



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

Identification: This is Judy Wing talking to Miss Joyce Whitworth at her home for the Keith Murdoch Sound Archive. Today is Monday 26 February 1990. Miss Whitworth was one of the original twenty-eight officers chosen by Sybil Irving to set up AWAS. She was one of the assistant commandants of Eastern Command New South Wales. This is tape one, side A.

Good morning Joyce.

Good morning Judy.

Thank you very much for talking this morning.

Well, I won't say it's my pleasure but I'm glad to be able to do it.

That's great. I wonder if you could tell me first of all where you were born and when?

I was born on 13th May 1911 in Randwick.

And did you live there for some time? Where did you go to school?

Went to Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School.

Whereabouts?

The head school, Forbes Street, Darlinghurst.

And how long were you at school?

I left school when I ... well, I didn't fail in the Intermediate but I couldn't sit for it because I got chickenpox and because of depression years I had to leave and I went later, at the age of eighteen, to be a trainee at the children's hospital, Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital.

And was that for a nursing degree? Did you complete that?

Well, I went for that purpose. I actually really wanted to do ... go to the Australian College of Physical Education - I don't know whether it still exists - but it was called the Swords Club in those days but it was a three-year course. And my father could not afford to have me not earning and to be paying fees as well. So the second choice was to go nursing and I did just over two years and then I got scarlet fever. I was given leave and during that period my father became very ill and it was necessary for me to live at home. So I did a secretarial course and got a job as a sec ... well, eventually, when the war started, I was a secretary in a business organisation.

Right. What about politics? Did you take an interest in politics at all at that time?

I don't know whether I took an interest in it but my father was always a conservative voter and our family have always been conservative voters. We get very disheartened but we still are loyal to the Liberals. But I didn't take any interest in it and I don't think I took any interest in it until war was declared and then I realised what we were up against I think.

And what was your reaction then when the war was declared?

Well, when war was declared - I always remember this - I was having tea with friends over at the Cairo at Macleay Street when the announcement was made in the evening and when I came out to drive home to Randwick the papers were then on the street and they were calling out and war has been declared. Now I had always been ... imagined and always taken great interest in the first war, I was old enough to remember them coming back. I was in, at the post office when they were marching down ... or coming down in cars. I had an uncle who was a first world war man. And I always imagined that if another war was declared I would drive an ambulance and I'd be the only one to get through, you know.

(5.00) So when it was declared and of course we were very pro ... see, my mother spoke, although she was a New Zealander, always spoke about England as the old country and home. My father was only one generation New Zealander and it was home and we were pro-royalists and pro-England and there'll always be an England, you know, and we wanted to do something, you know, to help.

Right. Well, would you have thought of yourself then as British first or Australian?

British. And I still find it very difficult to sing all the verses of *Advance Australia Fair*.

Because you'd rather be singing *God Save the Queen*?

That's right.

What about the church, did you have much involvement with the church at all? Was it important?

I can't say that you'd call it involvement but my mother was a very committed Christian. She was a missionary's daughter and grand-daughter and that was why I was sent to a church school. I can't say it did very much for me in that way. And we went to church regularly at St Jude's Church at Randwick and I've always believed but ... Well, after the Billy Graham crusade in 1959 I realised I was a pretty poor Christian and my whole life changed from that time, '59. In ... no, I won't go onto that now because you'll be asking that question later I think as far as the service is concerned, about Christian things.

Good. Did you belong to any of the voluntary services at all, Joyce?

Well, I joined the VAs and I was prepared to work in hospitals at weekends and at night but I couldn't work through the day because I had a job and I had to earn my living and they had so many that they didn't want us at the weekend or at night time. Being part of a business firm

we had fundraising things for the war effort and comforts funds but I was frustrated, very frustrated. I wanted to get into something active because we were getting these things on the radio, Winston Churchill and so forth, and we wanted to be involved. But I think there were a lot of women out there that were very frustrated because they wanted to do something active to help the war effort.

Well, in June 1940 I was very excited when it was announced that Lady Wakehurst, wife of our Governor, and who had previously met with 250 enthusiastic representatives of women organisations called a public meeting to be held in the Sydney Town Hall on 25th June 1940 for the purpose of inaugurating the Women's Australian National Service, which is the WANS, and I was one of 10,000 women who were endeavouring to gain admission. I did get in but there were hundreds that didn't and they stood outside to hear the proceedings through special amplifiers which had been installed. Now, on that particular night Lady Wakehurst spoke as president and the WANS was officially formed. She pointed out that there would be a training scheme and that we would be volunteers and we were not an employment bureau and the idea was to get women trained for when they felt ... the women felt that the women's services would be formed.

Help had been asked of the Department of Education as to whether they would provide public schools in the metropolitan area for venues for girls who wanted to join up to go. And on the - what was the date now - 6th July I went to the Randwick Public School where I enrolled to be a WAN.

(10.00) Could I just ask why they didn't take everybody that wanted to join?

I don't think they could have.

They couldn't have coped with the numbers do you mean?

I think ... see, it was voluntary and on that particular night they gave enrolment cards out to those who wanted to join and on that enrolment card it said where the venues were and if you wanted to join go to that particular area on the Saturday. Does that make it clear?

Yes. So, there wasn't any sort of selection procedure. In other words they accepted ...

No, no. Absolutely, purely voluntary. And on that first afternoon, I will never forget it, a male officer and the headmistress of the school - she had to be there every Saturday to look after the buildings, et cetera, and be the Department of Education representative - marched us around in the circle with the idea of selecting people who would become potential officers. Now, I was a golfer, I had gone in flat heels and skirt and jumper and so on. There were a lot in there in high heels and hats and so forth and I always say I'm sure I was only pulled out because I had sensible clothing on. And we were told to go to Fort Street Girls' High School on the following Monday night for officer training. Miss Fanny Cohen was the headmistress of Fort Street Girls' High School and she was the area officer and ... can I pause there just to check a bit ... and only officer Captain Willshire was appointed officer in charge of our training in conjunction with Miss Eleanor Manning who was a senior guide ... guider - very senior guider - and a very experienced woman in guiding and they were to be in charge with

various people that they incorporated for this training. Now this training, this officer training, was very intensive. We went every night and nearly every second weekend to camp. Under the guides the camping was at *Glengarry* at Turramurra.

Turramurra.

Mmm. *Glengarry*, Turramurra, under canvas. And if you've ever been under canvas with the Girl Guides you'd know what real camping is. They were magnificent. Now that training went on and we finished our training. You either qualified or you didn't qualify and I think I should have said that I understand that on that opening day where I'd gone to Randwick but 4,431 women applied, right.

Before you go on, could you tell me about the training that you did every night and what you actually did?

Well, we had lectures and first aid by St John's Ambulance people, home nursing, we marched around the parade ground or the school grounds and had squad drill, we had, when we went to camp, we were taught map reading, we were taught how to wave flags and signal, we had lectures from specialists in particular areas, army administration and that sort of thing. A lot of physical education and the camps were pretty tough because they had a ... the guides weren't disciplinarians but they demanded a certain standard and we had to, you know, really toe the line.

And the guides were organising that weekend camp part?

Yes. The first camp was held was ... they took us in gradually. The first camp was held at Thornleigh strangely enough. It was a house camp and we were divided into groups and we did this intensive sort of map reading and signalling and so on and public speaking lectures and that sort of thing. And I always remember that we were put into a group, myself and another girl I'd been to school with - with Eleanor Manning who was in charge and we didn't think she was very important at all. We weren't very keen on her. She told us to go and clean the latrines and to meet her at a certain spot and this is where I think I first got the taste of the discipline because we were two minutes late and when we got back to meet her and she said, 'When I tell you to be here on a certain time I expect you to be here'. Anyway she disappeared after lunch and we got someone else and we thought, 'Well, we're glad we got rid of her', and we had someone else. But on the Sunday afternoon Lady Wakehurst arrived in the vice-regal car to see how we were getting on and sitting up beside her in all her glory - full guide uniform, silver fish and so forth - was Eleanor Manning who virtually was going to be in charge of our training, so we had to get on with her didn't we?

(15.00) Did you understand at that point what the discipline was all for? Why it was happening?

I think we did. I think we did. We were so keen, you know, we were so keen to ... I think I understood it to a large extent because I'd been a trainee for over two years at the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital and the discipline there was very much like army discipline.

And what was it all directed toward, that discipline? Why did you need to be so disciplined?

Well, if you've got ... if you're going to control anyone you've got to have authority and discipline. I mean you couldn't run a hospital like the children's hospital unless there was discipline. I mean we had to, for instance, as trainee nurses, I mean, if somebody rang on the telephone to see how somebody was and you answered the phone you could not say yes that so-and-so was all right. You had - whatever you were doing - you had to roll your sleeves down, put your cuffs on, march up the end of the ward to where sister was, put your arms behind your back and say - although you knew how the child was - how was she, you know, patient's condition as well as been expected and then go back. It's very different today in the hospitals. I notice this particularly, to have respect. We had tremendous respect for our sisters and our matrons and I think that's why they were such a wonderful band of ... I think that vintage were tremendous.

So you really understood that it was important to be working as a team?

Most important. Working as a team and running an organisation you need to have authority and discipline especially going into ... we wanted to go into the services and we wanted to go in much sooner than we did because there was dilly-dallying.

Well, what happened when Lady Wakehurst came with Eleanor Manning sitting up beside her?

She was sitting up beside her and I can remember Alice Scott saying to me, 'I think we might as well resign now if she's going to be in charge', because she didn't think much of us. After that camp we went back to Fort Street on the Monday night and Eleanor Manning was officially launched as being in charge of our officer training. She was a lovely person, I had the most tremendous love and affection for her but in the beginning I was terrified of her. At the end of that ... do you want me to go on there, again from there?

At the end of that course we were sent out as officers to various areas. I was sent to Burwood and the area officer was the headmistress, Miss Bocking - I can't think of her first name - and she sort of kept an eye on things but I trained them in the things that I'd been trained in, the girls. And the girls out in that area came and joined up on that Saturday afternoon to be part of the WANS if they were really serious about it. And they underwent the same sort of training to a certain extent as we as officers but not quite so intensive. And I took them. I had been qualified as being able to take people to camp under canvas and I took those girls to camp under canvas because although we were in a house camp, at the first camp we had - I think as I said earlier - we went to be under canvas at *Glengarry*. Well, our girls that we were training went to a house camp first of all and then they went under canvas too at weekends.

Right. So the thing expanded in that way with those that were trained as officers then taking new groups?

Mmm. That's right. Now after a time Eleanor Manning and Noelle Brennan, who Mrs Noelle Brennan who was another girl guide, who was assisting Eleanor Manning with a lot of other senior guiding people felt that we needed more intensive training and WAN, what they call

WANS Defence Units were formed. There was the north, the south, the east, the west and selected people were taken from the areas like where I'd been at Burwood to go - where Burwood went to the western suburbs defence unit - I had the eastern suburbs defence unit. I was made a commandant then, I had been a captain and I was made a commandant to be in charge of this defence unit and we met at the Sydney Boys' High School every Saturday afternoon and they were ... those girls - there were 100 of them - were specially selected for intensive training and they were called the WANS Defence Units. And I think I should say at this stage that when the service was ... the services - the WAAAF and the AWAS - were formed that the first recruits were those ones that came from the WANS Defence Units.

(20.00) Right. Did you say that you under went further training after Noelle Brennan, was it, came?

Well, we had this ... it went on for, let me see now, just a minute, I'll check on my notes.

So that intensive officer training was for the girls who ... a selected number of girls to do the same sort of training that you had done before?

To a certain extent. I won't say perhaps it was quite as intensive as ours because ours was every night and practically every weekend where theirs was Saturday afternoon - this was in the areas - and the defence units still, as most of the girls worked, they were only available at the weekends so ... but it was more intensive than what they'd had in their areas. Is that clear?

I think it should be said, New South Wales was always considered to be a very strong state when the army was formed, when we went down to do our course, that so much, although we had male officers assisting in the training, that recognition should be given to the Girl Guides Association and in particular to Eleanor Manning who oversaw the training. We were streets ahead - I'll say this in all humility - when we went down to do our first course when the army started, the other states hadn't had this sort of training. So it was ... so much was owed to the Girl Guides Association and particularly Eleanor Manning.

And the Women's Australian National Service?

Yes. My word. Yes, well, the Women's Australian ... Eleanor Manning of course was one of the women that had met with Lady Wakehurst to see that ... a lot of people were involved by joining what they called the Women's Voluntary National Register and they had their names down there that if anything was formed they wanted to be in it. And Lady Wakehurst through Eleanor Manning, I think pushing, or the ... she was the daughter of Sir Henry Manning, the Attorney-General, seeing the need - she was a woman of vision - that we were going to need to have women's services because of our population was so small and 'A-Class' men were doing jobs that could be done by girls. Right?

Yes. So it was ... they did a tremendous job and very important...

The WANS and it's very important to mention the Guides. The WANS, yes. But the WANS couldn't have done it without the Girl Guides - those senior guides. I'm not a guider so don't think I'm being biased.

Now, what happened at the end of 1941?

At the end ... We were disappointed because the WAAAF were formed first. Clare Stevenson was appointed as the Director of WAAAF and she did approach Eleanor Manning and asked Eleanor Manning whether she would join her as one of her first appointments with some of her senior people on the WANS. But we felt we had been trained by the army and the guides for the army and we could not, as much as we were tempted to, accept Clare's offer. In October Colonel Sybil Irving, our Controller, MBE, was appointed as Controller in October and that was 1941, October 1941. We in New South Wales were a little disappointed because we felt Eleanor Manning would be but Eleanor Manning being the lovely person she was of course got in behind Sybil Irving who was after all the daughter of a general. She had been brought up in an army atmosphere and it was a wonderful appointment. She was a wonderful person and a great leader.

And she set about choosing officers?

Yes. She set about it. She travelled around from state to state and with recommendations that were given to her by the headquarters of the command or prominent citizens like Lady Wakehurst and others that had been involved in the WANS and she particularly - Sybil Irving had been a guide herself - she particularly sought the advice of Eleanor Manning. And there were six appointments made from New South Wales and from Victoria. The other states they were three and we ... I'll always remember that time she came and I was told I had to be at Victoria Barracks on the Tuesday morning for an interview. I had a group of girls, of WANS, in camp up at *Glengarry* and I couldn't get away because the heavens opened on the Sunday and we couldn't strike camp. So I had to call for volunteers to stay with me because being a good camper you don't fold your tents up and that sort of thing. And I had to tell Eleanor Manning I could not be there on the Monday, I could be there on the Tuesday because I had to do the job of looking after the equipment. And I went into Victoria Barracks on the Tuesday morning to be interviewed by Sybil Irving and I'll never forget it as long as I live because she had me in the light and I was very tired and she had her back to the light. And those piercing blue eyes, I thought that she knew everything that went on. And actually I didn't realise of course that she was very much involved with the Girl Guides' Association in Victoria herself. When she asked me why I hadn't come on the Monday, I said, 'I couldn't, I had to look after the equipment', apparently it made an impression.

That's interesting isn't it because it could have been the reverse.

And Eleanor Manning was sitting alongside her. Eleanor Manning was the first appointment in New South Wales. Sybil Irving made her number one.

And how did you feel about her being in a position where you couldn't see her face?

Scared stiff. She was a very distinguished woman and gracious woman and I felt she had very penetrating perception.

Did you feel at all though that she'd put you at a disadvantage, perhaps even deliberately?

No, I didn't really feel that. I thought that it just happened.

That it was just the way the room was ...

Yes. And Eleanor Manning had said to come in uniform. The WANS wore teal blue - I don't know whether you knew that - and it was a very nice uniform and she said come in uniform. So she actually questioned me about what I had been doing in the WANS since June 1940 till October 1941.

And you felt reasonably happy about the interview afterwards, did you?

Yes I did. I can remember meeting two of my friends at Coles in town for lunch and they wanted to know all about it and felt it had been all right but you never know do you? And I knew there were only going to be a small number. There were six of us as I said and four of those six were from the WANS and they were Gwen Gehan, Stella Swinney, Alice Scott and myself - Eleanor Manning of course I should have mentioned first was the first appointment made - and Millicent Aspinall was one of the guides that had assisted Eleanor Manning in that training we'd done. So those were the six. Four from the WANS and two from the guides.

And when did they let you know that you'd been chosen?

I think it was fairly soon as I remember - fairly soon - because ... it must have been fairly soon because we were told we were to go down to Yarra Junction at Yarra - Yarra Junction in Victoria, which was Guide House - to do this crash course to learn about the army in three weeks. And we went in November 1941. So it was pretty soon. You see Sybil wasn't appointed till October.

And what was your reaction to the news?

Well, I was terribly excited.

You felt it was a great honour?

Oh, great honour. Well, it wasn't so much that. I was bursting to do something. I felt frustrated, you know, and I was thrilled and we all gave ... we were all working girls except the two guiding people. The WANS were all working girls and we gave notice and then we didn't know whether we were going or we weren't going 'cause the government changed ... came in. Mr Ford said, headlines, 'There will be no women's army' and we didn't know whether we were in our out and our business firms we worked for wanted to know what we were all about, what it was all about.

So it must have been a very uncertain time?

It was a very uncertain time, a very uncertain time. The ... I think I should say that it was intended that the ...

This is the end of tape one, side A.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

Identification: This is tape one, side B.

You were going to say something about the WANS land army, Joyce.

Yes, well, I feel it's very important to say that. They'd formed a women's land army and Lorna Byrne who was one of our first appointments, had an agriculture degree and her advice was sought. She was working for the Agriculture Department of New South Wales and the land army started really in the WANS. Later it was taken over by the government and they weren't enlisted personnel. But Lorna Byrne was really appointed, not from New South Wales, but straight to the controllers staff at army headquarters because of her agricultural degree because it was envisaged that the land army would be part of the AWAS, but they never were. But Lorna still was appointed to Sybil Irving's staff as an assistant controller.

And did you have anything to do with the land army yourself, or ...

No, nothing at all. Mrs Aileen Lynch was appointed as a government employee to be in charge of that later.

Right. Now what happened when you went down to Victoria? You went to the officer training at Guide House, was it?

At Guide House, yes. Well, we were met at Spencer Street by Lorna Byrne who was to be the officer to be in charge of the bus that was to take us down to Yarra Junction which was in the Dandenongs and apparently Sybil Irving said that when she saw all these women she was rather appalled because everyone looked so very, very tired with the exception of New South Wales.

What was the reason?

Well, I don't think they'd had the training that we'd had and we were pretty fit and she just ... she just made that comment. She said, 'Oh dear' and there were twenty-seven of us. The ... I think I want to go on to what we did at the school and the school was designed really to part some knowledge of army administration and organisation and there were a lot of lectures. I always remember when we got out of the bus at Yarra Junction, we didn't know much about army uniform even though we'd been doing this sort of thing and there were three ... four I think, very smart looking men in uniform with red tabs and we thought they were at least generals but they turned out to be Australian Instructional Corps warrant officers that were going to be in charge of part of our training and there was a male officer, a Captain Foster, who was going to be working alongside Sybil Irving. And we had a lot of drill, we had a lot of physical education, we had a lot of ... we had to do all our own work - scrubbing - and there was inspection and so on and so forth. And Sybil Irving and Eleanor Manning did the course with us. We had lectures on army administration, organisation, discipline, discussions

as to what the uniform should be. I'll always remember Lorna Byrne who was an excellent public speaker, which wasn't my cup of tea at all, giving ... asking us to do ten minute lecturettes and she criticised us all - I won't say criticised, but told us at the end what we'd done that was wrong. And it was ten minutes on our personal experiences. And we ... at night time discussions were held as to what the army uniform should be, what the discipline should be, and how we were going to start it.

(5.00) And I'll always remember too that we went ... we had to clean Guide House before we left and we were to go to Government House in Victoria to be received by the Governor's Lady. Well, we'd been scrubbing and cleaning and what have you and we thought we'd be getting a uniform which we didn't get. Our clothes were fairly ... we didn't many pairs of stockings that didn't have ladders in them and we went off to Government House to be received by the Governor's Lady and we were pretty tired at that stage because we'd been up late the night before and we weren't given a cup of tea or even asked to sit down. We won't mention any names.

That was a bit difficult.

And we ... I forgot to say that we had been told the night before ... we had to do a test and we had been obviously examined by - visually, or whatever you like to say - by Captain Foster and Sybil Irving and Eleanor Manning as to what we would be because some would come out as captains and some would come out as lieutenants or some would be returned to civvy street. It was quite a strain as to what you would be. And three of us from New South Wales came out as captains and that was Gwen Gehan, Stella Swinney and myself and Alice Scott and Millicent Aspinall were lieutenants.

The assistant controllers of the state like Eleanor Manning, they were confirmed. Assistant controllers Major Eleanor Manning, Kathleen Deasey of Victoria ... I can't remember the names of all the others. I could if I looked up but I don't think that's so important.

When did you get this news then? Was it ...

The night before.

The night before you went to Government House. And what was the point of going to Government House then?

Well, I think probably it was a sort of a ... see, Lady Wakehurst probably might have said to the Governor's Lady, 'It would be nice if you received these girls', I don't know.

You weren't commissioned or something?

No, no. We were told what our ranks were and we were to go back and start the service in our own state. Right?

So it was just a visit to Government House.

That's right. It was just a visit.

Which wasn't a very pleasant one.

No. Well it was a very official visit. I wasn't like a visit to Lady Wakehurst's in Sydney.

It was no garden party.

No. And we had no uniforms and we were very shabby and we were ... and we were tired. We'd had a late night the night before and it had been ... it wasn't tired physically, it was, you know, as to whether you were going to have to go back to your job and say, 'Look, I want my job back. I haven't qualified', or whether you'd be a lieutenant or whether you'd be a captain. I'll always remember there was one girl that was bitterly disappointed that she hadn't got a captaincy but that's the way it was.

So there was a lot of emotional anxiety?

It was emotional anxiety, that's right.

And after that, what happened?

Well, I always say that Eleanor Manning was the first woman to enter Victoria Barracks as the first member of our service. Of course she was there before we were. Right, as I've said Major Eleanor Manning was in charge of the AWAS in the Eastern Command and took up her duties at the historic sandstone building to undertake the selection, training and posting of the earliest recruits in this area. She announced the next day to the press that a call-up of women to our service would be made the following week. The time ... At that particular time, it was a great time of tension and drama, as the Australian Government had just announced that we were at war with Japan. She also announced, Eleanor Manning, that the first recruit training course would be held in Sydney at Killara.

The army had, in its wisdom, taken over an old building that had been Milton Boys' Grammar School and hadn't been occupied for ten years and that the first course would be held in January 1942. Anyone wanting to join the army, and were prospective recruits, were to record their names - this was announced to the media - in the Women's Voluntary National Register. Now Eleanor had decided who was going to do what out of us six and Stella Swinney was to be her staff captain A, Administration. Gwen Gehan was to be her staff captain Q, that's quartering, catering and so forth. I was to be the chief instructor of the training school and Alice Scott who was one of the lieutenants was to be my adjutant and Millicent Aspinall was another lieutenant was to have been my quartermaster. Could I have a pause?

You wanted to say something about the office?

Yes. We were given one office, we had one desk, we had three chairs and one typewriter and we had no recruits, we had no staff and the army were not at all interested in us because they were busy packing their files away to move forward to first army because of the Japanese coming in. But that wasn't going to put Eleanor Manning off and she said, announced to the

three of us, that we would go to, the captains, with her to the brigadier in charge of administration to get instructions.

Strangely enough the staff captain of the brigadier was Bill McMahon our ex-prime minister that I'd known since I'd been a kid and he said, 'How are you getting on? What do you need?'. We said, 'We need chairs and two typewriters and more desks'. The brigadier was obviously in a - I'm not going to mention his name - in a state of, you know, chaos and he said, 'Look, all I know is that there are some application forms down at the Women's Voluntary National Register and I suggest you get those'. Now we came back and we sent ... or Eleanor sent Alice Scott, who was a lieutenant, down to the Women's Voluntary National Register to pick up the forms and she rang up. I answered the phone. And she said, 'I can't carry all these forms' and I said, 'Well, use your initiative. Get a taxi'. And she said, 'Taxi be blowed. I need a 3-tonne truck'.

And what were the application forms for?

For the army. Women wanting to join the army.

Oh.

And you see, so we set about ... I could type, Gwen Gehan could type. Eleanor had no secretary or we had no typists. We went through these forms when Alice eventually got back in the taxi with them and selected ones we thought, we had an idea what the army would be wanting first. They'd be wanting clerical workers and cooks and drivers and things like that. And you would have thought we were selecting officers the way we went through those application forms. And then Stella Swinney and I sat down at the typewriters and sent out call-up notices for them to come to the Victoria Barracks to be interviewed by us. And Eleanor set up Stella Swinney and myself and herself as being the sort of pre-selection board in the drill hall at Victoria Barracks. Alice Scott was like a sort of receptionist receiving the girls as they came and ushering them in. And we classified them, as I say, you would have thought we were selecting officers but we were determined that - those first people that came in were tremendous, really tremendous.

Approximately how many were there actually of those application forms that you had to sift through?

It would be hard to say, Judy, because there were piles and piles and piles of them.

Did they all fit in the taxi or did you really need ...

No, we had to get more, we had to get more later. The ... The standard of the applicants, they were tremendous types and we classified them as, say, 'A', 'B' and 'C', you know. And 'A's were called up first and so on and they were told ... I think we told them by letter that they had been accepted and that they would report at Victoria Barracks to be enlisted in January and then they would be sent to the training school at Killara.

(15.00) We worked I'd say from eight o'clock at Victoria Barracks, from 8 am in the morning because you could imagine Gwen Gehan who was Q - quartermaster - was running around trying

to get the army to do something about uniforms and Stella and Eleanor and I were interviewing all day. At night time we typed and sent out the notices and our families used to start ringing up about ten o'clock and say, 'When are you coming home?' and most times we didn't get home till midnight. We worked on Sundays - we worked seven days a week. Then we had to go up to the training school to prepare that and of course the army had no labour and it was in a terrible state. It hadn't been occupied for ten years and we thought, 'Well, we'd just have to clean it ourselves' and it was an enormous building. And we thought, 'Well, what will we do'. So each of us got on the phone, rang up our friends - a bit of a con job really - 'Would you like to do a war job?'. 'Oh yes', you know. 'Well, come along on such and such a day with your brooms and your buckets and your what have you, we've got to clean this place up', and we worked like mad to get place ready for the girls coming in on 26th January. I always remember Eleanor - Gwen Gehan wasn't there because she was too busy trying to get uniforms down at the Barracks - but Eleanor Manning and Stella Swinney and myself were sitting in this big mess hall on our hands and knees scrubbing the floor. I was nearest the door and this very imposing young man from red tab staff, you see, came to the door and I got up - dirty old clothes, you know - and wiped my hands and walked forward and said could I help him and he said, 'I wish to see Major Eleanor Manning the Assistant Controller'. He was the GOC, General Fewtrell staff officer to come to see about the opening of the school on 26th January. And I said, 'Just a moment'. So I stepped over to Eleanor who never ever lost her dignity and said, 'Excuse me ma'am', you know, the general staff officer. And she got up, wiped her hands and walked forward and said, 'How do you do' and that young man's face was a study.

I bet it was.

It was the first time he'd ever seen the head of a service on her hands and knees ...

Scrubbing floors, yes.

... scrubbing floors. And those people that came worked so hard, they were terrific, they really were great.

You had a good response from friends.

Oh terrific response. We could have got more than we wanted. Now the opening was on 26th January and the girls had come in and a lot of them had belonged to voluntary organisations and they were sensible enough, some of them, to come in skirts and blouses and so forth. I have got a photograph here of the first opening day of them all lined up with the GOC, General Fewtrell, going around the grounds and inspecting the buildings and he said to me after we'd been in the ablution blocks, 'Are these satisfactory?' and I said, 'No, they're not. We've only got cold water. We've got no hot water'. He said, 'Well, you're in the army now, you'll have to have cold showers'. I said, 'Well Sir, there are times when a woman doesn't want a cold shower' and we got our hot showers eventually.

Now from there, and they did the same sort of training to a certain extent that we'd done in the WANS. They had their physical education, they had their lectures, they had their inspections, they had ... (laughs) people used to say the AWAS were always marching around. And we used to go out on route marches around the streets of Killara, all in civvies. I think they all

thought we women were quite mad marching around. I had my dog there because my mother had given up her home at Randwick and moved to Cremorne Point and I had this big Scotch Airedale with me and he used to lead the parade around the streets of Killara. I think they thought we were all balmy.

Were you actually living there? You were quartered then at Killara?

Oh yes, yes. They were ... the girls were ... the girls were sleeping on camp stretchers, it was very basic. We had no doors that would lock and we had some peeping Toms and the army couldn't help us with any sort of protection so the police used to come down two or three times during the night and we were told that we would have to have our own patrols. So the girls were ... they used to do a couple of hours. Two would go around one part of the building and another two they'd meet and they'd come back and then one would sit in the office and they had whistles and if they saw anything they'd blow a whistle and she would ring the police.

So that was the only protection ...

That particular building is now the Lourdes Retirement Village at Killara. It's being pulled down unfortunately. They were - that first course - they were terrific. Of course, those first courses they were so keen, you know. And we thought they'd get uniform but they didn't get uniforms. They didn't get uniform ... I remember the fourth course was in April and it turned very cold and the girls that come in with just nighties, clothes, expecting to get uniform and they were freezing and of course it was a very cold building. So I rang (inaudible) and Gwen Gehan managed to get some men's army greatcoats and most of them were outsize and some of the girls were, you know, only seven stone and you could imagine what they looked ... they were grateful for the greatcoats and they wore those greatcoats even when they were posted because they had nothing else. See, the army weren't ready for us because Mr Forde had said there would be no women's army and of course it was a state of great drama with the men going north and the Japanese coming into the war and so on. So no-one certainly joined the army for the glamour of the uniform.

No. Was there a lot of disappointment about the fact that they didn't have their uniform or ...

Well, I suppose there was, yes. They didn't grumble, they weren't grizzlers. They were fine types.

They were aware of the emergency?

Yes. And we actually ... officers got ours tailored. I didn't have a winter uniform but when the course opened I had a summer uniform which was light drill. And I also had a warrant officer who was my adviser if necessary. He was a delightful man, fitting in with all those women, Warrant Officer Hatcroft. But the drama occurred when Eleanor Manning came up one night to speak to the girls and to see how things were and we put a folding stretcher for her in my room for her to stay the night, so she wouldn't have to go all the way back to Point Piper. And the next morning two or three of the girls were moving this bed out of my room and [Millicent] Aspinall, the Quartermaster, and I had to share a room because it was very ...

it was all dormitories you see having been a school. And they discovered bugs in the bed. So they came to me and I said, 'Not a word', because I thought if the press get hold of this, you know, it will be the end because we'd been very worried by the press after the opening. Now it's hard to get publicity, but they were the *Women's Weekly*, they came up. We had one society girl that had come in and said she ... when she was asked in the original interview what she could do, she said, 'Well, I can't do anything but I can cook' and we had to have cooks you see. So the first course had people who were enlisted who did the cooking and this girl, this society girl, was one of them and the *Women's Weekly* had got hold of the fact that she was on this course and they wanted to interview her.

And was that why you were pestered by the media then?

No, I don't think so. I think we were news, you know, this was the first time that women had been in the army.

And so it was more than the *Women's Weekly* that came up?

Not only the *Women's Weekly* but the other papers too. We were pestered. They left us alone after a while but they ... we had to hide this girl. Here she was in a big white chef hat and we had to hide her, we didn't let them know that she was in the cookhouse. And after they had done their cooking for the three weeks - the course was three weeks - they came in and did the second course and another group of cooks went in. See, we virtually didn't have any staff. This is what it amounted to. Does that make it clear?

Mmm. How did the press disrupt the happenings then?

Well, we had our routine and they were a blooming nuisance. We knew we had to put up with it because, you know, we wanted people to join up, not that we were really very worried because there were still hundreds of applicants being interviewed through the ones at the Women's Voluntary National Register.

And we were talking about uniforms a moment ago there too, were you involved with the actual decisions about what sort of uniform you would have?

Yes, this was discussed very much at Yarra Junction with the controller. The night sessions were mostly discussions of the sort about discipline, accommodation, uniforms and so on. And Sybil was absolutely insistent that ... she wouldn't have us in caps. The WANS did wear a cap, the WAAAFs wore a cap but Sybil wanted us in hats and she, when she entered Victoria Barracks as the controller, down in Melbourne, wore a sort of felt slouch hat and our hat was modelled on hers.

And why did she want hats and not caps?

She thought they were masculine I think. She didn't want us to look like men.

And did this sort of attitude pervade a lot of what happened in the army?

How do you mean?

The fact that she wanted you to be women, did you feel that at other times when you were in the army?

(25.00) Yes. I can remember Eleanor Manning and I going out to a male officers' mess somewhere out there beyond Ingleburn, I can't think where it was, where some of the - this is later - where some of the first postings had gone to and we were invited to stay for lunch by the CI and we had hats on and we hadn't been told that hats weren't allowed to be worn in an officers' mess, no-one wore hats. We went into the officers' mess in our hats and the CI said, 'You'll have to take your hats off. Hats are not allowed'. This was something, see, a woman normally wouldn't take her hat off. And we were, for instance, we discouraged the sort of masculinity you know where people went round with their hands in their pockets and stood with their feet wide apart and stand at ease position and we had the perfect example in Sybil who was always a very gracious woman and in Eleanor Manning. And I think, you know, it comes down and her officers were very conscious that we discouraged masculinity. You see, the idea was that originally - I think I might have said earlier ... I might have said to you before we got onto tape that we would go overseas ... I didn't say that? Well, it was intended we should go overseas. General Blamey wanted us in the Middle East but it was the Labor Government said no, only medical people would go. And ... turn it off ... would go overseas. We were bitterly disappointed when it came out that we wouldn't because the reason given was we weren't protected by the Geneva Convention because we were going to do men's jobs, so therefore we didn't go overseas. And it wasn't until 1944, I think, that the 200 went to New Guinea. But by then the Jap had gone a long way forward.

But although we were disappointed it became very obvious to us that with our population 'A-Class' men were doing jobs in barracks and driving vehicles and ambulances and operating searchlights and things, that these were jobs that could be done by women and we were really backup forces for the men to be released to go forward because of the smallness of our population. So I always maintain ... said that we released a division of men for front-line duty. And I don't look back now and say I'm sorry I didn't go overseas because I think we did a job that was needed in Australia, the WAAAF and the AWAS. Right?

Absolutely. But initially the jobs that the women ... it was envisaged the women would do were, say, traditional jobs that would be traditionally done by women, say, the cooking and the secretarial ...

The cooking and clerical work and driving cars and things, yes. But then it went on, you know, they went into signals, they went into ack-ack, they went into searchlight, they went into ambulance car companies, they went into ordnance and ordnance wasn't just being storewomen. I mean, I always remember down at Bandiana where there was a thousand women stationed at Bonegilla - that's just out of ... that's Albury - there were signallers down there. Bandiana, there were these ordnance women and they were operating, these little slips of girls striving ... I'll never forget one morning the CO getting me out of bed early to see these bits of kids loading these great heavy vehicles onto flat-topped trains to be shipped off somewhere. And they drove on night convoys with these big trucks down to Melbourne where they were to be shipped somewhere or other, always with an officer in charge. Lieutenant Helen Morris, our present Lady Cutler, was one of those who was an officer in charge of the convoys going down from Bandiana. But it grew as to what they could do and

most arms of the service had women doing something whether it was, you know, driving a truck, driving an ambulance, operating a wireless that they could decipher, searchlights, ack-ack, coastal artillery - all sorts of jobs.

And this happened out of necessity in a sense that if there was an emergency to be ...

Emergency and there were 'A-Class' men doing that. And as I think I said to you earlier before we started that the defences of Australia were virtually in the hands of the AWAS and the WAAAF.

So it was very important that they expand their activities and duties.

That's right. That's right.

This is the end of tape one.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

Identification: This is tape two, side C.

You were going to tell me some more about the training at Killara, the end of the training.

Yes, well, as the months went on and as these girls who were almost potential officer material went out to their jobs their COs were so impressed with their enthusiasm and their efficiency that the demand became greater and greater. They wanted more and more where they'd been reluctant a bit in the beginning. And it soon became obvious that the training school at Killara was not big enough to train the girls. So the army took over the whole of the right hand side of Ingleburn camp which was four blocks and it ... the AWAS Recruit Training Battalion was formed of four companies and I was appointed to be the CO of the Training Battalion. And there we could train. You see, each company had 150 and they came in week by week and there was a company marching out every week of 150.

The VAs, getting back to the VAs who'd gone overseas and had come back and become Australian Army Medical Women's Services - AAMWS - they were doing the same sort of recruit training, the AAMWS, in another block. And the army, in its wisdom, decided that our training, our basic recruit training was the same for their services as it was for ours and that we would be amalgamated. Now the AAMWS didn't want this because they had their company, they were happy. To be quite candid, I didn't want another company either. But, you know, it was war and you had to get on with the job and do it the most economical way. So they came in as part of our training battalion and our name was changed from 1st AWAS Training Battalion to 1st AWS - Army Women's Services Training Battalion.

I was only thinking yesterday how glad I was, because I know so many of the AAMWS and my friend Barbara Donkin, who lives in the unit down here came in as the officer in charge of

that particular company - Captain Barbara Donkin who had been a VA in the Middle East - and it was very successful. Joyce Snelling who was the assistant controller of that service was a little, I think, worried about us and thought, you know, we marched around a lot and so on. But we had a very nice officers' mess and they didn't and my people were told you had to make the AAMWS feel welcome both in the officers' mess and the sergeants' mess and the recruit mess and it was a tremendous success. Then ... so the AAMWS Training Company was disbanded and became part of the training battalion. Right?

Eventually 25,000 women were to pass through the ranks of the AWAS. Now that's ...

That's a lot of women.

It's a lot of women. And you know the jobs. We've talked about the jobs that they went to. Do you want me to do anything about that now or ... Signals, searchlight, anti-aircraft, coastal artillery?

Yeah, I think we know that list.

(5.00) You've got that have you? Right. Now, in '44 ... see, '42 was the crucial year. '43 was sort of consolidating and getting it going. The ... there weren't so many coming in so it was decided that the training battalions could really be disbanded and become companies, still combined without amalgamating. And I was moved in April 1944 to be Assistant Controller of Victoria and I went down there to headquarters. Not army headquarters. It was called VICLFC, you see, it had been Southern Command but the names had been changed, the Victorian lines of communication. And so I was a staff officer ... not a staff officer, I was a head of a service.

And what did you actually ... What job did you do there? What did that entail being head of the service?

Well, it ... the girls were posted out to all sorts of units and where they were we tried to have an administrative NCO or officer who would keep an eye on the girls but they would be responsible to the CO of the unit who was a man. So my job consisted of going out on inspection to see that things were going as they should be going. I mentioned earlier that we had 1,000 girls in Bandiana and Bonegilla out of Albury. Well, I used to go up there every month and inspect what was going on there. Their accommodation, whether they'd been properly accommodated and where in the beginning things were pretty basic where they just had army blankets and camp stretchers, Sybil Irving was very anxious that we should try and make the barracks a bit homely because they were so far away from home and didn't get home very much. So we had amenities and we used to sort of ... some of the girls would make bedspreads and curtains and things like that and this was her idea of women remaining feminine. So mostly I was either interviewing.

The welfare problem - it wasn't a problem. We had a welfare officer because we assistant controllers did not have the time to actually interview every case that had a welfare - well, we'd better use the word 'problem' - we had very few. So social workers were brought in as officers. They did a recruit training. Nobody was allowed in, straight in, without going to do the recruit training course. It was pretty hard for some of them. Mine for instance was an

older woman but she did the recruit training course. And a girl could go straight to her if she felt she had a problem she couldn't discuss with her male CO or perhaps even with the AWAS admin. officer, I she could go straight to the welfare officer and discuss what her problem was.

Just to cite a case; men sometimes went forward and a girl perhaps had been left pregnant - very few of them I'm thankful to say. We had the lowest casualty rate of any service. But Olive would interview that girl, the welfare officer, interview that girl, find out that they had hoped to be married. The man was perhaps up in New Guinea and she used to come to me and ask me whether I would write a letter to the CO explaining up in New Guinea about could this man come down. I had so much faith in her that I gave her the fact that she could sign letters for me because if I was away on inspection and so on. And on one occasion the GOC sent for me and he said, 'What's this I hear' - luckily I got on very well with him - 'that you're writing to male COs up in New Guinea and asking for men to be sent down'. Well, they'd come down - no pressure was put on the men - but by the time that Olive had finished talking to the two of them and discovering whether it was a good thing for them to be married or not, they very often were married. I think Olive had a lot to do with it but ... And it was just one of those things that happened in wartime.

Yeah, but it was good that there was that social worker there because it was important for these people to be able to get their situation ...

(10.00)Well, she could give them time. See, I don't think South Australia perhaps and Western Australia that were smaller, but Victoria and New South Wales definitely had their welfare officers. And they weren't just cases of ... you know, there were very few of them that became pregnant but they had problems. I mean, there were some girls that wanted to get out of the army for compassionate reasons because there was trouble at home as far as their family was concerned and it took away from us a lot of the routine basic things. And then Olive would come and say, my welfare officer would come and say - I had to give, we assistant controllers had to give the authority that the person could be discharged for compassionate reasons but Olive would have done the ground work and would say, you know, 'This girl ought to be discharged because she's got very good reasons'.

Some that happened, when the men, some of them who were married, and the 9th Divi. came back I think 1943 and some of their men were posted in base areas because they were medically classified because of war injuries or something, they wanted to get out.

They were unfit? Classified as unfit?

The men were unfit, yes. And they wanted to get out for that reason. So the welfare officers did a lot of that and they would come to me and sometimes if I wasn't satisfied, well, I would see the girl concerned but, you know, they were discharged.

Well, it took a load off your shoulders as well as fulfilling a very important role.

That's right. Well, not only that, that person was really more qualified than I was to deal with a case like that. As I mentioned about the pregnancy case, right?

Were you ever in strife for letting her sign the letters for you? Did it ever ...

That was what happened.

When the GOC ...

The GOC sent for me, you see, and because she had signed for me because ... and this male CO wrote down and complained. Who was this Joyce Whitworth, Assistant Controller of VICLFC, asking for one of his men to be sent down.

It should have gone through the male officer at the camp?

Mmm. Well, it should have gone through ... it should have gone really through A Branch ... that was administration for a male officer to be returned. It should have come to me and then I would have seen the AG - the adjutant general - and said, 'Look, this fellow needs to be sent back'.

Fine. What is your impression of the way the women got on with the men in the services?

Tremendous. Tremendous. We never had any problem. When we were at Ingleburn the whole of the left hand side of the road was men and the whole of the right hand side was the women and we never had any problem with them. The men were tremendously protective towards the girls. They had a great respect for them. When we marched in they got on the roadside, called out, you know, 'you'll be sorry' sort of thing, but we had very little problem. They got on tremendously well.

You didn't strike resentment that women were coming in and trying to ...

No. The only resentment I think was in the very beginning when the male COs saw their domains being sort of threatened a bit. [inaudible] The ... but when they got the girls they were so delighted with them and I think they were delighted too because 'A-Class' men weren't terribly keen on sitting at desks and filling in forms or typing typewriters or driving staff course, they wanted to go and fight.

So ...

There was a tremendous respect for each other. I mean, we had on one occasion the Americans came into Liverpool camp and racism was pretty strong in those days and there were Negroes amongst them and we got instructions that when our girls went on leave they were not to go - they used to go by bus, you see, to Liverpool - Liverpool was put out of bounds because of the Negroes and our girls had to go down to Ingleburn Station to go into the city on leave because they felt the Negroes would be a menace. You know, it was ridiculous. Some of them were a damn sight nicer than the white men. But that ... we never had any problem.

I mean, I remember on one occasion we were ... we kept a very close eye on them and the Crossroads Hotel down at Liverpool was a great meeting place that they liked to get down to and we used to hop in the utility now and again and do a raid down there to see if any of them were down there and they'd put them in the back and were brought home.

(15.00) They were absent without leave down there you mean?

That's right. Mmm.

And did you find some occasionally?

Oh yes. Not many. And sometimes we'd go out through the camp, out beyond the camp and we'd see ... because they weren't allowed outside the lines after I think it was ten o'clock and we'd see, you know, a girl and a man walking along together and of course we'd stop the thing and they'd run for the bushes and we'd pick the girls up and take them back. We were ...

So you did act a bit as an MP as well.

Well, you see, when you come to think of it, Judy, the age group was eighteen. The girls that were eighteen in those days weren't like the girls of eighteen today. The ... a lot of them had put their ages on to get in and probably were only sixteen or seventeen. They knew nothing and I soon discovered that they knew nothing. And through Eleanor Manning we arranged for there to be sex hygiene lectures and Doctor Grace Cuthbert used to come to every course and give a lecture on sex hygiene as it was called in those days. They were babies. I had a group that came down in the early days from Queensland, 200, to do training and there were no leave hostels then and they were going on leave to Sydney and it was full of soldiers - Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, you name it. So I got the staff to ring up all their friends and they to ring friends and so forth and we got all those 200 Queenslanders bedded down in private homes or we got the girls, the recruits themselves, to take a girl home with them so that they weren't roaming the streets of Sydney.

That was a wonderful thing to do and what a huge undertaking.

Well, you know, we maintained that we had to look after our people because, as I say, they were very young and those girls that came down from Queensland were a long way away from home and Sybil she came round - Sybil Irving - came round, she was an amazing woman, she had a tremendous memory for places and names. After the war when she came over to reunions and I was president of the Army Association here and there'd be four or 500 at those reunions and after dinner, after dinner was over, she'd want to mingle and I did think I'd never get her back, you know, to where I lived at Dural in those days. She'd say, 'Don't tell me, I know. You were cook at so-and-so or you were something at so-and-so'. She was magnificent.

And that creates a wonderful relationship with the ...

Well, I always say that a country's as good as its leader, an organisation's as good as its leader and our service was as good as our leader and the officers were very carefully selected. For instance we had ... a lot of the things came to us from the guides and Sybil, when we went

down to Yarra Junction, they had a ... always in guide's camps they had prayers before breakfast and Sybil said she wanted us to have this. It wasn't forced on us, it was voluntary. Anyone who wanted to come at a certain hour of the morning underneath the trees to have a short reading from the Bible and prayers could have that. And every unit had it. She was a tremendous Christian woman too.

And would that have been well attended do you think?

Not terribly. We used to have church parades on Sunday and everybody ... I had twelve hundred at Ingleburn, had to fall in on that battalion parade. But it was army regulations that you couldn't force anyone to go to church. So you had to say fall out on the white plank those who don't wish to go. And the majority would fall out. And the reason they fell out was that some of the services were very dull. Some of our chaplains were very dull - they were fine men but, you know, they fell out. Anyway we got over that because they didn't sort of stay at home and do nothing. We gave them some jobs to do.

Never an idol moment in the army.

No.

We've just been talking about the VAs coming back and how they came to be enlisted finally and how they came to your camp. Could you talk about that?

Yes. When they went away as VADs they were enroled and they were not enlisted and the demand for their services in Australia too was great and in the islands. So it was decided that they should be formed into a service that ... it's called commonly the AAMWS - Australian Army Medical Women's Services - and they had to be enlisted. The powers that be said that although they'd been away nursing Alamein casualties and doing a dash good job they had to do a basic recruit course at Ingleburn. Now when we were amalgamated I think one of the reasons Barbara Donkin always says that we got on so well was, I went over to see her one weekend when things were a bit quiet to talk to her because there'd been some application for some of their people to become officers. And I expressed feeling for them coming back after that, having to do that basic recruit course - she'd been chosen to be an officer, you see. She'd gone off and done an officers school, and also the fact that I had done two and a half years nursing and I understood the difference between our service and their service and I think that was why the amalgamation went so well and we regard each other as sister services.

Because you understood what they had done and how ... you thought there was a touch of irony in them having been overseas serving and then coming back to go to basics ...

The hospitals out here were clamouring for them. You know, there were camp hospitals, there were AGHs and so forth and they were sent off to Ingleburn to a ... march around and do a basic recruit course on army discipline, et cetera, et cetera. It was ironical. And it was rather sad actually because some of them were a bit resentful and I don't blame them because the direction - and we will mention no names to you - when they came back said, 'Well, you've had all the glamour of the Middle East, now you can get down to some basic army training'.

That's hard to believe, isn't it?

That wasn't a women, that was a man.

Yes, it sounds like a man.

And that did not help in some cases. But the people who served in Ingleburn and mixed together at Ingleburn loved and respected one another. And when I went to Melbourne I thought it was marvellous 'cause Joyce Snelling came down to send me off in the train and brought me a box of chocolates.

(Laughs) That's lovely. Now, what about the uniform, how did they feel about having to lose their lovely blue uniform?

Didn't like it at all. They didn't like it at all. I don't blame them.

But how did you get over that. You allowed them some leeway in that way?

Well, I gave them a bit of leeway, you see, I allowed them to wear their blues around the camp but they weren't allowed to wear - that wasn't my decision - it was the decision of the powers that be that they had to wear khaki when they went out on leave or wherever they went.

Let's go on from here about the relationship between the ...

AAMWS and AWAS?

The AAMWS and the AWAS, yes.

You see, they were doing jobs that women ... they were medical. We were doing men's jobs and there was a need for both and I thought it was ... I said to, I thought it was ridiculous them having to do a recruit course, these girls that had been in so long. Perhaps they could have had a refresher ... refresher lectures on the fact that when they got into khaki they had to salute and do all these various things. You see the ... I always remember when it came in that the nursing service who had not been officers, they were nursing sisters and regulations brought in they would be officers and that they would salute and that they would be lieutenants and they would be captains. Now the men they were nursing were a little bit, you know, this is an officer it's not a sister, you know, she's a captain or she's a lieutenant. I remember Mrs Roosevelt coming out to Australia and we were all four gathered at Victoria Barracks in the officers' mess and ... and General Fewtrell who was the GOC and the principal matron was a grand old first army nurse and she came up to him and he said, 'Good morning, Matron' and she said, 'Good morning, General' and he said, 'You haven't saluted me' and she said, 'I never will'.

Good on her.

Matron Kerry that was, tremendous woman.

And so the men in the army were feeling uncomfortable about having nursing sisters attend them who were ... had rank?

The boys, the boys in the wards, it sort of ... they got used to it but in the beginning they were nursing sisters, they weren't captain this or what-have-you that.

(25.00) And what did the men feel then? Uncomfortable?

They did for a time as I understand it. I wasn't there. I'm only going on what Barbara Donkin has told me.

Yes. Because perhaps they thought they had to salute or ...

Yes, well, you know, this was ... you know, I'm a private and they're an officer and I think perhaps the VAs helped here because they were the go-betweens you see. They were nursing orderlies.

And perhaps it was the menial tasks that the officers were doing ... performing for the ranks?

The what?

Would it have been the menial tasks perhaps that the officers in their capacity as nursing sisters ...

No, they weren't doing menial tasks. They were doing what the sister would do in a ward in a hospital even today. You wouldn't have your sisters doing menial tasks. You'd have your nursing aides or something like that. It's all changed today of course with all this [inaudible].

Yes. Or just attending to patients.

Yes, attending. Supervising and that sort of thing.

Yes.

You see the nursing orderlies did all the dirty work as it were. So that was a help, if they had them. But, you know, sister came around and, you know, she's got pips on her - three pips on her. Captain or lieutenant or something. But I think that was overcome but I know that the nursing service did not want to have rank.

(30.00) This is the end of side C on tape two.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

Identification: This is the start of side D on tape two.

We were going to talk now about the demobilisation process and what happened, Joyce. Could you carry on?

Yes. Well, towards the end of the war we started to talk of what we were going to do after the war and very few of us wanted to go back to what we'd been doing before the war. Some had lost their husbands or had lost their fiances and their lives were virtually changed. There was a change of direction. Those who had been fortunate enough to keep their husbands or fiances were quite happy to go back and be wives and mothers. But others of us wanted to do something different and I'd always wanted to be a farmer because I'd spent a lot of time ... I had a great love of animals and I'd spent a lot of time on my brother-in-laws property in Moree. Now Barbara Donkin who was my AAMWS officer at Ingleburn also wanted to be a farmer. So it was discussed - she lived at Moss Vale - we talked about, well, perhaps we could have a farm together. We thought fat lamb farm somewhere out in the country. Her mother and brother lived at Moss Vale and had a big home and her mother was anxious to leave Moss Vale and she was prepared to put money into - we didn't have a lot because we were very badly paid. In fact, I got out of the army really in debt. I'd borrowed from Barbara because we didn't get the same perks the men got, you know, for entertainment purposes, the heads of the services - so she was prepared to sell her home and we had had ideas of going further out and having a fat lamb place as I said. Well, (a) we didn't have enough money to buy a property of that sort and, (b) we had my brother-in-law and Barbara Donkin's brother who were both sheep men, graziers, and said, 'You girls could never possibly manage sheep'. So we settled for a farm, mixed farm, at Dural and we bought at Dural here nearby. Barbara got out of the army in January '46, I got out in June '46. In the meantime she and her mother were looking for places round about because Dural was very much a farming area in those days - a home, a suitable home for them. And we found this place and they said, 'Come over'. I came over to see what you think of it and so forth. And I was excited. It was quite a nice house and nice land and ...

How many acres?

Thirty-five and a half. And the idea was they'd have a fixed farm. As a matter of fact Barbara had ideas that perhaps we might do pig farming of all things. She did a pig course. Well, I got out in June '46 and we moved in in October '46 with the idea that we would perhaps do pig farming. Now, Barbara got ill, she'd picked up some elusive germ in the Middle East they thought and she had to go to hospital and during that period when she was in hospital I went to a field day and there was a man talking on poultry farming, et cetera, et cetera and also I could see that if we were going to do pig farming we'd have to spend a lot of money on shedding. We probably would not manage a pig farm without employing labour but I got excited at the fact that we could do poultry farming. And this man from the Agricultural Department came out to the farm at Dural, 'Belfries', and there'd been a commercial artist there who'd had a few old shed and a sort of brooder house and so on and he said, 'Well you know, with a few alterations you could get started in poultry farming', and they were very keen on helping the ex-service people get re-established. There were several of us out in that district.

(5.00) And Barbara came out of hospital and we went in for, first of all, poultry farming. And then we planted oranges, we planted passionfruit, we grew cash crops. We were peasant

farmers. Seven days a week, mud, slush, the lot. The lot of the land had to be cleared and we didn't have the machinery. We didn't have much money because Mrs Donkin, although she'd helped buy the property, she didn't have the money to help us get established in farming.

I was wondering, did you have no assistance say through the soldier settlers scheme?

We got a small allowance. I can't ... it was very small, for re-establishing ourselves. I can remember that Barbara and her brother Tom who was intellectually handicapped and myself put 100 pounds each into the farm account and that's what we started with. We had an overdraft of course after a time. Well, then we got keen. The orange market was not good because the fruit that was grown in the irrigation area was very much better than the citrus fruit that was grown out here because we didn't have irrigation. So we went in for pasture improvement and we actually had very good soil, we had very good paddocks and we got 100 ewes - Border Leicester ewes - and contrary to what our brothers and brothers-in-law said, we did everything for them. We drenched them, we ... I can't even think what it means to desex them, but we did that. I've forgotten the name.

Castrate them?

Castrated them, blood all over us and so on. And I had an army friend who had become a sheep farmer, her father had been a very prominent one in South Australia, and she came out on one occasion and she said, 'Joyce, you ought to change your ram. You want to have a particular ram, Dorset Horn ram and a Border Leicester ewe, and breed from that'. And we produced beautiful fat lambs that produced top market prices and you see we could have gone fat lamb thing but my brother said, 'Oh you couldn't do it'. But then the district grew and dogs started to get in and kill. So we had to give the sheep up.

Couldn't keep the dogs out?

No. I tried to shoot ... I'm a great lover of animals and two dogs got in on one occasion. At that stage we'd gone off the breeding into running wethers because the lambs were getting tics. And they got in and they ... I heard our dog barking madly, I was down at the house. And they were in the far paddock these wethers and these dogs had got at them. I was mad. And we had a gun, my father's shotgun, and I got the gun out and for me to shoot a dog, I'm a great animal lover, there's my little dog up there on the fridge, and he was chasing these dogs right down and I tried to shoot - I would have killed them for what they were doing to my sheep. Then I hopped into the car and went round the district trying to find out where these dogs had come from. And I tracked them down, it was a friend, and there they were dripping with mud and with blood and the ... I said to her, 'Cath, you must never' - I had the gun in my hand - 'you must never let them off together' because two dogs get into mischief.

You didn't demand that she put them down?

Well, actually her son who was a country man came home that night and he came up to me and he said, 'I want to borrow your gun', and I said, 'What for?' He said, 'To shoot those two dogs'. I said, 'No you can't because the dogs belonged to the daughter', and I don't know. I suppose I went a bit soft or something but ...

You were certainly soft-hearted about that.

We went out, out of the sheep and we went into Hereford cattle. We had six to eight Hereford cattle that we bred from and they ran on the pastures and we had cattle and we went out of growing things and we mostly became chicken farmers till ... 1960 when the Outward Bound movement approached me and asked me if I'd start the first Outward Bound girls' school. And when I was rung and asked if I would, I said, 'Don't be funny, I'm a farmer. How can I do this sort of thing?' Barbara was in the kitchen cooking and she said, 'What's all this I hear?' and I said, 'Well, Barbara Cullen who had been asked by the Outward Bound Foundation to find someone and my name had been given' because I'd been in charge of training and she said, 'You ring her back and tell her your interested'. So I rang back and said, 'Look, I don't know anything about it but I'm prepared to see Admiral Buchanan' who was the person to see all about it. I didn't really quite know enough about Outward Bound to know whether this was right for women or not. They had women's courses in England. And I went to see Admiral Buchanan and he said, 'Our warden says that we ought to be having a girls school. I don't know whether it's the right thing. What do you think?' Mind you, I got stuck into him.

(Laughs) And what did you say to him? You thought, yes, you ...

Well, I did. I went off then I ran the first three courses. I said I couldn't - Barbara had to have labour while I was away - but I got very involved in it and I sort of went onto the Outward Bound executive and was chosen chairman of the girls' management school committee and so on and ...

Well, that's really interesting and a very rewarding project I would think. The skills that you acquired through the army, skills that perhaps you didn't know that you had ...

Well, see, I didn't know I had leadership skills till I went into the army. I didn't know that I could be a principal of an Outward Bound Girls' course. For instance, at one stage when things got very tough in the farming thing and the cost of feed because of drought went up and people were going out of farming. It looked like as if I would have to go and get a job. Barbara had her mother and her brother and Betty Archdale who was a friend of mine, she said, 'Tara Girls' School wants a principal, why don't you apply?' I said, 'Betty, I haven't got any academic qualifications' and she said, 'What have you got?' and I told her. And she said, 'Good grief, girl, you're illiterate'. Anyway, she made me apply and I had to send a photograph and the only photograph I had of course was one in uniform and Elizabeth Hake tells me that I was in the last few but they took someone else. But I mean they asked me later to go onto the council and I was on the council for eighteen years.

But you see, I didn't know anything about that. And I was only one of many, Judy.

One of many women who benefited from their experiences in the army?

Yes, yes. There were a lot of course that didn't benefit because their lives would change because they lost their loved ones and marriages, you know, didn't occur or broken up or ... I

always think those girls that had their husbands in the ... and didn't hear anything. At least the ones that lost their husbands did hear if they were killed in the air force, that they'd been killed in something or other and they were able to ... but all those years I had many people on the staff of my - both at Ingleburn and in Victoria. I always remember one girl in Victoria didn't know till her husband landed in Darwin that he was still alive.

It must have been terribly difficult for everyone really.

Yes, yes. And, you see, I was ... I'm terribly against war. I think the Vietnam War was ... we've got men here on our executive here who are Vietnamese and when they had that Vietnam march Barbara and I sat and watched and wept, they should never have been there.

I think history has shown that now. A few moments ago you said when you came out of the army you came out in debt which surprised me and I'm wondering if you could talk about the pay.

Perhaps that is not quite correct because by then I got my deferred pay and I had a little. But I had borrowed from a friend at one stage because I was not getting enough to ... for instance, being the head of a service people came down who were passing through to the west or to the south or down ... or coming down to do schools and out of courtesy it was army regulations they called on the head of the service. Well, you'd have them and you'd talk to them and it would be just on lunchtime and you'd say, 'Well, would you like to stay for lunch?' and you'd take them to lunch and of course they would never think of paying, you wouldn't expect them to. I was a major probably and they were a lieutenant and, of course, that ... you see, the heads of the services in the states had lower rank than the men. The men were colonels that were head of the service. We were majors. See our controller was a lieutenant colonel when she was first appointed and she became a full colonel but her assistant controllers didn't become half colonels. And, so, we I think got, the men got an entertainment allowance for anything, you know, they'd sign a chit if they took someone to lunch in the officers' mess but we didn't get that. Actually I had, when my mother was widowed, and I had been allocating a certain amount of my pay to her never knowing that she was putting that away and not using it and that was the money she gave me when I got out of the army was provided by the 100 pounds to go to the farm.

Just as well she'd been doing that for you. But how did you feel about the fact that you weren't allowed to have an entertainment allowance and yet you were actually doing all this entertainment on behalf of the army? Did you think about that then?

No. Never entered my head. Never entered my head.

It didn't occur to you that it was unfair?

No. No. I think the girls got two-thirds of a man's pay, I think that's what it was. No, we really were very ... See, we were volunteers, Judy. We cared about our country, I'd - we were intensely patriotic. We'd volunteered and it was exciting. You know, people say you made this sacrifice. You didn't make any sacrifices, it was the best years of your life although you

worked seven days a week. You made friends that are still friends and will always be friends and that friendship between service people is just tremendous.

Yes, I keep hearing about this wonderful bond between you all. But along with the patriotism perhaps there was a sense of adventure too?

Oh that's right, that's right. This is why I think I liked Outward Bound because see that was adventure. See, they told me when, for instance, when I went to Outward Bound that I wouldn't have to do anything that the girls did like climbing mountains or so on and so forth but I found I did need to do it because I wasn't going to ask anyone to do anything I wasn't prepared to do myself. And when I climbed Submarine Crag, you know, I felt this exhilaration, this achievement because you see it's very devious Outward Bound there. It's character training through adventure.

Yes, a very good cause. I know of it. So that really the amount of money you got was irrelevant?

Irrelevant. Never ever sort of thought ... it never entered my head. We found it hard, for instance, I had - when I was at Killara - I had no army vehicle, I had my mother's car and that was used for transport to Killara Station or if I had to go to Victoria Barracks to see Eleanor Manning, you know, I'd pop in my car. I always remember a policeman pulling me up and said I was exceeding the speed limit because I had to be at this meeting at Victoria Barracks and I said, 'It's very important. I've got to be at Victoria Barracks in such-and-such ...' and he said, 'It's not a state of emergency yet', and I got a ticket.

And you had to pay that yourself?

Well, I couldn't go on the day the court case was. I had to go to court, you know, ... and I sent my quartermaster. (laughs) And she apparently impressed them that how important it was that the job, you know, that I was doing and the hide of them to sort of call me in and I didn't have the time to go. One of the ...

And did she win the case?

I can't remember, I can't remember. I think it was dismissed I think. I think perhaps the army might have sort of come in there. But when I went to Ingleburn I was still using my mother's car and then we ... of course, we had to get rations and things. We needed utility trucks and we had two utility trucks and we had two drivers and I remember on one occasion we were ... I was going down - we didn't have a staff car like a ... see, I was a battalion commander but I didn't have a staff car, I had a utility.

That's what they thought of the women!

We were driving down and my driver perhaps was exceeding the speed limit and suddenly a car flashed past and indicated to pull in and it was a colonel or brigadier or something or other in a staff car, I think probably coming from Liverpool. And the driver was summoned out of the car to go and why was she exceeding the speed limit? And she said well she was driving

her CO and of course he didn't know that I was in the car with her. But he was just saying, 'You're exceeding the speed limit'.

And the explanation sufficed on that occasion?

Yeah. Oh, the men were very good. They were very good. We weren't driving dangerously but we were in a hurry.

But still in all, you just had the utility and not the ...

Not a staff car.

Not a staff car.

(20.00)Mmm. And I had to fill in forms that every bit of petrol. They after a while decided they'd provide me with the petrol and I had to fill in a form every time the tank was filled.

This was when you were driving your mother's car?

Yes.

And that came later on for ...

That didn't come till 1942, well into 1942, possibly even through into 1943.

That you got the petrol allowance?

Yeah. Well, our own controller was entitled to a staff car as a head of a service at Victoria Barracks and she didn't get one and then Matron ... Chief Matron Sage came back and she got one and it was decided that Sybil Irving should have one. And she was so patriotic she lived at Yarra Junction and she wouldn't use it. She used to get the tram into Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. Matron Sage who lived in the same officers' mess as I did, with the combined services, the staff car used to pick her up and it was her right as the head of the nursing service - matron and chief. At Toorak where it was an old ... it was a home that had been converted into an officers' mess to take, but Sybil, no, she wouldn't use it. She'd use it if she was going naturally ... we'd use it if we were going ... for instance, Major Appleford who was my opposite number, Barbara's ... the AAMWS Assistant Controller, and if we were going out together we had to have a staff car. But we always tried to share. She'd go and see her AAMWS in the camp hospital and I'd go and see my AWAS wherever they were working. We tried to economise.

I was going to say, it was part of your ...

War effort.

War effort, your patriotism need to cut down and use of little as the country's resources.

That's right. Mmm. ... About when the submarines were in Sydney Harbour we were told that we were never to react to civilian sirens, that we had to wait for the air-raid message read from Victoria Barracks and if the sirens went there had to be someone by the phone and we would get the air-raid message read. And the girls would be got out of bed and they would get into the trenches. We had trenches and I'll tell you a funny story about the trenches in a moment too. And we could hear - at Killara - we could hear all the shooting and the what-have-you's and so on going on and we heard the all clear and one of my officers came to me and said could they get out of the trenches and I said, 'No'. I was at the phone you see. 'We haven't had the all clear from Victoria Barracks' and we sat and we sat and then I rang and they'd forgotten to give it to us and it was cold. The girls got out and they looked, you know, they had their hair in curlers and so on. They looked cold and miserable and we got them into the mess hall and gave them all hot cups of coffee. But that was what we were doing when the Japs were in the Harbour. We were sitting in trenches.

How we got those trenches was when Darwin actually was bombed, Intelligence came up to the school to see what protection we had because things were ... we knew how bad Darwin was, we people in the army - civilians didn't. And this captain said to me, 'You haven't got any trenches?' and I said, 'No'. He said, 'Well, you must have them'. So it was arranged that the ... a labour corps would come up on the Sunday morning to dig these trenches and myself and Millicent Aspinall who was my quartermaster were standing on the verandah there and truck load by truck load arrived of these men, this labour corps and Aspie - we used to call her Aspie - thought she was going to have to feed them. But there were a hundred and they dug the trenches and they went home before lunch.

They got it all done in the morning.

And we used to have to have practise things. We had a ... I think we had a bell or a whistle or something if there was going to a practice. You know, there was an air-raid message read and ... it was either an air-raid or there'd be ... we had fire alarms too and we used to spring these alarms on the girls at the most unexpected times. And on one occasion we rang for ... there was to be the air-raid message read and they got into the trenches and they sat in the trenches and the adjutant came running back because she ... the idea was that you had to take all the records with you. She hadn't got the xxx. Well then, after that, the heavens opened and the trenches were full of water for weeks and if there'd been an air-raid we certainly couldn't have gone into them.

(25.00) They were six feet deep or so, the trenches?

Mmm. The ... We did have quite a - I don't think it's commonly known but if you're familiar with Canberra naturally - if you go and look at that map and see all the enemy shipping that was down the eastern coast of Australia, there was a lot of them. See, and the planes used to fly off. We had several scares at Ingleburn of running and getting into trenches.

Yes, I don't think the general public were aware that there was unidentified activity going on.

That's right. That's right. There was and ...

And it could have been for real.

And it could have been. What we thought was so funny on one occasion my adjutant and I sitting in a trench and it was near the camp ... the road that ran through the camp and the buses were still coming from Liverpool Station you see with some of the men coming back from leave and there was a fellow there that used to sell hot dogs at the bus stop. And my adjutant said, 'Wouldn't you love a hot dog?' and I said, 'I'd love one'. She said, 'Well, I'll slip out and get one'. And (laughs) she ran out in the middle of this so-called air-raid to get us a couple of hot dogs.

Good on you. That was bending the rules.

Oh, we used to bend the rules now and again I don't mind telling you.

How come the trenches weren't properly drained?

Just the labour corps and I think just bad management.

Just as well you didn't never have to get in them when they were full.

No. No.

At this point we broke for lunch and the interview was discontinued. This is the end of the interview and side D.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B - END OF INTERVIEW