



# Australian War Memorial

## Sound Collection

### ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** S00228

**TITLE:** Ms Leila Granger's service with the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force  
During the Second World War.

**INTERVIEWEE:** Ms Leila Granger

**INTERVIEWER:** Joyce Thomson

**RECORDING DATE:** 4 September 1984

**RECORDING LOCATION:** Bruce Hall, Canberra

**SUMMARY:**

**TRANSCRIBER:** WRITE*people*

**TRANSCRIPTION DATE:** 16 August 2004

GRANGER: My name is Leila Granger. I live in Goulburn.

THOMSON: Could you give me a few details about your childhood Ms Granger?

GRANGER: I am the eldest of three children, two girls and a boy, the boy being the youngest. I was brought up and educated in the country, my father being a grazier and I was educated in the Laidvale Primary School, a one-teacher school up until 6th grade and then we moved to the city of Goulburn and there I attended Goulburn High School. I completed my secondary education and left Goulburn to teach at the Lower Mummel (inaudible) subsidised school followed by the Rosalind subsidised school, which is situated near Crookwell.

THOMSON: And did you go through teacher training or was this a form of teacher training?

GRANGER: It was a form of teacher training because it was during wartime and we were paid by the Department of Education and under the local inspector and he came out and visited us. We were, in every sense of the word, a public school.

THOMSON: And where were you living?

GRANGER: I boarded with the people in the country and the subsidised idea, the parents of the pupils in the school had to provide some type of accommodation for you and generally you spent a month about in the different parents' homes and you took part in their everyday living.

THOMSON: ... a parents attitudes and expectations of the girls (inaudible)

GRANGER: Well perhaps after being brought up in the country and appreciating country life I think I was rather lucky in that my parents agreed that girls definitely needed education and it was expected that after you left school that okay you weren't required at home, you went out, got yourself a job and started to stand on your own two feet. During the depression it didn't really touch us very much in the country because we were self reliant and then when we moved to the city of Goulburn I think we were caught up on the usual secondary school activities, we played a lot of sport and I think we got on with the general business of living. When the war came it was slightly different. I remember going down in to the main street and

seeing the march through of the Snowy River men as they marched through to Sydney to join up as part of the recruiting bid for the army.

THOMSON: And did the war affect your teaching at all? There'd be fewer men when you were living with the family in the country, did you find that the women were doing more jobs because the men weren't there?

GRANGER: I certainly had to because I worked in the shearing shed at shearing time as a wool classer under my father's instruction and his eye, but we found too that getting people to work in the country and for the country people was very difficult because it seemed to be the country people, or at least that's how we felt, that they were the ones that seemed to join up very early. Whether they wanted to escape or not I don't know, but they seemed to be the ones that wanted to join up. When I'd finished my secondary school it was just expected that I would start work and when I decided that I wanted to join one of the women's services my father was rather reluctant, my mother went along with the idea, I think she had more of an adventuresome spirit than my father who was definitely head of the house. And because I was only 18 I had to get my father's permission before I could send in my application to join.

THOMSON: And how did you persuade him to give you permission?

GRANGER: After much talking really and much waving around of the application form and so on. And eventually I think was really persuaded him was the fact that his uncle had signed the paper for his daughter to join the air force and he felt that if it was good enough for him it was good enough for his daughter to go in as well. And I think that was the turning point when he gave – he signed his name gave permission and I very swiftly posted it away.

THOMSON: And then you were called up for your interview. Did you have to go to Sydney?

GRANGER: I had to go to Sydney for interview and medical and of course a shy country girl, the medical was quite an eye opener, but nevertheless you waited and waited and wondered whether or not you were going to be accepted and of course when the letter came with the Defence Department stamp, great excitement, you didn't know whether you wanted to open it or just sit and look at it.

THOMSON: And was it a male or female medical officer?

GRANGER: It was a collection of medical officers, all male and you went in your birthday suit generally from one little cubical to another where they tested eyes, tested ears and everything else. But from my remembrances they were all male.

THOMSON: And did you find that at all a trying experience?

GRANGER: I don't know whether it was trying or just part of my education. I rather feel it was part of my education because I certainly learnt a lot more about myself.

THOMSON: And then when you got the call-up notice did your parents go with you to Sydney or did you just put yourself on the train and go down?

GRANGER: No, if you were going to join up to fight for your country you have to learn to stand on your own two feet right from the word go, according to my parents. So I went down by train and got myself to Woolloomooloo and went from there on on my own.

THOMSON: And when you reached Woolloomooloo were their other WAAAF waiting?

GRANGER: Yes, other civilians and the WAAAF and so on and right you were one of the mob and you were shunted around here, there and everywhere, had your photograph taken, had a blood sample taken, had some injections for this and injections for that. Things that I hadn't even heard of that you had these injections.

THOMSON: And did you do an IQ test at that stage?

GRANGER: I can't remember if we did or not, but I think we did because we seemed to be doing all sorts of tests and the result of that then depended on what particular mustering you went into unless you really knew which mustering you wanted to go into.

THOMSON: And had you chosen a muster?

GRANGER: No, I just suggested I wanted something away from books and I can well remember his smirk and he said I'll give you a change and I finished up as a flight mechanic. I didn't even know what a flight mechanic did.

THOMSON: That interview then, was it a WAAAF officer and a RAAF officer interviewing you?

GRANGER: I think they were both there because I think they were both asking questions but I can remember the man saying we will give you a change.

THOMSON: And then you were put into a (inaudible) was it Bradfield Park?

GRANGER: To Bradfield Park, through the pearly gates with everyone saying you'll be sorry and we did wonder whether we would be or not because it was all so new and all so foreign but nevertheless we seemed to have survived.

THOMSON: And can you describe your feelings when you were grouped at Bradfield Park? Where were you accommodated?

GRANGER: Well when we saw our accommodation and were shown the ablution block et cetera, et cetera, and marched off to get our issue of uniform and so on, I think we were all in a state of complete bewilderment. Everything was happening all around us and we didn't know what the next step was going to be and we didn't even, I don't think, asked about food.

THOMSON: And where were you accommodated? Were you in a hut with 20 others?

GRANGER: Yes, in a hut with quite a number of others, some of whom snored, which was a new experience for me.

THOMSON: And did you form friends on that recruitment?

GRANGER: Yes, I formed friends on that recruit course, friends that I've kept in touch with ever since and I think probably we were partners in crime or a new experience, because they were all country girls that I formed friendships with, excepting a couple. But I've kept in touch with them and I think they were pretty lasting friendships.

THOMSON: And what sort of training were you given there?

GRANGER: Marching mainly. And of course check up to see if your smallpox vaccination had taken and as mine hadn't taken I was given another one and it didn't take so after the third one the medical officer assured me that there would be some reaction but there was a little bit of a pimple and I was a little bit of embarrassed about the size of the pimple. From then on our days seemed to consist of marching, eating, marching, eating, and that was it. And being fairly tall I seemed to be the one when the screamed out marker I had to hear it.

THOMSON: And did you get any lectures?

GRANGER: Yes, we had lectures on the air force, aircraft recognition, our health, I can't think of anything else, but I know we had a certain amount of lectures. Air force law and regulations, I think that came into it as well. But the aircraft recognition we had quite a bit of that.

THOMSON: And did you find it difficult?

GRANGER: Not particularly. They all looked alike. No, actually I found it quite interesting and I found it fascinating because I'd never really had much to do with aircraft before.

THOMSON: What did you think about the discipline? Was it enforced by a peer group or by the officers?

GRANGER: I think it was mainly enforced by our Corporal who took us for our marching. She seemed to be the one that had all the say. It was a Corporal de Vorneaux (inaudible) I think, from memory. And we just expected discipline. We were there to do as we were told

and to the best of our ability we did it because we didn't want to find out what happened if you didn't do as you were asked.

THOMSON: Did you go on a bivouac? Had they started bivouacs by then?

GRANGER: Yes, I went on a bivouac to Pittwater. We stayed in a an Air Training Corps camp which was fairly rugged but it was still good fun and we marched around through the streets and just marched through the bush and generally seemed to do very little.

THOMSON: What was that? Just for a weekend?

GRANGER: Yes, just for a weekend, but a great deal seemed to have been made of it in Bradfield Park that okay, at the end of your course we will have a bivouac and I didn't even know what the name meant but I was quite prepared to find out what it was.

THOMSON: Then you had a pass-out parade after that?

GRANGER: Yes, we had a pass-out parade and parents and people arrived to see them. Of course my parents didn't come down because okay there was no petrol and it would have been quite an excursion anyway. So our passing-out parade and so forth and with that I found that the next intake of flight mechanics wasn't to be much later and I was assigned to work in the hospital so as a very shy country girl I certainly found out some medical terms that I hadn't heard before and I was in a RAAF ward and they knew too that we were rather shy about things and they made the most of it.

THOMSON: Was that at Bradfield?

GRANGER: Yes, that was at Bradfield Park.

THOMSON: And how long were you at the hospital?

GRANGER: I think we were there a fortnight before there were sufficient flight mechanics, flight riggers and whatever assembled to send us off to Adelaide and then the great day came when we had our posting that we were all going to Adelaide. So we went by troop train.

THOMSON: How many of you went down there?

GRANGER: I think there was about 30 or 40 of us. There was quite a group of us.

THOMSON: Oh, as many as that?

GRANGER: Yes, there was quite a big group. Or I felt it was a big group from memory. And we travelled by troop train, we were fed at Albury and I think had to walk just about the length of the great long Albury platform and then we changed in Melbourne again and across. But for someone who had never travelled very much it was a great experience and I didn't mind the discomfort. I could sleep.

THOMSON: You were just sleeping in your seat or on the floor.

GRANGER: Yes, sleeping in your seat generally.

THOMSON: And was the discipline good on the train?

GRANGER: Yes. Everybody seemed to move around. Everybody knew everybody else just about anyway so it was just one of those things that they said you do and we did.

THOMSON: And then you arrived in Adelaide and where did you go there? Where were you going?

GRANGER: At the city parking station in Putney Street and I visited it last week and I find to my great regret that the city parking station has been pulled down. So that we were – the parking station was on the lower floor and the WAAAF were bedded down on the other two floors and we went across North Terrace to Exhibition Building for our meals and parades and



so on and they took great delight in showing us the dining hall and great delight in telling us that it was used at one time as a mortuary.

THOMSON: The sleeping arrangements, it would be just a large concrete area.

GRANGER: That's right, a large concrete area with WAAAF ...

THOMSON: No heating.

GRANGER: No heating whatsoever and Adelaide winter, because I think we went there August/September I think and October. So that we had the coldest part of an Adelaide winter in an area with no heating and cement floors.

THOMSON: And where were the ablutions?

GRANGER: I can't remember, but I'm sure we must have had some. I think they were on each floor.

THOMSON: And then you went each day to Number 4 school of technical training.

GRANGER: Yes. We went by tram to Goodwood, I think it was Goodwood it was called, and they were special areas where we had our different sections so we had an area where we did our technical training and filed away at bits of steel and bits of this and bits of that. Made C-clamps and whatever they deemed necessary for our education. We had a section where we did electricity, a section where we did technical drawing.

THOMSON: And how did you find that?

GRANGER: I thought it was great fun. I thought it was most interesting. I must admit I did get a bit bored at the filing away at the block of something or other that I had to square up and it never seemed to square up. But the electricity and the tech drawing and so on I found fascinating. I was thoroughly enjoying it.

THOMSON: And you had a RAAF instructor?

GRANGER: Yes, we had RAAF instructors all the way through with this technical part of course, and using electric drills and things like that, that at that time of course the flight mechanic area had only just opened up for WAAAF. There weren't too many of them that had been through before so I suppose in a way we were guinea pigs.

THOMSON: And was the instructor amiable or did he resent having to teach women?

GRANGER: I don't remember any feeling of resentment. I think they were very keen that we did well because I think it reflected perhaps on them too that okay if a WAAAF went out on to a station and did a good job it was part of their training that helped achieve that. But I never felt there was any resentment anywhere at all.

THOMSON: And what percentage of WAAAF got through the course?

GRANGER: Most of them and then they channelled off into their different musterings. So that some went to do their flight rigger course, some went to do flight mach and some went to do their instrument making.

THOMSON: And you then went to Ascot Vale for your advance training?

GRANGER: Yes, to 1 ES for our mechanical training where we were introduced to Moth Miners and so on and engines and starting up aircraft and starting procedures and all the mysteries of an aircraft engine.

THOMSON: And that was a RAAF/WAAAF course?

GRANGER: Yes, that was a RAAF/WAAAF course and most of the time we spent in what was called the bull ring, which is one of the show rings of the Showground, because this is the Melbourne Showground we're in now, and we spent some time of course in lecture halls and then out into one of the show rings which was aptly named the bull ring and there we started

Tiger Moths and various types of training aircraft, learnt the procedures and something about the engines.

THOMSON: And how did the women fare there when they were in competition with the men?

GRANGER: There didn't seem to be any competition at all. You were all just one and everybody did their best and just thoroughly enjoys themselves, learning something that was quite different to their ordinary everyday life, most of them. Some of the men of course had been motor mechanics and so on, it was okay for them, but I don't think there were very many women there – perhaps Hazel was the only one, who had ever had anything to do with an engine, a motor or anything else.

THOMSON: And then what did you do with your spare time?

GRANGER: Generally went in to Melbourne and had a meal or went to a picture show or else went to the picture show on the station and of course there was always Salvation Army huts and various areas where people wanted to entertain service people and sometimes we went to the Town Hall in Melbourne if there was a special show on. Before Christmas they generally had a children's pantomime and sometimes the Messiah was put on and just sort of drifted around. I spent a lot of time out at St Kilda at the glaciarium ice-skating.

THOMSON: Did you ice skate before?

GRANGER: I had never iced skated before. I had roller-skated but I had never ice-skated before so it was all part of a new experience.

THOMSON: In other words you were having a ball.

GRANGER: Of course. I had a thoroughly enjoyable time. I loved Melbourne and I liked the Melbourne people. I had my first Christmas away from home in Melbourne and I went home with one of the Melbourne WAAAF and had a family Christmas with her and something I thoroughly appreciated because the first Christmas away from home is a little bit traumatic.

THOMSON: And having completed the course successfully, you were then posted to number 5 Aircraft Depot Forest Hill from the beginning of March 1934. Were you the only one for that posting or were there others with you?

GRANGER: No, there were others with me. At least we had heard of Wagga and we know okay it was in our own state and not all that far from home but didn't know anything about an aircraft depot and what actually it was, although everybody wanted to get on to a flying station. We arrived at Forest Hill, rather unexpected and given this great sack and shown where to get the straw and shown where we were to be bedded down in Hut 131, it's still standing by the way, and then we set about our jobs.

THOMSON: And did they receive you kindly at Forest Hill? Or you were rather new aircraft mechanics.

GRANGER: I think there was a little bit of consternation at first, particularly when we were assigned to these different hangars and we were a little bit of a novelty and I think the men were waiting for us to fall on our face a little bit and yet were rather proud of us when we didn't. I think they just accepted us as one of the chaps doing a job. They didn't question the fact that okay you're only a woman, you can't do this. It was your job and you did it and you expected them to do the same. But they treated you with respect nevertheless. I always felt it was respect anyway.

THOMSON: And what were your duties?

GRANGER: I spent some time in the engine testing bay when the aircraft engines had been running all night out on the test stand they came in, in the winter time in Wagga they were absolutely coated with thick frost and you set about checking it over to make sure that okay the test report was all it should have been. And then I spent some time in the assembly bay when I was putting together the Hercules clutch plates and putting the clutches together and testing those.

THOMSON: And how long were you working in that particular position?

GRANGER: I was in the same hangar for 15 months.

THOMSON: But not on the same task sort of?

GRANGER: No, as I said I spent some time in the engine testing area and then in the assembly area with the clutches and so on. Mainly the Hercules, the Bristol Hercules engines.

THOMSON: And did you have any exceptional times when there were any crises at all?

GRANGER: Well one particular time there were quite a number of Beaufort's came down from New Guinea and it was quite a big program, we had to check all these engines and we were put on a 12 hour shift on and a 12 hour shift off and no leave, no days off and that went on for a fortnight, but we were given extra days leave at the end of it. But for that fortnight we were 12 hours on, 12 hours off.

THOMSON: And what were you doing when you were first stood down? Did you go swimming in the Murrumbidgee?

GRANGER: Yes, I did a lot of swimming in the Murrumbidgee. We used to walk across from the camp. It wasn't a set swimming area, when I look back on it it seemed a pretty dangerous thing to be doing, particularly in the summer time, the dust storms and so on and I was a members of one of the parties that was lost in a dust storm and one of the WAAAF had fallen down and broken her pelvis and there was a little bit of excitement back at camp I believe when they realised that there were a group of people missing. I spent a lot of time playing tennis and hockey and they asked for people who were interested to join a shooting party because the AWARs at Kapooka had challenged us to a shooting match and so – it caused a great deal of excitement and fun I think in the hanger at the thought of okay, I'd put my name down to join and we were using 303s and they carefully made me up a pad of rags cleaning to put on my shoulder to make sure I didn't get too bruised. I think they thought that was great fun too and I certainly did. We were a mixed party and had the day at Kapooka and we shot against the army girls and the men shot against the men and it was just a thoroughly enjoyable day. We spent some times playing hockey matches against the Wagga high school

girls. They generally beat us, nobody minded that we had to shift the cowpats from the field before we played, it seemed to be just part of the game.

THOMSON: And the people of Wagga were very hospitable weren't they?

GRANGER: They were wonderful. I used to go to a Methodist church there and the people there were most hospitable and I got to know quite a number of people in Wagga just through their hospitality and they were most generous as well because you went back to camp generally laden with a sponge cake and some food and that was of paramount importance.

THOMSON: What did you go out and spend a night with them or would you just go for lunch?

GRANGER: Generally dinner at night and then you went back to camp. There were plenty of buses going out and plenty of tenders going out so that you weren't cut off at all from the city of Wagga. It was easy enough to get in and get out at odd times and for the people on different shifts they could do the same which made it much easier. Because we weren't all that far from the city anyway and it made you feel not so cut off.

THOMSON: And you didn't work shift, you worked daytime.

GRANGER: No, ours was day time and a set time so that you were up and had your breakfast, went on parade and then you were marched up to the hangar and you went in your own group.

THOMSON: Did you get any promotion?

GRANGER: When we joined up and realised that okay we were flight mechanics, it was certainly pounded home that there was no hope that we would get promotion. We were group 2 at this stage as flight mechanics and we were told quite often, and it was brought home to us quite often too that there was no hope of any promotion, you were wasting your time to put in for it, you were wasting your time expecting that you would be promoted to even Corporal or

Sergeant. You just became and stayed and ACW doing the same work as the men, but on a much lower rate of pay.

THOMSON: If the men got promoted did they move on to another – to a fitter 2E or could they get promotion as a flight mechanic?

GRANGER: They could get promotion as a flight mechanic only as far as Corporal I think if my memory serves right. But then of course once they did their fitter training they went on to greater things.

THOMSON: And what was the reason that you couldn't get promoted?

GRANGER: How could you expect a woman to tell a man what to do in the mechanical world? I was unthinkable. And that was their reason.

THOMSON: You'd been well up in the course results.

GRANGER: Yes, but it didn't matter whether you were well up or well down. The fact that a woman's place was not to tell a man what to do and I think that feeling was still there and that was the reason that we were told there was no promotion available.

THOMSON: And were you put out or disappointed about this?

GRANGER: No, it didn't seem to make any difference. It didn't worry me that somebody else was going to tell me what to do. I think I was a lazy person that didn't really want too much responsibility. If someone told me to put that screw on there, as far as I was concerned that's where the screw went.

THOMSON: And what about the money? You would have had a bigger pay packet.

GRANGER: As a Corporal you mean? Yes, you certainly would have had a bigger pay packet, but when you knew there was no hope of getting a bigger pay packet you existed and

made do. And after all, you really only had to spend it on very ordinary things, uninteresting things like shoe polish and toothpaste and food.

THOMSON: You wouldn't have very much left over would you?

GRANGER: No, you didn't have very much left over and you certainly didn't make a fortune, you didn't save a fortune and then you thought to yourself, well there's six pence a day being paid in and when I get out of this I'll have some money.

THOMSON: Then why did you decide to put in for fitter 2E training?

GRANGER: I think the need to achieve more than anything, and another thing it put you up into group 1. It didn't change your pay, but it put you up into group 1 and perhaps I thought I'd like to be group 1 and I wanted to find out what fitters did that was different because we seemed to be doing the same. The men who were fitters were doing the same as the flight mechanics and I think I just wanted to say I was a fitter. A little ego thing.

THOMSON: And the men when they were fitter's 2E they went into group 1 but they got their group 1 pay.

GRANGER: Yes.

THOMSON: It was only the women who were classified as group 1 but were paid in group 2.

GRANGER: Yes.

THOMSON: Because it wasn't suitable for you to be paid quite as much.

GRANGER: No, that was right. And we seemed to accept it. It was just one of those things that you knew right from the word go and it didn't make any difference. As I said I think it was just an ego thing from my point of view that perhaps I felt I'd been a Wagga long enough and I wanted to change.



THOMSON: Then you went back to Ascot Vale to 1 Engineering School.

GRANGER: Yes and did my fitter's training there, working on the two types of engines that I'd worked on in 5 AD which was very fortunate because it made the course much easier. The Right Cyclone and the Bristol Hercules engines.

THOMSON: And you topped that course?

GRANGER: Yes, but that was only because I'd worked for 15 months on those engines, it wasn't that I knew more than the others I don't think.

THOMSON: How many would have been in the course?

GRANGER: There were two other girls and myself and I think about 15 to 20 men. It wasn't a very big course because the war was over in Europe and it was one of those things and I think the WAAAF had only just been accepted to do fitter's training and before you could apply you had to at least have worked 12 months in the hangar or on engines, and have your COs recommendation. So that they didn't take people who mustered as flight mechanics and worked in offices and so on. You had to have worked on engines and have your COs permission and at least 12 months of this work.

THOMSON: And did that apply to the men as well as the women?

GRANGER: No I don't think so. I'm not sure of that but I don't think it did. But I know that was the requirement for the women. But once the war was over in Europe I think they felt that right, they would keep these women quiet and give them their chance to do fitter's training because it finished up I think there were only about seven or nine of us in the air force, I'm not sure of that number though. But I know there weren't very many of us.

THOMSON: And the men were they mainly mechanics?

GRANGER: Yes, mainly mechanics. And well I suppose they felt it was a breeze for them too and it put them into a higher pay bracket and they could see the end of the war perhaps coming and they wanted some extra training.

THOMSON: Would they have been permanent men or the Citizen's Air Force?

GRANGER: No, they were mainly just in for the duration.

THOMSON: Thinking about training after the fighting.

GRANGER: Yes. So that okay, they had that extra mechanical training behind them even though it was aircraft engines. Jobs and what would be available was of paramount importance.

THOMSON: And what did you find out the difference was between flight mechanics and fitters?

GRANGER: Absolutely nothing excepting you were supposed to know a little bit more about the more up to date engines instead of just the Tiger Moth engines. You were on to the Hercules which are sleeve valve engines and the Right Cyclones, which were the ordinary engines that one expected in aircraft at that time.

THOMSON: And I suppose you picked up your friendships in Melbourne again?

GRANGER: Yes, and I kept in touch with the people with whom I'd spent my first Christmas away from home and you felt like old home week because you were going back to Melbourne, you knew what to expect. This time though we were elevated to the horticultural pavilion, which was a little bit different, but the laundry was still in the horse stalls ...

THOMSON: What was the difference between the horticultural one and you were in the horse stalls before that were you?

GRANGER: The sheep pavilion I think it was. And horticultural I mean it is a step above after all, farm to the garden. And we were there at a Melbourne Cup time, which was also an added excitement because people in uniform were allowed in free and we had the day off.

THOMSON: How did you find the Melbourne people – general public reacted to the WAAAF?

GRANGER: I think they were quite proud of us. Certainly the first time I was there we had just been issued with our fur felt hats and they talked about Curtin's Cowgirls in a very kindly way, not making fun of us, well at least we took it that they were being kind. And the Melbourne people I found too – well anywhere – the people were very kind and admired us because they felt that we were doing a pretty good job I feel.

THOMSON: And you didn't come up against any rumours or resentment that you were working in a job that might perhaps take away from men's work after the war?

GRANGER: No I never came across it. I may have come across it but not been aware of it because I wasn't looking for it. Because I'm a great believer in live and let live as long as people let me live my life and I don't think I was looking for it. Perhaps if you were looking for it it would have been there, but I never look for those things. Life's too short for that nonsense.

THOMSON: And what did you have on your head up till the fur felt hats?

GRANGER: Well we had for work time of course the black beret and jeans, and then the peaked cap with the shiny peak. Later on we were issued one with a cloth peak, which was definitely a step up.

THOMSON: And you didn't find you were sunburnt in Wagga in the summer without proper shelter?

GRANGER: Well I certainly didn't because I have a very olive skin and I just went another shade of brown.

THOMSON: Of course you lived in the country so you'd be more used to outdoors.

GRANGER: Yes. Well I was used to the outdoors, I liked the outdoors and I think my skin was used to it too.

THOMSON: And then after you'd successfully passed the course at Ascot Vale you were posted to 2 Air Park Depot Richmond?

GRANGER: That's right. I was a bit disgusted with the air force people for that. I was quite sure they'd send me back to Wagga but they didn't do that. They sent me to Richmond, which was completely different because it was a permanent base and our quarters there, instead of being the usual hut, were brick buildings, multi-storey and we actually had a proper bed and a proper mattress.

THOMSON: That was comfort.

GRANGER: Oh it was comfort all right; they had linoleum on the floor even, which made the Monday night cleanup a little bit easier too.

THOMSON: And then where did you eat? Airmen's mess?

GRANGER: Yes, the air force mess and it was at this time that they were making the film *Smithy* and there was very little doing in the aircraft line because the war was over and we spent a great deal of our time sitting on the main planes watching the making of Ron Randell who call's himself Ron Randelle these days being *Smithy* and the making of the film and making up the crowds as extras for which we didn't get paid.

THOMSON: You weren't overworked there?

GRANGER: We certainly weren't overworked. In fact one place called *Shanghai Lil* seemed to be our set job because the pilot had a girlfriend there and he always took it up for a test

flight and wrote it off as unairworthy and it needed some attention so we played along with it and took our time.

THOMSON: Because then that would allow him to ...

GRANGER: Keep up his friendship as well. No we certainly weren't overworked. We worked a lot on Mosquitos but there was no pressure attached to it and it gradually went off and we had less and less and less to do and people were getting out of the air force daily.

THOMSON: Were you doing any rehabilitation courses?

GRANGER: No I didn't do any courses of that kind at all because I knew I wanted to teach when I got out and I wasn't interested in doing anything else and I went home on leave one weekend and there was a position at the local Presbyterian Ladies College advertised for a primary teacher. I didn't do anything about it the first weekend. The second time I was home they were still advertising for it so I rang up, made an appointment, went up to see the principal, was quite disgusted at her ignorance when she said oh, you're in the army, and I was in khaki summer gear, but I was given the job, mainly I feel because they couldn't find anyone else at that stage and I then went back to camp, put in for my discharge and got my discharge on the Friday and started work the following Tuesday at the Presbyterian Ladies College so that I went from being a mechanic or a fitter to being a lady.

THOMSON: How did you get home for the weekends? Did you travel by train? Were you given leave passes?

GRANGER: Well we used to have a – you'd get a weekly ticket that allowed you to travel inside the city area and it was strange that some of the city areas seemed to extend as far as Goulburn and I travelled by train.

THOMSON: They weren't keeping too close a check at Goulburn.

GRANGER: No, it was very fortunate that there was always a gate open at the side and you didn't have to go through the main entrance into the railway station and if you did you just pat

your pocket and say I've got a leave pass, do you want to see it? And they were very understanding and always said no.

THOMSON: And were you regretful of leaving the WAAAF or were you just excited about going back to teaching?

GRANGER: I was regretful because I would have liked to have stayed on but I realised that that wasn't possible because there's a limited extent as to what fitter 2Es would be doing in a citizen air force and as well I think too once I had a job to go to that made a difference. I don't think I would have liked it if I had been just tipped out and no job to do to, then I would have done something about doing extra training I feel. But as it was I knew what I was going to do and I knew it was going to start very quickly so I didn't have time to think and I think that was probably the best idea. Even though I regretted leaving the air force, probably because it was a very ordered and orderly existence and the old saying, you don't have to think, the air force things for you perhaps helped my lazy nature.

THOMSON: And then you got your deferred pay?

GRANGER: Yes.

THOMSON: And some clothing coupons?

GRANGER: Yes, clothing coupons which of course in a Ladies College existence didn't go very far because we had to dress for dinner at night and things like that. But it was amazing how you made do. And with this deferred pay it seemed rather like a fortune anyway and once you started work you started earning real money and that made a difference. And I think my adjustment didn't take a great deal out of me simply because okay I went from the orderly existence in the air force to the very orderly ordered existence in the boarding school and one of the old time principals who believed in people doing as they were asked and keeping up a certain amount of dignity and one of my ex-students of that time is very fond of saying and yes, we knew she'd been in the air force.

THOMSON: Can you remember how much you'd be paid?

GRANGER: No I have no idea.

THOMSON: Was it 5 and four pence a day?

GRANGER: It was a very minor amount. I probably could find it out if I looked back through my records, which I've kept. But I know it wasn't a great deal because I had to buy clothing and everything whereas in the air force you didn't have to buy all these things and I think we more or less broke even. Although I did manage to save enough money and at the end of five years I went to England. So it must have been a better pay, because I was able to save a bit and in between I'd also spent some time in New Zealand. I'd spent about five weeks in New Zealand, so I must have saved some money somehow.

THOMSON: And were the male teachers getting the same pay or were you on two-thirds of male rate?

GRANGER: This was a – private schools were not paid nearly the same as the public school teachers. This was before the time of our union and so on, and it was left to the Presbyterians to decide on how much you were worth and to pay you according to the duties you performed.

THOMSON: And what do you feel your experience in the WAAAF did for your life as a civilian?

GRANGER: It taught me a great deal of tolerance and it also taught me to live with people, to realise that people are different and to listen to their ideas, that my ideas weren't the only ones and I think mainly I can thank the air force for a great deal of understanding of human nature and a lot of tolerance and patience.

THOMSON: And you don't regret having spent those years?

GRANGER: I certainly don't regret it. I just feel sorry for the people in my age bracket who didn't join up one of the services because the friendships I formed are very valuable ones to me and they seem to be the ones that have lasted and for people in my age bracket I think

they've missed out on a great deal and they've missed a lot of appreciation of finer things of living.