

Australian War Memorial

Sound Collection

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

ACCESSION NUMBER: S02734

TITLE: ***AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S LAND ARMY (AWLA), 1942-1945***

INTERVIEWEE: Nell Molloy

INTERVIEWER: Sue Maslin

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SUMMARY:

I was wanting if I could start off by asking you a little bit about your life before the war, were bout's you grew up?

All my life in Ipswich expect that I, different jobs I had. Most of my life I spent in Ipswich I was the youngest of a big family.

Can you tell me what your father did?

My father was a woodman and at first I remember he was a woodman then later in years he had a grocery shop my father, that would have been in the 1930's, but he was a great sportsman, my brothers were all athletes too.

And your mother what work did she do?

Yeah, mum was home, she had a big family and she loved it, and she use to do all the sewing by mostly, a lot of it by hand in early days but she didn't do anything after she was sixty years old though, of course we all helped, she died when she was ninety my mother she was a wonderful person. We use to have a sports field and one paddock, they use to have a run there and do everything, power walking and hurling. The Irish people use to come out sometimes and play hurling in the one paddock but it was mostly power walking and running, swimming and tennis, a lot of tennis, we had a tennis court.

Were you very sporty yourself?

Yes I use to play a lot of tennis, I use to swim, I had swimming trophies I don't know where they are now and I had a

trophy for rifle shooting, but we walked a lot in those days, I use to love walking.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

I had five brothers and seven sisters I think. They were all athletes.

Where were you in relation to your brother and sisters? Were you the eldest?

Well,I was the youngest of fourteen.

And what was that like being the youngest of a family?

Oh I had to stick up for myself, always. They said I was spoilt, I don't know I wouldn't say that but we had a lot of fun in those days the olden days. On Saturday afternoons was a great time we would all sit around the kitchen table and my mother would have a big boiler full of apple dumplings we'd boil in the old….

There was a great step dancer and he use to play in the concert too, and I had one of my sisters was a dancing teacher and we had a big hung, father build a extra dining room from the house and in the old days they use to have, they decorate with the gum branches all up the post and father would sprinkle this stuff on the floor and my sister would dance all the old dances those days, father use to play the Contadina for the dances. And another time we had a big big night I think It was for the breaking up, my sister was a music teacher too she taught the piano, and I think they asked fifty six people were to come and

they were in gate crashes and I remember my mother went out and whipped the cow at midnight after they had one big spread I think the people were still there so they went out and whipped the cows at midnight and had another big supper. But that was just one of the memories.

Can you tell me where you went to school?

Yes I went to Newtown state school at first and then I went to the S? state school went from Newtown to S?, a big new school. Was on my father's property during the war. 1914 my father sold that with his brother, my uncle. They sold it, it was a big allotment up there, he use to grow buttercups and they sold it for two thousand pounds and they were going to go overseas but the war broke out, in 1914 it was. But that was those days.

How old were you when the first war broke out?

I suppose, I'm eighty one now, you work it out.

In your teens?

Oh about fourteen I suppose. I remember I was six when I saw Halley's Comet.

Eleven, Twelve?

Probably, I was six when I saw Halley's Comet. We were all standing on the front veranda, beautiful it was. I remember now.

Can you remember much from your years during the First World War? What that meant to your family?

No not much only that my sister, my eldest sister, her name was Dolly and all the soldiers were marching down Brisbane Road and I think they were going to Brisbane to camp, a lot of them. We all went up to the fire ways it's not far from our home, and the soldiers sang "Goodbye Dolly" that song "Goodbye Dolly we must leave" I remember that really well. That was the end of that.

Where did you go to school?

I went to St Mary's School a Catholic School in Ipswich, till I was seventeen.

Were you living at home at that stage?

Oh yeah yeah. Mum, she didn't want me to leave home till I was ready to work. I tried different jobs. I took on music teaching then, and I had a little bit of that, I had different things but before the Second World War I took up Nursing, mental, I was nursing for thirteen years, that's how I joined the Land Army and I got a bit tired of it. I had my Mental Certificate.

I was wondering why did you decide to begin Mental Nursing, what was your interest there?

No interest really. I just wanted to get out and leave home and get out and do something. My other sister, she was older than me, we said we will go out and do something, mum didn't want either of us to go because they were all working , we had such a wonderful time in the olden days, wonderful family. We decided to go and start nursing and we stayed there. I did for

thirteen years, but my other sister didn't stay there for very long she got married. But that was an experience.

Did you consider doing other types of work at that time?

No. I think I have tried everything you would be her for two months if I told you all my experiences.

No, I was wondering when you first decided to leave home whether there were other things you were thinking of… Only tripping around that's all. I went to Noumea for a holiday on my own, I met lovely people on that trip, and then down to Sydney we went to Sydney for a holiday my other sister and me but we use to have lots of good times and anything that would pop up I would have a go at that you know? All the different things.

When did you first hear about the Land Army?

When the war broke out you know, I thought it would be nice to do something for your country and an open like in the Land Army it would be wonderful, fresh air, sunshine, that's how I started of.

Can you remember the day you joined up?

No not much, only that I was going to Brisbane in the train sewing the things on my uniform, the little badges on the train, sewing the badges on the train on my uniform. I can't remember much about it really, only that it was very hard work for the girls.

Did you know anybody else that had joined the Land Army?

A couple. We had some wonderful people, wonderful friends in it. The first night we went up to Stanthorpe to pick apples. It was in January, that's usually a heat wave in those days at that time and we nearly died with the cold. We slept on palliasses they call them, corn stuck with corn, and it was very, very cold that night. It was in January, should have been very hot. We used to pick beans and peas and big potatoes. I put the fork in all the potatoes that I dug and hid them again. We used to work for the different farmers and the truck would come at the end of our day, the truck would be that busy he'd hardly pull up for us. We used to run and jump on it while it was going, you know, worked that hard, worked very hard picking apples, beans, tomatoes.

What did you consider was the hardest work you did there?

That was pretty hard. I remember it one time I had to, they planted beans, then I had a big kerosene tin of blood and bone, that didn't smell too good and I had… but there was a horse and plough behind me, I had to hurry with that. I thought that was very hard work. There was always laughter, they were a wonderful crowd, and then, they sent me to Theodore to open this camp but the agriculture men, I can't speak highly enough about those they were wonderful help, It turned out I had to do the cooking up there, that was after I got this letter saying I was raised from the ranks and so I go the job as a cook, I didn't know much about cooking. I remember one of the men the agriculture men brought me suckling pigs to cook, I nearly

died, I didn't know anything about them, I didn't know how to cook them to tell the truth, and about fifteen tarts, I made fifteen tarts but that was at Theodore. The girls picked cotton in those times it was very very cold, they had to leave at about 6 in the morning and came home all frozen cold, some of them where hysterical with the cold I had to get the ambulance man in, it was very hard work for them, then they sent me down to open this camp for the permanent camp, then they sent me down to Hawkesbury College to study Account Management, it was a good experience, I really liked it, we had a wonderful time on the weekend, we go into Sydney and that was Mrs Dean she was with them, and I think there was another one called Doc Law. Have you heard of her? Doc Law? She was one of the Matrons that went down, the three of us went down and we had a wonderful time on weekends but one farmer called out an SOS to go and pick his beans before the frost got to them. I don't think Ill tell you a lie I picked thirteen bags of beans that day and one of the girls beat me that day, she picked fourteen or fifteen bags of beans, and then we did a march, we had to, we didn't learn anything about, we had to march somewhere, I remember our feet were swollen. At one place I think it was Keybiral or Homehill we were, they got water from the windmill, their windmill went out of order, I climbed up there thinking I knew I wouldn't be able to do anything with it, I got up there and I didn't know what to do with it, when the girls came home after working hard they had to walk half a mile for a jug of water to bath. They were hard times. Then there was another time I had no wood to light the old boiler, then half a mile away I heard men's voices and I cooeed them to come up an chop the wood for me, they chopped one big log of wood for us. I don't think the girls would have had any tea that night if I didn't do that. There are lots of experiences like that.

Can we go back for a moment to your first camp, where you first went, and when you first were told that your status would be raised to a Field Officer, how were you informed about this?

The letter. You read the letter.

Can you just tell me again who you received the letter from?

She was The Deputy Superintendent I think, Mrs Atkinson. I didn't want that job because I prefer the open air life, but then I had to do what they told me, learn to cook.

Had you ever done any cooking?

No, I came from a big family, I'm sorry that I wasn't learnt, taught to cook. I was good at scrubbing floors I loved that sort of thing, but I never had to cook or wash before, but I soon learnt.

Did you tell Mrs Atkinson at the time about your reservations or did you just go…

I had to do what I was told. I don't think I told her I didn't want to do it, I just went ahead, I knew I had to do it, there was no use complaining I just stuck to it.

Whereabouts did you go from your first camp as being a Field Officer?

I had to go up and open a camp at Theodore. Think I told you that didn't I? I wasn't in charge of the camp there, there was

another matron there, I didn't know anything about cooking at all, I had to do my best there.

Can you tell me what it was like when you were first starting off?

Terrible. I don't know I don't remember much about it. The girls were good. Hundred girls came from Batlow, I think, Sydney to pick the cotton, they were all good sports, we had a lot of fun. I didn't miss out on my fun with them, although I was in the kitchen and I had to stick to the rules, we had a lot of fun.

How much contact did you have with the Land girls?

At night, mostly at night time, they were pretty strict in those days, pretty strict in the way that I didn't have the fun I use to have. I remember in one time, I think it was in Theodore we walked about five miles to have a swim one Sunday afternoon. It was a beautiful spot, it was a creek it had the weeping willows and had a little canoe in there we got onto the canoe, that was beautiful that little flutter. The rest was all very hard work.

How much contact did you have with the Matron? How did you get on with the Matron at the time?

I got on all right, but she was fairly strict. No but it was just hard work, you know. By the time you washed up and tried to do the cooking, I didn't have to do it for long, another girl came along, she was a beautiful cook, so that's when they sent me to Theodore, and they asked me, sent me down to Hawkesbury College and I said I don't want to go to Hawkesbury

College because you will expect too much from me when I come back, Mrs Pender, she was a lovely person, anyway, I had to go down and there were three of us from here, we learnt about account management, mostly about the food, cleanliness of course. So they did send me down to Victoria Point Camp.

> Can we just go back to your time at Hawkesbury, the Camp Management course that you did there, how long were you there for?

I really forget. I think it might have been a couple of weeks I think. I can't tell you.

> Can you remember the type of activities and instruction that you got?

Only I remember the cook was there from Government House. She, we had to write our menus and things like that and she was a marvellous cook but she was called away so we didn't have her anymore. That was only after a few days. I don't remember much about the rest of it, only on weekend, we had the weekends off, I think we must have been there about a fortnight.

> How did you feel about taking on the responsibility of being a Field Officer?

I didn't like it. I wanted to be outside really. I always loved hard work but, no I just had to do it that was all to it. I remember one time the Governor visited in those days Sir Lesley Wilson came down and Mrs Pender, she was Superintendent, she rang me and said "When the Governor comes, Ill be in his car, you salute me". I said "we are not taught to salute, I couldn't do that, don't ask me to salute, I can't" she said "you salute

me when I get out of the car you salute me". It was unheard of, he worked hard that was all that matters, it was funny, I had to have a Land girl there open the door for Sir Lesley Wilson, he got out, soon as he got out she was getting out too and he was going to shake hands with me, there I was in mid air. Yes that's what I did. But he was very good, they just went through the buildings and looked around, it was very primitive really until Dr Stuckleston visited us, and she told home office that we should have had cement paths, hot and cold showers and then I got word to go to the army camp about two or three hundred yards away from us, a big army camp. I had to go there on my own to the Adjutant and ask him to send the boys to build the paths and things and that's what I did. She was marvellous, Dr Stuckleston.

When you were at your first camp and was this at Theodore?

No that was Thalimbam

Thalimbam? And you just been promoted to the status of Field Officer how did your hours change to when you were working as a Land girl?

Not much different because the girls use to have to get up early and by the time they got their showers you know? And got their lunches ready, we use to prepare their lunches those days, they didn't have that much, cut their lunches and have everything ready for them, we use to get up about the same time

And what about in the evening?

Yes, they get home about five O'clock and have their showers, I nearly forget about their tea in those days, but I always try and keep a good table, down in Victoria Point I got a letter once saying why did I have apples and oranges on the same menu. They work very hard.

When you were at the camp at Thalimbam was one of your responsibilities the discipline of the girls?

Oh yes, yes I had to see that everything was in order, watch them, they were mainly a good lot. But I had a wonderful lot in the permanent camp in Victoria Point, they were wonderful girls really.

Did you ever have problems in Thalimbam?

No. I wasn't really in charge of Thalimbam. No I don't remember having any problems.

What about later at the camp at Victoria Point?

No. They were wonderful crowd, they were lovely girls, very good, they were very young too.

Did you feel it was a big responsibility having the number of girls?

Yes I thought it was at the time. I had some wonderful girls in that camp.

What contact would you have with the Land girls?

Oh, all the time we were you know, they were a happy lot. They would come from work and help with the veggies, do the vegetables, peel the pumpkin and things like that they use to hate doing, peel the pumpkin. I had a cook there too, two different cooks they were well fed in my camp, I use to give them good meals.

Would you do things together in your time off?

Oh yes. We put on that concert in Victoria Point and we had a lot of fun there together.

Can you tell me about the concert?

Yes, expect the different things were on I forget about them really. The girls were really talented, they sang and we had another girl there she was a wonderful pianist; Mavis was her name, Mavis Ford. They all did their own thing you know? They all did their own thing. We all put on a camp fire thing, I had the piano recording at that time and we use to play all the old songs, they sit around and make a camp fire business out of it, and then we put on a big Ball at Cleveland, that's how we got the piano for the camp. I remember I wrapped a pair of blankets up, I made sixty pounds for the kitchen dory for the blankets. They were good years. The best news was when the war was over. I think we all went mad.

Can you tell me about the day when you heard the war was over?

Oh yes yes. I think everyone left the camp when the war was over. They had a big get together in Brisbane in Queen Street, everybody was out.

And what did you do on the day that you heard the war was over?

Well I just went up to Brisbane with everyone else, I didn't even know where the girls went, I think they all went mad. So I didn't stop anyone from going, I let them go ahead. I hardly remember really. But the agricultural people men where marvellous as always they helped us end up the camp sort of thing, the sheds and things like that.

Whereabouts did you have your contact with the agriculture men?

At Victoria Point.

When you first went to set up the camp there?

Yes down there.

And can you tell me what it involved setting up a camp at Victoria Point?

No it was just a big dormitory down there, but the men use to help me with many things like, where the girls were working and all about everything, what they were doing, but the one part was just the cooking that was my main worry that they were well fed.

Was there already a camp at Victoria Point?

No no, we opened up a great big dormitory and they sent the Acom down from Government House to see if it was clean enough for the Duke and Duchess of Kent to visit.

Duke and Duchess of Gloucester?

Gloucester yes. It was raining and they caught me with bare feet mopping the dining room but everything went well, I was very keen that it should be clean, a clean camp.

And how many girls were at the Victoria Point camp?

Thirty three, thirty three girls.

Did it take a great deal of work actually setting up the dormitory?

Oh yeah to keep it clean it did, of course they made there own bed and tried to keep tidy I had to see that everything was tidy and everything was well kept. The lights were out by nine o'clock at night, whether they sneaked out again I wouldn't know I was too tired I was also too tired. I never did anything dirty to them.

And how much contact would you have with administration?

They came down one day and said that I was wanted back at the nursing, the hospital and they want you back, his name was Gibson was in the Man power he said "I told them you were doing too good a job her that you couldn't go there" so I was pleased with that because I didn't want to go back to nursing I had enough of it.

Would you ever get direct dips from the State Superintendent directing you to do things for the girls or organising?

Oh yes yes always by phone, but we didn't have to do that much only see that they well fed and did their work. There was nothing military about it at all. But they had a lot of fun, at their time off. I remember one time up at Keybar all the girls went to Home Hill on the weekend, I didn't want to go out and I was sorry I didn't go because I was there on my own with fifteen tents, and about half a mile away and I heard this whistle something like someone is riding a bike and then is sort of stopped and I said to myself "that's funny they might be on their way here what will I do?" I got dressed and put a hammer under my pillow, I thought he was on his way up to the camp, I was on my own with fifteen tents at night a whole weekend, I'm sorry I ran that risk. Cause you could not do that now could you? But that was fright I did get.

When were you up there in Keybar? Where you there as a Field Officer?

Yes. Keybar I had a girl, fifteen girls there we worked for I think he was Italian. The girls use to go off on there different billets and I remember some girl use to smoke, I never smoked in those days, I thought I don't want to be too straight laced I got a packet of cigarettes and I use to see my brother in law make his own cigarettes with the wax matches you know? To make a good to hold, they'd light the match and put the wax at the end of the cigarette to keep it together or something, I thought I'd let them see that I am not that straight laced so I'd be a bit of a sport and have a smoke with

them, and I got the safety matches and I did what he did with the wax matches, they laughed at me, Miss Molloy we can see you couldn't smoke before, I didn't know what do with the matches I just did it with the safety matches you know? After they went to work I thought to myself, why don't I just light a smoke have the drawback like they do. I got onto a stretcher and I layed down I though I'd die, oh I never forget that, I would never have cigarettes after that, oh no. They were a good lot of girls they had a lot of fun between them.

> Was the keeper camp already set up before you went there?

I think it was yes. I think it was. I think It was coming from Theodore I forget. I forget coming to or from Theodore.

> Were there any special difficulties related to a camp or administrating a camp of tense?

No. They didn't feed us too good I remember, there were fifteen girls and we were allowed that much tomato sauce on the table, about a egg cup of tomato sauce, I don't know that we didn't get good meals there I don't remember, but at my camp they did get good meals at Victoria Point.

> Had there been any other Land girls that had been elevated or raised to the status of a Field Officer before you?

I don't remember. I don't remember I didn't meet any of them. I know that Mrs Dean she was a nice person, I just remember she had a camp somewhere that's all and that she came to Sydney with us you know?

So to your knowledge you were the first Land girl to…

That's all she said. That's all I know that's on that thing isn't it?

I wanted to ask you if you could remember back to the official visit when the Duchess of Gloucester arrived can you tell me about that day and leading up to that day?

The only thing is that it rained and everybody was disappointed, you couldn't show off the town or anything because of the rain. But we had too, all the girls were all lined up in the big dormitory and she came along and I had my orders what to say. Mrs Pender was right behind me, she was very good, I didn't go out of step, and the Duchess she was beautiful, she walked though all the girls walked through and said she'd like to talk to each one individually. Mrs Pender picked out a few girls that worked out extra hard like Tiger Hunter, and when we came up to Red Cross women, they were very good they helped with all the visitors with afternoon their teas and that, the Duchess came upstairs to have tea and that, and she said "and where are all the girls going to sit?" she was wonderful I thought to say that, they were suppose to stay an hour and they stayed two hours but it was raining all the time I couldn't get many photos. They left we gave them big cheers and away they went.

And did you get special orders from the State Superintendent or Administration before about how…

Oh yes. How to behave and when to speak when spoken to and shake hands they shook hands, things like that. I don't think it was necessary because the Duchess was like our own she was lovely. They had a party with them, I forget the others that where there. She was really wonderful.

You say here on the comments on this biographical sheet that you had to go marching on blistered feet. Where abouts was that?

Sundown in Sydney. Someone took us for a march and I had blisters I know I couldn't complain about them I had to keep on fighting I think it was a days work too. I think it was at Hawkesbury College I don't know were he came from I just remember doing the march with him somewhere.

And who would have been marching?

I can't even remember the number.

Would these have all been the different ones doing…….

I think they were all just the Matrons. There were three from Queensland and there were other girls, did you meet Pitting?

Doris Pitting?

Doris Pitting. I met her down at Hawkesbury College she would be able to tell you. I don't remember.

So were there Matrons training from quite a few different states?

Yes I think so. There were different ones from Sydney there. There was Mrs Dean and Moore and myself from Queensland.

And who was training you?

I don't remember. I don't remember. All I remember was the cook from Government House she came in and then had to leave. No I don't remember who was in charge of us.

You also say here at Keybar and Homehill there was no water and you had to climb up the wind mill. Can you tell me about that story?

I knew there was no water and we used it from the wind mill and I thought we must make some effort to make it, see what I can do. I couldn't do anything, I climbed up the top and I didn't know what to do when I got there so I came down again and the girls had to walk half a mile to get a jug of water for themselves for their bath. So they had it pretty rough there.

Was there a drought at the time?

I don't think so. I forget.

Was there a problem normally with water?

No, no. It's just the windmill went out, off you know? I don't even remember getting it fixed up, they must of got it fixed. That was the same crowd that made the togs for me. Just about fifteen girls there.

Can you tell me about the time you went swimming and what the girls had done?

I didn’t have any togs. I didn’t think I’d be going swimming. I think I must of have the first pair of bikini in Queensland in those days and they just put two, three little diamond shape pieces that’s all I wore. We went for a swim then. We had a lovely swim. We had some lovely swims. We did appreciate them. We had a lot of fun. I think that was at Keybar when I had about twelve fifteen girls there was nothing else to do. They would go to Homehill on the weekends.

Did you have very much time to yourself?

It was mostly work. We didn’t have too much time to ourselves, except for a Sunday afternoon or at night, they would have a bit of music or a sing song at night but apart from that we didn’t have much time for ourselves. The girls use to wash and iron there own uniforms and things like that so that all took time.

Do any particular girls stand out as real personalities?

Yes Alison Benett. The girl I asked to come today and she couldn’t come. She lives in Sunnybean. She was a lovely person. She was a wonderful gardener. She had a lovely garden in my camp and of course Mavis, Mavis Cody, she was very good with the girls, she had a sister too. A perfect camp, they were all very good girls. I think we got on pretty well together.

Can you tell me about the time when Dr Summerskill came and visited you at Victoria Point?

Yes, she brought a lot of people in the plane, the crew, I only thought she'd be coming really. It was Lord L? and another man. The Red Cross women were wonderful. They arranged afternoon tea and we had it all set up in the big dining room and we ran out of cups and one of men I think it was Lord L? or one of them went down and got a big enamel cup. They were a very friendly lot. They were good company. I enjoyed them. Again the cultural men were very good to us down there too.

How would you agricultural men help you?

Well with the tents and anything that would go on we would ask them. I depended on them for a lot. They use to come around and check. The farmers use to check see if the girls were doing all right.

What sort of things might go wrong at the camp?

I don't know. I forget. They might have not been in the right jobs, suitable jobs, things like that, but I think they were pretty well all right I think. Just I remember they worked hard. We all worked hard.

When you say the agricultural men, would they have been working for the Government?

Yes, I suppose so. The Agricultural Department. I've even rang them up since I have been here and asked them if there was something wrong with my paw paws. I've rang them up and asked them and they sent me a leaflet.

Can I ask you when you left the Land Army were you involved in the closing down of operations with the Land Army?

No it wasn't much no. The agriculture men had all the building things I don't know if that all belonged to them or not. I stayed on and cleaned up everything and got my brother in law down and my sister and their kids. They had a wonderful little bits holiday in the dormitory that was wonderful. The men had their little flutter after the war and the kids had, there must have been, my brother's kids and my sister's children, they were about six and seven. They had a wonderful time down there after that. My brother in law was very good he did the cleaning up. We put all the stretches and folded them up and put away and everything like that and all the jugs and everything. It was a lot of work to be done after it. It was wonderful to be finished.

How much longer afterwards were you involved with the Land Army?

No more after that. Finished.

But after the day the war ended until you……

I don't think anymore than a month, we were just cleaning up, you know?

Did you feel the Land Army was in any way like a Military Service?

Not at all. Not at all. We were never treated like it either, except that one Anzac Day I told you about the soldiers camp,

there was one Anzac Day one of the Captain took the salute and we had to march up to, and put the wreath on the Sanita, then we had to salute him, I knew this chap cause he started us off, I thought I can't salute him, I'd laugh. One of the girls, she died, she was in the camp, her name was Ethal Smith. I said "Ethal you put the wreaths on" she said "no Mrs Molloy that's your job" I said "that's an order Ethal". We weren't military types you know? She was a wonderful girl.

Do you remember any talk at all of the Land Army becoming a Fourth Service?

Not a word, no.

I was wondering if you remember any discussion during those years of your time as a Matron in the Land Army, any discussions about the Land Army becoming a Fourth Service?

No I don't remember any.

Did you feel it should have been one of the Women's Services?

Oh yes, I think so. Don't you? They worked hard, we took men's places and so they can go to the war. The girls worked hard for them and they weren't treated lightly as far as the work goes. No they didn't have much fun, we all worked really, except on Sunday afternoons we had a lot of fun then.

Do you feel your contribution to the war effort has been acknowledged over the years?

I don't know if it's been acknowledged or not but I know we gave all we had to it. So I just don't know, except that concert I went to, that's the only thing I heard of, you know? It was a returned soldier's thing.

When was this concert?

This was um…oh not long after the war. They had a concert for the forces and there was a chap there I happened to know, a Brigadier, and he, I don't know whether I asked him to get me to play it or not, I don't know. I was in the concert, that's the only thing that I ever remember from the other forces, it was just a little place in Newtown where we lived that's all, just the people there.

Did you know any other women in the Women's Services?

Yes a few. A girl I use to nurse with, she joined the Air Force.

And how did their conditions compare with yours?

Oh. I wasn't in much in contact with her at all. I don't know. But we were far apart from the services. Far apart.

In what ways do you think it was different?

Oh well, it wasn't a military thing at all. It was just like farmers we where, we did the work and that was it. Of course the different girls did the different things. I was always with the fruit, you know? Of course the cotton up at Theodore. That was very hard work for them, was very cold then.

At Theodore, do you feel the girls were supplied with enough warm clothes and blankets?

Oh we had those, what do you call them? Brazers or something, those big warm things they call them brazers, the big tins with the fire in the bottom, that's the only thing we had to warm ourselves in the tent. We shivered, I'll never forget that night, and we only had a couple of blankets each and had to sleep on the corn husks, what do you call them? palliasses? And they stuffed them with husks. That's what we slept on, on stretches.

Did you notify the Land Army administration?

No. We took it in our stride, took it in our stride.

And how did you keep warm?

I don't know, we must of slept the next night, we would be tired. We would have no sleep with the cold, and, must of slept the next night. I think that was the worse night and of course it was summer time and should have been hot.

Were the girls issued with uniforms at that stage?

Yes, uniforms, dresses and overalls and shoes and hat.

And what would you wear on a normal day?

I wore the dress all the time, the khaki dress. I remember one time was I was picking apples up at Stanthorpe and it was a horse, it was like a pig cart, it had a big drum on it you know? Poor old horse, and some of the apples that wouldn't be

fit to go to the market they would have a pin prick in them, they would know it were no good and that horse would had to be put down a pit, they couldn't go to any places, no hospitals around you know? That horse, I was suppose to drive the horse up to the pit and I never knew how to drive a horse, the poor old horse went himself and when he got there to the pit he turned around and back, I thought he was going to fall into it, but he knew what to do himself the horse, I didn't do anything to him. I was frightened I tell you. The fruit was beautiful, big delicious apples they had a pin prick if they couldn't sent them away.

While you were at the camps can you remember of any incidents where a Land Army girl asked to leave the camp or left early?

No, no.

Would any have been dismissed in your time?

No I don't think so. I think one might have left on her own accord; she didn't come back to us, but nothing else. They were a good crowd of girls.

What was your pay at that time in comparison with the other girls?

I forget. No, I forget. It wouldn't be much more. I wouldn't have a clue how much money I got.

I wonder if you can tell me a little bit about Matron Lawson what type of person she was?

Oh she was very strict. I didn't know her much. I don't think she was in the Land Army for very long I only met her at Theodore. She was in charge there. But I didn't even know at all what work she did, just that she was in charge you know? And I had to do my work, and I stared off cooking there and they sent me down to Victoria Point.

How much administrative paperwork would you have to do?

At Victoria Point I had to do a bit. Had to do all the reports from the farms.

What would that involve? What do you mean reports from the farms?

I really forget. I'd love to see then what I did then. I'd love to have a look and see.

What would you have been talking about, the girls?

The work days. Any report, yes. Whether they were any good or bad, what their jobs were, then all the groceries and the fruit and everything, all those things you had to write down. I really forget it all now.

Did you have to do it for the budgeting for the food?

Yes, but the girls at Victoria Point they were always well fed.

Would you ever have contact with the employers of the girls?

Yes sometimes they would come and talk, but not that much. I never had time to go out at all after I got into the kitchen. Didn't have time to go out.

Did you miss your outdoor work?

I did very much so. I must have got out with them you know? I must have gone out with them when we had the swims and when we went for walks. There wasn't much entertainment of any sort unless the girls had their weekends off and did what they liked with it on their weekend. I never even went out much on weekends.

You say that one of the best jobs you ever did was digging potatoes?

Yes I use to love it out on the fields. I spoilt the man's crops and dug a folk in them and I use to bury them up again. I use to love the outside, I love the outside work, picking beans and digging potatoes and picking apples. There was a girl from a billet there I think she was from the University up at Thalimbah and she was a lot younger than I was, she must have been in her early twenties, she use to show pride with her work, with picking apples and that, she use to do two trees to my one, trying to keep up with her was very hard, she was very good, but she use to live there, she was sort of billeted, I even forget her name.

How much contact would you have had at that time with Beryl Pender the State Superintendent?

Always, always happy to talk to her. She often rang up and talked. I went up to the office a couple of times, she was very good, she kept in contact with me all the time, she was wonderful.

Can you describe what type of person she was?

She was very, very bright knowledgeable person. I remember we had a dinner, I think it must have been after the war, they had a dinner at the Chinese café in Brisbane, seven courses, that must have been because it was over I think? I don't remember much else about it.

After the war what sort of things did you do?

Me?

What did you do immediately after your time in the Land Army?

Well um..people use to come down to a little holiday hut next to the camp every weekend and the manager of this place use to manage Princess Dye remember the dye? There use to be a dye called Princess Dye and another name I cant think of it, and he, it was Sanders company somewhere in Brisbane, he said to me, "when the war is over will you come and work for me", I said "it depends", he said "would you come and be in charge, I would have half a dozen girls working, would you come and be in charge?" I said "I will try it out and give it a go", Sanders Dye Company I think it was. The girls would come, he had about half a dozen girls there, after their weekend they'd come and parade in their togs, no wonder he wanted some to go and look after them, but if they did their work I didn't care. They

parade in their togs. I said to him one day "you know what goes on there upstairs after the weekend?" he said "don't say anything to them they would leave me" so I left I couldn't face having to telling them what to do all the time and not, I wasn't the bossy type at all.

What they were living in some sort of hostel?

No it was in a big factory. Factory Dye, Princess Dye and cant think of the other Dye. One lot went into the chemists and the Princess Dye went to the ordinary shops. I don't think they cared how they worked, really.

What was your job in looking after them?

An overseer. They did their work but it was too much for me.

What type of girls were they?

Oh they were all right I suppose but they didn't have their mind on their work at all. I told him "you know what goes on?" he said "don't tell them they'd leave me" so I left couldn't be bothered. Then I tried lots of other things. I looked after Priests about twenty years in the Presbyteries. Catholic Priests I use to cook for them, they were very easy to cook for, they never complained so it didn't matter. So I had a bit of that. I tried a lot of other things until I settled down.

How did you feel when the war was over and you left the Land Army?

Oh no way, it was wonderful. My sister was with me, we celebrated in Queen Street in Brisbane you know? It was

marvellous, thousands of people there; yes it was wonderful after the war. I remember one of the girls, the day Hiroshima was bombed you know? Young Penny came into the kitchen she said" oh I heard on the news Hiroshima was bombed". So that was the beginning of the end.

How did you feel when you first heard they bombed Hiroshima?

It was terrible. It was an awful thing wasn't it? But we were glad because the war would be over.

Can you remember the Battle Of the Coral Sea?

Not much. We, I had my mind on the other girls and I had my mind. I think the kids use to send messages in bottles during the war, I don't know if anyone got them or not.

Did you have any brothers who were away at war?

No I didn't. I think they were too old. Frances went down, he wanted to join the Air Force, and something wrong with his feet, that didn't suit. You're in the Land Army you didn't have to go through big examination like the others as long as you worked that's all that matters.

Can you remember in taking part in any Victory Day celebrations or marches?

Oh only once. I think that's the time they marched through the street, I really forget. I know we marched through; it couldn't have been Anzac Day as they don't allow us to march on Anzac Day. It must have been the Victory March I think, I'm not sure.

But I know I was bring up the rear, that's all I remember about it. Was a big long march. I wish, I'd like to see what paper it was in but I don't think, too far.

Did you have any wishes to go back onto the Land?

No only my own yard. Plenty to do there. No I wouldn't like to be working on the farm. I had relatives on the farm up Toowoomba way and I use to have a wonderful time with them, I use to go up every Easter, milk cows, twenty six cows when I was about sixteen, we use to have a wonderful time.

You were telling me before you had done a lot of different things before you had gone into the Land Army lots of different jobs apart….

No I think I just did domestic jobs like, things like up at the girls grammar school in the corridor, making beds and things like that, in the nursing home they took me there from the CWA place I think it was, I was looking after the girls in the big dormentry, and then they asked me to, the same building next door I think it was, they asked me to go and cook for a old home, I didn't want to do that cause I didn't know anything about cooking much, but I did there, I went there then, I always thought to myself If I ever would have to go to a home I would like to come here, but still everything has changed, then I did different jobs. I had a job at Government House as a Kitchen Maid. That was very enjoyable, I liked it for a while, but I got a bit tired of that. Different places I went, you will find I am very interesting from now on.