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TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A.

Identification. This is side one of tape one of an interview about the Australian Women's Army Service, recorded with Norma Burns on 23rd May 1990.

Norma Burns, where and when were you born?

I was born in Launceston, Tasmania, on 11th August 1923.

Tell us something about your mother and father, and the circumstances in which you grew up.

Well my father was a carpenter in the Tasmanian Railways. My mother and father separated when I was about four years old. I have slight recollections of those days, but not very much. My father went away with the railways - he was a carpenter and he went away and mainly came home only weekends. I do remember little instances. He was a very particular man. He was very, very particular in his appearance, and everything had to be exact and there were certain things we were not allowed to do. One was swinging on a gate. I remember once my mother had visitors and I stayed behind after she said goodbye and I was swinging on the gate. And I saw the front wheel of a bike at the corner of the street, coming around, and I raced inside and said 'Here comes Daddy, here comes Daddy!', because I knew I wasn't allowed to swing on the gate and if he'd seen me I'd have been in trouble. That's from about that age, but my mother and father, as I said, separated when I was about four year old and

When you say 'we', brothers and sisters?

I had one sister, who was twelve years older than myself, and a brother was two years older.

At about what age then did your family split up?

I was about four, my sister must have been sixteen, she was working. My brother was apparently round about six. He was down at my grandparents' in Longford when my mother left, and she came across to Melbourne and brought me with her and left my brother behind.

So who looked after you from then?

My mother.

So you did stay with your mother?

I stayed with my mother, and my brother stayed behind with my father.

What sort of person was your mother?

Um, a very - oh, how can I describe ...? Mum never worried about anything much. She just went along with the tide, as you might as well say.

Was she a religious person?

No. She had been. She had been a very good Methodist person, but no, she didn't continue along with her church. But I In those days it was near the end of the depression and it wasn't easy, and you sort of lived in rooms. Like, there were rooming houses. And she'd do housework at someone's house and we'd live there. I had many places of abode around Melbourne.

Was it a happy childhood, or how would you describe it?

Not particularly.

Did you miss your father or miss your brothers?

Well at the time I was so young and I just was taken along, virtually. My mother, apparently she had a very hard birth when she had my brother and the doctor said she wasn't to have any more children, but she contracted diphtheria. Anyway, before anything could be done for her I come along on the way. So I was just taken along with the tide, I wasn't particularly It was just a fact of 'Oh, don't worry about Norma. You know, anything'll be all right as far as She shouldn't have been here anyway', sort of thing. And I

(5.00) Did you feel a bit uncared for?

I had to sort of think for myself. Yes, I wasn't particularly cared for, no, that's right - yes.

Did your mother remarry?

No, she built a *de facto* relationship but she never remarried.

How was your relationship with her *de facto*, then? Did he become a father figure as such?

No. Not really, no. Because by this time my maternal grandmother came across to Melbourne when I was about seven year old and took me back to Tasmania with her for a year. I went to school at Beaconsfield for a year and then I came back again to Melbourne. By this time my sister was about twenty and was married, and she had a daughter and I was sent out there to sort of be a baby-sitter for her, when she needed to go to town and I was with her. The daughter only lived ten months old. As far as I was told she had a stomach problem. I don't know what it was, anyway she died and then I was sent back to Mum again. Then my sister had a son, in 1933 I think it was - no, '34, 'cause I was eleven year old - and I was out there for three years living with my sister. So I was just more or less pushed along with the tide, as you might say.

With the depression years a lot of people found it a struggle anyway. Was it a period where you felt poor?

Oh, yes, yes. I mean, I'd have a brick in bed at night to keep my feet warm, and we used to have golden syrup dumplings for tea, and lived on bread and golden syrup and specked fruit. You know, you just more or less existed in those days.

What about your schooling, then, apart from you mentioned going back to Tasmania for a year?

My schooling was very haphazard. I went to a number of schools, but I done very well. I used to do very well at school, but my mother didn't think an education was any good for a girl. She never took much interest in my schooling. But I was always at the top of the class. I remember that I went to a school - in those days St James' Old Cathedral in King Street in West Melbourne, I don't know whether you know it or not, they had a school. It was a sort of a little private school and I went there for three years, and I was just beaten for top marks by one boy at that school, from the fourth to the fifth grade, I think, and from the fifth to the sixth, and he became a technical school teacher, which was very good in those days, to get up to there. Unfortunately I didn't complete my schooling there. I went from there when I went to live with my sister, and I went to Ripponlea State School. When I was there I was always at top of the grade, always done very well, and when I got into the eighth grade the infantile paralysis epidemic broke out. I was going onto my fourteenth year of age. We had a mid-term examination and there were about three or four of us taken down to the headmaster's office and we were told that we would get our Merits on recommendation. Well as I say, the infantile paralysis epidemic broke out, so my sister took her son to Tasmania to get away from the St Kilda area, and I turned fourteen in the August so my mother decided I'd go to work. It wasn't any use me going any further in my education ...

To that point had you begun to form ideas about what you might do with your life and where you might go?

No. Unfortunately I think with the way my life went I had a bit of an inferiority complex about myself. I didn't have any confidence in myself. So of course I was told I had to go to work and earn some money, and unfortunately I never ever got my Merit Certificate. So I was a bit deprived of that, which I regret now that I'm older. I always encouraged my own children to do what they could at school and that, but they didn't have that, well, urge to better themselves. But I wish I had now. There was one friend who almost begged my mother to send me to Emily McPherson, that she knew I had the ability, but my mother said 'Oh, education no good for girls', you know, in those days, 'cause this is back in what, 1930.

(10.00) To that point was it an environment in which social issues or politics were discussed? Did you have access to people who

No. No, nothing like that.

So what were your interests at that time, do you recall? Just before you started work did you have any particular hobbies? What sorts of things did you do with your leisure time?

There's another thing. I was never allowed to play sport. I wasn't allowed to join in the school sports or anything. In those days you could've learnt tennis for sixpence a lesson, and I wasn't allowed to. I had to go home and look after my nephew and do household chores.

Was sport regarded as a waste of time? You could be more productive than that?

Yes. I was very good at mathematics and I used to do very good at script writing, the Old English script writing. The only thing I would've liked to've furthered in that way would've been in the sign-writing and script work that I was interested in.

So where did you start work?

I started work at a tie factory, the Australian Tie Company in Lonsdale Street, right opposite Wesley Church, making bow ties for evening wear. I wasn't allowed to sort of think any higher. I was just an ordinary working girl.

What was the working circumstance like? Was it a large place, with lots of girls at machines, or how did you operate?

It wasn't a very large place. In fact, it was rather a friendly place. I didn't go towards girls of my own age, I always sort of moved towards older people. I more made friends with the older girls and women, more than anyone around my own age.

Were you looking for a mother, in a way?

Probably. I could've been. I'd always go to an older person and ask for advice, and I never sort of went around with anyone of my own age. I was pretty much a loner that way.

What were you actually doing? How did you make ties? What was your role?

The machine would make the pattern, [roll out?] the pattern, you'd reverse it and you'd put the pleat - it's amazing the different materials and the different pleats and things that went in to make bow ties - and then you'd put the little circular thing, the centrepiece over with the band on it, and handsewed it.

These were made-up bow ties - sort of slip them around the collar and they were already tied?

Yes.

How long were you doing that?

Oh, a little over a year, about a year and a half.

Do you remember how much you were paid?

The first was ten shillings a week, and I went up to twelve and six a week.

What did you do with your large amount of income?

I remember when I was getting twelve and six a week my mother had ten shillings and I had two and six, to last me for the week. But in those days your tram fare was only a penny or tuppence a fare. I had to buy any of my underclothing or anything myself, but you could get that fairly cheaply in those days, 'cause in Coles you had nothing over two and six; you could make two and six go a long way in those days! It's just twenty-five cents now.

As a working girl did you begin to get some new freedom? Did it gain you any independence of that sort?

Yes, a little. We lived around the North Melbourne area and you know, I got to know quite a lot of people. Of course, living round in that West Melbourne-North Melbourne area I'd sort of, and I used to still go to St James' Old Cathedral and I joined the choir down there. I turned to the church, which was a great help for me. But I didn't go out with girls or anything very much. Peculiarly enough, I made up my own mind I wasn't going to go out with any boys till I was sixteen. That was my own decision, nobody else's. It was strange, I suppose, for a girl my age.

So after that period at the tie factory, what then?

Things got a little difficult at home

What do you mean by that?

Well my mother's *de facto* husband, he used to be a 'weekend drunk'. He came home one time just before Christmas and behaved a little bit indecently.

Towards you, or your mother?

Yes, because I was fifteen by this time. So I decided I wouldn't stay around.

Did you tell your mother?

(15.00) After this incident, yes. And she said - I slapped his face, as a matter of fact - and she said 'What did you do that for?' and he goes crook at me. So I thought it was time for me to move on. I had a friend at Mount Evelyn and I just went up there and rang my mother and said I wasn't coming home, and I didn't. She thought I'd be back home in six months but I never ever returned again.

Was she angry at you?

No. No, she just thought I'd come back. I didn't see her for about six months and then I saw her again and she said to me 'What would you'd done if I'd sent the police?'. I said 'Nothing', because I knew she wouldn't.

So what sort of work were you doing by then?

Well, I went and done housework for about six months. Then I saw they were exploiting me a bit, and I had a friend

Do you mean paying you badly and long hours?

Yes. Yes, and there was a big family of about eight children in the family and they were really making I was really like that you read about in books, you know - Cinderella in the kitchen doing everything, sort of thing.

Were you living in?

Yes. But anyway I had another friend that approached a midwife. She lived down in North Melbourne. I went down and she rented me a room, and she was wonderful, she was like a foster-mother to me. She was very, very good. An old English midwife, she was; didn't have any family of her own. She was a Lancashire lady and her husband was a Manxman, and they took me in. I wasn't quite sixteen when I went there, and I walked in down the passage the first day I arrived and I said to her 'I know I'm only young'. I said 'If you see me doing anything you don't think is right, will you tell me?'. And any time she thought I wasn't doing something right this's what she'd say when she come into me room: 'Do you remember the first day you arrived and what you said to me?', and we'd talk it over, and sometimes I'd take her advice and sometimes I wouldn't.

What sort of things would she advise you about?

Oh, if I was going the wrong way about doing Whether I was going somewhere, or even if I was going out with some boy or something like that, and she'd say 'Oh, I don't think you should do this', or whatever. Sometimes, as I say, I'd take her advice and other times I wouldn't, and if it didn't work out I couldn't say I wasn't told. So it was a very good relationship that we had together. Used to spend a lot of time talking around the table. And as I say, I always had more rapport with older people.

So what came after that?

Then I went to work at a From there I went to work with John Sackvilles and Sons. They were clothing No, I didn't, I'm sorry, I beg your pardon - I'm digressing. I went to work at a place behind John Sackvilles. It was a little clothing place. They were Jewish, and I'd only been there a few months, and the boss decided then he'd send me to the bank and do things for him. Then if the machines weren't working properly and he sent goods to the warehouses and they'd ring up and say 'Oh, such and such isn't done', he'd send me down to the warehouses to do these jobs. He must have seen some potential in me, I don't know, but at that age I didn't realise I mean, as I said, I never had a very, I had a bit of a complex about myself. He used to do this and he was gradually getting me out of the factory and doing messages and things for him. I think he was gradually going to get me into the office part of the work. Anyway I finished up I put a needle through my finger. He was most concerned. On the machines. But at that time I decided I was going to leave. I had some friends who worked in Sackvilles and they said 'Oh, you can get money in Sackvilles'. I think I was getting at this time about thirty shillings a week and I could've got thirty-two and six a week at the other job, you see. Anyway I left this place and went to work at Sackvilles. He saw me a few months later and he offered me four pound to go back and work for him, and I refused - why, I do not know to this day, but I refused to go back and work there, and I stayed at Sackvilles.

What were you doing there?

Well, making trousers. I was a machinist, making trousers. And of course then when war broke out, well they started making uniforms. We were making army and air force uniforms.

(20.00) What was your sense as to the nature of the war and what it was all about?

Well at that time when it broke out I was only just eighteen No, I wasn't. It was 1939 I get sick. 1939 - yes, sixteen when it broke out. We didn't think much about it first, in the European stage. It wasn't till Japan came into the war that we started to get conscious of it, that it was getting a bit close to home, when, you know, the boys from the factory were all leaving and joining up, and of course then when the Americans came. You know, it was just starting to get a bit closer. We were a fair bit isolated from it in the beginning. I think mainly when all the Americans arrived and Royal Park was taken over and there was just so many servicemen around, and as I say, when Japan though started, when Pearl Harbor and then Singapore, and especially when Singapore fell and it started, we all started to get very conscious of it. I was in the RAP, I joined the RAP. We had brownouts, we used to have the brownout.

When you say 'We used to have the brownout', in what way did it affect you? What would happen?

Well you couldn't, you had to have your windows closed at night; you weren't allowed to have any lights out, and the lights in the streets were all dimmed.

Where were you living at this stage?

Still in North Melbourne, mm, round North Melbourne. So

Did you have any particular sense about the ANZAC tradition? Did that mean anything at all to you?

No, because I'd had no connection with it. I mean, right from school we were told about ANZAC Day and we always remembered it and revered it, but we weren't told We were told about the ANZAC and Gallipoli and all that, and you respected the soldiers for it and what they did, but I think nowadays you've got more feeling and the young people have more feeling for what those men did. And I think after being in the services, too, you have a closeness, there's an affinity there that you know what they did go through.

But at the time it had no special meaning because you had no members of the family involved in it?

That's right. That's correct - yes, yes.

With the American servicemen arriving, as single young women did you have Americans express an interest in you?

Oh, if you wanted to let them, yes, but I had no interest in I did meet two American boys that One was at a friend's home. They were very interesting to talk to, but apart from that I had nothing to do with the Americans when they were here.

What was the popular view then amongst young people like yourself as to the nature of girls who went out with American servicemen? Was it thought to be sort of not a proper thing to do?

Oh, well, a lot of them went out because they were very generous. You know, they used to buy them everything. You used to hear the girls in the factory that went out with them and that, but as I said I never I was one

How did you regard them? Did you think perhaps it was a bit improper?

No, I thought they were to do a job, they were only here as a stopover and they were to go on to the islands and things like that. America had joined in to help Australia, because at that time England weren't doing anything.

No, what I meant was, how did you see the notion of young girls going out with American servicemen? Did it seem perhaps not quite the right thing?

Yes, to me it was. I don't know whether I must've been a bit of a prude or what, I don't know, but I just didn't have any interest in them.

Did you have an Australian boyfriend at this age?

No. No, I used to go to dances. The little private ones we used to go to, and I'd meet our boys there and dance with them. And one I met there he, I met him later on in the war and even after the war, and we were just friends, even then. And I'd write to him, all through the war after he left Melbourne. At the dance he gave me his address and that and wrote to me.

Where was he writing from?

He went up to the Northern Territory, to Larrimah and then he went on up to the islands. Then after the war he was a driver for Myers. Up to quite a few years later I sort of kept in touch with him. Yes.

(25.00) So when did the idea first occur, then, about the possibility that you might join up?

As I say, when Japan started getting a bit closer. I was about eighteen and I felt I'd like to It was after I'd turned eighteen, and I felt

Had you seen recruiting advertisements or anything of that sort?

Oh yes, yes, a lot of recruiting advertisements, and I felt then I knew I was in a protected industry, which was unfortunate. The boss wasn't going to allow any more to leave, because he'd lost quite a lot of men that joined up and there were two or three girls had left, and he said no more, he wasn't going to let any more leave. But then I sort of made up my mind, well I wanted to leave. I thought 'Well, I'd like to be doing something more than what I'm doing'. So I went into the Manpower Office and the chap in there said to me, he said 'You'll get nowhere here'.

Where was the office, by the way?

Oh, now that's a good question. Where was it? I think it was down in Swanston Street somewhere, somewhere where near where the Ansett building is now. I think that was about the area it was in. Anyway, he said I wouldn't do any good there. He said 'Look', he said, 'I'll tell you what to do'. He said 'You go home and write a letter'.

Why did he say you wouldn't do any good - because you were in a restricted service?

I was in a protected industry, making uniforms, and that was just, was it - you know, no further. But I explained that I was on my own, and that the life in the services would be beneficial to me. You know, I'd be mixing with more people my own age. As I said all along, I've been mainly with people who are older than me.

Did you feel lonely, as such?

I suppose I was a lonely person, yes. I was a very withdrawn person. I always had to do things for myself, virtually all my life, and think for myself, and I didn't let go only to someone that was sort of older than myself. But anyway I went home and I think I wrote a two or three page letter. I can't remember what I put in it now, but I posted it on the Thursday and on the Saturday - we had Saturday morning deliveries then, with the post - there was a reply from the Manpower, to call into the office at my earliest convenience. And

What did you say in the letter?

Well I must've just described my lifestyle and that I was on my own, I had no family commitments. And must've put a brief resume of how my life was, that I was working in the factory but found that life in the services would probably be more beneficial and whatever. I can't remember now, so I must've put a fair bit. And I walked in and got behind the closed door that was there, that the chap said I had no hope in getting through. The chappie read it through and took a look at me and signed it, my release, which the employer wasn't very happy about. Because they had to give you a reference. The employer had to give you a reference, and they said what a good worker you were and everything, but always at the bottom line but, 'We do not wish to lose this person', virtually saying 'Do not accept her', sort of thing. Anyway I got my release from the Manpower.

END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

Identification: This is side two of tape one, an interview with Norma Burns.

So having got your release, what were the processes - to actually joining up?
Where did you go, what did you do?

Then I had to apply - I had already applied. There again, I wouldn't give myself - how can I put it? - that I was capable of doing anything. I had a choice between an untrained clerk and a cook. Instead of pushing myself up to learn typewriting and everything like that I decided I'd

do a cook, because I thought that was the level that I was at. I never gave myself any benefit of the brains that I was capable of using. I was still on this low idea of myself, that I was on this level, that I wouldn't rise above it - that I could rise above it. As you get older you know now that what you could've been capable of doing. But anyway, I joined up as a cook. Then I had to go to

You had a medical and those sort of things. Where did that happen?

I had a medical at Royal Park. Whether they'd known what that I had been in this protected industry, but they said I had to have my tonsils out. This was in about the October in 1942. I had to have my tonsils out, so of course I thought 'Oh well, if I've got to have my tonsils out I shall have my tonsils out'. I hadn't given up the job at this stage; before I had the medical I was still working. So I went into the eye and ear hospital and had my tonsils out, when I was nineteen.

Did you have a problem with them?

Not really. They were a bit poisonous, I was told they were poisonous. The only thing doctor told me not to say anything about was my nose. I had a nasal problem. But they said I had to have my tonsils out, so of course December I went into the eye and ear hospital and had my tonsils out and then had to go and have another medical. That's why I didn't get in I went from the October, I didn't go into the army until the February in '43. But that wasn't my fault; I wanted to be in earlier if I could've been. So I went into camp in February 1943.

What was the induction process?

The first day you had to go to Spencer Street Station and they took you to Toorak, where they outfitted you as much as they possibly could.

(5.00) Did you go by truck or bus or

Train. And then you were taken to Darley, up past Bacchus Marsh.

Was it exciting? How did you feel about it? Or a bit awesome, suddenly

Oh, it was awesome to start with - all these strange girls, and when you get to Darley they give you a hessian bag and take you to a hut with a lot of straw and you fill this hessian bag up with straw. And then you get taken to a hut and there's these collapsible beds, you know, these iron beds, and that was your mattress. You were given your sheets and blankets and taught how to make your bed properly.

How was the mattress?

Well, you got used to it. I mean, we were only young, so you got used to it. But

Did you have any regrets about leaving the people you were staying with?

No, no. Oh she was I still kept my room. That was still home to me, I still had my key and I could go back there any time. It didn't matter what time of day or night, that was still my home.

You didn't have to pay for it in your absence?

Yes, I paid for it out of my army pay, yes. She couldn't afford that, she was only an elderly midwife, but I quite willingly done it.

What did you take with you in the way of personal effects?

Oh, the only personal effects was your undergarments, because that was the only thing the army didn't provide, was some of your night attire. They provided panties or whatever it was they called them in those days, but any other undergarments you had to provide yourself.

What kind of hut did you find yourself in?

I forget how many was in a hut - about twenty, I think, in a hut. You had a corporal in charge of it. But your modesty went out the window, because when you were woken up in the morning we all had to go and have a shower quick smart. You had to go out for roll call and then go and have your shower and everything, so sometimes there'd be two or three under the one shower!

Were there some found that a bit hard to cope with?

I think there were quite a few found that a bit hard to cope with, especially because some of them came from very protected homes and that.

What about you? How did you feel?

Oh I adjusted very well. Yes, I adjusted. I enjoyed it, yes. I adjusted to it.

So what was your first uniform? Did you get one immediately?

I forget when we got the uniform. We had mainly our working clothes first. You only had sort of an overall, in 'rookies', as we called it, rookies' camp. You didn't get your full uniform all at once. I can't remember when I got mine but I know when I got my greatcoat I had to have it practically remade, because it was down to my ankles, practically - very big for me. But they got as close as they could to fit you out properly.

What was the manner of the instructors towards you in order to get you into the army mode? Were they bullying, were they friendly - how did you find them?

Oh very good. The discipline - I adjusted to the discipline very well. No, they were very good. I mean, you learnt in recruit school was your marching and your discipline: what you had to do and what you didn't have to do, how you accepted your pay. Then you went through gas trai.... It was three weeks, and you were on the go all the time.

What was the gas training? You were going to say gas training, were you?

Yes we did, we went through a gas chamber and put on a gas mask and everything, but they said that was only a last resort if it was ever necessary. But we had I think only a whole morning's training on that, just to show what

What was it? Going inside a hut filled with smoke or something, was it?

Yeah, just putting the gas mask on, that was all.

Do you know what sort of gas or smoke they used?

No I wouldn't have a clue, but that was just Yeah, but it was just all experience.

What other sort of things did you do in that three weeks?

Well we never had guns. I mean, the colonel never said that we would ever hold a gun. So it was all just strictly discipline that we learnt in the recruit school.

Did you have any particular sense as to what it was you'd be doing during your time in the army, when you first joined?

Well when you said what you were going to do before you joined up. So it was after recruits that you were put out to the different areas where you - what you were going to do after. So everyone was all in the one thing at recruits for three weeks. And you had your injections, you had your smallpox and tetanus and everything - you had all your needles and everything in that first three weeks. You had sex lectures.

What form did they take? The times were fairly, shall we say, narrow. How did they approach the topic?

(10.00) Oh we all were taken up to a big hall and there was a doctor there who just lectured us, for about a couple of hours probably. And that was They

Did they sort of skirt around the issues, or were they fairly direct?

Oh Dr Blanche was very direct. Yes, she was very direct. She used to be in Toorak Road, I think - but very straight out, no Straight around.

It was a time when there wasn't much of a tradition of parents taking on the roll of sex educators.

No.

Were some rather shocked?

Oh yes, yes. Oh we were all very naive girls, you know. We were very We never thought about those things in those days. I dunno why, but we didn't.

Had you begun to make some friendships?

Yes. Yes, we made some friendships, although not so much in recruit school. It was later when you got into your own direction that you were going.

So at the end of the three weeks, how were you sorted out and it was determined that you'd be going where ...?

Well then you had to wait until your sort of posting or your school came up, whatever school you were going into. You'd stay at Darley in another part from the recruits, and then when your school term was coming up you were sent. I was sent to Glamorgan, in Toorak. It was a big - I believe, a private school or something, but they had this big building. They had the clerks there too, as a matter of fact, and we were in the cooks. I was in the cooking school. You slept there and in the morning you'd march to Toorak Road and a special tram would come along. You'd go down Toorak Road, along St Kilda Road to the Carlton breweries - continuous, the tram went - around the corner up to Elizabeth Street, along Elizabeth Street into Flemington Road and then up and stop right near the Zoological Gardens. We'd get off the tram there and then we'd march up. The cooking school was up there, up in Royal Park. And we'd march up there. Boys had the school too, but they slept there at Royal Park, so they'd have our breakfast ready when we arrived.

What was breakfast, do you recall?

Oh they'd have porridge, and eggs and bacon and everything. They'd have it all cooked when we got there. But we wouldn't have anything to eat till we got there, from when we got up.

So how long would it take, then, before you had breakfast?

Oh it was a good half an hour, three-quarters an hour's run on the tram. It depends on Of course, you had to compete with the peak hour of a morning. You'd have 'Special' written all over the tram, the bars'd be down, but people'd still try and get on to go to work, you know, from Flinders Street.

How had the food been during the training period?

Quite good, quite good. Oh you learnt to cook between two railway sleepers, or in hay, the hay box. You learnt all the field cooking, which was mainly the men's job because that's what they'd be doing up in the islands and everything like that, but we had to do our share on that. And steam cooking - had a steam cooker.

So did you have male instructors as cooks?

Yes, yes, male instructors. And this went on for twenty-eight days.

What was the relationship between the men instructors and the young ladies that they were teaching? I mean, how was their manner?

Quite good. Never had any problems. They were very good, yeah.

So how long did you learn to be a cook, then?

Twenty-eight days! Of course, the compound was next door to the cooking school, where all the bad boys - AWLs and all that - went, was next door to the cooking school, and as the soldiers were going backwards and forwards to the Royal Park Station, if they were on transit or they were coming home or anything like that, and they'd see girls up in [inaudible] they'd say 'What're you doing?' and we'd say 'Twenty-eight days'. Anyway, one day a soldier stopped and he looked, and it was my girlfriend's husband. I had a girlfriend I worked with at Sackvilles in there, and he stopped. I went down to the fence to speak to him and he said 'What're you doing in there?' and I said 'It's a cooking school'. He said 'Oh I didn't think you'd be in clink'. So that was - he got quite a shock to think I might've been in clink. He didn't think it was my scene!

What sort of reputation did that army detention place have? Did it have any sort of reputation? Was it thought to be ...?

Oh yes, apparently. We'd get there some mornings and the boys'd say 'Oh a couple have jumped the wire last night', and they'd run through the cooking school camp to escape.

Was it supposed to be tough or rough?

I don't know. It was just the compound where they put them in if they were - mainly AWLs, I think. Yes.

So at the end of your twenty-eight days, what happened then?

Well then we stayed at Glamorgan till our posting came up, and I was

What was the accommodation like there - dormitory?

(15.00) Yes, dormitory type of Yeah. But I wasn't there that long, I was sent down to Queenscliff.

How did you go down there?

Train - train and bus.

What, to Rosebud and then bus from Rosebud, or where did the train finish?

No, no - Queenscliff.

I'm sorry, the other side, yes. So where did you get off?

Geelong, and then bus to Queenscliff.

Had you been down that part of the coast before?

The funny thing, no. Times there I'd been to The old [Waruni?] used to go down the bay. It was a boat used to go down. It'd stop at Queenscliff and then go across to Sorrento. And

never once did I ever want to get off at Queenscliff, I always went on to Sorrento. It was a day trip you used to have down the Like a paddle-steamer, I think it was. I'd always go on to Sorrento, never get off at Queenscliff. So I must've known that I was going to be there one day.

Was it a bit of an adventure? Did it feel like that?

Oh yes, yes. And it was a guesthouse where we were, at 'Whitehall'. It was a guesthouse. It was very, very nice, it was. You only had about, oh, sixty-odd girls to cook for, and there were about four of us in the kitchen, and it was a normal big kitchen, like a guesthouse kitchen.

What were the other young women doing there, the sixty for whom you were cooking?

Oh, some of them were on - there were signals, and some were on the guns at Crow's Nest. Well they weren't on the guns, they worked in the office round there. They were mainly office workers and signal girls. I don't know what else they were. Oh, drivers - yeah, there were a few drivers down there. So

As a guesthouse, did you have a shared room with another girl, or several to a room? How did the accommodation work?

Yes, yes, the accommodation was, you know, two or three to a room.

How did friendships start to form? Australia then in a way was rather more class-oriented.

Yes.

There was a much more definite sense of an upper class and a middle class and so on. Did friendships start to form on a class basis or ...?

No. No, just a one-to-one basis, mainly.

Well I mean, I don't suppose people would seek to formally enquire or try and establish class ...

No, no.

... but even by means of speech, people Certainly the Australian upper class ...

Oh yes.

... and the middle class spoke in a rather more precise, genteel way then.

That's right. Well you see they would us...

Did people tend to sort themselves out on that basis, then?

Yeah. Those type were usually then, like, non-commissioned officers, like corporals, sergeants. They'd got themselves into other rank type - not just the ordinary private.

So the working-class, so-called, were the non-commissioned people?

Yeah, mm.

Did you ever find that people were a bit snobbish towards you, those who obviously saw themselves as a bit superior on that sort of basis?

Were looked as you were a cook? No, not really. I've got a couple of friends even now that were at Queenscliff when I was there. Um - no.

Well you said your friendships started to form after you left the training.

Mm.

Tell us about some of the friends you made. Who were they? What sort of people were they?

What sort of people?

Mm. Characters, or what sort of backgrounds did they come from? You say there are still some who are friends.

Aah.

Describe them. What are their names?

Oh there was Peg. Well Peg now, I still see her. She comes to our R and R. She

When you first met her, can you remember meeting her, what she looked like and so on - how she struck you at the time?

No, I just accept people as they are.

Well how was she?

A very nice person! Very nice. All the girls that I keep up with, they're I just I dunno, it's just something that I'm I don't know, I just must There must be just sort of a feeling between two people that you I mean, you meet someone and you think 'Oh, how nice they are'. Then you sort of click, and you just form a friendship. You take people

Well as you form a group, often you may have somebody who emerges as a bit of a character or a bit of a wag. Did you have any in your group who were like that?

I think, me being rather a serious type of person at that time Um, oh yes we had fun, but I can't pinpoint anything just at the moment. I can't, no

What was your daily routine? How did your day start? What time did you get up and the sort of things you'd do?

Oh well you got up early, at six o'clock and all that sort of thing, and er

Would there be a bugle, or how would you wake?

Oh no, the cooks had to wake themselves! The others had something to wake them up, but the cooks had to be up earlier. I can go onto something more like that later on, but the er

How did you wake? What was your method?

Oh probably a clock. Probably a clock, or someone else waking me. But we just sort of done our job and that was it.

(20.00) Well, you'd get up. Was there a sense of rush, that ...?

Oh no. Well you had a roster system. You had someone on breakfast and then someone'd be lunch, and then you'd have a break.

Alright, let's say you were doing breakfast. What was the routine? How would you set about it?

Oh well you'd get up, and it depended on You'd have toast, or you'd have eggs and bacon, or you'd have scrambled eggs and porridge and

Wood ovens?

Oh yes, yes - wood ovens. You had to light the fire, yes. You had to light the fire. I have more recollections of those at Bandiana than I do at Queenscliff. I'll move from Queenscliff. Then I went across to Point Nepean, from Queenscliff, right on the point. It was a beautiful little spot, right on the hill facing the bay. There was two windows at the back of the stove and you could watch all the ships coming through. But I was only there a short time. One of the girls from Queenscliff, her sister - she had a sister at Bandiana. The older sister could claim the younger sister, could be together. I had to be the one to replace her at Bandiana. And I'd been at Queenscliff all the winter and the weather was just beginning to get nice in the October, and they sent me to Bandiana. I wasn't very happy about it. But at that stage I went up there - I had to come to Melbourne, to Berry Street, and they sent me on to Spencer Street the next morning to go to Albury. And when I got - I had to report to the depot at Spencer Street and they said to me, 'Where's your corporal?'. And I said 'I haven't got a corporal'. They said 'But privates don't travel on their own'. I said 'Well I haven't got anyone with me', and they didn't know what to do. And I had my papers, and privates weren't supposed to carry their own papers!

Did you feel a bit worried, as if you'd done something wrong?

No, no. They'd given them to me and told me I had to go to Albury, and I was only doing as I was told and I was given my papers. Well they didn't know what to do, so they could just let me go! And I went up to Albury on my own, and I got out at Albury - never been there in my life before - and there's all these army trucks lined up and I didn't know what to do. Anyway one driver said to me 'Well, you know, can I help you? What're you doing?'. I said 'I'm to go to Bandiana, to 41 Barracks'. 'Oh', he said, 'hop in', he said, 'I'll take you there'. Anyway when I got out to the He let me off and I walked up to the orderly room. When I walked in the orderly room there was a girl there had gone through the cooking school but she'd gone on to clerical work. She was there and she said 'What're you doing here?'. I said 'Oh, I'm here to replace you. I don't know anything about it'. So she went to the officer and the officer said 'Oh yes, I know about that', she said. 'Come in here, Private Kelly'. And I'd gone all that way on my own, with my own papers, and nobody knew I was coming and anything else except this officer! I can't remember who it was now, but she knew I was arriving and nobody else did.

Were you arriving as a cook, or were you going to be a clerical ...?

No, arriving as a cook.

You said before, when I was asking you about waking up, there was something else you could tell me about that. What was that?

Oh yes. Well at Bandiana was much bigger kitchen; there were 200 girls you had to cook for. And you had to get up at four o'clock in the morning there, to light the fire. There was a soldier who'd been in the desert and he'd come back wounded, and he used to help a bit with the wood and things around there, but you used to have to get up yourself and light the fire and get everything ready - for 200 girls. The others'd come down about seven o'clock, but you had to cook toast and everything. But if the fire wasn't working properly, sometimes you were in a lot of trouble trying to get breakfast ready for 200 on this big wood stove fire.

Would different ovens tend to have different characteristics, a bit like old cars?
Some would go well and

Yes. And it depended on what sort of wood you had, too, to cook with. Then you had great big trays that would take six legs of lamb in these. It took two of you to lift them, and [inaudible] how big the ovens were. You used to have to fill these up with potatoes and that for a roast. But you had a roster and you'd have one or two on breakfast and then you'd work till lunchtime and then you'd have the rest of the day off and usually your rest day afterwards, which would give you one and a half days, because you worked very hard up there. Then you'd have another girl doing vegetables, or two girls, and then you'd have another one doing sweets. You had to work out a roster for each one to do this and work out a day off and everything. It was quite a feat up there, to do that.

(25.00) With that sort of cooking, with stoves that could be variable in how they were ...

Temperamental, yes.

... and temperamental, would you find that sometimes you'd get some food that wouldn't be cooked all the way through, or others that would be burnt, even?

Oh yes, that's right. And you'd get the complaints too, you know. The girls'd complain that they couldn't eat it or something like that. But they never used to think of the trouble you used to have to try and get it cooked for them, half the time.

How did you manage to keep food warm? Because presumably you'd have some cooked and then there might be a wait as you were getting on with the other. Would it be difficult to keep food warm?

No, not really, because you could just keep the oven doors open, just to keep them warm. Or you had the big dixies with vegetables and just put the lid on them and things like that.

Just going back to Queenscliff again, how long were you there?

April to September - what's that? About five or six months.

With just sixty it was easier, more relaxed?

Oh that was much easier, yes. It was more family type of

What was the evening shift, then? What time would you finish?

Oh - you wouldn't finish till half past six, seven at night.

Did it give people who maybe had a bit of a sweet tooth or just were in the habit of taking snacks the opportunity, who were in the kitchen, to indulge themselves a bit?

Oh yes, I suppose they could. They'd pick a bit, yes, whatever - especially if there was anything left over.

Or take stuff back to the huts and that sort of thing, or was that not allowed?

No, you didn't take things back to the huts but I do remember one amusing incident. The officers were having a big party, and some of them had been in that day making punch. They made this big bucket of punch. And we had a huge refrigerator. You could put sides of lamb and quarters of hinds of beef in one part of it and you had two great big milk vats on rollers. It was a huge - it took up nearly a whole wall, this refrigerator. So instead of pulling the rollers out when they made this punch, they set the bucket on the rollers, you see. And that night a few of us in the hut decided we were a little bit hungry and we'd go down to [laughs] - go down to have something to eat out of the kitchen so we'd

Would you have to sneak in?

Oh no, we were cooks. We could go in, yeah. So we decided we'd go in. And of course sticky-nose me, I decided - I said 'Oh I wonder if they've taken their bucket of punch?'. And as I opened the door the bucket fell over [laughs]. So we quickly got clean towels, what we

could, sopped it up and wrang it back into the bucket and then filled it up with water, and got out of the kitchen as quick as we could!

Did you ever hear how the drink went down?

Not a word. They never said a word. We were on tenterhooks for a couple of days waiting to see, but they didn't know any difference. [Laughs] Oh, dear!

END TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A

Identification. This is side one, tape two of the interview with Norma Burns about the Australian Women's Army Service recorded on 23rd May 1990.

Would you get people who would try and get sweet with you so that you might give them snacks or do them little favours with food from the kitchen and so on?

Oh sometimes you'd get girls coming out and saying 'Hey Ned, do you think you'd get me so-and-so?' or 'I don't like that'. Yes, sometimes you'd get them ask you little favours. If they didn't like something that was being - they'd come out and ask if you had something else.

Given the rationing that was on, was there any pilfering or did people attempt to take advantage of access to stores and smuggle it out and do trade?

No, I never struck that at all.

What about people then who oughtn't be in the kitchen trying to sneak in to get an odd bit of fruit or a snack or something? Would you get fellows coming round the back knocking at the door and saying ...?

No, not with the men at all. No.

With the women?

No. No, not really. Because they had the canteen, and when we were rationed with fruit we'd leave, if there was any over we'd leave it out, that they could always go back and have seconds if there was anything there. Because we had what we called a subsidiary allowance, that we were able to buy some of those little extras that wasn't in the normal army rationing. You had the subsidiary that you could just get extra little things that would make whatever it was a bit better. We were fairly well catered for.

While you were at Queenscliff what would you do with your recreational time?

Mainly dances, and the picture theatre. And there again was me I got to know the locals and I'd go and visit people in their own homes, and I got to know people there.

What was the general attitude of people round Queenscliff? Did they at all resent a sense of invasion by the army, or any feeling of that sort?

Oh I don't think so. I think some of them may have, but no, the local people accepted us. We were pretty good.

Incidentally, bromide I understand was often used in tea as a means of diminishing men's sexual needs. Did that happen at Queenscliff?

No, not for the women. No, we didn't have that.

Did you hear about it?

We heard about it, yes.

What did you understand about the process?

We just accepted it.

Did you ever see the stuff?

No.

You'd no idea what it looked like or tasted or ...?

No.

So anyway, when then you went to Bandiana how long were you there?

I was there twelve months. I didn't like it for the first six months, 'cause I resented being sent up from Queenscliff. Then the catering school Before as The cooks at first were just part of the army and you were just part of wherever you were sent, but then they formed a Catering Corps and you were under, you were only loaned out to the different kitchens to cook. You were under the camp for discipline but as for catering you were under the Catering Corps. Each area had a Warrant Officer Caterer and you were virtually under their jurisdiction, you see. Well anyway what happened was that the Catering Corps took over our kitchen at Bandiana and we were distributed to the other - there was another barracks next door - or just general duties. I was told I had to do One of our officers was away, she was in a school. She had someone used to do her washing and that sort of thing, and she'd just come back from leave and reported sick. So I was told I had to do this washing, you see. And I said no, I wouldn't do it. I was refusing an order, which wasn't done.

Were they shocked?

Yes. [Laughs]

Were you a bit shocked, yourself?

Yes, I was. I was starting to assert myself a little. Anyway the corporal said 'Well you have to do it'. I said 'No, I'm not going to do it'. So she said 'You'll have to tell the officer'. So I said 'Alright'. So I thought 'Oh hmm' and the tummy started to turn over a bit. I had my lunch and she said 'You been to see Madam yet?' and I said 'No'.

5.00 So anyway I said 'I'll have my lunch and then I'll go up'. So I went up and this officer was sitting at the table. She said 'Yes, Private Kelly. What can I do for you?', you know. I said 'I believe I'm to do such-and-such, Madam' and she said 'That's correct'. I said 'Well Madam', I said, 'I don't want to do it and I'm not going to do it'. This corporal was in there and there was just complete silence for a minute. She turned to the corporal and said 'Assign Private Kelly to duties in the sergeants' mess and send the cook there to her'. She said 'Don't you think you'll have the same trouble, Madam?'. She said 'Private So-and-So has applied for a transfer'. Well I had also applied for a transfer. She said 'Oh, I understand her position'. So in her own way she was saying 'Well she'll get her transfer but you won't get yours'. Anyway, I was quite happy. A sequel to that was that later on in the day - it was a very, very warm day, a very hot day - and the sequel to that was later that day she came in and said 'Oh Private Kelly, what've we got for dinner tonight?'. And I said so-and-so, and she said 'Oh, I wonder if we've got anything else? We'll go over and have a look in the refrigerator'. Anyway what she wanted wasn't there, and to the sergeant she said 'Sergeant, go and get Private Kelly an icecream and a drink', she said, 'it's very hot today'. As it happened, this particular officer I was to do the washing for was bringing another major back with her, and she was having extra, wanted an extra nice dinner that night. 'Cause the sergeants and officers were in the same mess and I had to cook for both, so she had to turn round and be very nice to me, to cook a decent meal that night for them, after making me go there to work, you see.

Did you oblige?

Oh yes. You were there to do the job. But it was just a turnaround in the

Did you ever get any ruckus at all where people, for whatever reasons, were just downright unpleasant or went out of their way to make things difficult, or ...?

Yes, I had it once. I had one in the kitchen there once. I stood up to one person one time. She tried to make things unpleasant so I just turned round and the others just stood there with their mouths open. They couldn't believe that I'd actually stand up for myself and for them!

What did you say?

I can't remember now, to be quite honest. I can't remember but I know I stood up to her. She was a non-commissioned - she was a corporal - and I wasn't.

You wouldn't get people get their own back a bit by deliberately giving somebody that they didn't particularly care for food that was perhaps not so good or anything like that?

Oh no, no. You didn't do that sort of thing.

What did you do recreationally at Bandiana?

Dancing again; going into Albury. We used to get a bus into Albury and go to the pictures or go to a meal in the cafe in Albury.

Were you briefed about expectations of behaviour - what was proper and what was expected of you as you were in uniform?

We knew. Oh yes, you knew you were there to uphold the standard of the women in the services. You didn't do anything to disgrace the uniform.

What time did you have to be back?

You had a leave pass and you had a time stated on the leave pass, what time you had to be And in Albury it was the time you had to get the bus. They had a schedule, a bus schedule and your leave pass ended at the time the bus was to leave. So if you had a leave pass, say, for 11.59 at night that was the time the bu.... Because you never got one for 12 o'clock; it was always 11.59 - or 23.59, whichever time of day. 23.59 was at night-time. And

What happened if you were late?

Oh well you were in trouble. You were AWL, weren't you?

Were you ever late?

No. [Laughs]

Did you have friends who got caught out, or were in love and had somebody they just had to see?

Oh yes, yes. They either got a reprimand or they got confined to barracks for so many days.

Did it happen often, or just occasionally?

Well it depends on who it was. Some of them didn't care. You know, they didn't worry if they were confined to barracks. But it went against them. It went on your report.

What about men trying to get into the women's camp? Would that happen?

Never knew it to happen at Bandiana. It happened a couple of times in Darwin, but it didn't happen at Bandiana.

What happened in Darwin?

(10.00) I believe a couple 'Cause there were I'm not sure whether an Aboriginal got in one night, and then there was They used to have what they called the Allied Works Council up there, the AWC, and I think there were a couple of those got in. There was about two or three incidents up there that they'd got in. We had two military police guarding us every night up there, and they'd patrol, but they could hop over the fence - a six-foot fence.

When people got into trouble for minor breaches of whatever sort - being a bit late or whatever - how were they dealt with? Would they be dressed down, or what was the way things were gone about?

Oh it depends on the severity of it. I only ever went to one once. It was when I was a corporal. It was after I'd I was asked be, to go to this - not court martial - she was brought up before the officer and she had to have an NCO each side and marched in to the officer. She read out the

Was it intimidating?

Well for the person concerned it wouldn't be very nice, really. But some of them, I don't know.

The one that you went to, did you go because you were in trouble?

No, I was called as an NCO. I got to be a corporal in the

When did that happen - while you were at Bandiana?

Yes, at Bandiana. It was after this other incident that I was telling you about at the, being put in the sergeants' and officers' mess, that I decided that the next school that went through, I'd go in it. I'd put myself in the school, rather than have to be shoved around here, there and everywhere and get myself into trouble. So I went through the next course and after that I got my first stripe - I passed extra well in it - and round about six weeks later I got my second stripe.

What was the nature of the course?

It was just an advanced cooking school that they had there in that same kitchen that I was working in. They took the whole kitchen over and had a cooking course. And the girl that I'd stood up to, she'd gone through the same time and she failed and lost her stripes, and I passed and got two stripes! [Laughs]

What did the first stripe mean, in terms of just your

Oh it was just There was no extra pay with the first stripe. It was just a lance corporal. You just got a bit more responsibility in being over a few of the other girls and working out of an office and that.

So you began to give orders?

Yeah.

Did it seem odd to you?

Yeah, I suppose it did! But then when I got my second stripe, by that time the officers had moved over into their own mess and I finished up being just the officers' cook, on my own. See, I worked on my own, just for the officers.

With the second stripe, again, how much extra rank in the sense of what you might do or how you might tell people what to do - what did it mean?

When you got two stripes as a cook there wasn't anything you weren't supposed to be able to do there wasn't anything you couldn't do.

What do you mean by that?

Well if you had two stripes, you were supposed to be able to do anything.

Like what?

In cooking, in whatever they asked you to do. Like, the officers would have seven-course dinners and you could have to do your hors d'oeuvres and your entrees, and you had to be able to present You had to be able to be a good cook, virtually.

Were you?

Well I must've been, I suppose!

Did you ever have any disasters where you thought you'd try something just a little bit ambitious, a bit different, and it didn't turn out?

Oh no. I worked out my menus before. You worked your menus out first and you know what you're having and what you're doing.

Did you cook cakes?

Oh yes, yes - morning teas, afternoon teas.

Did you ever have any that came out rock hard or that sort of thing?

Oh yes, you had a few of those! But on the whole they always turned out all right.

Where you'd then become a corporal and you'd be able to give orders, did you ever have any people you knew say 'Oh come off it, Kelly!', or that sort of thing?

No. No, because then I was mainly on my own. I wasn't in a main kitchen.

What about your accommodation? Did you stay in the same place?

Yes, I was in the same hut, mm. But I never threw my weight around there, of course.

So after Bandiana, what then? Sorry, before we leave this move to, was there much difference in the sort of food available in the officers' mess?

Yes. See, the officers had their own - what do you call it? - fund - they had an officers' fund - and if there was any extras they needed for any formal dinners or anything they'd buy and provide that out of their own mess funds. You did what you could with army but anything else, they used to provide it for you out of their own mess funds.

Would you get shortages occasionally?

No, we were pretty well provided for. You see, we had less meat given to us but we had eggs. We were allowed an egg a day, whereas the men had a bigger subsidy of meat and they didn't get the eggs. So we had a lower subsidy of meat and had an egg.

(15.00) Cream and cheese - were they available?

Cheese, but no cream, no.

Plenty of sugar, and no shortages there?

Yes. That was alright.

Again coming back to the sort of menu you'd have in the officers' mess, was it a bit like the difference between going into a cafe and a first-class restaurant? Was it as different as that?

Oh yes. Yes, much different.

Would they have wine at the tables?

They'd provide anything like that out of their own mess funds if they had that.

Tablecloths, waiters?

Oh yeah, table Oh yes, you'd have a girl, a mess orderly. Yes, they'd have one waiting on the tables. I didn't do anything like that.

How did you feel about that? Did that seem to you to be just the natural course of things, or did you ...?

Yes. For the higher ranks, yes.

It seemed perfectly appropriate?

Yeah.

So how did the move from Bandiana come about?

I went on leave for my twenty-first birthday, and I went to Tasmania. By this time I'd made friends with my father; I'd caught up with my father again. After fifteen years when I was nineteen, I'd caught up with my father and my brother. I went over to Tasmania and my brother put on a twenty-first birthday party for me.

Did you go down in uniform?

Yes.

Were you hoping to impress him, that he'd think 'Here's my girl. Look at her now.'

Oh yes. Yes, I got a piece in the paper and everything, you know. No, it was fine.

How was he? Was it an emotional reunion?

Oh yes. He was as proud as anything, 'cause he wasn't able to join the services. He wasn't a strong boy and he wasn't able to join up, so he was quite proud of his young sister.

And what about your father? How was he?

Oh yes. Dad didn't say much but I think he was, yes. Then I came back to Bandiana and they had called for volunteers to go to Darwin. See, they didn't send you to anything like that; you had to volunteer. The army didn't send you to 'Cause we were the only ones that went into an operational area. None of the other services did, but they volunteered. And that time there were two of us corporal cooks wanted to go, and they didn't think the war establishment would carry us. So I just gave my stripes up. Because as a private cook you got a special pay, group pay, six shillings a day. That was a specialty trade, sort of thing - classed as a trade. And as a corporal you only went up a shilling a day extra, which was seven shillings. But see, as a clerk you would only get four and fourpence a day as a private, and if you got two stripes to a corporal and went to seven shillings that was quite a big jump. But for the added responsibility of a cook it wasn't really worth that extra shilling a day. So it didn't worry me, like, dropping my rank to go to Darwin, because I thought that was an opportunity of a lifetime, to go to Darwin, 'cause you didn't travel in those days. I mean, you never thought of going out of your little area where you lived. Travelling was something out of the box, and plus the fact we thought we would be doing more to allow the men to go up to the islands. We were doing something more worthwhile, to go into an area that was more vital, that we thought we could be really doing something for Australia by going up there. So anyway, we volunteered to go. I put my name down - that's how I left Bandiana.

How did you travel?

We travelled to Spencer Street, and I think you've already interviewed Ruth [Whiteball?] - Ruth Bartlett. She was in charge of us, and we went from Spencer Street to Adelaide by train.

Was it exciting?

Oh yes, sleeping on the seats and the floor and everything like that. It was completely all military. We stopped at Ballarat and there were trestle tables on the station and you stood up

there eating your tea, and the people were watching you on the other platforms. They just had tea all dished up for us there at Ballarat. Then we stayed at, we went to the barracks at Keswick, in Adelaide.

Did you sleep on the train?

Yeah, we just slept anywhere we could.

How did you sleep? Were you able to?

Either sitting up or, as I said, some laying on the floor, some laying on the seat or whatever. There was no comforts. No, you just slept where you were.

Did they have separate women's carriages?

Yes, I think they had a women's carriage. Oh yes, for sure. But there were male officers and that on board that just would come through and just check and see what was going on. Mm.

Were you able to sleep?

(20.00)No, I don't think so! [Laughs] But it was exciting. There was quite a bit of

When you say they had officers going through to check what was going on, was there anything going on?

No, no. Anyway, then we got to Adelaide and we got to Keswick. Ruth settled us all down that night, so we all started singing 'Kiss me goodnight, sergeant major' to her. So she got down and kissed us all goodnight before we went to bed, and then she and another girl got up the next morning and went and got us our breakfast, and brought us our breakfast in bed - as the song says, 'Don't forget to wake me in the morning, and bring me round a nice hot cup of tea', which she did!

Ruth talked all the time of her 'children'.

Her 'children'. That's how she classed us, as her children.

Did you begin to see her as a sort of big mother?

That was her She took this mother role on, to look after us. Yeah.

Was she generally liked for that?

Yes. She was very good, yeah. Then some AMWAS came through, which were the medical girls - like the VADs, medical assistant girls. They came through to Adelaide and they took precedence over us. They were going ahead of us. So we got an extra time in Adelaide. We were there ten days, I think, altogether. I think the whole of Adelaide got to know us, because we all went in a group. Wherever we went we were all together.

How many of you were there?

Well by the time we got up there was fif.... I think there would be fifteen of us when we left Adelaide, but there were about eight or nine of us would go into Adelaide together and we'd all be crossing the road. Police and everybody got to know this group of AWAS, you know. Everywhere we went we'd go to the Red Shield, the Red Cross - the Red Shield or the Comfort place - and then we'd get on a tram and we'd go to these different places, and we'd talk to people on the tram. I think one day we picked up two air force boys, and they came with us. Here's these eight or nine girls and two air force boys, and they had a great time with the lot of us: with Ruth and all the rest of us. Then we went to the pictures with them, and all these

Do you remember what you saw?

I couldn't tell you what we saw, no. But we went there and there was these just two boys and all these girls. We went up to Mount Lofty another day, and an army chap come with us. There was one army boy and all these girls together. This army boy, he really cottoned on to us. He came down to see us off when we left Adelaide and he was nearly crying! [Laughs] It wasn't just any one, it was just the group of us, that we were all together and

Was it a jolly time? Was it a very special time, in a way?

Yeah, a real fun time. We'd go somewhere and then we'd go somewhere and have supper afterwards. But we were always in a group, just the whole lot of us.

Were there any problems at all emerged? Did you find as you'd got to know people that, while everybody was generally having a good time, there'd be some personal misfortune in a family or anything of that sort?

No. No, not on the way up to Darwin we didn't have anything.

So how was the trip up to Darwin?

Well then we went from the train from Adelaide to Terowie. We had a lunch stop at Terowie and then we went to Quorn and had dinner in the hotel at Quorn. Then we got on the old Ghan, and went up on the old Ghan.

How did the outback impress you?

Oh, great. I loved it. There was another girl and I - she had a nickname too, 'Billy', Billy Hassett - and we'd sit out on the back of the train, on the little platform at the back, and just watch the desert and that go past. You know, people'd say 'What can you see? There's nothing there.' I said 'There is. There's just the countryside, just the way it' The undulations and the scrub, and then there'd be a bit of sand, and then you could see where there'd been a river. It was quite interesting. I enjoyed it.

Did you smoke in those days?

No, no.

Did many of your friends and that smoke?

Yes, a lot did smoke. They used to say to me 'If you don't drink or smoke you're out of it'. I never ever found that, because the first thing they'd say to me was 'What do you do with your ration?'. 'Cause we all had a ration. You got seventy cigarettes, I think it was, a week and two bottles of beer. I never had any trouble getting rid of my ration!

Had you had a drink, to this stage - alcohol?

You were rationed. You were allowed to have

When did you have your first drink?

Me? I never drank it. Didn't drink. No, I couldn't With the *de facto* husband of my mother's, the smell of it was enough for me.

What about Christmas or New Year? People would try and press a drink upon you then, presumably?

They never did. No, they always said 'Oh, Ned won't have anything to drink'. No, it was just accepted. They never forced you.

Did you stop at Alice Springs?

Yeah, we stopped, I think, three days at Alice Springs.

How did Alice Springs impress you?

It impressed me greatly. It was just like

Did you see Aboriginal people for the first time?

We saw them at Finke, I think. Finke River was the first time, when we stopped there. But

What was the general attitude towards Aborigines, amongst people who'd never had much to do with them? It seems to have been a time when they were thought of as the poor old blacks, or the poor old Abos. Was that the sort of view?

(25.00) Yes. Yes, it was. Didn't see many of them in Alice Springs, but when we got up to Darwin we had girls working round the barracks. And when you walked in first they sort of used to trick you, because they'd talk in their own language and you didn't know whether they knew, they could understand you. Then you found out afterwards they could speak English almost as good as you could. They used to pull your leg a bit at first, till they got to know you. But we found the girls that worked with us, they were very nice girls.

What was the nature of their role? They were essentially working as servants, to assist with the menial things, were they?

Yeah. They used to wash the showers out, and the men used to do the toilets. The girls just used to go round picking up papers and that in the grounds, and generally just fill in the day.

Was there generally a sort of an informal and friendly sort of relationship?

Oh yes.

Did you ever actually make friends with any individuals?

No, not really. Minnie Ann was the only one I used talk to, mainly. She was rather an attractive girl for an Aborigine. She had nice curly hair, and a nice type of girl. But they were very shy, very shy.

Did you get any impression as to how the women were treated, I mean outside the camp - their way of life and so on?

No, I think that during that time it was fairly easy. It was a fairly easy life. Aunty Dolly, as they used to call her, she smoked a pipe and that, and she used to keep the girls under control. She was sort of the matriarch.

Even just this last week I heard an Aboriginal woman from, I think it was, the Northern Territory complaining that if a white woman were raped there - this was an outback area - immediately police would arrive and there'd be a big investigation. If it happened to an Aboriginal woman it would almost be ignored. Did you get any sense as to the sorts of difference between Aboriginal people and white people in terms of how they were seen by the white community?

I think that was more or less I suppose you think, with the stories you used to hear, it was an accepted fact, I think, in those Of course, you've got to remember we were still only pretty young. I was only twenty-one. I mean, you sort of didn't think

You took things as they came?

Yes. You didn't think deeply about those things at that age.

As you were going to Darwin, was there a concern about the possibility that the Japanese might invade, or there might be an air-raid and that sort of thing?

Oh yes. Yes, we didn't know what we were going, might have to face.

So what was the mood you found when you arrived in Darwin?

Well the girls had been at Adelaide River prior to this, and they'd moved up into Darwin only a week before we arrived. They were still in the process of readjusting themselves also, the same as we were. But and course, some that were there, I'd already been in camp with at Queenscliff and I'd known them previously. So we were meeting friends, which made our adjustment a lot easier because we were amongst these other girls that we'd already known.

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B

Identification. This is side two, tape two, of the interview with Norma Burns about the Australian Women's Army Service recorded on 23rd May 1990.

So how did you find Darwin? What was your general feeling about the place and the circumstance in which you found yourself?

Oh I loved it. I loved Darwin.

What did you love about it?

Oh - I suppose, the climate, the newness. It was just though you were in a different part of the world. There was no It wasn't like a city, or anything like that. It was just something totally different.

You were staying in little huts?

Yes, at that time we were. We were in huts, with mosquito nets over them. It was a communal thing. Then during that time the builders were finishing off the Larrakeyah Barracks, the big barracks. I forget how long after it was, but we moved into these barracks, into this big building. It was absolutely brand new. But that time the officers were having another dinner and I couldn't move I was back in the officers' mess again. I'd been in the kitchen, the main kitchen, for a while and then these girls who were there when we arrived, they'd had their time and they were going back down south. You were only allowed up there for a year, for twelve months, and then you went down, 'back south' as they called it. And then course we took over from them. Well the girl who was in the officers' mess, she went south so they put me back in the officers' mess and I was back on my own again! And so this particular time when they were moving into the barracks, I couldn't go when they did so I moved in the night before. And another girl and I were the first two to sleep in this great big building on our own for the night, before the others moved in. I had the policeman, military policeman come the next morning and say 'Wakey-wakey, time to get up'. [Laughs] He had to call me to go to start, into the officers' mess.

The climate in Darwin can be very hot and humid, and being a cook with a wood stove, it could've had its bad moments, one might suppose.

Oh yes, very much so. In fact, I got a touch of dengue fever up there. Before I went into the officers' mess, just before Christmas, as I was telling you before about the AMWAS, they were down in Berrimah, which was about nine or ten mile out of Darwin. There was a big hospital there, and some of the signal girls had been sent down there too. So the cook down there, the AMWAS, she decided she wasn't going to cook for AWAS as well as her own so they decided they'd send an AWAS cook down. So they sent me down. And this morning I went in to light the fire, to start the kitchen, and oh, I got real dizzy. I couldn't go near the heat. I had to sit down. So then I had to go and wake someone else up and say 'Look, I can't do it. I gotta go back to bed.' I was shivering like anything and I had a temperature. So of

course the next thing I'm in hospital. They queried me all sorts of things before they decided I must've had a touch of dengue fever. This was a couple of weeks before Christmas. Then Christmas Eve they sent me up They had a recreational centre. You had to have a rest every six months; they put you in this recreational centre for a week's break. So they sent me up there to recuperate. I went back to the Larrakeyah Barracks after that and I got a message to go over to the Darwin Hospital. So I go over the Darwin Hospital and they said, 'What are you here for?'. I said 'I don't know. I've been sent over'. So he said, 'Well, have you been sick or anything?'. I said 'Oh yes, I've been down the Berrimah for two weeks'. He said 'Oh well', he said, 'I'll give you a check over and find out what you're here for'. Well then they found out it was to see if I was fit enough to go back to duties. So he said 'No, your temperature's ninety-eight point something or other and when it gets 100 you go back'. So they didn't wait for that, they sent me straight back to Berrimah again and I was in there for another two weeks. So I had about five weeks.

(5.00) What were the conditions like there?

[Laughs] They were very good, but the female ward looked out onto the morgue [laughs] and the screen, they had the screen for films in that area. Then they had me in the isolation ward and that looked over across the road to the war cemetery! So the two female, or the two wards were in appropriate positions, really. Well they weren't really, they were a bit depressing. You could see these white posts sticking up, with 'Unidentified Japanese Airman' on them.

Did you wander round the cemetery at all?

No, no.

Was the food any better in hospital?

I was only on a light diet, so it wasn't I wasn't allowed to eat very much, except for brains and all that sort of Tripe and stuff.

Was it the usual tradition of wake you up at some ungodly hour of the morning to ...?

Yes, yes. Pretty much the same, yeah.

What other sort of people were there - with what other kinds of things?

A bit of dysentery broke out and some of the girls were in with dysentery. And some of the girls broke their limbs and what not, you know. There were a few accidents and that went on.

Were there any unexpected, unwanted pregnancies amongst young women up there?

Well there were, but I don't know much about What was the saying around the camp was, when we heard someone had 'come south', and that was always the thing: 'So-and-so went south today'. 'Oh yeah, how'd they go?' If they went down by army transport plane, we knew they were on compassionate leave, that it was a family problem or something like that. But if

they went by Qantas we knew they were probably pregnant. That was the only And that's how it went. We just sort of never thought any more about it.

What was the assumption, do you think, about Qantas - that it'd be more comfortable and more appropriate in terms of travel?

Oh yeah, it was a more comfortable trip for them, you see. So that was the only distinction we made.

Apart from the dengue fever bout, just generally working in a kitchen in that hot climate, did you find it hard at times?

Oh, as I say, once more, we were young - we coped with it. The wet season was a bit uncomfortable, but you coped. Made icecream and that.

The north has a bit of a reputation, in that season preceding the wet, for suicides. Was there a sense of that, or temperament? Was it apparent that the humidity affected people?

Oh you only said people were going 'troppo', that's all. It was always an expression, 'Oh So-and-So's gone troppo'. But apart from that, no.

'Troppo' meaning anything that involved a temper?

Anything. Anything could happen, yeah. [Laughs]

What about recreation - football and cricket and all those sort of things? Were fellows playing them?

A lot of girls played basketball. Yeah, they went to basketball. There was quite a good competition and they used to go down as far as Alice Springs. But see, I was never allowed to learn any of those sports and never got into it. But there was tennis, yes, and things like that.

I gather it was a more relaxed way of life up there, at least as far as recreational opportunities were concerned.

Yeah but we were very strictly supervised. We weren't allowed out. We had to be If we went out, whoever was taking us out would have to get permission from their officer, and they had a paper, what they called a G2, which had to be signed. That had to be presented at our orderly room; we'd have to sign a book to say where we were going, who we were going with. There was a record every time we went in or out of that gate, that we were accounted for. So in one way if it was relaxed, in another way it was very strictly supervised.

Did you have weekend picnics or that sort of thing?

Oh yes, but there again it had to be recorded, where we were going and what we were doing. The boys'd bring the steak and we'd take the eggs [laughs] and we'd have barbecues and

picnics. They'd come, they'd have to pick us up at the orderly room and the officer, whoever was on duty, would have to check it, that we were in the right place and the right time.

Just how far afield could you go on a weekend? Could you really get out at all much from Darwin?

Well we were never allowed out for a weekend. It was only a day, whatever days you went out. Oh yes, you could go a few miles out, yeah.

Boating? Did you go boating?

Yes. We went out once. One of the officers took us out one day, when she was leaving us, going back to West[ern] Australia. She took us out for the day and we met up with a concert party. Horrie Dargie and them were on this concert party and we joined forces with them, and we went right over the other side of the harbour and down the East Arm, and we had a wonderful day out. Come back and it was night-time, and submarines and that in the harbour. It was very effective.

(10.00) What do you mean, submarines in the harbour?

Oh there was American submarines used to come in and refuel. There was a couple of them in at the time.

Again did you get to meet any Americans while you were up north?

There were a lot of Americans, but there again I wasn't interested. I never I used to The air force and the army, and that was all I was interested. I never had any other friends.

Did you have a boyfriend by this time at all?

Yes. Oh yes, I had a couple of boyfriends.

Was it special?

No. No, I made a vow before I left Melbourne, I wouldn't get serious with anyone up in Darwin.

What about your friends? Were there any romances or dramas involving any affairs of the heart and that sort of thing?

I'll tell you something funny. One night I wasn't going out anywhere; I was staying in camp one Saturday night and these two friends of mine went out. And I was going to have a complete laundry session. I washed everything, everything I had. I stripped right down, and all I had on was my greatcoat. Didn't have another stitch. I went up to the latrines and the corporal from the orderly room come up and was there, and she said 'Oh Ned', she said, 'is Billy and Swannie still in?', and I said 'No, they're gone out'. 'Oh', she said, 'there's two boys waiting at the gate for them'. And I said 'Oh no, they're not there'. She said 'Well you go over and tell them they're gone'. I said 'No, I can't, 'cause I got nothing on!'. She said 'Well I'm off duty for another hour or so'. She said, 'Oh go on, go, they won't know'. [Laughs] So I knew

these two chaps that was waiting, so I went over to tell them that they weren't home. I nearly died inside, because I knew I didn't have a stitch underneath my greatcoat I had on, to tell them that these two had gone out. I stood there talking to them for a while before I excused myself and went back, but I thought if they only knew that I didn't have a stitch on underneath! They must've thought I was crazy with a ...

Wearing a greatcoat, yes.

... with a greatcoat on. 'Cause I told them when they got back. I said 'What I do for you!'.
[Laughs]

Were there any accidents, car accidents or any other dramas at all occurred during your time?

Not that I can remember. Not that I can remember.

Did you know of people who had brothers or relatives lost?

Yes. Yes, we did have some of those that we had to console. And 'course then when the prisoners of war came back we used to go and make up beds every day. We used to go down to Winnellie and make beds up on our breaks when we had time off, and when they used to fly in, then we'd put on a dance for them in our barracks. They never knew that there were girls in the army or anything like that, they being prisoners for so long. They didn't know what they were coming home to, and we were the first sort of Australian girls that they'd seen for years, when they'd been in captivity.

Many of them must have been very affected by that.

Oh yes, they were. Yeah.

I mean very affected to find themselves near some warmth and gentleness and that.

That's right, yeah. It was very hard for some of them, but then by the end of the night or day, however time they were there for 'Course they were only on transit; they'd just be stopped Darwin, either overnight or for a day or something. It depends on how they were able to cope before they reached home. We might've been a bit of a breaking point for them before they reached their own families. It was just someone, a female to talk to before they had to face their own families. It was more or less a little bit of a

Less abrupt?

Yeah.

Before the end of the war there were occasional air-raid warnings, or alerts?

Yes. One night we had a blackout, the harbour blackout, and we were told to put our lights out. Apparently it was the Japanese, the last lot that were on Timor before they were pushed off there, were trying to make a last bid to get across We had two floating docks in the

harbour. They'd come out from Scotland, I think, and they'd been trying to bomb them all the way out, trying to get them; and they were on their way to New Britain for our navy to use as repairs, and apparently they knew these floating docks were in the harbour and they tried to get across. But we had a Canadian force up there at the time, and they picked them up on the radar and they were able to prevent them from getting across the Timor Sea there to us. But we had this one scare that night. That was our worst scare.

Was it a scare? I mean, did suddenly it seem 'Good God, this really could be war'.

Somnething could happen, yes.

Where were you when you heard the news about the end of the war in Europe?

The end of the war in Europe - that wasn't as exciting as what the other one was, but that was in May, wasn't it? I think we didn't get as excited over that. We were quite pleased that it was all over, but it was the other, the one in August that really we were happy about.

(15.00) Do you remember what you were doing at the time - where you were?

Well it was around my birthday, I know that. The first news was around my birthday, and we all went round very happy about it - first in the barracks, and then when the news came through the next couple of days, of course everyone was You know, we got an extra rest day and everyone was celebrating

Did you have a party?

Yes, well I was

Did you drink for the first time?

No. No, I was keeping company with this colonel's driver at the time, and I got taken out for the night. So it was very good.

Should we ask where you went or what you did?

No, well, this colonel was very good to me. Arthur wanted to ask me to go round and of course he had to get the colonel's permission for me to drive in the car. This had been going on for a couple of months. The colonel was quite pleased because he knew me and he knew what I did. He used to pick me up to go to the pictures or go to church, and go to all sorts of things. He was the quartermaster-general up there, so my officer was quite willing to let me go. 'Cause I had to have her permission too. So when the war finished and they were going out that night He used to take a couple of nursing sisters out with him and that; he used to have two or three ladies used to go with him. This night they were going to take me out and I said 'Oh, do you think I can get permission?'. So I'm in my kitchen and I'd provided afternoon tea for the officers, and my officer came out and she said 'I believe you're going out tonight' - 'cause it was closed camp. We could invite our friends in, but we couldn't go out, when the war finished. 'Cause everyone was celebrating, you know. She said 'I believe you're going

out tonight, Private Kelly'. I said 'Am I, Madam?'. And she said 'Oh yes, you can go'. So I was the only one out of the barracks that night. So I was quite pleased.

Would you get teased by your friends about

Oh yes, a couple I'd Not actually teased; a couple of them weren't too happy about it. I used to get some A couple of them used to get real nasty.

Why?

Because I used to go out with Arthur - probably just a bit of jealousy, I don't know.

What, that they didn't have relationships and ...

Probably, yeah. But they were the only two.

What would they say?

I'd come in and there'd be some digs about red tape or something like that. But I just used to take no notice of 'em.

It was felt that you were using special sort of favours with the colonel and so on?

Yeah, with the officers. But I never used to take any notice of 'em. I used to say to Arthur in the beginning, 'Oh, I don't think I'll come any more', because of the remarks. He'd say 'Don't be silly. They wouldn't refuse if they had the opportunity', he said, 'and you deserve it'. So that was the way he looked at it.

So how much longer were you in Darwin after the end of the war?

Er, October.

And went by ship back down south?

No, we came back transport, the same way. Ruth came too. She brought me back as well as took me up, and I came back with her as well.

Was there a different mood through the country, with the end of the war?

Oh yeah - much, much more relaxed and happy that the boys were coming home.

What about rationing? Did that still continue?

Yes, rationing continued for a while afterwards. Yes. But what I was going to say about the prisoners of war: the hospital ship came in, the *Oranje*, and there was a chap who'd been a prisoner on it who was the husband of the officer I had at Bandiana! He was there and they brought him back to the barracks for lunch. And of all days, I had creamed rice. I couldn't

believe it! I wasn't expecting them to bring anyone home. So I had to quickly change it and have icecream and some fruit or something for

He would have been a bit tired of rice?

[Laughs] He would've been tired of rice, yes. He's still alive. I still see him, and that particular officer.

What condition was he in at the time?

Not very good - not very good at all. He'd been a prisoner for some years, mm. And she didn't know whether he'd been - whether he was dead or alive for many years.

So when you got back to Melbourne, what then? You went to Wodonga?

Yes, I went back to Wodonga. Not Bandiana - there was another camp near the Wodonga racecourse. I was there till I was discharged in May.

What were you doing at Wodonga?

Cooking! But this time it was a mixed mess. By this time the women and men were in the same mess, and it was a man as cook as well as myself.

Did things become at all more casual between the ranks with the war's end?

Oh yes, much. It was. And 'course we'd have There were Italian prisoners of war there. And I'd go to put a bit o' wood in the stove, and the Italian'd be this 'Me get, me get' and they'd go and put the wood on. I got spoilt; I got absolutely spoilt there. You was there with the men.

(20.00)Did you get to know them particularly well at all?

Yes. Oh yes, you got to know the boys. And they had a lot of respect for the girls.

No, I mean the Italian prisoners of war.

No, just talking to them, you know. But they had But the same with them - they had respect for the women as well, for the army girls. They were very good.

With the more casual relationship then between the ranks, did you ever see incidents where officers would try and assert, or reassert, authority and people would resent it because they thought 'Well what's the point anyway? The war's over.'

No, I don't think so. I think in the army you were a soldier. You were in the army; you accepted the orders and the discipline. I saw the TV thing, the 'real life', and our officers never used to yell or bark at us like you see them now, on that. We never had that. There was always They were officers, you respect them as officers, you done as you were told, but they were human. You know, you were all there for the same thing. You were all there to

help the country. You were there for the To do what you could do to help the war. You took pride in it, and it was I dunno, it was just a different It was a different life, a totally different life. And I think as a civilian, it's very hard for a civilian to realise. I'd never marched in the ANZAC march for many, many years. It's only in these later years I've marched. You get a feeling, there's a special feeling that you have with the soldiers and the air force that when they see you there marching you're accepted. You've all been through something together. It's all I dunno, it's something you can't explain.

There were some quite famous incidents between Australian troops and American servicemen in Australia, where ill feeling spilled over into some major brawls.

Oh yes, I believe so.

Did you ever see any of that, or did you hear about the events at the time?

No. No, well even up in Darwin there was The Americans had their own picture theatre and anyone that wanted to go could go, but there was never any trouble. There were Canadians up there and they were a fine lot o' men. There was the English Spitfire squadron. We had all di.... There weren't just Australians up there; there were all other nationalities as well. But no, I don't think there was any trouble up there with the Americans. A lot of the girls used to go to the American dances, which I didn't go to. But I did go to the picture theatres a couple of times, and there was no problems at all.

When you were discharged, how did it feel to suddenly be out of the army?
Did it seem strange?

Very strange. Very hard - very hard to adapt back into civilian life again.

You'd gone in, as you said yourself, as a very quiet person, lacking in self-confidence. Were you a different person at the end of the war?

Yeah. I always said I wish I'd known as much when I went in as I did when I came out of the army. [Laughs] I did, I had a lot more confidence, sort of thing, in myself.

What was the first work you did, then, when you left?

I went back to Sackvilles for a very short time, but I couldn't adapt back to factory life again. And

Why? What was it about it?

Oh closed in, and just the sameness. I mean, even though you were

Did you feel different to the others as well?

Yes. Yes, felt different and

Did they see you differently, do you think?

It's possible - possible. So

And after that?

I got married.

Children?

Yes. I'd met my husband at Wodonga, at Bandiana. He'd come back from the islands and I'd come back from Darwin, and we met then, up there, and I came up to Ferntree Gully to live and had the children. That unfortunately didn't last, but I've got a son and a daughter.

Did you remarry?

I reared my children for eleven years on my own, and I think my early life sustained me that way, that I was able to bring them up I hope two decent citizens. I had no problems with 'em. And I married my husband I was on my own eleven years, mm.

What about the association of the ex-army women? How important is that in terms of your life now and its value?

(25.00) It's good. I'm very pleased to be in it. We have a wonderful friendship and relationship. We have our R and R meeting once a month, that our secretary organises. There's about anything up to thirty or forty of us meet once a month - again, all in a group. We all go everywhere, somewhere different every month. And we help one another if need be, and we have this friendship. Then with the committee, well it's good to keep the reunion going every year.

Was there a sense in a way that the war years had a special value, of bringing people together in a sort of, with a sense of common purpose and so on?

Definitely, definitely. It didn't matter what you were, whether you were a sig or an ack-ack or a driver or cook or whatever, you know, it didn't matter what branch or what field they were working in - clerical or whatever - you had this rapport with each other.

Do you have a feeling in a way that Australia lacks a sense of purpose and the kind of humanity and warmth that seemed to be shared in those days?

I think so. I feel sorry. I don't advocate war or anything, but I think national service would be so good for a lot of these young ones who don't know where they're going. And I think if there was national service for both boys and girls, that they could meet on a common ground and have this little bit of discipline. I think this is all that some of them want, is just that bit of discipline that they're not getting, and I think it's a wonderful thing. I don't think it'd do any harm; I think it'd do a lot of good to a lot of these young ones these days.

END TAPE TWO, SIDE B