to deal with the worry about your brother,

22:00 **and the worry about the Japanese. What sort of things did you do to cope?**

Ah, what did I do to cope? I don't know. I tell you what, I know what I do now to cope. You just work, oh, I know. I'll tell you what we did up in Darwin, no, at Adelaide River.

22:30 They used to have a lot of dances for the airmen, and I don't know how close to the airport we were, and everybody that was around used to go to these dances. And they were really pathetic. They were like that, you know (shaky), and all they wanted to talk about was their wives or their girlfriends, and their families, and dance,

23:00 and that's all they wanted to do. So, I went to those quite often and I found great pleasure in doing that. There was one of the airmen was killed up there and he was quite a famous one. I can't remember his name, Griffith? No, I can't remember his name. But he was killed in a car, going home from one of these dances, I believe. That's what I heard, anyway.

23:30 But apart from the other entertainment, that's about all there would be. I mean there wasn't anything there except the hospital.

Were you still a Christian?

No. You want to know why, or not know?

Yes.

You do want to know why? Well, my father was a minister, and my mother,

24:00 she was always very, very religious and she knew all the bible and she used to give lectures on the bible, and the prayer book, and whatnot. When she died, no, she didn't die till years after my father. My father, she didn't make him happy when he was dying, didn't give him any comfort, and as I was very close to my father, and I just thought,

24:30 "Well, if it's no comfort for him, it's certainly no comfort for me." So that's why.

Interesting.

You haven't heard that one before.

No, not from a minister's daughter. Was there ever a time when you turned your mind back to God?

25:00 No, no, never.

Did you have a sense, in the things that were happening around you, and you obviously saw a lot of people dying, from fever or from wounds, babies who were dying. Did that give you a sense of a divine hand,

25:30 **or were you more of a fatalist?**

I think I had so many times when I nearly died in my life I just take what comes. I mean, I lost my kidney, but I nearly lost my life there. That was very close, extremely close, sixteen pints of blood and the family crying over me. And various times that has happened to me, at various times since.

26:00 So, you just take what comes. They say, "Well, you've got to go to hospital and have an operation this day" and you've got to go to intensive care afterwards, you just take what comes. And if you don't, well, if you don't have a go at it, well. That's all you want to know, isn't it?

As one of a generation that went through a world war,

26:30 **was there anything that you learnt from the experience?**

Yes, people are so stupid. Yes, yes, yes. That's what I learnt. But I don't know. My husband, he was a good man. He did a good job and I've heard a lot of good things about him. And he, we were all doing our jobs, I suppose.

27:00 You see, it's different if you're in a real war. We weren't fighting people. I would have found that vastly different. So, no. I don't know what you asked me now. What did you ask me? I've forgotten it. Did I answer it any rate? Did I answer it satisfactorily?

Yes. So what has Don told you about his experience?

Nothing. Nothing.

27:30 He didn't go away in the first troops because his father was pretty sick. And he joined the, what do you call it?

The militia?

Militia, yes. And he was in the militia army. And I don't know if he felt badly about it, I can't say what he feels badly about, but he was up in the Northern Territory for a long, long, time, and he,

28:00 it's very hard. And see, he never wrote to me when he was so sick. I don't suppose he could write to me. I've asked him about the war, but I don't think he was there any time before he was sick. He's told me about the things in the Northern Territory, which were pretty terrible they had to do. I told you about that, didn't I? They went out in the mallee scrubs [mangrove swamps],

28:30 up to their shoulders in water and mud, cleaning out mallee scrubs to make entrances for troops to come into or whatever, and they did that day after day. It must have been pretty awful. Apart from that, there was boredom, so that part of his war must have been very boring, but I don't think he was up there very long before he was in hospital. That's just my opinion.

29:00 **Do you think he was affected by the experience?**

No, he's the sort of man who is as he is. He doesn't get, no, no, I don't think so. I don't know. I have tried, as I said, I tried to find out what happened, but the only thing I feel in my mind is he wasn't there long enough.

29:30 He was flown from where he was down to Port Moresby, and he was there for months. And he was really sick. I mean he had this dermatitis in his eyes, and his ears, and his mouth, and everywhere on him. And he had a pretty terrible time. So there wasn't much to tell, I suppose. He told me all about that. So perhaps there wasn't much to tell. Well, that would affect him. It still affects him now, this dermatitis. Yeah.

30:00 **Given that you marched in Anzac parades as a Girl Guide, and you didn't march afterwards, do you feel a part of the Anzac tradition?**

Oh, sort of no, sort of, yes, I like the Anzac tradition, the idea of it,

30:30 but in a way I don't like what happens. I went back to the army; I belong to the RSL [Returned and Services League]. I haven't been able to get into any of the things while I've been in Melbourne, but at any rate, I don't know any Melbourne people. I mean, it was in Sydney, a Sydney place [unit] I was in, and there was only one nurse and myself went from Tasmania,

31:00 so I haven't belonged, I haven't been able to belong. But for years and years and years living it, and living it, and living it. And I suppose some people want to do that, but some people don't, and I'm one of the ones that's not, I'm afraid. I went to the 75th dinner for the nursing profession,

31:30 Royal Nurses in Tasmania, and that was lovely, getting together with all of them but not all the time. But I've nothing against them but it's just not my cup of tea.

And do you know any songs or poems from that time?

Songs or poems.

32:00 Mostly from the First World War ones were the ones we used to learn. But I can't sing now because my voice has gone.

Can you tell us the words?

Yeah, from the First World War. Donald tells me all sorts of dirty ones from the Second World War.

Any of them would be fine, if you can remember the words.

But I can't remember the words, no.

32:30 No. I can't remember that fellow who died in the First World War. And I used to think he was so

romantic. I can't even remember his name. No, we all knew the First World War, like, I don't know, I'm too old. 'The poppies are blooming in…' that sort of thing, sentimental sort of songs that you wouldn't want to sing now. No. I'm sorry,

33:00 I can't remember any songs. Can't do anything like that, with you. But I did know the poems. I knew them all. He was an Englishman. No. I don't retain those.

Now, seeing as this is a permanent archive, it's hopefully going to last for hundreds of years, and be available to future generations of Australians, is there anything that you haven't told us so far,

33:30 **that you haven't told anybody, that you'd like to tell us for the permanent record?**

No, I think I'm pretty open. I don't think I've left…it's been very important to me. And this telling it is terribly important. I was just, when it came along, I just thought, "Lovely" because I did so many things and I've wanted to tell them.

34:00 **And you had a very important role, in the work that you were doing, it was very important to supporting the whole country's effort.**

Yes. Yes, it was, it was very important and I feel proud. But I've told you that about that stupid army. But you better not put that down.

34:30 You don't want to have any more wars, because when you realise how stupid they are, you don't want any more. And they're still going on, aren't they? Oh, well.

What do you think of the adventures that Australia's involved in nowadays?

I think they're absolutely appalling. Absolutely appalling. I think we've got plenty of adventures we can have ourselves.

35:00 Oh, dear. I don't know. What do you feel about it?

It's not about us. You're the star today.

Well, I've told you what I think.

How did you feel about the Vietnam War?

Oh, I've told you that: pure anger from the beginning to the very end. And the only time I felt any light was when Jim Cairns [Dr Jim Cairns, Federal Labour politician for many years, and Minister 1972-75] got that big march together.

35:30 I wanted to march and Donald wouldn't let me, because he was working for the Herald and he said someone might see me, so.

Do you usually do what your husband tells you to do?

Oh, in that case I did, yes. Not always.

Were you involved in any other action, or activities, against the Vietnam War?

36:00 No, only, there was nothing much other only marching, but I let my mouth be heard loud and clear everywhere I went. So that's about all I did. We moved over here in the middle of that.

How did you feel about Whitlam's dismissal?

Well, I'm a Labour Party voter,

36:30 because I was appalled by that, too. I can remember exactly when it happened. I was looking after my grandchild in the city park while his mother went to the dentist. And they were putting up pamphlets, and cameras were coming into the square, and I didn't know what it was all about, so they told me.

How did you feel?

37:00 I felt appalled. That's a word I'm fond of, isn't it? It's a word my sister's fond of.

Now, your memories of those six years of the war, are they the strongest memories that you have?

Yes. Yes.

What do you think of most?

37:30 I think mostly of the whole area, and George, and times that, no, I don't go back all that much. I just feel it's, we did what we could. I think that's about all. We did what we could. It was terrible. It could have been more terrible.

38:00 Yes. I'm glad you don't, hope you don't have to go anywhere, to war. A photographer.

So do I.

No way. So that's the end. I've felt terribly close to Timor. I feel I know Timor somehow. I feel very, very close to it.

38:30 Even now, when they got over, I rang up and congratulated the Timor Society. I just feel I know them, somehow. I wish I could do more, but I can't do anything now.

You rang the Timor Society when?

Yeah. When they won their war,

39:00 not the war, it was when they overtook the Indonesians.

How did you feel about Australia's involvement in Timor?

I felt wonderful. Just cause. A just cause. And see, I think to suit my own purposes, don't I? That's right.

How do you feel Australia's involvement in Timor

39:30 **is different from their involvement in something like Vietnam?**

Because we owe them so much. They did so much for us in war, and we turned our backs on them, and we just let them be, and we owed them something, I feel. So that is my main, because they stayed close to us, and they did such a tremendous lot for us. I've read all sorts of things. The Doomed Battalion is another one.

40:00 They all went back to Australia and left them in the hills there, and they looked after them for so long, in the hills there, and they looked after them for so long. They just left them, and they were mostly killed, most of those people who were left behind, which was the Timor people. So that's my reason.

Now, we've only got about two minutes left, is there anything you'd like to say to those future generations of Australians.

40:30 **Some kind of message you'd like to pass on?**

Oh, dear. That's, no, no. I can't say anything. I've said all I have to say about war and leave it up to them. They've got to learn their own way and they've got to make their own path. There we are.

41:00 I'm becoming a poet in all this. Yeah, someone's getting a laugh out of it, any rate. Oh, dear.

It's been absolutely wonderful. Thank you very much for that.

It's a pleasure. I didn't think I'd last because I hadn't had any breakfast, you see. So I got that drink and I was all right. OK.

Well, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW ENDS