ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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INTERVIEWEE: Jean Price

INTERVIEWER: Sue Hardisty

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SUMMARY:

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Jean Price as a member of the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA), 1942-1945, interviewed and recorded by Sue Hardisty on 16 April 1985 at Gawler, South Australia.

Would you like to tell us about your early life?

Do you want me to start off when I was real young?

Yes.

Well, I was actually born over at Streaky Bay, and my father had a farm at a place called Yantanabie which is about 40 miles inland from Streaky Bay and I was one of eleven children. And when I was about eight, Mum and Dad shifted to Adelaide and we lived in Enfield for a few years until grandpa's house was sold and then we bought the house at Clinton. We lived down there and I went to the Clinton school after we shifted down there and then I, not having a very high education, and I did housework - mainly sleep-in job sites sort of housekeeping jobs.

At what age did you leave school.

I wasn't quite 14 when I left school actually - I left school the year we had the outbreak of polio and the school didn't open up until the March so I left - I didn't go back to school because I was 14 in March and Mum had been ill and she wanted me home to help with the younger children.

How many children?

There was eleven, I was one of eleven and I had one sister and three brothers older than what I was and I said then it was mainly living away from home - living at the place, being a housekeeper. As a housekeeper I used to do all the housework and look after actually I did all this work for an invalid lady at the time I joined the - at the time I was called up in the Land Army - I had put my name down when I was in the munitions factory - I didn't like that - being indoors - not all the time - I just couldn't stand that.

How long were you in the munitions factory?

About six weeks, I think.

What work did you do in there?

We were doing shells - we were making shells like working on the machines and that was that noisy - I just couldn't stand. It just wasn't my cup of tea actually so I wanted to join one of the services 'cause I had three brothers at that time that were both in the services. Three older brothers went into the services and I really thought I might like to join the services. So I joined the Land Army and then I went working for this, I had worked for this invalid lady before, and I found out she wanted somebody so I was without work so I went and worked for her and I got called up in the Land Army. And at the time her husband was a bandsman for the Army, over Christmas, and he

was sent to Loveday to play for the prisoners up there in Loveday and he asked me would I stay and I didn't mind staying. But he had to go and have it arranged with Miss Marshall, who was the head one at that time, and she said yeah, that would be quite all right. So she then called me up with the next lot of girls who wanted to go pickin'. That was my first place was Waikerie. I think I was there a little over a month - I think it was about five or six weeks I think I spent up there at ? I had never ever done ? or anything like that before and I hadn't been away from home for so long before. I'll admit I was very homesick.

When you worked in other people's houses could you go home at weekends?

Oh yes, and most likely one day a week, perhaps one afternoon a week or perhaps a full day a week and then perhaps every other Sunday but it was really about one and half days a fortnight you'd end up by having off so, of course, I always used to head home and spend time with my brothers and sisters.

Can you remember what you got paid while you were there?

Yes, well when I was, actually the very first job I got I think I got about 2'6 but I didn't live at the place. I just went - that was down at Plympton - I worked for a lady. When I was at the doctors that lived on Goodwood Road I was 5 shillings a week and my keep and being a doctor and that you had to do everything from washing, cooking, answering the door, answering the telephone, everything, everything while I was there. His wife used to be at work quite a lot because she belonged to the Red Cross being war year - it was the start of the war while I was there. We got 5 shillings and our keep and that's all we got.

How did you hear about the Land Army?

I don't know if I read it in the paper or just whether it was through going and applying for a job and I heard about - but I just might have heard about it ‘cause we had to get references which I had already gone and got because as I said I wanted to go into the Air Force so I had been to some of the places I had worked and asked then for references. So I had some references and we also had to get a reference from somebody who I knew when I was younger so I went to my Headmaster from down at Plympton and he gave me a reference and stated that I had come off a farm and he thought I would be suitable for that sort of work.

How old were you when you left the farm?

I was only about eight or nine I think, about nine at that time.

Did you go back to the country at any time after you were nine?

No - not at that time - I hadn't - no. I stayed.

Do you have good memories?

Yes, I can remember going to school - I remember where the school was and everything. I know we had to travel seven miles to school every morning - horse and

cart. As I said having older brothers - actually there was - my older sister had left school but I had three brothers older than myself and a younger brother that started school. Actually there was no school over there. They built a school when there were enough children there. There were five from our family that was going to that school when it first opened up.

Do you remember having a medical to go into the Land Army?

Yes, yes, we had to have a medical to go into the Land Army. Dr Violet Plum, I think her name was from memory. I don't if any of the other girls mentioned her.

Do you remember her?

Yes, I remember her - very abrupt lady.

Was it a very vigorous medical?

I certainly thought it was because I hadn't been to the doctor very much beforehand, you know, and hadn't been because I hardly ever had sickness. Even now I hardly ever go to the Doctor. I think if anybody perhaps had been to a Doctor quite a lot I think they may have wondered what had hit them, you know, when they met with her because she was really outspoken. I think we were - from being from we were quite young - we were running around without shoes and socks on - you know how your feet get a bit clacky on the bottom -
remember her saying about my feet. Whether she expected people to always wear shoes and socks, I don't know.

What about Miss Marshall - did you meet her?

Yes, yes, I met Miss Marshall. She seemed a very, very nice person even though I suppose she was a bit strict. But then again at that time you don't realise it but as you get older you realise that when you've got so many under you, you've got to be strict. I think at times we thought she was a bit rough with us but as I said as you get older and had family of my own I think I've realised she was a little bit rough as we thought she was.

Can you tell us about going up on your first job?

Well, I'm not too sure what time the train was but it left fairly early in the morning and, of course, we were out at Plympton we had to get either a Glenelg Tram which took you into Victoria Square and then you either had to walk or get another tram out to North Terrace out to the Railway Station or hells otherwise. I was one of the lucky ones because we had a bus that used to run along Anzac Highway and used to pull up right outside the Railway Station and I had to get on the train and was told I had to get off at Morgan - I didn't know where Morgan was or anything. And then I was told we had to find out which bus - there were about seven buses or so that used to leave Morgan that used to meet the train and had to find out which one went to Waikerie. Through Waikerie, I had to be sure to get on the one that went through Waikerie. I know we got to Morgan around about lunch time because we had lunch at Morgan, bought some lunch at Morgan, and then we got on the bus. I remember we travelled

and travelled - I didn't think we were every going to get anywhere because we seemed to be - we went over a punt which I realised now was the Cadell Punt and called in quite a lot of different little towns, sidings. He dropped off the mail at different places, he dropped off the mail bags and I think it would have most likely been around about 4.30 before we got to Waikerie. I presume, I don't remember but I presume the boss met us there. I presume it would have been a Mr Wilson that met us and took us to the house.

Were you with other girls?

One other lass was there when I was there and I was introduced to a Miss Wills and I found out she was in the Land Army. She was some years older than what I was and apparently I found out afterwards that I was sent up with her because more or less on probation. I worked with her.

About probation?

Well apparently, I don't know whether she was or whether she had been at other jobs or not - I don't know, but I was definitely on probation and they said a month's probation. I found afterwards because when I went back to town they said, "I'll keep you". We shared the room together at Wilson's and worked together and that.

Did you know anybody in the Land Army when you joined?

No, I didn't, no, no I never - Oh there was one lass I came across afterwards that I did go to school with but only worked with on one job and that was up at Basket Range.

Do you remember your first day at work?

Remember my first day at work? No, not really - I mean if you asked me what happened I don't remember actually. It is a bit vague. Some of the other jobs I remember.

What was your accommodation like at your first job?

The accommodation at the first job was they had turned a lounge room into a bedroom for us and they had this sort of - they had the wardrobe put over the back in the passageway so it was more - so it was private for us and girls. Being because I suppose being that the first time that they had had to have girls there - well not having many - I don't whether they just had ? before work I just don't know that part about it. It was quite nice and the beds was very comfortable and we always went and had our meals with the people that we worked with.

How did you find your employers there?

Very good, yes. We found him - he was very nice, actually we had two bosses there because there was a Mr Wilson and a Mr Lambert sort of own the premises - we were staying with Mr Wilson up at his home.

What did your work involve?

It involved wheat [grape?] picking mainly.

Were you the only pickers - you and the other...?

No, they had another young couple living there and they were living in a little cottage there - they I was very friendly with because they were around about my own age. As I said the other Land Army lady was bit older than what I was.

How old were you?

I think I was around about 18 at that time. First time away from home - or any length of time.

Was that the furthest you were to travel?

Yes, definitely.

Can you remember how you felt?

Well, as I said I felt very homesick each and if it hadn't been for this other young couple that was there that I used to go the pictures with of a Saturday in evening and used to go and talk to them quite a bit. I think I - I think I perhaps might have chucked it in.

You were used to a big family?

Yes, and that was so quiet - you know there I don't think there were any children there at all - I don't remember the Wilson's having any children around.

What did you do with your time at the weekends?

We had to do our own washing so I presume Saturday mornings were most likely been spent doing our washing or perhaps if we wanted to go into Waikerie which I know we had to walk because there was no transport - no buses - no nothing like that to go and I think we were perhaps about a mile and half, perhaps two miles out of the town from memory. We had to walk in so where I presume it would have been possible that we would have walked into the town and done some shopping. And as I said we did our own washing. We had to wash our own linen and that off the bed and so I guess that Saturday would have been taken care of and I used to go to the pictures Saturday evening with this other young couple that I was - they were to remain very good friends with. And then on Sunday I just guess we just sort of poked around, just read or wrote letters or whichever.

Where did you go to next?

Then there I went down to Westons and that was on the 17 March 1943. From there I would have - while I was working down there - I was living at home which was about 3-4 miles. I used to ride a bike down there each morning to work.

What time were you getting up?

Good question! I don't know - around about six I presume - I think we had to be at work by 8am. So I guess I would have been up at six to push the bike that distance.

Did you enjoy the work greatly?

I didn't mind it. Once I got into the knack of doing it and that.

Did you have any money over very much or was it hard to make ends meet with the wage?

Well, I don't think we ever run out of money. Well, at least I didn't. Whether it was because I never had very much money, as I said we had come from a family, a big family and we never ever had very much and I think if you are not used to a lot of things you sort of don't miss them. But I know I always paid Mum board even though while were living at home we always had to pay board and I think - you see, once we went to the Land Army we did get our uniforms, things supplied to us. Yes, when I was down at Weston I had the jumpers, the riding trousers and shirt, hat, boots was the only thing I hadn't been supplied with when I had that photo taken. So apparently when I came back from up the River I must have been supplied with that outfit to wear to work.

What are these in the photograph?

They would have been the leather leg-ons that the - like horsemen used to wear or motor cycle men used to wear during the war – they were army britches - what the army used to call britches and they are very much similar to what the police wear now on their motorbikes. Yes, we were supplied that – here's a supply there that I've got on there. The hat was the army hat and we were supplied with that until our rag dress uniform came out. The ? of the uniforms was the bib and braces, overalls and khaki shirt.

Was it difficult to get out of munitions and into the Land Army?

Well, I didn't find it - I just told them I didn't like working there and I just walked out. I went back to housework again.

Why didn't you eventually go into the Air Force?

Well, my mother didn't want me to go into Air Force and, of course, being under 21, she signed the papers for me to go into the Land Army. Then the next looks like it must have been at Mr Williams up at Baroota and that was pea picking. Up there, there was five of us, I think it was, five or six. I know one lass - she did all the, she stayed at the house and did all the house - helped Mrs Williams do the cooking and get meals and everything like that ready for us girls. And us others, we lived in what they called the honeymoon cottage - it was a little cottage away from the main building and us girls lived over there. We had our own bathroom, own toilets and everything and we used to get up of a morning - we always had to do our own beds,

keep our own rooms clean and tidy. We used to go over to the big house to have meals and then we used to go off down to pick the peas.

What sort of condition was the honeymoon cottage in?

It was really quite nice – yes, it was very nice little place. At least I thought it was - I don't know what anybody else thought but it wasn't what some of the girls were used to cause it was only wood copper and things like that. But in those days most of the country places were and I don't think there was any electrical - I think it was all kerosene lighting which I was used to because we didn't have electricity when I was kiddie at home. So it was more like a home away from home actually. I think it was five of us in the cottage together - to start off we used to go off out to pick peas.

Can you describe that work?

Can I describe it? Well, it was - wasn't bad actually. I used to find out that if you got down on your hands and knees and sort of went along the rows and picked the peas - you had to drag your bag along with you as you went - it wasn't too bad. Something different from grape picking. Up there we used to entertain ourselves at night. We used sit around and talk and Eunice, one of the other girls, and I - we used to go out trapping, rabbit trapping.

Did you catch many?

Oh yeah, we used to catch quite a few. Quite often we used to help the boss there do the milking of the cow at night and things like that. We used to on the Saturday night he always used to take us to a dance at Port Germein.

Did you have to do the milking?

No, we didn't have to do the milking but we just used to go out especially of a Saturday night to help seeing how they used to take us in to the dances of a Saturday night because they never used to go into Port Germein very often and that was usually mail night and we used to collect all our letters and that and we used to sit the hall quite often reading our mail we used to get in between dances and that we always used to milk on Saturday night because of that reason.

Was the milking by hand or by machine?

No, by hand, by hand.

How many cows did they have?

I think they had four or five there that they would milk.

Had you milked before?

Yes, we used to have a cow when we lived down at Plympton, actually, so it wasn't anything new to me to do milking.

How did you entertain yourselves in the cottage?

We used to have weekends there. Actually it was too cold for land ? because Port Germein is up the other side of Port Pine. You had to go straight to Port Pine and then you get on what we used to call the
derail car from Port Pine up to the ? and up to Baroota and I think the rail car used to go through to, the little rail car used to go through to Port Germein. And I think that ? picker - he picked us up at Port Germein, took us out to Baroota to his place. And I know where we were, we could always see the troop trains going out along the line. We always knew when a troop train was on the line because you used to hear it and we used to look and we could see it go through from where we were when we were out picking peas.

So what did you do for entertainment at the weekends except for your dances and the washing? Did you go walking or riding?

No, never went riding. We never had no bikes with us to go riding bikes and I think we never ever had horses. They never used to let us have the horses anyhow, and they never suggested we could have the horses or anything. We most likely used to go walking - I don't know actually but I suppose I guess we used to fill our times in I suppose like the youngsters of today would I guess.

So what other work did you do in the Land Army?

I also did thinning out carrots - up at Nuriootpa. We had to go along the lines to thin out the carrots and we did weeding and thinning because they plant them - they plant a whole lot together and you have to thin out the healthiest looking ones. And then I also went up to Highbury East and we did orange picking up at Highbury East. Oh yes, I was up at Clement's, Basket Range, on the cherries and then I went through up to Renmark, again up through to Renmark and did grape
picking again up there. And then I ended up at Toora Vale near Bern. In Bern I was in the hostel - that's the first time I ever had been in a hostel - all the other places we lived either in the house or with people that we worked for.

And in cottages?

No, no the only place with a cottage was up at Baroota - that's there only place where the cottage was but up here we lived in the rooms. We had a bedroom - there was another girl and myself, we had the bedroom to ourselves. We were more or less made as one of the family - we sat at the table, had meals with them, they went out, they took us with them.

Did you always feel comfortable in that private accommodation or some times did you find it very difficult?

No, I always found it fairly well, I sort of fitted in fairly well - found out that. Well, especially up here at Nuriootpa - that Mr and Mrs Smith up here - they were very, very nice. I used to help do the cooking and I would bake when she used to cook and I had nothing else to do. They used to take us into Nuriootpa when they went shopping. If they went out of an evening they would give us choice if we wanted to

go out with them. We met their friends - went out with them and they were a very nice couple and they really made us at home.

How did you find local people responded to you?

Yes, actually when we were up at Baroota, Mrs Williams arranged for us girls to go into Port Pine - a long weekend. We had a choice - we could either go back to Adelaide and for the long weekend or else we could stay up there. And she belonged to the Country Women's so she asked the Country Women whether they would mind putting us up. And I remember when we went that nobody had apparently up there had seen girls in our uniform and, of course, a few little white lies were told when they asked what we belonged to. Then we ended up by saying though that we were Land Army girls and that we were out on farms doing the farm work so we were made very welcome. The family that we were with, they made arrangements for us to go to the Institute Ball - or local dance - that they had every weekend because up there, there were servicemen. There were Air Force men and also Army Personnel up there so they always had plenty of entertainment for the services. We found it very nice - I remember being turned around and told us that if we met anybody that we would like to spend the weekend with or anything we were quite welcome to invite him back for a meal or whichever you know so they really made us feel at home.

What was the reaction of people when they first saw the Land Army uniform?

Well, they couldn't work out. Up at Port Augusta, at Port Pine, they just couldn't work out what the uniform was, you see. So, of course, they asked so we just kidded them along for a while and so I think we ended up, I think they were Americans, just for a while and then we ended up, well, we thought, you know, we really should tell them that we were Australians and that we were working out on farms - we had taken up the jobs that the men had left to go away and fight for our country as we thought we would do the jobs that they were doing.

What sort of reaction did you get from them? Once you told them.

Quite all right – yes, quite good actually.

How did you find hostel living - being in that sort of accommodation? What were your feelings, first of all when you first went there?

Well, it was a bit strange actually because I had never ever been sort of under anybody with such strict rules, put it that way. And even though, I'm thinking of times my parents were strict, but I presume that if I didn't want to anything I guess my Mum used to do it or we used to do it when we wanted to do it whereas when you are in hostel you had to do things at just at the right time. Of course, two of you shared a room - we realised that we couldn't just let our room-mate do all the work - so we had to pull our socks up and had to do what we had to. And I think up there was only about one night a week we had to be in then by midnight. Whereas that didn't worry me that much because I never ever had - we always had to catch a train in any case to get home and that was usually before midnight the last tram used to run so that didn't worry me that much. It was the other girls - apparently I wasn't used to being in amongst so many girls and I found that some were quite nice - others could be, as they

say, girls can be fairly catty - which I found that out. On the whole I suppose I got on all right with them.

> What did you feel about the background of the other girls? Did you feel that they had similar family life to you or a variety?

Some did and others didn't but you could pick up the ones that came from a much higher family than what I did. You could more or less pick the girls up and you could tell which ones had the a high education.

> How did you find them?

Well, I used to try to avoid them if I possibly could. I don't know if that was the right thing or the wrong thing, but I think you found out who your friends were and you sort of stuck with your friends.

> How did you feel about those with a higher education or very different background to yours? How do you feel that they coped with the work?

No, I think they coped with work all right. Actually, I think you would have to find out from the bosses what they were like - as I said, I never ever worked with many. There were only about one or two girls that I actually worked with on two jobs and perhaps if I had got with one of those sort of girls and gone around with her and to every sort of job I may have been able to judge what type of worker she was. But as I said, I worked with Naire? up at Port Germein and then I worked with her down in the cannery and I think we sort of got on all right. And I think she worked as good as what I did. I know at times I didn't feel like working and I think you had your off days and that but once you were in you just knew you had to it.

> So when you were at the Bern Hostel were you working the factory there?

We were working at Toora Vale which, I think that was the way it was pronounced, and Toora Vale and which we used to get a bus to go there each morning and home each night. I wasn't so keen on that because, as I said, I didn't like the - being inside all the time. I suppose the doing the housework right from when I was younger - when you are doing housework you can get your housework done then you can get a book and get some sewing or something and sit outside. But when you're in factory from say about 8am to 5pm and only being out for about the hour for lunch that just wasn't me.

> Were you surprised that you had to work in a factory when you joined the Land Army?

No, not really because I think we had it pointed out to us that if we took on - we had a choice of - we could have either gone as seasonal worker or rural worker. We were told if we went as a rural worker we had to stay at that place at least 12 months. Well, that put me off straight away because I thought, well, if I get with a boss I don't like I wouldn't be able to stick it so I thought right. With the rural we were told that we would be shifted around from different places while with seasonal work we were told we would be doing packing work sheds as well as outdoor work.

So what was the work you had to do in the factory?

We were on dehydrated potatoes - we were doing dehydrated potatoes but just what was involved, I just don't know, I just can't remember. It was apparently, we might have been spreading the potatoes after they come out of the - but I do remember it was with potatoes and they were dehydrated potatoes and we were in amongst that.

Did you work in any other factories?

Yes we worked at Roburn's Wayville and that was packing the table weights in little containers and to be sold. They were the only two factories actually I worked in. During the other time it was always outdoor because I think they realised I didn't like indoor work. I preferred outdoor work.

How did you find the conditions of the factory?

In what way?

Did you feel that the conditions were reasonable in which you had to work?

At that time, yes and no. And I think we felt though as if - it wasn't under the Land Army girls - it was everybody because we were in amongst other people especially at Roburn's - it was all the same actually. We nicknamed her Hawkeyes - the forewoman who used to sit up above and used to be watching every move we made. We just felt - to me and I know some of the others even the others wasn't in the Land Army - thought that that was wrong, that you should have never been put on a seat up above and just sort of watched over top of everybody the way she used to.

Was she in the Land Army?

No, no, no, she was the forewoman of Roburn's and there was only a few girls sent there at a time just to help out when they were short staffed.

Were there any jobs you refused to do?

Yes, there was.

Can you tell us about that?

Yes, we went to the Cannery. Can you see the one there? The Norwood Cannery. And we went there, there were three of us sent there, just one day. And we went there and we weren't told what we were going to do. We were just told to go over to the bench. We went over to the bench and we found out that we had carrots floating around in fluids and it was our job, we were suppose to peel those carrots. And we found out by lunchtime our hands were that sore and that wrinkly. When we knocked off for lunch we asked one of the other women that worked there where the toilets were and all we got was laughed at. So we just packed up and walked off out and went back to headquarters, got blown up at headquarters, and when we showed them our hands - I don't think they sort of, I think they felt a bit sorry for us because they

turned around and said we won't send you back down. So they sent us back to Roburn's until there was another place. So I wasn't the only one that walked out - there were three of us - we walked out and I don't know how many other girls worked there or how they got on or anything else because if I had of been sent back I just wouldn't - I would have said I wanted to leave the Land Army and that would have been it.

What was the liquid?

We found out afterwards apparently it was caustic that they put in the water to help it - apparently to help lift the skin off the carrots. Whether we should have been given gloves or whether they expected us to have our own gloves I don't know. We weren't told and we didn't like the way we were treated so whether that was because we were in the Land Army or not we don't know.

Were any other women at the factory working - doing the same work?

Yes, there was - there were other women at that factory doing the same work but they weren't Land Army girls.

Did they have gloves?

I don't know - I just can't remember if they had gloves or not but I know we sort of – well, as I said, I don't think anybody spoke to us from the time we went there and only the Foreman told us to go over to the bench. So whether this was because we were in the Land Army or what I don't know.

Who was it that you had to go and see at Headquarters?

We went back and saw - I'm not too sure whether Miss Marshall was still there at that time or whether it was Miss Proudfoot, but I know we had to go back - we had to pluck up enough courage to go back and say we had walked out which was a bit hard to do but we knew we had to do it.

Did you run your hands under water or do anything to them after the caustic was on them?

Well no, I think we just sort left them - you know how your hands go in ordinary water - you know your hands go all white and all - well ours were all like that... you know they were sort of when we got back into Adelaide but that is the only place I was going to say that we – well, I'm pretty well sure that that was what it was - it because - I'm pretty well sure it was because we were in the Land Army we were girls that were...

So do you feel that the Land Army, that they were fairly protective to your living conditions, your working conditions?

Yes, I think so, yes. Yes, I think it actually, it's a shame now that these vineyards and different places don't do the same now with the teenagers, with our teenagers of today. But they expect the teenagers to go out and work but they don't stop to think

that they've got to get to work, they have to got to have somehow to get to work and then they have got to have somewhere to live and I think perhaps if it still worked the same way as what they did during the war years, I think they would find that there wouldn't be some many unemployed today.

Did you have to join a union?

Yes. When we worked at Renmark we had a union rep come around and I'd never ever belonged to a union before. I wasn't the only one - there were two or three of us decided we wouldn't join. We were told that if we didn't join the bosses wouldn't be taken into the sheds so we just turned around and said to them we would like to have a discussion with our boss and find out what he felt like. So that evening we went to our boss and we asked him and he said that he couldn't tell us one way or the other - he said it was up to us - we had to - but he did say exactly the same as what the union rep told us that if he had - if they liked, the union, they could refuse to take his fruit if he had non-union people working for him and so next day when the rep came around he said to some of us, "I believe you are going to Toora Vale - that is a union shed and they won't have you there." And, of course, we took notice of him – well, when we got there we found out that..

What union was it? Do you remember what union it was?

No, I don't. No, I don't remember. But I reckon in those days there would have been more or less one union - one workers union wouldn't it? It would have only been called a worker's union - wouldn't it? I'm not too sure either. Well, I was one them that got sucked in good and proper because I did join - I know it wasn't very much but at least so we only joined for three months or so and that was the only time that I ever belonged to a union.

Did you feel that they did anything for your pay or your working conditions?

No - definitely not. Because none of us applied for anything because we found out our conditions were all right.

Was there anywhere else you had to join a union?

No, no, that was the only place where they did - because I wasn't in the Land Army much after that. That was the same year as I left.

Tell us about that.

Well, I left because I got married. My husband-to-be was u p at Alice Springs and he came down and we were married and because I found out I was pregnant so I went and asked could I leave so they just discharged me from the Land Army and that was it.

Was your husband in the services?

Yes my husband was in the AIF. He spent four and half years up at Alice Springs and Darwin.

Did you hear anything about the POW Prison Camp when you were in Bern? Did you have much contact with anyone there?

No, I didn't have any at all but I knew about it because Mr and Mrs Hopkins, who I was working for when I first went in, he went up and played - he played over Christmas and for the military band was sent up there over Christmas to entertain the prisoners and that all I ever heard of...

??

No, no, no actually I wasn't that keen on dancing. I don't think I went to a dance all the time I was at Remark Hall, Bern, I went to the pictures a few times but didn't go to any of the dances, not while I was there.

What would you do instead?

Well, when I was at the hostel I was the one that usually used to darn the girl's socks. I used to darn socks. Quite often I did a few of the girls and then I used to knit and I think we used to do fancy work - I wasn't the type of person that used to go out a lot even, well, actually I suppose it was when I worked at the Doctors and on nights that they went out I had to stay home and answer the door and the phone for emergencies, anything like that and I never used to go. The only time I used to go out was the night that I had off during the day I go and make that my night - I'd go to the pictures and it never ever worried me if I went out or not, you know, of a night.

Did you see yourself as a loner or was there a group that you went out with?

No, not really. I suppose you could say that I was more of a loner even though after work two or three of us used to go up the street and used to do window shopping and buy a few little odds and ends. I never ever got in with gangs or anything like that. I never made a habit of going out and sneaking out or anything like that. Yes, I suppose you could say I was a loner. If it was coming from a big family and not going out very much when I was younger or....

Was the piano played very often at the Bern Hostel?

Yes, I think there used to be. Yes, I think they used to, it’s a big vague. Even when we were at the hostel when we got home from work by the time you queued up to have your shower or go down to the river and have a dip in the river, whichever. And then by the time you got back it would be time to cut your own lunch, because we had to cut our own lunches. There would be stuff bought and it would be put on the tables - the bread and the meat and the whatever they thought we needed would be put on the table and then you would fix up your own lunches and pack them up and get them ready for the next morning. By the time you did that I guess it nearly would have been nearly tea time and then you had to have tea. And I've got a feeling that you had to pack up your own dishes and take them out to the kitchen whether we used to go and help do the dishes. I just can't remember but the time seem to go because in those days we used to work eight hours a day.

Was there any other workers aside from Land Army on the jobs where you worked? Who were they?

Civilians - just ordinary people, local people used to work. Actually, just about everywhere I went there were other no.. yes.. even when we were up pea picking they used to employ outsiders - people who lived in the town.

Women and men?

Yes, both women and men. Yes.

What about the children? Were there any? If there were women there, did they have children with them?

No, I don't remember any children being at the jobs.

Were there any creches or anything like that?

No, no, not that I heard of. I think perhaps not ? at school used to, during the school hours.

What about aborigines? Did you ever see any up the river? Any working or..?

No, I don't remember seeing any. As far as I know there wasn't any working on the farm. When we were at Shores and lived at Alexander, I think there were 13 of us girls there. We lived in a big house and they had servicemen come from New South Wales to help out doing the fruit picking and that. There were 13 of them, I think there were 12 or something working at Shores at the same time I was there.

Did you ever have great chats around the fires at night time?

Oh yes, yes, we used to.

Do you remember what things you used to talk about?

Oh, what we used to talk about.. Oh most likely about home life and that I think. I know we used to sit around. I never did because I used to wash my hair Saturday or Sunday but I know the girls used to sit around drying their hair and they would dry it, sit in front of the fire, some of them used to do it. And then they used to cop out - it was their night out - they used to go out and spend the evening out. Nerola? had friends at Renmark, Bern rather, and we - one evening we walked out to their place at the evening at their place. Just can't think of the name of the people at the present time and that was one night. And I think that was about the only night we did got to anybody's place while I was up there.

When you were in the Land Army did you think about what you might do when the war finished? Did you have any thoughts about that before you contemplated marriage?

No I didn't actually - no. Because I knew I could go back to housework.

When you were working on the grapes and different jobs like that during those years, were you conscious all the time that there was a war on or did you feel very separate?

Oh no, no, I think – well, at least I knew there was a war on because I had dozens, that I had three brothers away and by the time the way ended I had four brothers away at the war. And my sister's husband was away at the war and my own husband was in the services and he was, as I said, up in Northern Territory and no I think we had it on the year and in and in papers and stuff all the time to let us that there was definitely a war on.

Did you personally know anyone who lost their life?

Yes, I had a cousin that was killed during the war and also another young lad from down at Plympton - he was killed during the war years. He used to be a very good friend of my brothers. I can't think of anybody else at the present time.

Did you know any women in the services at that time?

In the other services? Not actually girl-friends, but some of the girls that went school down at Plympton when I was going to school I found out that they had joined. My own cousin came over, from over Yatanabie, and she was in AWAS, she joined the AWAS

Did she ever talk about the conditions or what life was like in AWAS compared to the Land Army?

No, but I think they were better because I think their conditions would have been much better. They got everything free and right from the word go they had their uniforms and everything supplied and their accommodation was all free whereas we, more or less, we had to hand part of our money back for accommodation. We paid our own fares when we travelled which they didn't. They got free passes to go - being in the uniform they got free passes to go wherever when they had to leave they went home. When we changed our jobs we had to paid our own fare but I think by the time I think I went up to Renmark, the last time I think we got our fares paid one way.

How did you regard the Land Army when you joined? Did you see it as a fourth service at the time or a civilian force?

No, actually I didn't. I thought it was very much similar to the Army and the Air Force because I think I had looked on it as opinion - just as an Ammunition Factory work and sort of like that. I don't think we would have been supplied with uniforms - once we were given uniforms - I think we all had the same - they we would have been and then when the war ended I know that all the Land Army girls were asked to march with their – well, here in South Australia - with all the service people that marched - which they called the Peace March after the war ended.

Did you go in that?

Yes, I did. Yes.

How did you feel participating in that?

Quite proud really. Met some the girls I hadn't seen from the time I had been married and some that I had worked with when I first started off. As I said, some of them that I worked with, the one I worked with up at Waikerie when I first started and I worked with her again down at Weston's, well after that I never saw her. Most likely she would have been at the ANZAC - and she would have most likely been at that Victory March. I know there was quite a lot of the girls that I had been with at different times I had seen down there and I had seen them before.

How did you feel when you didn't benefits like the other services? Were you thinking about it at the time?

No, actually what happened, because I think I have been very lucky, have been one of ones that, as I said, I hardly ever get ill or anything. I do suffer with rheumatism which I think now perhaps if, perhaps if with flu. You see my husband has been an invalid pensioner for 17, nearly 18 years now, and I've been getting that in any case but I think that perhaps for the girls who did work at ? and things like that and they did suffer from anything - I think they should have been entitled. That's my opinion because I know the AWAS Girls and the WRANS - they do if they have rheumatism and they are under doctors. They get benefits - but then again there is a lot of servicemen that stopped getting it. My husband never ever got anything because he was up at Alice Springs and Darwin. They used to draw transport through to Darwin but they weren't stationed in Darwin or near in the - they had to be within that area of Darwin at that time that bombs were dropped. Well, they weren't there when the bombs were dropped so therefore they didn't get any benefits or anything through ?

Is he entitled to anything?

No, he is not entitled to any - he is not classed as a returned serviceman because he didn't leave Australia. He was in the AIF - he joined the AIF - for no reason of his own. He wasn't asked to leave Australia - he got put in Alice Springs through to Darwin - driving trucks and that and then when he got out of the services there was nothing - nothing whatsoever he was entitled to. I don't know whether if there is many people that realise it or not, whether they think all service people get things or not I don't know.

How do feel about marching on ANZAC day?

Well, I think its quite good actually - I think its really - I usually like to go down to it because we do meet one another - even though we always do have reunions every year. We hold a reunion every year. We have been now for the last 12 or 13 years now since they first started getting together. Its a shame actually we let it go for so long before we did. But I suppose we were all too busy rearing our own families and having our own lives to live that we just didn't.

Do you have contact with any Land Army girls who aren't in the Association?

Yes, Nell doesn't belong to it. As I said, she did belong to it but she pulled out. No, as soon as I found out Dulcie up here was in the Land Army I contacted her. Well, she joined when she found out that we had the ? I suppose you would call it that - she joined. But I don't know any of the others.

Do you ever see any former employers?

No - actually I've never every seen any of them. Even though I still don't know whether the Smith family is living up here at Nuriootpa. I did have a piece put in to the local paper about our reunion we had here last year hoping that some of the - perhaps people around that buy the local paper might have seen it and might have contacted me but none of them did.

Could we go back to when you were getting out of the Land Army? Where did you live then after you left the Land Army?

When I left the Land Army I lived at home with my mother and father down at Plympton while Alf was away until after the war ended.

So were you separated long?

He went away and then he came home. Yes, it would have been nine months afterwards because he was home when the first child was born. Our first one was born and then he went away again and Trevor was nearly 12 months old then, about 11 months old when he was discharged from the services.

Was that a difficult time for you?

Yes, it was actually because Trevor was born with a hole in the heart and one of the bowels wasn't.. he was always a very sick baby and I suppose it was lucky in one way because I was home with my people. Perhaps if I had been on my own I think it would have been very hard. I would have been worse, put it that way, but I think perhaps being living at home was easier than it would have been. And then when he got out of the services we found it very hard and he found it hard to get work. Work was very, very hard and when they found out he came from inter-state they were a bit wary of him. Housing was very, very short but, as I said, being a big family there was still one brother to come home, another one was married, three of them were still single out of the four, and then we had to find accommodation somewhere else so we got rooms down at Plympton and Alf found it very hard to get work and then when he did find work he found it very hard to settle in after being in the services. He chopped and changed his jobs and then he got ill - he had to have his appendix out and I was six weeks off having the second baby. And actually within that six weeks the four of us were in hospital - because he had his appendix out and just after he had his appendix out our eldest son, Trevor, went into the Children's Hospital. I went in then to have the next baby so within that six weeks. So, of course, with him not being at his work for 12 months he had no leave so it just meant he lost pay so we – we really scratched - found it really, really hard but we managed - we scraped.

Did you think whether it was fair or not after you had been in the forces?

Yes, we did because we went to the RSL and asked for help - especially when Alf had his appendix operation and they said no - he wasn't a RSL man so they couldn't help. And we just didn't know where to turn or anything else. As luck happened we - seeing he was off for about six weeks, we did get unemployed - what they called unemployment. We were given pieces of paper that we could take to a grocer with a certain amount of money marked on it - I think it might have been around $5 worth of groceries we could pick up from the grocer. We could go and pick up meat - a certain amount of meat but the butcher we went to told us that the only meat we could have was corn beef - you can just imagine what we were trying to feed a two-year-old on corn beef. Apparently there must have been another one that we could get milk with but there was no money - we had no money.

Did people treat you differently when you took the coupons in?

Some did, it just all depends. I think I took the grocer and the green grocer's seemed to be quite all right because they had seen me grow up and they knew - they more or less knew me. But with the butcher, apparently he was somebody new and I think he just sort of gave us the cheapest meat that he passed onto to you. When he was allowed to go back to work he got another job things went pretty well - for a little bit longer and then I got pregnant again and I spent time in the hospital then and I kept getting pains and they thought it was appendix so I ended up in hospital being pregnant and they weren't game enough to operate so they treated me. Then I think was in that pregnancy Alf had to have his tonsils out so he missed work again. Then I had that baby and when it was six and half weeks old we lost that one and so we just felt it was as if everything and every way. We moved - the housing was short, still short at that time. Then Alf had a good job down at the Airport. It was when the airport first started and the houses we were in really went with the job he had before which was at a dairy. And, of course, as soon as he left the dairy because he wasn't meant to drive - he left the dairy - the owner put us - told us we had to get out because it went with the job - the house went with the job. It wasn't a house, actually, it was stables that we had done up and made look like a house. Actually it was two families - we weren't the only ones. There were other people the same as this other family - he was a jockey and he worked for this chappy who was renting these stables and he was doing the horses and him and his wife took one part of the stables and did them up and we took the other part and we did them up. We had sold our furniture that we could afford and we bought an old bomb, a real old bus, and we decided it was going to be our place. So we set off with the two children - we got as far as Rhynie and one of the big ends in the car went - the old bomb went on us. As it happened, a bloke we knew lived at Rhynie so we called in and saw Earl. We borrowed a caravan which we paid a shilling a week for the caravan ‘cause it leaked. Our eldest son, being a hard case got pneumonia - he went back into the Griften? Hospital. My husband couldn't get work and no way could he get work - I went and I ended up getting a job at the hotel, and found out through doing housework and that before I was in the Land Army, I went back to making beds, cooking and things like that - at least we had a little bit of money coming in and after about six weeks, living in this old leaky caravan we found out that we could get a house at Giles Corner. So we shifted to Giles Corner. We had no furniture and nothing - there was an old spring off a bed down in the cellar so we dragged that up and we made - we happened to have our mattress and so we used kerosene cases - you know the cases where two tins of kerosene used to fit in - we used those as tables to start off with until my husband got

work which he got. We used to go out log chopping, making posts for this chappy that owned the property and we got a bit of money in that way and then we finally..

Did you do that too?

Yes I used to go out with him. We used to set traps for the chappy that owned the house, his cottage. He gave us cow, there was a cow in the paddock. It was fairly wild - if we could catch him, we could have the milk. So where there is a will there is a way so anyhow we ended up by having free milk for the children, the two children. We went out and did trapping. Bought a little bit of meat, on days we couldn't catch rabbits, and used to buy vegetables, bread and stuff like that -whatever we needed.

So it was easier in the country to make ends meet?

Oh yes, and we found that country people were friendlier. They did sort of care for one another whereas in town your next-door-neighbour never worried whether you had a piece of bread or what. Yes, out in the country people are more friendlier.

Did you find life just as hard after the war as before the war?

Well, actually before the war I was 17, when the war broke out, about 17, but I always had work. I went straight into housework and there was always plenty of housework to be done.

You didn't have any dependants either?

No, no dependants and then of course my husband came from Victoria, he was a Victorian and he came over here in the services and, of course, then when he got his discharge he got it from here.

Where did you meet him?

At the Army Camp of all places, he was on duty at the Army Camp one Sunday afternoon down at Plympton. There was a camp down at Plympton and he was down there and I'd come home from work. My mum was going out - she told me I had to look after my younger brothers and sisters so I told her I didn't think it was fair that I had stay home and look after them after working all the week. This is before I went to the Land Army and so I said to them, “Well, come on. Seeing I have to look after you lets go for a walk.” One says, who was three or four years younger than what I was, she was working in the Post Office delivering telegrams, and she said, “The Army Camp is open for inspection - what about coming over?” We walked, which was about mile and half over to the Army Camp. When we got there we stood outside - too frightened to go in and ask whether we could go in and after a while one of the men turned around and said, "What are you hanging around for?" We were wondering if we could go in and they told us we weren't allowed in. We stood at the gate talking to him and Alf happened to be one of the men that we were talking to. They were Victorians and I suppose they thought, bit lonely here, so Alf asked me if I would go out with him. So I went out with him and about three days afterwards they went up to Alice Springs so we kept in touch with one another and wrote to one another. While he was up there we got engaged and when he came we married. From

then on its been a battle ever since! I've got two other children, I've got four children now and four grandchildren. Everything has turned out real good really. I think you take it in your stride, you learn to take the ups with the downs.

> You know we are making a film - I would be interested to know what you like to communicate with people who have not heard about the Land Army, what you would like to say to them about what the Land Army was?

I think the Land Army was formed for somebody to take over where the men had to leave off and go and fight for this country. It meant that it was the women, the younger women of Australia, that had to do work. That would be the best way I could word it.

> If you were to describe how they worked or - what sort of images would you associate with the Land Army? What did the Land Army mean to you?

I think it broadened my outlook on life and I went to places that I may not have seen. As I said, we never went very far when we were younger, being a big family. I think it broadened my outlook on life, gave me more of a opportunity to find out how other people lived and just what sort of different types of work there is to be done. Other than that, I don't know exactly what else.

> I'm not sure if you mentioned - when you first came to the city after living in the country, what was your father doing?

For years Dad didn't get a job because it was more or less a depression time - work was very scarce then and he was just on social services, unemployment I think.

> Assistance?

Yes, it was something anyhow. In those days we didn't get money. We had a tickets if you wanted to go to the grocer, apparently each fortnight I think they used to be issued out with things. And we lived in Enfield for a start off and in my grandfather's house - that was my Mum's Dad's house at Dural. He passed away and, of course, the house was sold and we lived in the house while it was sold. We came over from the West Coast and lived in it until it was sold. With Mum's share of the money she bought the house we lived in down at Plympton.

> Why did they move across?

Dad went bankrupt the season that they had the depression – I know he was going through court for a long time after.

> It must have been difficult with 11 children.

At that time there were ten of us and Mum had my brother after we shifted to Adelaide.

> Were any of your elder brothers and sisters able to get any work at that time?

No - well at that time I think one sister would have been the only, the older sister would have been the only one that wouldn't been going to school. The others were still going to school and two elder brothers got a job selling papers on the street corner and this - I don't think I will ever forget this - they were the first two paper boys to be issued with a uniform. Because I remember they had their photos in the papers - in their new uniform and they used to stand on the corner of ? Road, now Regency Road and the Main North Road and they used to sell papers after school of a night to help bring a bit of money in. My sister, I think, would have been working at that time and she did housework, the same as what I did. The others would have still being going to school. I went to school virtually until 1938, I think. That was the year I left school.

> To ask again - what did you girls talk about when you sat around the fire? Did you ever talk about birth control or things like that?

No, we would not have. No, those things were never ever discussed. Actually I heard the other day a grandmother told her grand-daughter - she is only six and she said she knows more at the age of six than what she knew when she was first married and I would agree with that too. That was something that was never ever, you never ever discussed things like that amongst - not even with your friends - even your sisters. I don't think my sister and I ever discussed anything like that together. It was something that was never ever discussed. At least not in our household. Whether there was in others - I don't ever remember the girls bringing up subjects like that.

> Is there any other stories that you can remember about the Land Army? Or anything else you would like to talk about?

I know there was night when Eunice and I went out to do the traps and whether it was through being a farm - Eunice came from over on the Peninsula - but my Dad always taught us if we ever went out and done a trap it didn't matter how dark it was - you always had a torch and always shine a torch into the trap. Down into the burrow before and I remember this one night Eunice didn't and there was a goanna in the trap - we both nearly died of heart failure when we realised. Could have been a snake or anything, but it happened to be a goanna that time.

> Did you kill it?

No, I think we let go - not too sure. Apparently there were bones broken and we most probably did kill it rather than let it run around.

> Did you go fishing?

Not when we were up there, but we went when I was up with Mrs Smith at Nuriootpa .. he went up the river one long weekend, it must in January, the long weekend we have in January. He gave us a choice if we wanted to go with them fishing or if we went back home. Nellie, Stella and I were together there and we decided we would go up with them fishing and slept out on the river banks with them and went fishing. In those days they used to put nets across the river, they used to fish that way. You didn't sit on a bank, not with a fishing line. We had a beaut weekend that weekend with them. Real nice. Then another night we went fishing out at along one of the beaches - I can't work out what beach they took us to - but we worked all day. We set

off and I remember going across the paddocks – we had to get out and open up the gates, shut gates, open up gates, shut gates and we finally ended up getting to the beach and they had nets and we had to drag this nets out because the men folk were drinking very heavily and we were getting very, very tired and every time we put the nets out they would get a nice lot of fish and, of course, the nets had to keep going out I think we ended up getting home about 2am the next morning after being out fishing all night. We used to have fun actually - it wasn't all work we used to - I was very lucky, I stopped with bosses that were very good. Especially when we stayed with them, lived in the same house with them.

Got any regrets being in the Land Army?

No, none whatsoever. No, none at all. One night when I was at Roburn, we got called back to the office, head office. None of us could work out why and when we walked in that a lot of the girls wasn't wearing full uniforms and, of course , I had had a plaid skirt on, my khaki top, and a hat that I should have worn, I had shoes which shouldn't have been wearing and, of course, we were told that when we wore uniforms we had to wear full uniforms or no uniforms at all. So we soon found out why we were all called back. The funniest part about it was the girls, when we said we knew that we would get into trouble for not being in uniform, not knowing that this is what we were being called up for, so as we were going in the girls were saying, "Come, you had better get to the back, you are not in full uniforms." Those in full uniforms all went to the front and us others stayed at the back - but they knew who was in uniforms, not because our bosses used to communicate with them - and I always used to tell them things that went on. We girls should have realised that.