Australian War Memorial

Sound Collection

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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TITLE:

INTERVIEWEE: **Win Donovan**

INTERVIEWER: Sue Hardisty

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SUMMARY:

Would you like to tell us about where you were born, and where you grew up?

Born in Chidlow, WA. My father was a signalman who was transferred around regularly. We went to Merredin, Northam, and came down to Perth and lived in West Leederville.

How old were you when you came to the city?

About nine. Went to Leederville School; Perth Girls School; City Commercial Business College and then out to work. As a ledger machine operator; shorthand-typist; switchboard operator. You name it; I've done it.

How old were you when you left school?

Fourteen. To go to City Commercial College. Then at fifteen I left college, qualified.

Did you grow up with other brothers and sisters?

One brother, two years older than me. Sister died when she was a baby.

Can you tell us a bit about your early life?

Very happy life. Very strict parents. Nothing interesting really. Just grew up as an everyday person. Swam in Mongers Lake when I was a kid. Enjoyed myself with my brother, until he got a girlfriend. I brought her home

when she was thirteen. From then on I didn't go out with my brother.

How did you get to school? How far away was the school, from there you lived?

At Leederville. About a two mile walk each day. To get to Perth Girls, about a mile walk to the train, then by train to West Leederville to Perth.

How would you describe your parents' political outlook?

Staunchly Labour.

What about their religious views?

They had no religion, but Dad took a lot after his family in England. Salvation Army. He was rather narrow in a lot of his outlook.

Could you tell us a hit more about your father's family?

They lived in England. Dad was born in Brighton. One of nine children. They were very poor. Dad could see that things were going to be bad over there, and he left when he was eighteen, and came out here. When he was a signalman at Boulder, he met Mum, and they were married at Boulder. And then he was transferred to Perth.

What about your mother's family?

Mum was born in Broken Hill, New South Wales. Her father was a miner. Her mother had come out here as a Cornish lass, when she was eleven. They came across here in 1900, bringing three small children, to look for gold in Kalgoorlie.

Go back to the work you were doing, once you left school. Could you tell us a bit about your employer?

The first employer I had was **Plaistowes** Confectioners. I was in the office there for three months, but my job then was to type envelopes and carry cards round the place. I left. I then got a job at the Monarch Laundry, in the office, and that's when I saw a lady operating a ledger machine. And I decided I didn't want to be a secretary, I wanted to a ledger machine operator. So I left there and I worked at Berger Paints, as a ledger machine operator, until I joined up. Then I came back and the ledger machine position had been taken. I went to Ben Mercer's in the markets, and I was a ledger machine operator there 'til I was married.

You said to me earlier, that once you left the ledger machine job that you had first, you joined one of the services. Could you tell us about that?

I joined the Air Force. Did training at Victor Harbour, out of Adelaide. Then transferred to Melbourne, Victoria Barracks, but owing to the fact that my brother had gone overseas in the Air Force my father was doing shift work, I requested a discharge to go home and look after her. I came home, but in the meantime Dad had been promoted in his job, and he was home. Not on shift work. So after

about four months, I joined the land army. That would be August 1943. Then I was sent from Fairbridge Farm School Training Centre to No. 3 Tobacco Plantation, Manjimup. I was there ‘til March ‘44, working with Betty Turner, Pat Gibson, Nancy Piggot, Enid Huggart. That’s all I can remember.

Could you go back to your Air Force days? What was your work in the Air Force?

Running round with files, tied with red tape. Marked “Most Secret”. And doing some typing.

How do you feel about that time you were in the Air Force?

I didn’t like Melbourne weather. I was never warm.

How long were you actually in the Air Force for?

About six or seven months.

Do you remember when you first thought about joining up, into the Air Force?

About three months before I joined.

Why did you decide?

Because there were posters here, everywhere.

What did they say?

The Jap - he's coming south. And I thought well maybe they could do with a bit of a hand, plus the fact that, that was in 1942, they were scraping the bottom of the barrel. Boys that they'd rejected before. Friends of mine. Were not physically fit, were called up and taken away. To fight in New Guinea. So things were very bad at that time.

What did your brother do during the war years?

He was a, I think they're classed as a Fitter 2E. When the aircraft are shot down, one man mans the engine; and the other one mans the fuselage. He was the fuselage mender. He was a carpenter by trade.

Was he younger than you, did you say?

Two years older.

So when did he join the Air Force?

About a month after I did.

Had he been talking about it at home? Had there been discussions?

No. He had been trying to get into it. He tried three times and each time when he told them he worked at the Midland Workshops, they sent him back as being Manpower. So the fourth time he fronted up to them and said I'm unemployed. So they took him. He had been trying to get in then for over a year.

How did your mother initially feel about you both going away?

She wasn't happy about it. We were the only two she had.

So where was your brother posted when he joined up?

He did some time at Pearce and then he was posted to Laverton in Victoria. Then he had pre-embarkation leave. Then he was sent to New Guinea. He was at Port Moresby; Lae. They were the only two places I can remember.

When you were in the Air Force, what sort of accommodation did you have?

We were all billeted out, in private houses. I was billeted in a house in Caulfield.

By yourself?

Yes. Just with an elderly couple. They were very nice. Very lovely to me.

So when you look back on that time, on your life in the Air Force days, how do feel about it?

In one way, I wouldn't have joined if I'd have known I was going to Melbourne, because I do not like Melbourne. It's a very cold place. Terribly cold, and the people were not like we were over here. They just seemed very doubtful about everything. One chap, elderly man, I asked the way in Melbourne. And as soon as I said, "Excuse me",

he grabbed his wallet. I just burst out laughing. I'd never seen anything like it. I think he thought I was going to pick him up.

Do you actually remember when the war broke out, where you were?

Yes. I was at home we with my mother and we had a wireless. It was a wireless in those days. Cabinet model. My daughter has that wireless now. That's how old it is. And it still works. They said there would be a special announcement coming over at a certain time. And Mum switched the wireless on and we heard the announcement. I was eighteen at the time.

Do you remember how you felt?

As I'd never lived through a war, I didn't quite know. I could just remember my mother saying, "Oh, my God, no." When you're 18 you don't quite realise what it means. Those boys you grew up with don't come back.

Once you left the Air Force on compassionate grounds, could you tell us a **bit** about the work you did next, when you went home?

I went back to the firm I'd left, where I'd been a ledger machine operator. But that job had been taken by somebody else, so I left there and applied at the Commonwealth Employment Service and they sent me to the Metropolitan Markets, where I got a job as Ledger Machine Operator. I was there a few months and I got itchy feet and I joined the Land Army. I became land girl 195.

Can you tell us about the day you joined up?

In the land army. No I can't remember. I must have gone in the office and joined up. But I can't remember doing it. I must have.

What about the first day you were posted? You went down to Fairbridge Farm. Can you remember that bit?

Yes. I can remember going down. I can remember we were each showed a bed in a dormitory. I think there were about 12 beds and we were given overalls, and boots, a shirt and told that we would do a month's training to see if we were physically capable of doing it and if we were we would go on; if we weren't we would be discharged. It was a trial period. One week was working in the vegetable garden. One week milking cows. One week, I think we called it "Emu picking'. That's walking through paddocks, picking up sticks and stones, and putting them in a pile. And then they came to me one day and asked me had I ever been on a horse, and we were told, in the Land Army, if you're asked something, don't say "No, I can't do it", say "I've never done it, but I'm willing to try". So I was the mug who said "No, I've never been on a horse, but I'm willing to try." I was given a great big draft horse, and one of the boys from Fairbridge Farm, a little Pommie boy, about twelve, he and I were to round up the sheep. Not many. About two hundred sheep. My horse never got above a slow stroll and I never stopped bouncing up and down. In the end the boy said, "I'll do it myself." And he went away. Rounded up the sheep, while I sat and thought on this horse. That night I couldn't sit down. We

all had to go to a community dining room for our meals. And I was the only one, I literally stood at that mantelpiece and ate my tea. They warned me I would do it. I never went on a horse again.

Did you have many country experiences as a young person?

No. No I've never. I was born in Chidlow, but I left there when I was little. I don't think I'd ever seen a farm.

What about, did your father have country postings, or were they all city postings?

Well they were to the middle of the city. He was the signalman, and we just rented a house, wherever we were sent. We went to school there. But they were just houses in the middle of country towns. Never saw a farm.

Why did your mother say to you that you'd enjoyed the outdoor life?

I don't know. I think because when I was a teenager, I played tennis, I went swimming. I loved outside. I hated indoors. You get enough of that in an office, during the week. And she knew that, I do love animals, so I suppose that well, if I could go somewhere on a farm. But I liked camping. Things like that. Roughing it.

Was the accommodation at Fairbridge fairly rough, or was it adequate?

It was adequate. It was like a big hut. I don't think there were any windows. I think it was more like open spaces. Up the top. I wouldn't have liked being there in the middle of winter. But it was a bed. The bed was comfortable. We were out all day on the farm. Then we had our meals. All together, in a great big dining room. With all the Fairbridge children. And the teachers; the cottage people. And then at night it would be just, maybe, twelve of us. We would have one big room in the cottage where we would just, read, or do whatever you liked.

And what other things aside from reading did you do?

I can't remember anything, because by the time we knocked off and had a meal, it was dark and I think we had to be in bed by about 9pm. The lady in charge was very strict about that because you had to be up by about quarter to six in the morning.

Do you remember who was in charge, when you were there?

Wasn't her name Miss Egan? Wasn't she at Fairbridge?

Yes.

That was Miss Egan. Quiet. Very firm. Stood no nonsense. But reasonable. Very reasonable person. I think she must have been, would she have been then, in her thirties. I can vaguely see her. I can still remember the startled look on her face, although she never panicked, the day that Pat Gibson (that's where I knew Pat before, at

Fairbridge). Pat Gibson had finished milking a cow, and was walking up the aisle, it was all concrete and looking the other way, and I called out to her "Mind the rope, Pat." The rope was about, tying one cow up, right across, and it was about two feet off the ground, and she hit it with her knee, and went straight down and cracked her head on the concrete. And the chap in charge said "Quick, go and tell Miss Egan". It was Miss Egan. And I had to knock on the door, and tell her that Gibson had knocked herself unconscious. She never panicked. She just said "Go and tell the gentlemen to get her here fast please." But she was all right when she woke up, but the whole place shook as her head hit that concrete. But she was, I knew her afterwards and she was quite all right, so nothing came out of it.

Can you remember any sort of pranks you got up to in Fairbridge?

No. There were no pranks. But I can still remember the first time I heard a Cockney. I thought we were on a different planet. We'd been out Emu picking and I'd left my cardigan behind and we had to ride from the farm out to this paddock in a cart drawn by a horse. And I went to go down and get it and he, the little boy, a twelve year old boy, said something which I couldn't understand. So I said "I beg your pardon." He said it again. And it sounded like "I'll go get ya hor". So I said "I do beg your pardon, what did you say?" He said "I'll go & get you…" And the gentlemen driving the horse said "It's all right", he's saying "I'll go and get it for you." I said "Oh, I'm sorry." He said, "He's a cockney." That's why

during the war when I met Americans and they said we speak like Cockneys, I got very upset.

Had you ever heard about the Fairbridqe farm scheme, before you went down there for training?

Yes. Yes, we knew it was there and we knew that the children had been sent out from England. Mainly orphans, it started out as. Then I think, during the war, children sat out there for safety. I'm not sure. But it was a thriving concern, when we were there. But we, you learn, you hear of them.

Were you much older than other girls in your batch, in the land army?

Yes. Most of them were about eighteen. I was twenty two.

Did that make it difficult for socialising, or was it Okay?

I got on well with the girls, but then they made me the group leader at Manjimup and there's always people calling. The boys of the district flock around when the land army girls arrive. And they used to treat me as if I was going to bite them. I was older then. But I said one day to them "What's the matter, do I look as if I'm going to bite?" "Oh, well you are the group leader." So I found that put a distance between us. I had to wear a stripe of some sort on my sleeve. I can't remember. A red one, I think it was. But I got on very well with the girls. We had a lot of fun together. Saturdays were wash days, when the overalls were put into a kerosene tin, over an open

fire. You could boil one pair at a time, so wash day went on all day. And bathing. We had to have a bath every night because of the sticky stuff that comes out of the tobacco. You get it all up your arms. Like black goo. And bath every night. The water was heated like a great big forty four gallon drum, balanced over a fire then carried bucket by bucket to the bath.

If we start off at Manjimup, that was your first placement after Fairbridge, could you describe the work that you did do there?

The first things we did, when we went down there in September, was sew bags together, with a bag needle and heavy twine. We would work at the top of a shed and we would just sew bags, until we had enough bags to make a complete wall around the shed for the stringing-on shed, and up above. During that time the seedlings, which the boss, or other people, there were three Macedonians there, they could have planted them in the seed beds. They were growing. When we finished the bags it was time to transplant the seedlings into rows. Hundreds of rows along. Each one had to be planted very carefully, very quickly, because you had hundreds of them to plant. And at that time there were only four of us there.

How big were the seedlings?

From what I can remember, about six or seven inches high.

And you said you had a bit of a rhythm about doing that?

Yes, you could. I suppose each plant would have been about, I'm trying to remember, about four feet apart, and you can plant without standing up. Dig; plant; push the earth; pick up another plant; move on, say, three paces; dig; plant. And you can do it non-stop, after awhile. But the main thing was firmly planting them because the boss would come along afterwards and see if he could pull them out. It was not nastiness. It meant they were not planted right and you had to go back and start again.

How did you carry those seedlings, as you were going along?

They were carried over in boxes. I can't remember. I mean we couldn't have run and got a plant each time we wanted a plant. There could have been somebody walking along with us with a box. I can't remember that part. And then from then on, for several months until the tobacco ripened you weeded. You keep hoeing and hoeing. And by the time you've finished hoeing hundreds, it's time to start again and do them all over again.

So it was a hand hoe?

Just the ordinary hoe you use in the garden.

Long handled?

Long handle. You had to be very careful you did not decapitate the plant. It was not allowed. Then when the plants got to be, oh, some of them would have been up to five feet high, you would pick the leaf. The leaves always pick from the bottom. The leaves turn yellow.

Yellowish. You do not pick a green leaf. When you have an armful, you call out “Leaf”, and the leaf girl for the day takes your armful of leaf and spreads it over a bag that has been sown together, that is about two feet wide and about six feet long. When she has covered one little part, she rolls the bag ‘til she’s covered some more. Then rolls it again. So that when she’s finished that, there are two hooks placed in it. Each roll, each fold in it, contains leaf. It’s not leaf in the middle, or leaf not touching the other leaf. Then when we’ve picked enough, or all that should be picked, each girl had to lift one of those bales of leaves, or bags, and carry it on her shoulders to the stringing-on shed. They were heavy, but there was a knack. By wearing them on your shoulders.

How far was the shed?

About three hundred yards, uphill. But we never dropped a bag. It wouldn’t be worth our while. Once we reached the stringing-on shed we had to stand for the next job. The leaf was taken out of the bags and strung on by the top part of the stem, onto these wire spikes, which came out either side of a piece of wood, about four feet long. And when that piece of wood was full, or the spikes on it were full, and the leaf is all hanging down, just next door to each other, it was removed by one of the men on the plantation. He took it up to the kilns to be cooked, or baked. And the fire in the kiln was never allowed to go out until that leaf was finished. That man would be there every night, stoking up that outdoor fire. It was a small fire place on the outside of the shed, but it was shaped very much like an Eskimo igloo. And he kept

packing wood in that to sort of steam the leaf. When it was brought out it was brittle. Just very, very brittle. You felt as if you touched it, it would crack. Then the leaf was sent away. And this went on until March, when the season was finished.

> You said earlier, that there were particular times when you were allowed to go and work in the shed, rather than work outdoors?

When it was over one hundred degrees, under the trees, with the thermometer, checking we were allowed to go up stringing on in the stringing on shed, or do something else there. Also we did go to other plantations. We were "lent" to other plantations. If our leaf was done, or not ready to be picked, we went to No 2 plantation. We walked there. It was only about a mile. We walked up there in the boss's time in the morning; and back in our own time at night. That was No 2 plantation. We never went to No 4. Yes, sorry, we did once. Mr Dodd's plantation. Then Mr Dodd would lend his land girls to Mr Johansen if he needed help. It was interchanging all the time.

> Do you know if these farms were actually all owned by Michelides?

Yes. They were. No 1 was Thompsons. I think that was private. No 2, Limmers. He didn't have land girls there. He had girls from outlying districts working for him. That was Michelides No 3 was ours. Was Michelides 4 was Dodd's. Michelides Then there was some at Pemberton.

Were you ever required to work outside of those day hours?

Yes. If the rain threatened, or a storm threatened it would get very hot and uncomfortable. It could be 11pm at night and you would hear the boss's voice. He had rather a carrying voice. Everybody out. And we would be picking leaf in the dark, hut just with the aid of a lantern. You would be walking along the rows, shifting your lantern as you went. The only thing, in the dark, you would call out "Leaf", the leaf girl didn't know which one had called out leaf and she was running up and down the rows looking for us. But we usually managed by working very hard. And with the, there were three Macedonians, and the boss himself. We would pick fast and furiously. We might finish at midnight. But we would get it in before the rain spoiled it.

And then would you have a day off the next day?

Oh, No. You're wages were thirty bob.

How does that compare with what you got in the Air Force?

The Air Force was six bob a day, and keep. So I would have got more there.

And what about your ledgers job, in between?

Oh, I was getting, four pound a week. So I dropped really, in the land army, but you did get a uniform.

Did you ever have to write home for financial help when you were in the land army?

No. As a matter of fact I was sending home money, for Mum to bank for me. I sent home a pound a week, for Mum to bank for me. Well there was nothing to spend it on. You're on a plantation. You're six miles from Manjimup. There's nowhere to go. So you can't spend your money.

What did you do with your time off, down at Manjimup?

Oh, just mainly, you couldn't read much. Not with no hurricane lamps. You would just talk mainly. Laugh. Well of course you couldn't go to bed very late. You had to be back on duty at seven.

What about the weekend?

We went to a dance every Saturday night. We would get a lift somehow. When the boys came to take the girls, they came on horses, bikes, motorbikes. I wouldn't get on the back of the horse. I think I rode a bike. We didn't have to worry about long dresses. We had uniforms. We would go to Dixvale, which was two miles down the road, or Yanmah, which was six miles. We used to walk to the Dixvale one, but get a lift to Yanmah.

And who would hold the dances?

Oh, they were just dances held. Nobody special. I can't remember what we did on Sundays. I think we just listened

to records. See having no transport you couldn't go anywhere. We might go for walks. That was all. But usually on a Sunday you were glad of a rest. Because you worked hard during the week. Long hours. Seven 'til five. Not long. And seven 'til twelve or one.

Did you ever go into Manjimup?

Yes. There was a bus. It could have been once a week, or once a fortnight, there was a bus, and we would go into Manjimup and walk round and have afternoon tea, but Manjimup was just a little town. There was nothing much to see. But it was just you could get away from the plantation for awhile.

Did you ever have sing songs together?

I think we tried, but none of us had very good voices. No mainly we would just, at the end of the day's work, especially if it had been a heat wave, you just want to relax. So you just get into shorts and blouse. You'd lie on your bed because they were the most comfortable things to lie on, and would end up laughing. You would find really that silly things would make us laugh. One of the Macedonians, they were all rather elderly, and they spoke broken English, had borrowed something. I lent him something from, I think, the kitchen and I said to him "Just return it tomorrow." And that night, it must have been about two hours later, we were all just lying on our beds talking, and all of a sudden this voice came echoing round "Win, Win." We all shot out of bed. We didn't know if it was a ghost that walked, but it was Lou. Didn't know what hut I was in, and was trying to return what

he'd borrowed, and he was just walking around calling me and such a mournful tone. They were nice men. They were getting on a bit, and they all had wives in Macedonia. You never say Greece. I upset him by saying he came from Greece. But they'd come out here, and the money was good… And they were going to send for their wives one day. Well old Nick was sixty five and I suggested he'd better hurry up if he intended to get her out. But I don't think they'd ever went back. They loved it here too much.

Were they local residents who lived in the area?

No. They had their own huts further over. Each one had a hut further over.

But they weren't internees?

No. I did meet one internee on No 4 plantation. Italian. And he sang O'Sole O'Mio for us, and he had the most beautiful voice. And I said to him "Do you want to go to Italy." And he said "No, too poor in Italy…" He said, "I like it here." And I said "Is your family here?" He said, "No, but I like it here." And I've never actually met a man as happy as that man.

Was he an internee or a Prisoner of War?

Internee, and he had just been out here when war was declared with Italy, so they interned him. The only thing it meant was that he could not leave the plantation. But he was quite happy. He was getting good money. He was getting paid.

Did you work alongside him?

He was at no 4. I was standing there stringing-on next to him this day. But we did. No 3 we worked alongside the Macedonians. We all worked together. The only thing that upset us was that they got 4 pound a week. We didn't. And we did exactly the same work. But of course men's wages were higher in those days, and four pound a week was the wage for a tobacco worker.

Can you remember being shifted on to your next placement?

Yes. I was told. The boss said one day it was finished and we would receive our postings. I don't know where Pat and Betty were sent. I think they, yes, they had to report back to Headquarters. But I received a rail ticket, telling me to go to **Donnybrook**. Get off the train there, stay at a hotel and catch a train next day to Boyup Brook. I don't think they paid the hotel bill. As we were getting our board. But paid of course, all rail fares, things like that. So I didn't come home between those two jobs. I went on to Boyup Brook, and a flax mill there.

Were you by yourself? Did you travel down by yourself, or with the group from Manjimup?

The girls. I think by this time there was only Pat, Betty and myself left on the plantation, and Pat and Betty, and Mr Johansen, the boss, for some reason was going to Perth. So I left them on the train. I got off at

Donnybrook. Then I went to Boyup Brook, where we had accommodation. Very small huts. Each one contained a dressing table, little wardrobe, two beds, in the backyard of Dr. and Mrs Stennings' house. There were about eight of us there. Every morning we would be picked up by truck and taken to the flax mill. What else?

What did your work on the flax involve?

Well the first day, I was put up, on what was like, a platform with another girl and bales of flax were thrown in at one end and our job was to push them down to where men would catch them and put them through the threshing machine. I enjoyed doing that, but the next day they put me on this type of machine, which was dreadfully noisy, and you had to lean right over it and put the flax into it. I was doing that with one of the boys there, the soldiers. But the noise was getting to me in the end, so I asked if I could work outside, and our first job was to spread the flax, which involves being driven to long paddocks. Then you get the flax, undo it out of its bundle, and spread it evenly, in neat rows. Row upon row until you've covered that big paddock. And there was about six feet between each row. The flax when lying down was about three feet, and that would be spread out there to dry, until a few days. If it rained it stayed a bit longer. In a few days you would have to come along with big poles, wooden poles, slide them under the top end of the flax, and turn the flax over, end to end, so that the other side dried. Now Boyup Brook, it's a very wet place and we were given a billy, with some tea, with some milk and some sugar. Maybe some cake and a box of matches. And told we would boil that billy. But it was rather awkward.

We were in the middle of a paddock. No sticks. No kindling. No paper. No nothing, to start the fire, and it was raining. So we would make a make-shift shelter, with coats or anything like that, so we could cover the fire. But amongst us there was a country girl and she said "Oh, this is very easy." She went over and stripped the bark off a tree. The inner bark. And that lit straight away. That's how we learnt to make a fire. With bark. Even if you had no wood, kindling, or no paper. So that's the morning tea. Spent crouched under your coat or something, drinking it. But, it was good fun. None of us ever got a cold. None of us ever got pneumonia. I think we were a disgustingly healthy lot.

Apart from the spreading out there, did you do other work on the place?

Yes. After it dried it was put into bundles. Those bundles were brought into the fields, closer to the sheds.

And did you do that work yourself?

No. I don't remember ever tying the bundles. We were given pitchforks. Two men were going to build the rick. Two girls were going to throw, and there would be say four lots of girls. Or four groups. And that would be to make four ricks. Then you would go onto the next one. The girls job was to throw the bales of flax until the rick got so high, approximately six or seven feet, that you couldn't throw any higher. You just couldn't throw them. So then, the men would get down, and the girls climb up the rick. And we would then place them. They have to be

placed in a certain way. Very neatly arranged so that your stack is not falling everywhere. But I used to say to my friends. “What are we doing throwing, while the men are up there just trying to make some sort of rig out of it?” We never did find out why the girls had to do the throwing. Then the men threw for about another four feet. Then when they were finished, that was to dry. I think it must have been about then that we left to go on. That would be about three months. We left to go on as the flax was finished.

Who else worked on the flax, besides the land army girls?

Men that were from the district. Elderly gentlemen, too old to join up. Soldiers, boys. The CMF. No the AIF. But they were about 13. And they were just citizen military forces and they were soldiers but they could not be sent away until later. Later on they sent them away. But they were lads more than anything. But mainly men from the district. Men in their 50’s or so.

Were there any local woman working on the flax?

No.

So would you like to tell us where you went to after you’d finished on the flax at Boyup Book?

I was sent home to get rail passes, to go to Albany. Travelled down to Albany. We were given tickets for bikes. I was. I had a good trip down. A lady sat there nursing a beautiful little baby, and she sang to it

“Paper Doll”. And it was the first song, and I thought it was the most beautiful thing. Anyway I arrived at Albany and I was met by my boss, Mr Hill, who was a Member of Parliament, his wife and their two little children, four and two. And I was taken to a farm on the Upper Kalgan River, which was about fifteen miles from Albany. My job there was to look after the pig, sow and piglets. Pick the apples, three bucketfuls every morning for them. Knock the ice off them first. Let out about thirty hens. Move about two hundred sheep, into another paddock. Chop the wood. After doing that I was allowed breakfast. Breakfast consisted of pork sausages, or pigs fry. That was all that was put on the table for three months. Then my job was to go out and prune the apple trees in the orchard. At ten o’clock I was called in for a cup of tea. No biscuits, no cake, nothing. A cup of tea. At one o’clock we had lunch, which consisted of cold pork, boiled potatoes and cauliflower, cooked yellow. No sweets, no soup. At three o’clock another cup of tea. At five o’clock I knocked off pruning. Took the two hundred sheep into the house paddock, because there were foxes around. Took the hens and tucked them in for the night. Fed the pig, the sow and the piglets some more apples. Fed three pet lambs with a bottle. Brought in the kindling wood for the next morning. And about seven o’clock I was given tea, which was cheese on toast every night. At eight o’clock I would go and sit in my room and write letters, or read a book. No electricity there. This was my day for three months. I was supposed to knock off at Saturday midday, but I wouldn’t, I was usually digging drains. And Sunday morning, every morning, I had to take the milk up to the next farm, about a mile. Carry the bucket of milk to separate it on the next farmer’s

property. Then carry it back and make it into butter. Things I did which you cannot be made do, but you do if necessary were empty the pan system with the lady of the house. Another rule was we could not he forced to do housework. I was asked to do housework, and I refused. This was the first few cross words between the lady of the house and myself. The next time we had words was, she gave me a stock whip and told me to move the bull from the paddock. The bull was standing along in a big paddock. Just one tree there. I walked towards it, and it fronted me. Its eyes were bloodshot, and its tail swinging to and fro and it was standing between me and the tree. I wasn't sure whether it was angry, or what, so I backed down to the fence, clambered through, and asked Mrs. Hill "As a cat wags it's tail when it's angry, and a dog wags a tail when it's happy, what is wrong with the bull?" She said "It's very, very cross, now go and get it out of the paddock." I said "It won't shift." She said, "I'm ordering you." So I said "It is against regulations for a land girl to be asked to go in and shift any bull out of a paddock." She said "Take the whip and move it." So I threw the whip at her and told that it was her bull, she could shift it. I knew that she could not report me to the land army. She said she would and I offered to ring the number for her from Albany, but she never reported it. But it was silly things like this which caused us not to get on very well. She was a lady in her middle forties and I think she'd had girls working for her from around the district. Domestic help. And she thought I was a domestic help and that was really the cause of trouble between us. But I loved the farm life. But I was always hungry and when I pointed that out to her one day, she told me to eat apples. The pips were

running out of my ears. But I did three months there and then I left.

Why would you say you left? What reason did you give?

I wrote to the land army and said I no longer wished to stay there. My year's service was up. I don't remember whether I said why, but I thought at the time the only way I could get away from that place, was leave the land army. It wasn't 'til afterwards as I was returning my stuff they said if you stay in we will send you back on tobacco. But it was too late then. If I'd known I would have just asked to be transferred. They sent down another lady to replace me, but she was forty five and a spinster and the lady of the house would not talk down to her, at her age, as she did to me.

From what you've said I gather you were exploited in terms of work?

In that last job I was exploited. I was told the first night that my job would be to get up, light the fire, boil the kettle, make the tea, and be fully dressed myself, and have that tea on the table at seven when she walked down. Now, I don't think that was a job I should have done but I didn't mind it. But when you consider that I was lighting a fire a six thirty in the morning and I was not getting my tea and finishing off 'til six thirty at night, it was a long day.

When you've spoken to friends of yours who are in the land army, have you heard of any similar

experiences to yourself, or do feel that employers generally treated land army girls well?

Most employers treated them very very well. Stickler for hours. You could be called out in an emergency. You don't ask for wages. Possibly the boss might have said "Well knock off early today", if you'd worked an hour before. But, I was. It appeared that my hours on this last farm were taken just pruning. It was not counted, all the extra work I did before and after.

Was it actually Mrs. Hill, or was it her husband who gave you instructions all the time?

Mrs. Hill. Mr Hill was away most of the time. At Parliament.

Was it any better when he was home?

He was only home at weekends, and as I knocked off at Saturday midday, and only had to take the milk up for separating on Sunday morning, and feed the pigs, I was finished. And I used to get on my bike and clear out.

Where did you go?

I made friends with a family further over. They had a farm further over than this one, and I met the girl somewhere. And they were a happy family. I think there were one boy and four girls. And they invited me over one Saturday for tea. I rode my bike over there. And another day they said they were going to a Ball in Albany, would I like to go. I had an evening frock with me. I rode the

bike over the Robinsons place. I had tea there and got dressed there. I went in the truck with these four girls and this boy. We danced ‘til about one o’clock in the morning. Came home, slept the night at Robinsons, and was back by seven o’clock the next morning, chopping wood. Mrs Hill, when I told her what I was going to do, she put her foot down and said she would not allow it. I said “I’m telling you where I’m going Mrs Hill.” “It’s quite all right; would you like to ring Mrs. Robinson?” She said, “I’m not letting you go, you have to be here tonight, to do odd jobs.” So I went to Mr Hill and I asked him. And he just said “Of course you can go. You’re entitled to.” So I went to this Ball. Mrs. Hill threatened me the night before. God help me if I was not back on that farm by seven o’clock the next morning. Then Rita, the land girl who replaced me, said Mrs. Hill sat there, stared at the clock, and when it got to five to seven she started to laugh. Then at four minutes to seven she heard me chopping the wood. And she was most upset, Rita said. But she could not punish me. I had done nothing wrong.

Was she fairly isolated on the farm?

There was a stepson on the next farm, but she did not get on with his wife. She had married late in life and she was about forty six then, and she had two little children, and she was not a woman that had any friends.

Were you ever asked to do child minding?

Yes. She went to Albany one day and requested that I keep my eye on the children. I got on well with the two year

old girl. She was lovely. The little boy was very difficult. Very precocious. - But Miss West, Rita, was there to replace me, so there were the two of us. We just had to keep our eye on the children. While I was, it was a Saturday afternoon, I was sitting at the kitchen table reading the paper when the door between the laundry and the kitchen, was smashed. The glass was smashed. The little boy opened the door, walked in and said "Now wait 'til I show my mother what you did." And I said "That is a lie John, and you know it." And he said "She's not going to believe you, she'll believe me." Then he didn't see Rita come in the back door. Standing at the back door. And Rita said "But I saw you." "Are you still going to tell your mother that Win did it?" So he cried. When his mother came home she took one look at the broken door. Marched up to me and said "Right, the cost of that comes out of your pay, this week." So Rita stepped in and pointed out that John had done it. She said "Well he wouldn't have done it deliberately. It must have been an accident." That was the sort of thing which you don't know how to handle. Because to me that's vindictiveness.

It must have been very difficult for you, you know, a young woman down there, isolated?

It was. There was nowhere to go. I think I went into Albany with them one Friday afternoon. But for having those three hours off, she made me work all day Saturday. So I never went again.

Did you feel uncomfortable, even living in the house?

Very uncomfortable. She always talked down to me. And after the other people I'd had, the other bosses, I couldn't understand it.

Did you used to write home or did you keep in touch with your friends?

Yes. I had a boyfriend in New Guinea. I was writing to him. My brother in New Guinea. My mother and father at home. My sister-in-law and nieces. And about three girlfriends. That's why usually I spent each night, I'd write about two letters a night.

Did you have a horse there? Did you do any riding there at all?

No. There was no horse there. There was a cow. Mrs Hill asked me could I milk the cow. But I could see that looming up with all the other things I had to do by seven o'clock. So I said "No." So she had to milk the cow.

Did you eat together?

Yes.

Was that a strain?

Yes, because the children were given Bovril, while I had cheese on toast. And when you smell Bovril, and you're eating cheese on toast every night, oh dear. So the one time I ever went into Albany, she was in the big co-op, I stood next to her and I asked the gentlemen for a bottle of bovril. And she said to me "Anyone would think I don't

feed you.” I said “You don’t.” That caused, that she did not speak to me then for the rest of the day. But I had my bovril, which I kept in my room.

> Did you find the neighbours supportive? Was there other neighbours? You mentioned the Robinsons earlier that you had something to do with.

Oh, the Robinsons they were miles over. I didn’t see them except for that one ball and going to tea there once. They just asked me how I got on with the lady of the house, and I said “I don’t.” And I found that when I took the milk up to the next farm, the son’s farm, Mrs Hill’s step-son, he was a chap about twenty eight, I suppose, his wife, they were very distant with me. They treated me as if they didn’t want to know me. And finally one day I asked and I was informed that “she” was not popular in that district. And I said “Well don’t take it out on me.” They were snubbing me because she was not popular, which was ridiculous when you consider it. I was twenty odd and I just wanted a friend. But I knew it wasn’t for long. It was only three months. So I tolerated it.

> Did you find that your evenings seemed to be long, when you were there by yourself?

Yes. She would sit in the kitchen and read, or talk to her husband if he was home. The kids would be put to bed. But I knew that if I stayed in that kitchen, I would be told to wash-up. So I would wash my things and just go in my bedroom. And there was a lot she would like me to do, but you can only fit so many hours work in a day.

How well off were they? I mean how did your accommodation for example, compare to your own home life?

I had a sleep-out at the back. Just a bed and wardrobe. It was quite comfortable. No electric light of course. There was no light out there. It was quite an old farm house, but quite nice. It had been nice in it's time. But it compared very well with sleeping like we were before in the huts. This was a room. But she kept telling me that I was too fussy. That was regarding one night I brought all the sheep into the house paddock, and one of the ewes was running round, panicking, and it was getting dark. So I took the lantern and went right back to the paddock where they'd been and there was one little lamb, about three days old, under the bush, and she told me to leave it, don't be so stupid. She said "What's a lamb?" But the thought of a fox eating that one upset me, so I carried it back. But then each day we would find some sheep dead. Some of the Merinos were very old. She used to tell me to throw them in the river. And then gradually the complaints came back. The dead sheep were floating down into Albany. So she said to me "You are to burn them." Well you try burning a sheep. It's not done very easily. You have to light up logs, and I had to lift the sheep and throw it on top, and then keep adding logs until it was burnt. But I didn't mind because it was cold and wet down there and I was keeping warm. And while I was doing that fire I wasn't doing anything else.

Had you seen work like that done before?

Which sort of work?

The sheep work.

Sheep. No. No I hadn’t. I’d never had anything to do with sheep, to round them up. I had no sheep dog so I had to run round them. Hold them, while they were tailed. That’s cruel. One of them died afterwards. I had to help crutch them. Dag them, as we called it. Up round the backside.

Who else was there with you then?

Mr Hill would help me do that, so would do that at weekends.

How did you find Mr Hill as an employer, when he was there, when you worked with him?

Very kind. Very kind and considerate. A benevolent old gentleman. Reminded me a bit of Dad. Just a benevolent old gentlemen. He didn’t seem to, well, don’t worry about sort of thing. Not. He didn’t pick at me all the time like I used to get picked at by the other one.

Did you often find yourself, when, where you were asked to do a job and you actually hadn’t seen that work done before, because you were from the city?

Oh yes. Most situations were like that. Well on tobacco it was. On flax it was. On the farm, well you can always round up chooks by clucking and when you let them out in the morning they’re like old ducks. They tear off. The sheep, well, I gradually learnt to run. The faster you

run, the better you are. Just keep running until you can keep rounding them up and get them through the next gate. The pigs, no, I'd never tackled a great big sow before, and she had one dreadful habit. She was always so pleased to see me. Like Monday morning were clean overalls. You only had the two pair. Clean overalls Monday morning. I'd have to pick three buckets of apples, take them in, I'd open the door and there was cement up there for her and then there was mud. And as soon as I would step into this mud, she would knock me, behind the knees. And I would sit down in the mud. Those overalls were never clean for long. I tried throwing the apples over, but Mrs Hill caught me. That was not allowed. I had to go and put them on the concrete. She came to me one day and asked would I please make a bed of straw for the sow. So I took in an arm load of straw, laid it all out and made a beautiful bed on the concrete, walked outside, and the sow ate it. So I thought, well. Mrs Hill came along and she said "You haven't made that bed, do it immediately." So another arm load of straw. The sow ate it. She came up and told me off again and I said "Well look, it's your straw Mrs Hill. I can do this all day." I said, "It's eating it." She said "It does not eat hay." "No, Mrs Hill." So I carried the hay, put it down. The sow ate it. I said "Shall I continue Mrs Hill?" She said "No." She was a dogmatic type of person. But then we had to kill the pig. That was the pig we lived on for three months. I'd never seen a pig killed. I didn't know how it was done. But Mr Hill said "Sit on it." It was a very big boar too. So I sat, and Mr Hill plunged a knife into its throat. Then you have to sit on it 'til it bleeds. And then I had to help him make pork sausages. We pulled out the intestines and we made pork sausages. I don't know what we put in

those skins. Then we had to take out the pig's fry. And then we had to clean the pig altogether. And we lived on that pig for three months.

How would you sort of sum up your experiences at that particular place?

They didn't appreciate the land army. They just didn't understand we were there to help them. And really, when you consider they were getting pretty cheap labour. Thirty shillings a week, they'd paid us. They were paid our board. The thirty shillings a week they paid us is pretty cheap farm labour. And considering the farm, not that it was a big farm. But the apples were exported and that. Mr Hill told me his parliamentary wage, and it was an unbelievable wage for those days. And all expenses paid, and all meals provided, they would be what I call "well-off".

In terms of emotionally, I mean, how would you describe that experience in your life?

I was walked on, but I find when you have got to live in house, it is easier to overlook things than to be continually arguing. I didn't like the way she treated me. She treated me as a domestic. Someone begging for work. So I told her I was going, that my time was up. And she said "I thought you liked it here." I said "I love the farm, but I don't like the food." "I'm always hungry." Mr Hill turned around and said "I'm sorry to hear it, I didn't know it." But he was never there. When it's freezing cold and you've got to knock the ice off things, you'd do anything for a plate of soup, or a stew.

But to go in and get cheese on toast. No. No that was the only place I did not enjoy. I loved the work. I found it very hard. Very long. But I did not like the circumstances.

Had you ever thought about ringing up Mr Carlton, you know, the Superintendent?

No. It would have been very awkward. I was out working in the paddocks all day. Mrs Hill was working around the house. To lodge a call like that, a trunk line call, in the war, you had to wait sometimes, many hours. Trunk lines were busy. I would have had to lodge it and then hang round for hours, waiting for it. It was not a case of just ring right through. So it would be an impossibility. I thought of writing, once. And I thought, well, what can I complain about. You can't complain about the work. You've got to do it. The hours were long, but how could I say I didn't like her tone. It's easier just to ignore it, knowing that you'd be leaving there soon.

How conscious were you that there was a war going on during that period when you were on the farms?

Very conscious, because to start with you never saw many young men around. It was odd to see a young man, in his twenties, thirties, in the streets, walking. When you consider how many thousand went away. There's your eternal blackout when you're home. Always the blackout. We have blackout blinds. Blacked-out streets. Course you don't notice that when you're on the farms. But the farm you notice, the men you work with are elderly, or they're boys. And if you go to a dance, women are five women to

one man. So you just notice it in various things. Also that you can't buy certain things. You've got your coupons, but when they're gone, they're gone. You don't buy your clothes. So you have to be very careful with your coupons. It was more the austerity that you could feel.

> And you were saying to me earlier that because you had the experience in the Air Force of going to Victoria, that you noticed the difference in terms of being able to purchase things, in the different States, would you like to comment on that?

Well I saw tinned fruit. I saw washing powder over there. Over here you'd have to get down and beg for that. They still had their coupons for clothing. But items which were impossible to procure here were freely displayed on shelves over there. And when I spoke to somebody they said "Well of course you can get these things." We couldn't over here. But I think what upset me mainly over there was I learnt of what we called the "Brisbane Line". The line drawn down to Melbourne, cutting off the rest of Australia. Give it to the Japanese. It doesn't matter about those people. And I thought what am I doing over here, when I've got my family and friends over there. Who's going to look after them? We were all right, we were in Melbourne. All the big-wigs were looking after their own schemes. And that did upset me, that line.

> Can you remember who you heard, or where you heard about the Brisbane Line from?

I think somebody said it casually one day in the Air Force. Don't worry we've got the Brisbane Line. We're all right. And my husband of course knows about the Brisbane Line. He heard of it and he was in New Guinea. So it seemed to be fairly common knowledge. But anything west of that just had to go.

And when you were on the farms, you know, either Manjimup or Boyup Brook, or at this last farm you mentioned, did you hear about any major war events?

Yes. There was always the wireless and I can remember Mr Hill was home that day and I was listening to the news and it came over Special Newsflash the Japanese Diet, all the Japanese Diet has resigned. And I remember yelling to Mr Hill, right across the orchard, "It's resigned." He came back and he's ringing up all the farmers. We knew then there was starting to be strife in Japan. That the whole, well it's a Parliament, that the whole Parliament had resigned. So things like that, oh, big events. You listened to the news every night, but you never believed it, because we never retreated, we made strategic withdrawals. As my husband said, according to what you heard on the news, issued to them, the Japanese weren't anywhere near Port Moresby. He landed at Port Moresby the day before the Jap's landed there. But they weren't there. As the Commanding Officer said to all his men, "They're not there gentlemen, just ignore them." So he said. So after that I learned there were a lot of things not to believe, what you heard during the war. We were told the propaganda we shouldn't learn, that was all.

What sorts of things, was the propaganda? What sort

of things do you think you were told that weren't true?

We were told that the battle had been won, when it had not been won. We were told that we had taken something, and we hadn't taken it. We were told that there were no losses. We were told that planes went over and bombed Germany and only one was lost. And you'll find that half the squadron was lost. We only had to be told about the ships because we knew when the ships were gone; I mean you can't just hide it. You heard about the ships. But you'd hear that a hundred sailors drowned. And you'd find that five hundred drowned. The loss figures were always lied about. But it's the same in any country.

Did you know that at the time, or was it when you were a little bit older after the war that you heard about it?

Mainly after the war I learnt it, but, during the war you hear things. See we were told Darwin was bombed. And the bombs fell "harmlessly in the bush". Well afterwards I met a sailor I'd known for years, I grew up with him. He said "I was in Darwin when it was bombed." I said "What damage?" He said "The Post Office was wiped out, several buildings were wiped out." "Over two hundred people killed" he said "and I saw it." And that was during the war he told me that, and that was when I learnt to take it with a grain of salt.

Can you remember where you were when you heard about, first of all, where were you when Darwin was

bombed?

When was Darwin bombed?

February ‘42.

I was home. Living with my parents.

Can you remember when you met up with that chap who talked to you about it?

He was on leave. And I’d just come back out of the Air Force. I’d say about ‘43, ‘ay ‘43, something later.

So over 12 months later when you heard about that?

Yes.

Can you remember hearing about the bombing of the Western Australian towns, in the North?

No. We were never told that Broome was bombed. I didn’t realise that until I was watching something on TV here one night, and it said that Broome had been bombed, and I had no idea. That was kept very quiet.

You mentioned earlier that you did hear about the subs coming into Sydney?

When did the subs, bombs, December ‘41. No. No, that was when they bombed Pearl Harbour. About the beginning of ‘42. I must have been home.

Did you ever fear an invasion when you were living in Perth?

Oh, yes. Because our coast line was nothing. We were not guarded. All our boys were in the Middle East.

Did you ever fantasize about how it might happen?

No.

What might happen to you?

No. I just hoped it wouldn't. No I never fantasized what would happen to me because my brother wrote down from New Guinea, and he wrote in his letter to Mum "…If ever the Jap's land I want you to put your head, Peggy's head, that was his wife, and Win's head, in the gas oven.." Because he said "…they are animals…"

I'm just interested in that time, your experience in the war years whether it was a really sombre time or whether there were moments of gaiety. What was that sort of balance in your life?

It was a sombre time and yet you went to work, say when you weren't in the forces. You went to dances. Not many to dance with. You sort of acted gayer, happier not gayer, we don't use now days, happier than what you normally do. You seemed to be grasping at something. Enjoy yourself while you can because what's going to happen next. It was a sort of feverish activity. That's when you met so many girls who met and married a soldier,

knowing him for a week. It was grasp at what happiness, because you don't know when you'll get it again. So it was like a false gaiety we had. I found too, another thing; after I left the land army I joined a canteen. I went to work and then at night I used to serve in the canteen. That's where the soldiers would come. They could get a beautiful three course meal for a shilling, or ten cents. And I saw boys there, and what they'd seen, you could see by their faces. And that's when you realised how bad things are. I was in that canteen '44, '45. Then afterwards we'd have a dance. And of course the Americans, British, Australian soldiers, sailors, they'd all come up and they'd dance. And there were the canteen girls. Other girls would come. And you could see they were intent. They'd come back from New Guinea a lot of them and they were intent, enjoy yourself while you're still alive and then go back and fight again. So it seemed to, always at the back of your mind, was the thought, get out of life what you can because you don't know how much longer you'll have it.

Where was that canteen?

In **Irwin** Street, Perth. We were called the Signets. There were several canteens there, but we were the Signets and we were run in a proper fashion. There was a lady in charge of us and we'd be given roster duty. You'd be told on a Sunday that four of you would come in and serve lunch on a Sunday. You didn't cook it, you served it. A hot meal. And the boys would come in and there might be a hundred boys waiting to be served, mainly Australian soldiers. So you just kept serving as fast as you could. Did you go out with many of the boys that you met there?

Oh, I think I went out with two. One was an English sailor, and he was lost and lonely, and he was about 18. And all he could do was talk to me about his Mum. He asked me. He was upset. It was his Mum's birthday. He wouldn't be in Port other than the weekend when the shops were closed and how was he going to get a present to his mother. And he asked me would I, if he gave me two pound, post his mother a handbag. They were unprocureable. And I said "Do you trust me?" I said "What's to stop me getting away with your two pound." And he said "I don't think you will." I shopped around. I bought her a beautiful brown leather handbag. Some lipstick, which is unprocureable in Britain and a hankie and postage. That came to two pound. And she wrote to me. She got it. I sent it ordinary mail and she got it. And then, no, that was the only boy. I went out with him. He took me to a show one night. To the pictures. And then he asked me would I, would he buy me a present. I don't know whether he was on the Maidstone. The HMS Maidstone, an aircraft carrier I think it was. I don't know whether he ever got through the war. I can still see him, an 18 year old kid. Upset because his Mum didn't have a birthday present from him. He said "No good sending her money, you can't buy anything in Britain." No handbags, no lipstick. You'd meet nice boys, but you'd, don't ever get romantically involved. They were gone. Gone the next day. You don't know whether you'll ever see them again. You don't know when their ship will be in port again. You just laugh and talk with them. Just say Good Luck and off they go.

Do you think that there was pressure on young woman at that time because of young men going away to war

and maybe being killed, to be sexually involved?

I don’t know. You see, in those days sexually involved was not done like it is now. Now-a-days it appears to be nothing. It’s a habit. You live together or something. It wasn’t done. Possibly yes. I know a lot of the girls went with Americans. I went out with one and Ugh! I didn’t like him, and that was the end of that arrangement. But he took me to a show, but he, oh, talked about the States all night and I thought, oh, heavens, and that was the end of him. So I just didn’t, wasn’t interested. But a lot of the girls I think would have got sexually involved with the Yank’s. I don’t know. Well, yes, judging by the number of children born here during the war, some of them black, yes there was a fair bit of it going on.

Did you meet many Americans?

Yes. Quite a few, yes.

Did you notice them around the Perth streets?

Oh yes. They were there. They were coming. They were in Melbourne just before I left Melbourne. They were coming there then. When, about the time Macarthur was there. They were everywhere then. But that too made us angry. If there was an American in a shop, he was served first. And no way, ever, could an Australian soldier get a taxi, or could anyone call a taxi, if there was an American standing there. They were known as big tippers, so they got taxis. They got everything. We were just left out in the cold. And what upset me about them, their attitude was, it’s all right, we’re here to save you. You’re right

now. And I had one stock answer. We've been going a long time, and we're tired. Now it's about time you came into it. "You were late in the last war, and you're late in this war." They didn't like that. I said "We've carried on now without you, for a long time." I said "Let our boys come back and Australia will be all right." But, I admit we needed them in the end. They were the only ones between us and the Jap's.

Did you ever used to go down and look at the ships in port?

Yes. I went over the Maidstone. I went over several British ships.

Who would you go down with?

I went down with a girlfriend that lived in the next street. She and I worked in the same canteen, and she took. She said let's go down and go over it. The public's welcome. So we went down. Walked all over. They'd just look at you as you'd go on board. To see you're not a Jap I suppose. Not going to plant a bomb. It was interesting. But I used to get so sad because I'd just look at the ship, and I'd look at the boys and I'd think, well, are you going to come back in one piece. It's a sad time when you see the ships go out. And when you see the troop ships go out, that's the worst.

If you were walking down Perth streets, or when you were on your way to work in the canteen, who might you actually see on the streets during that time of

the war?

Some soldiers. Some Australian soldiers. Usually on leave. You could see they'd been through it. You could just tell by looking at their faces and their eyes. Yank's. A lot of Yank's. A lot of Pommie sailors. That's about it. Mainly servicemen. Very few men of that age in mufti. Very few.

If we go back to the Land Army, when you were working in the country down South, and then you're coming back to Perth. When you met, you know, family friends and people who you knew, did you find that they'd heard of the Land Army?

Well, they knew it when I joined up. I just said "I am joining the Land Army. I don't know whether they'd known of it or not.

What about today, do you think people have heard much about the Land Army?

I don't think so. I think they think there were the Army, Navy and Air Force. And if you said Land Army, I don't think they'd know about it. It was sneered at when I spoke of it once. "Oh what did you do?" They imagined you just sit there in overalls and look glamorous. It was blinken hard work some of it.

How would you compare, you know, the work you did in the Air Force and in the Land Army?

You can't compare it. In the Land Army, they work. In the Air Force, you stroll around with a file under your arm. And from what I can see, nobody did anything. They sat at desks, got fatter and fatter and that was it.

Did you have to march?

When we did our training we had about a five mile route march. But only one morning, we had to line up outside Victoria Barracks and do a route march; they must have decided we were getting stale or something. But by sheer bad luck, I'd gone with a girlfriend to a skating rink the night before and I don't skate, and I spent more time sitting on the ice than skating. And Madam was walking behind us and it was dripping wet. We only had the one uniform. Heavy winter. I'm afraid I received rather a bad lecture, until I pointed out that it was dirty and I'd washed it overnight. "Don't do it again ACW."

Were you aware at the time when you joined the Land Army that it wasn't a service and that different conditions existed than in the Air Force?

I knew it wasn't a service because we didn't have to swear the oath. But, I imagine conditions would be different because you wouldn't be a Battalion, all put together, you'd be individuals working on farms or wherever you were needed.

Well, because of that different status of not being a service, do you feel, how do you feel about the fact that if you were a member of the Land Army and not in a service, that different conditions applied

once, well during the war years and also once you'd finished? You know, in terms of the money being different, concessions during the war years and after.

There were no concessions that I can remember. Money was less. Worked harder. But there were no concessions. Nothing after the war. There may have been something if I'd stayed in until the end of the war, but, I did a year's service and that was it. Just hand the stuff back and that was the last I heard of it.

Do you think that the work the Land Army did do has been adequately acknowledged?

I don't think so. Not for how hard we worked. And when you consider that the girls replaced the men. We were doing man's work, not women's work. You had to be physically very strong. And the hours we worked, I don't think there were enough acknowledgements given. I mean you can't belong to an organisation now, any returned person, you can't even belong to an organisation. You get no benefits. Possibly because it was not a "sworn" service.

So once you left the Land Army, what did you do on leaving that farm down in the South?

I went back and lived with my parents. Went back to my job. Ledger Machine Operator.

Was that difficult, adjusting?

It was hard working in an office after being outdoors for so long. But I worked with a wonderful lot of people in the markets. They treated me… it was good to be treated as a lady again. I mean, after the farm. We were always treated as ladies on places, but that last place we'd been talked down to, like Cinderella or the Maid. I learnt what it was to be addressed by my name, Miss Stevens. Spoken to as a lady and at least at that job, my hours were a certain time. If I hadn't finished I would stay back. I could have lunch hour when I wished. They were a very, very good firm. I was the only lady in the whole firm. And they treated me more or less, that I might break. They wouldn't let me lift anything. I wasn't allowed to lift my typewriter, which was rather funny, considering some of the things I'd already lifted. I adjusted back. And then of course the war finished. Well, of course, I thought we'd go back to normal, but after the war had finished it took a long, long time to go back to normal.

What date was it you left the Land Army?

It would be about August '44. About August I think.

So you were in… how long were in the job, the Ledger job after you left the Land Army?

Until I was married, which was in October '43, '45. So I was in that job from '44 to '45.

So over twelve months?

I was there for about, up until the January, then I left. So yes was in there for quite some time in that job, I loved it.

So do you remember where you were when the war finished?

Yes. I was working at my job. And rumours were going around. And everybody couldn't do their work properly. Japan has… it is surrendering. We thought she'd surrender after that first atom bomb, but didn't. Then they said if, when she surrenders, the siren will blow. And the siren blew that day. But it was a false alarm, she hadn't surrendered. So back to work I went. Next day, it came right over "The war is over." So the boss said "Everybody go home." I couldn't get on a trolley bus, it was full. Full of people shrieking, shouting. So I walked home, it was only two miles. So that's what I was doing. I was at work. But we were only half heartedly working.

And were there celebrations in the Perth streets?

Perth streets, yes. I went… walked through them for a time. Everyone was going mad. Then I went to the Wesley Church, joined the service there. And then I went home. It was getting really wild. Wild, not wild, we wouldn't call wild as they would these days. Everybody shouting, more like New Years Eve. Everybody shouting and yelling. Especially those in uniform. Yes. So if I'd have been down that farm when war ended I would not be shouting "Yippee!" That would have been high celebration and then I'd have to wait until I could be driven into Albany to catch a train. So I imagine Mrs Hill.

Did you hear much about the atom bombs being dropped at the time?

When the atom bomb was dropped, yes. It came over the news. “We have dropped a bomb on Hiroshima.” They called it Hirosheema in those days, not Hiroshima. “And most of the city has been devastated.” And they called an Atom bomb. We’d never heard of an atom bomb or a bomb that would destroy a whole city. Then, that’s when the rumours started, of Peace. Then they dropped another one on Nagasaki, and that’s when the Emperor decided he’d better call it quits.

How did you feel about the dropping of the bombs at the time?

I’ve been upset since I’ve seen photos of the women and children. But then, I look at it the way a lot of men, returned men, do. There were thousands and thousands of our boys being killed everyday in New Guinea. Being shot down out of planes. Ships being sunk. The Jap’s thought nothing of murdering, machine gunning nurses, nuns, children and women. Well we’d just kill some of their’s for a change. Well, by dropping that bomb, it was a dreadful thing, by dropping it, it stopped thousands and thousands of allied troops and civilians being raped, tortured, massacred, so I think “Well jolly good luck.” It was only a case of who made it first.

Did you ever hear any rumours, either at that time, or since the war, that in fact the war was winding up anyway and it was unnecessary for America to

actually do that? That they were doing it for their own, sort of experimental purpose?

They had to do it. After Pearl Harbour was bombed they had no option. They didn't join until after that. And that was '42 they were sent out here. They had to declare war on Japan or lose face. But the war was, we were getting on top of the war in 1943. The Germans were being pushed back. We were beating them. Well of course peace came with Germany in '44 wasn't it, I think. And the Jap's were coming South, that's when we… because Germany seemed a long way away. The boys were fighting over in Britain, thousands of them stuck in Britain. Someone said it's a wonder the island didn't sink, there was so many on it. But the Jap's were being pushed back. But '42 was our worst year ever. The Jap's were very close to Australia. They had landed… we did hear about the party that landed on Northern Australia. They took off again, they couldn't find anything interesting there. They were looking for American bases. But '42 was the worst year. Everyone was sunk in gloom. The Germans were doing all right; the Jap's were doing very well, pushing everything before them. My husband's brother was killed by a sniper's bullet in New Guinea in '42. Jap sitting up a tree got him.

Were you corresponding to your husband at that time, your future husband?

No. No, I didn't know my husband then. So… no he was married, his wife died. He had two sons. I married him after the war. But I was, in case you get involved here. I married a man and lived in Melbourne after the war. We

separated. I came back here and divorced him. I met my present husband and his wife had died, so we got married. I have a daughter by my first marriage; he has two sons by his. I have a step son in his fifties.

May I ask about your first husband, was he in the Services?

He was the son of the lady who cooked for us in Manjimup. She asked me one day, I used to go and visit them and there was this photo. She had a boy in the Army and this boy in the Air Force. He was stationed at Darwin. And she said he didn't have many writing to him, would I like to write? So we corresponded for years. Then he came back and we were married. But he turned out to be vastly different than what his mother had told me he was like. So I'm afraid it didn't work out.

Did he go to New Guinea?

No, he was at Darwin. He never got past. He was attached to the RAAF in Darwin. He was the mechanic that fixed up the engines of the planes as they were shot down. It's a wonder, because one would be working one end and one would be working the other.

Were you in fear, you know, about your brother's life during the war, or your…

Not as much as if he'd been a soldier fighting hand to hand combat. There was danger in as much as he was stationed on air fields. And every so often the Jap's would come over and bomb the air field. But he told me he

got very good at going bush. He said one day he was under a make shift shower up there and he heard them coming. He said you don't make a mistake when you hear a Zero. He said "I didn't wait." He said "the trouble was I landed on a prickly bush. But another thing that worried me, although at the time I didn't know, he told me after the war, the Jap's… our boys would come in on a beam and the Jap's would come in and follow them in on the same beam. And the pilot, our pilot would land, stand up in the cockpit, wave to the soldiers getting out, in would come the Jap and drop an egg on him. And there'd be no plane, no pilot, no nothing. And Ron said you never rushed over to the plane, you waited to see who was following him in. So he said that was one thing that he thought might happen, that he would get bombed from the air. But there was never any arm to arm combat, because the airfields were right out of the zone of the Jap's.

Any of your girlfriends, you know, during the war years, did any of them get engaged to American soldiers?

No. They were all going with boys, started before the war broke out. My brother married his girl that I brought home, when she was thirteen. My mate married the boy she met when she was sixteen. The other mate married another boy she met when she was seventeen. So they all got married. And no, no girl I know married a Yank.

And did your first husband, did you get engaged by letter?

No. No, I waited 'til he came back.

> And what effect do you feel that the war had, you know on your life personally, you know, what other direction might it have gone if there hadn't been a war?

I was going with a boy, when the war broke out, I'd been going with him for a year. I got engaged when I was twenty. Then I started to get restless and I'd be trying to explain to him, he lived just down the road, we saw each other every day, that I'd been going with him since I was seventeen and I would just like to go out sometimes on my own or meet somebody else. And he wouldn't listen. We fixed the date for the wedding, May '42. And then I met a Sydney soldier coming through. I was introduced to him by a mutual friend and I wrote to him. I told Johnny I was writing to him. He was just a pen friend. He was an orphan. But then I gradually became interested in him. He came back and I knew that I'd made a mistake. He came back in March '42 and I broke the engagement. So I'd have married Johnny if the war hadn't broken out. But then of course this other boy, he went away to New Guinea, got through alright. But time, I'd only met him twice, time was against us. It just sort of fizzled out.

> Do you think that from your friends' lives too, who were young women at that age, that the war did have a dramatic effect on personal relationships, you know engagements and marriages?

Not in most cases. One got engaged, married Eric, when she was twenty one and she did. He was stationed at Rottnest for the whole war. He won't go to Rottnest

Island now, he hates it. He wanted to get away and fight, but he was on Rottnest. They got married when they said they would. The other girl, her boyfriend never joined up, he was at the workshops. They got married when she said they would. When she was twenty one. So really their lives were never affected. My sister in law, yes her's was. She was married to my brother when war broke out. That's right, about the time war broke out. And she just sat home, night after night, writing him letters and looking after two little children. So her life was affected. Especially as he came back from the war, was discharged and dropped dead with a heart attack six years later, when he was thirty three. They said it was not war caused, well I don't know what caused it, if the war didn't. So that affected his life I think. So she had really no life. He was gone out of it for four years. You'd say she had very little married life.

Getting back to the Land Army, were you ever asked to join a Union, in the work you were doing?

No. In those days, I'd never been in a Union in my life. I've worked in offices, nobody asked me to join a Union. I went back to work after we sold the Service Station. I worked for nine years and nobody came and asked me to join a Union. If they had of, they'd have been helped out the door. I don't believe in Unions. If I'm getting underpaid, I face the boss. But in this case, in Mrs Hill's case I didn't, because she was not really my boss. It was very awkward there. But there were no Unions. Not for services, that I know of.

And in terms of your health, do you feel that the Land Army affected your health in any way?

Well I know I had very, very good health in the Land Army. Exceptionally good health. But since then my back has worn away. They've proved, I was told 20 years ago, it was practically worn away. It is worn away now, down to the lower region. The only thing I can put it down to is the work I did in the flax mill.

Was there heavy lifting involved?

Throwing those bales of hay, high. Just two discs are not there. They're worn out. Well they wouldn't be worn out sitting in an office. They called it "Shearer's Back". The shearer's got it through too much bending. That's the only thing I can put it down to. But of course it didn't start, well that didn't start playing up 'til I was about twenty six, well that's when your bones… when your twenty five your bones start to deteriorate. You've reached your peak and then they deteriorate. It's taken a long time but they've gone now. It's no good worrying about it, not at my age.

If we… I can ask you a few questions about the girls who joined the Land Army, that you met, what sort of backgrounds did you feel they came from, similar to yours or very different?

Oh, there were shop assistants. I don't know what Betty was. She might have been a shop assistant. None of them worked in an office. Except one who was sent down one Christmas. She was about 5'8" and built to match. Well

built. More like an Amazon. And she was attending University. And she joined the Land Army for the school holidays. I think to earn money to stay at University. She came from Nedlands, which is equivalent to the Melbourne Toorak or say Sydney's Vaucluse and she thought we were disgusting. We were nothing but animals. It was beneath her dignity to speak to us. I said "What have we done?" Well it was mainly when we were laughing and joking with each other. At the table someone would say "Can I have the bread please?" So you'd pick up the loaf and throw it. You got to learn to be a good catch. It was only in fun. We were not like… if we'd done that at home we'd have been shot. Or someone would give something, somebody and say "Put it on the next man's plate." And she reckoned we were rude, ignorant and bad mannered. She lasted a week. Being the tallest and biggest, we **gave** her the heaviest leaf to carry, we thought she could carry it. She dropped it. So we found that she had to have the smallest bale. And there's this big Amazon striding up there with this little bale on her back. She went to Mr Johanson at the end of the week and said "I will not work with them. They are nobody's." Mr Johanson said "Right, oh, I'll take you back on the train." I said to him afterwards, "Didn't you say anything?" And he said "I told her you were all ladies, young ladies." But she took hijinks for bad manners. That was all. But she was a snob. She should have been sent to Mrs Hills farm. But no, she did not fit in. She was Somebody. She was going to University. I said "Look, I went to a Business College, I work in an office and I've been a private secretary, now don't treat me as if I'm a half wit or the garbage collector." I said, "I'm just as high as you are, but I was taught at a Business College, you're being

taught at University." And she said, "Well why do you act as you do?" I said "High spirits, fun." I said "If I went out to tea, I wouldn't act like that." I said "We just have fun, you've got to relax sometimes." Of course we'd lie on the floor and wrestle and she thought that was disgusting. So I'm afraid that was one Land Girl that should never have been in the Land Army.

What about the other end of the social scale, I suppose you'd say, were there any girls who, you know, had fairly, oh you know, sort of poor, or difficult backgrounds, with very little education?

No. The average girl I met was fairly well educated. At least we all went to State Schools. Poor, well you can't tell whether a person's poor, when you all dress the same. They all spoke well, none of them acted dumb. They're just the same as anybody else.

I'm just trying to find out if there's sort of a diversity of backgrounds in the Land Army or if you tended to come from, you know, similar backgrounds?

No I think we all came from working class people. Different walks of life, but all, just ordinary Australians.

What do you mean by different walks of life?

Well, I know one that was a shop keeper. A shop assistant. Another one I think was from a factory. I was from an office. So we all came together from different walks of life. But it was hard to tell. I remember Vera

Brownlie, at Boyup Brook, quietly spoken, beautifully spoken. But I said "Did you work in an office?" She said "No." But she never did tell me where she worked, but she maybe, I was going to say a nurse, but she wouldn't have got into the Land Army if she was a nurse. So quietly spoken, a real quiet little lady, she was. Sweetie.

> From the girls you met in the Land Army, what sort of reasons would you give for them joining up?

Well, Pat, little Pat, seventeen, full of fun always laughing, always running everywhere. I couldn't imagine her in the Services. I meant the Army or Air Force or Navy. She never marched anywhere or walked anywhere. Pat flitted. She just would not suit on a parade ground nor would she sit in an office. Betty I don't know. Betty was always very small and very pale, yet strong as an ox. I couldn't say why. No I don't know.

> Do you think sometimes girls joined up, you know, for a job, because it was at the end of the Depression Years?

I don't think so. Because all those I worked with had jobs. They all left jobs.

> Did you meet any girls who had just come from school?

No. 'Cause in those days girls left school at fifteen. I don't know what the army… What was the age for the Land Army?

> Well it seems to have been a bit lower in this State. There were some girls who joined at fifteen.

Were there? No. I never met anyone that young. The average age… Pat was the youngest at seventeen. The average was eighteen.

> And, another thing was, I wanted to ask about, was with you girls living together, and sort of, men being away and so forth, did you ever come across you know, women who were involved with each other sexually?

No. Never. We were all ordinary ladies. Girls… well most of them were a bit young to have a boyfriend at eighteen. They might have. I was the only one with a boyfriend overseas. Oh, a couple of the girls at Boyup Brook had chummed up with boys down there. No, being a lesbian didn't seem to come into it. I never met one down there.

> I just wondered if there were, just how they were treated by others.

I think we'd have booted them out. I don't know. That was such a shocking thing those days.

> It wasn't spoken about?

No, it wasn't spoken about. In fact I don't think I knew about it. I must have been well in my thirties before I heard of lesbian, and I asked somebody what it was. And they said "The same as a man homosexual." I said "What's a homosexual?" It shows how ignorant we were.

If we can go back to your training that you did at Fairbridge, how useful was that, when you went out on your future placements?

Well I know how to weed a vegetable garden. I knew how to do Emu stalking or picking. Well, it just taught you what it's like working outside, even if it's raining. Hard work it can be. Really it's not hard there, compared with what we did on the outside. Not half as hard. But they just wanted to see if you could do it, whether, I don't know whether you say this, during the months you might find you can't do the work, because a lot of the girls, some of the girls I know had to get out. They just couldn't do the work, at certain times of the month. So you had to learn whether you could do it. Because you just can't say to the boss "Excuse me while I knock off for the day."

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about that time your life or about the war years?

No. I was glad I joined the Land Army, I loved it. I loved the work. I did like the girls I met. I liked most of the people I met. I wish I'd stayed in for the last year now, because although the boss had been contacting me. The girl, the Ledger Machine Operator he had put in was hopeless and war time couldn't get staff. And he kept writing to me asking if I'd come back. And he was just a dear old stick. He had Parkinson's Disease and he was worried enough. So I got out, and went back. I got a message from him about fifteen years ago, from his son. Old Mr Mercer's dead now. "If you want a job, will you

please come back?" I sent a message back again "I'm no longer in my twenties." But he sent another message back "You have a job for life, if you want it." So I thought, well that was very sweet. The ledger machines now are nothing like they were then. I couldn't operate one.

We are starting this at the very end, but what year was it that you were born?

1921, in Chidlow.

One thing that struck me about your experiences during the war was that… was it true that you traveled far more then you would have done if the war hadn't have come?

Yes. Yes, see that way, I saw a lot of the south west that I would never have seen otherwise. Since then I've been down there quite a bit but no, up 'til that time I'd never been anywhere. I went to England when I was five with my parents, but that was about the only thing that ever happened to us. So I'd say that, yes, I managed to see the world, I managed to see how the other half lives. I managed to see a terrible bush fire at **Manjimup**, and that's when I first saw a bush fire, and it was a dreadful thing.

Were you involved in, were the Land Army girls called in at any stage to help with it?

No, not permitted. We did knock off from work and we didn't tell the boss. And we knew there was a big fire further over, so we kept walking 'til we found it. Then

we went and asked the farmer could we help. He said “No, no, it’s all right, we’ve got enough volunteers.” He said. “At the moment, we can’t do anything.” It was at the top of these enormous gum trees. So we walked back and the boss met us and said “Where have you been?” So we told him we’d been to see if we could help with the bush fire and I’m afraid we copped it. One, we should not have left the plantation without telling him. Two, we cannot fight bush fires, we belong to the Land Army. There are volunteer fire fighters for that. And three, don’t ever do that again.

> Sorry, you were listing some things that you thought were experiences you’d had because of the war and then we got… I shoved you on a side track about the bush fire, you were saying, you know, you traveled more. What other ways do you thing the war affected your life as an individual?

Well it changed my whole life. Changed my outlook on a lot of things but it did change my life in as much, I didn’t get married when I was going to or to whom. It’s made me… I love farms. Up until then I would never have seen a farm. Now my daughter married a farmer. Once a year we go up for a week or so and we mind that farm while they go out to the beach. There’s nothing much, chooks, dogs, cats, maybe a pig. Sheep look after themselves. Got to see the lambs are all right, if they’re there. And I have a fair idea of what to do. I know about the rain water tanks, and switching them over and things like that. So that gave me an outlook that I wouldn’t have had, if I hadn’t joined the Land Army. And I met some very nice girls. But of course, time goes on

and you shift away and you don't know where they end up. That's why I'm hoping if they have a reunion in Perth next year, I'll go and see if I can recognize some of them, because I would like to. I've met one since. One of the reps who used to call into the garage and see us here, got married again and he brought his wife in. I gave one look at her and I said "Oh its Scho'y." Her name was Edwina Laura Schofield and she said "Nobody calls me that." So we called her Scho'y. Scho'y and Ray had just got married. That would be twenty years ago I suppose. So that's one I saw again. She was from Boyup Brook. But I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Why did you decide to work at the canteen and how did you apply to work there?

I had a friend who worked at the canteen. She was in the next place in the markets and she said they were looking for girls, they needed help, could I spare a few nights a week or an occasional weekend? So I said "Yes." They took me along, but you have to be vetted first, make sure you're not in for… look for a man or something I suppose, I don't know. But the lady talked to me and then she said "Yes, we'd like to have you." And see the canteen's go to keep… the girls have got to keep a good name. We're not there to be picked up and taken outside. You're there to work and to talk to the servicemen, serve them, dance with them. But we're not brothels; we were a canteen, so you had to be sort of "looked over" first. And I quite enjoyed that. I kept that up for a while. I think, yes, the war finished. But it used to make me sad to see the look on the men's faces, the look in their eyes. You knew they'd been in battle, you didn't have to ask. My brother

had the same look when he came back, but not because he was in battle, but he said he saw sights he never wished to see again. When you see a bloke blown up in front of you, that's not funny.

How do you feel if there's another war, I mean, how do you feel about the role of women in that war?

If there's another war, there won't be any need for anybody to leave home. We're just going to get blasted off the map. I'm just heading that way, because if they drop an atomic bomb, well I think they're hydrogen now, on Perth, the shock will go as far as **Mundaring**, which is six miles up the road. I'll be in my car and I'll be half way to Kalgoorlie. But then what's the good of living… somebody said to me, I'll go bush and wait 'til the wars over. I said "Now they've dropped a bomb, so you pop up. Where are you going to go and buy your stores? There are no shops, they've been wiped out. There are no vegetables; they don't grow on ground filled with radiation." So I said "You're dead anyway of hunger, you might as well get blown up." No, if there's another one, I don't think we'll have to move. I think they'll just keep putting bombs on each other. And that will just wipe out the place.

Do you think, you know, we've learnt anything from the Second World War?

No. There'll always be Kaiser Bill, Wilhelm **Kaiser** and there'll always be a Hitler. There's always someone who wants to own the world. Now at the moment we've got, I think the Russians are frightened of **America**, and

America's frightened of Russia. Two big powerful people. Britain's not that powerful like she was. And I think that each one will be too scared to start something. But if they want to start something, let them fight it out between the two of them. Let us keep out of it. That's the way I look at it. We're too small to bother. Britain's very small. See, Britain in the last war had nothing. She was being supplied with all the equipment. She started out with nothing, because, Hitler was crying out all the time "Disarm!" and Britain was disarming, while Hitler was building up an army. The war started, Britain had nothing. No men, no equipment. That's why they were caught.

Well how do you feel about American bases in Australia?

I used to say in one was that it's a darn good thing because if they're threatened the Yanks will come down here so fast to defend them, but then of course it means we'll be bombed anyway. I think we have to have them. And I think we have to have their ships in the Indian Ocean, because the Eastern States do not worry about us. We're here, we're isolated, we're the poor country cousin, let us just be ignored. We've got to have somebody come down. I found that attitude during the war, with Melbourne people. People said to me… one lady I was billeted with… Mum sent me a Western Mail, there was a picture of Perth in it. She looked at it, she said "But your streets are paved." I said "Well what did you think, we ran along on goat tracks?" She was amazed. Now my daughter went over to Melbourne for a quick trip when she was seventeen, that's 1963. She went into have her done and the young

lady asked where she was from, and she told her. And she said "Do you have dances over there?" And Marcia said "Yes, we have balls and dances." "But who do you dance with?" And Marcia said "Well who do you think we dance with?" She said "Oh well, the girls said there's only **Aborigines** and pensioners in WA." How do you get to be an old age pensioner if you weren't young once? So Marcia said "Oh we dance with the Abo's." That was the end of it. Now that's how ignorant some people are regarding us. It upsets me.

> Do you think there's that sort of division between city and country people?

Yes. City people don't understand the country people. I do, because I've been in the country, I've seen the way my family battled up there. Getting nothing for their product. It would take them a long time to raise… living on the smell of an oil rag. And city people saying "Well why don't they walk out?" What if all the farmers walked out? Where would we get our meat, our butter, our bread? They can't see that. There are five of them up where they are now at Bullsbrook walked out. Just closed the gates, walked out. You can't sell, so you might as well hang on.