

# Australians at War Film Archive

## Gloria Berry (Glo Girl) - Transcript of interview

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<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1610>

### Tape 1

- 00:35 **Mrs Berry, thank you very much for being involved in the archive project. The first thing I'm going to ask you to do is just give a very brief summary, if you can, of your life up until this point?**
- Well, I was born in St. Peter's on the 25th of December 1924. I went to St Peter's School and then I went to Arncliffe,
- 01:00 the Domestic Science School, and then to Kogarah High. When I finished there I finished, because I wanted to work and I got a job. Biscuits and Confectionery, that was my, over in a shop in Marrickville. I had to walk there and walk back. It took about an hour to walk there and walk back in the winter time, the summer time, any time at all. After that I did various things. My mother was a music
- 01:30 teacher. She put me through, I did all my exams, got my cap and gown when I was 13. That's the ALCM [Australian London College of Music] and LLCM [Licentiate London College of Music] that's after my name, and then I went to work, I think I went down to the radio stations. I worked with Harry Yates and with Allan Toohey and with Uncle Tom on 2SM, Uncle Tom's radio, and I went there every Saturday,
- 02:00 I went for a lot of years there. Then there was a Deanna Durbin contest. I went into that, came about seventh, I think. I wasn't like her at all. I was only very tiny. But then I decided I wanted to sing instead of play the piano. But it was very good, the piano stood me in good stead for reading my manuscripts, I could read straight from the manuscript so I could harmonise. So that's what I did. I worked with the Tex
- 02:30 Morton Show. And then the Bob Dyer Show. Then I went to Christie's. I was singing at Christies. And first of all I went to Rose's. That was a cabaret up in York Street. I worked with them for a lot of years. Then I went to the Bright Horizon, I think it was called, a Humphrey Bishop on the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation], we did a show every week and I was in a
- 03:00 sextet, then there was six of us. I was working with Gladys Ives for a while in a quartet of hers. I'd go to work in the morning, we'd record, we'd rehearse first, then we'd do the show in the afternoon. No, the next day we'd do the show, then in the afternoon I'd go out to Homebush and we did some recordings just for the television, not for television,
- 03:30 for the radio. They did a couple of, they weren't televisions but we were on the screen in theatres and things advertising Lifebuoy Soap. And Horlicks malted milk. Then I went to, I worked as a stenographer for a while, as a secretary. Then I went to, I joined the army. Well, that was a long time after, but I dunno what happened in
- 04:00 between. I was just about 1944 I joined the army suffering a broken heart. I went there and thought I was going to go away to the Foreign Legion. But they put me at Victoria Barracks and that's where I was stationed at Victoria Barracks. I used to go home just as usual every night. So I took a job at Romano's singing the dinner session and the boys knew that at the barracks, so when this opportunity
- 04:30 came up to join the entertainment unit they came and told me and I applied and I was accepted and Peter Finch came to interview me. I just took one look at him and I said, "You're on a wrong horse." He said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Well, I know you act. I don't act." He said, "Have you ever tried?" I said, "Yes I have, in school plays, in church plays and things like that." So he said, "Will you come out and give it a fly?" And I said, "OK."
- 05:00 So I went out and got in the back of the truck and in the front of the truck there was another girl sitting. I was trying to look at her and she was trying to look at me. Anyhow, we got out there and we read the scripts. We took over from the female impersonators in the army. We were the first few girls in the army as soldiers. Soldiers to act. So we read the script and the boy I took over from, he was a very, very nice little boy, Billy Donaldson,
- 05:30 and he upset me. He came out and he said, Peter was talking to him and he came out and he said, "Put

these down your blouse,” and they were great big split peas I think they were. So I had to do that and then we travelled down to the southern tour down to all the army camps down there. To Heidelberg and all those. We came back, and then we were going to New Zealand,

06:00 to New Guinea. And I couldn't go because I wasn't 21. So then they decided they would send me after a while, and we got up there just before peace was declared. But I still haven't got the Pacific Star. So anyhow, that was the story of my life. We stayed up there for five months and then over to Rabaul for eight months doing these shows. It was really great fun.

06:30 We had a lot a fun and a lot of hard work too. A lot of mosquitoes and sweat, you know, with the sun and everything it was really hard. But we enjoyed it very much. And then when I came back from there my OC [officer commander] was Albert Chapelle. Do you know Albert Chapelle? He was a singer on the J.C. Williamson shows. Well, he was my OC, and he said, “Would you like to go to Japan?” I said, “Please, yes I would.” So he said, “Well, we'll put you in for,

07:00 to go for a interview with this company.” I went down, it was John Alden, the Shakespearean actor. He was one of the fellows in charge of the unit. So I joined them and I went over to Japan for 13 months. I was there from December, no, September until the January the following year. It was '46-'47 and I came in 1948 and that was a very, very

07:30 rewarding thing. In the meantime I had always worked in night clubs. I've worked at Romano's and at Christie's and Rose's. I haven't sung at Prince's. That's the only one that I missed, really. That was, it stood me in good stead because I thought I was going into the army as a singer but I wasn't. I had to act in plays. We did While the Sun Shines and French Without Tears. And

08:00 it was very interesting. I learned a lot from Peter. Peter used to stand out the front and sort of tell us what to do.

**We'll go back and talk about your army time in detail during the day. When the war finished, if you could just give me just a very brief summary of what your career has been after the war?**

After the war? Now let me think. I went straight up to Japan.

**When you came**

08:30 **out of the army out of the entertainment?**

Yes. And I went straight with another unit up to Japan, with DAD Amenities we were attached, to we're Number 6 Special Show DAD Amenities and I don't have the, what's the medal you get up there? Seems like I'm whinging a lot, doesn't it? But no, I thought I would get it but still I'm writing away to see if I can get it now. And I used to go back to Christie's and I worked there, singing with a band with,

09:00 Monty Richardson was the band leader and we did a lot of broadcasts. We used to broadcast and I became engaged when I was in Japan. I was there for 11 days and my husband asked me if I'd marry him and I said, “Don't be silly. I'm coming back here again next year.” And he said OK. So for 11 days from, till the 15th day he kept asking me every day, so I gave in on the 15th day and I said, “OK.”

09:30 But then his discharge came through and he came home and I was to come home soon after him, I followed in the January. When I got home he was practicing up in Port Macquarie. He was a dentist and I got cold feet. I thought, “This is good. I'll go back to work and earn plenty of money and we'll get married and we'll have plenty of money when I get married.” I read in the paper where he'd been,

10:00 the boat he was out in fishing capsized. He was nearly drowned and I panicked like mad. My father came in to me in the morning and he said, “Gloria, have you read the paper?” I said, “No, I haven't read the paper.” It's seven o'clock in the morning, I was still sound asleep. Anyhow, I read the paper and then I got on the phone and Warren said, “What are you talking about?” I said, “You're on the front page of The Sydney Morning Herald.” He said, “Oh.” So then I thought

10:30 I nearly lost him. So then we were married the following August and he died about eight years ago now. I'm very sad about that. That was a blow to me. But anyhow, life must go on, mustn't it? But I'm digressing now from the subject.

**That's OK. What I think I might do is go back, and we might start talking about your childhood and where you grew up in Sydney.**

Well, I grew up

11:00 one of five children. I was the youngest. I had three brothers and a sister, and the brothers used to tease the daylights out of me. But my mother taught piano and I followed her. She put me through, I got all my examinations and we went for various districts for the eisteddfods and we did very well out of those and I had a trunk full of cups and lots of

11:30 medals. But I dunno where the, I've got the medals but the cups have all long since gone. We found out the boy next door was crawling through the roof into the back garage and stealing the cups. I don't know what he was doing with them, but anyhow I don't have any now. Then what'd I do?

**Can you tell me about your mother? Like, where she came from and what she was like as a**

**person?**

Well, Mum,

- 12:00 as I said, was a music teacher. The photo of her over there playing the violin. She played the violin too, and she was one of four children. Uncle Charlie. Auntie Alice and Auntie Ruby and Mum. Her, no, her nephew it was, was Manning Clark. You know, Professor Manning Clark? And we were very close. He used to come up here and stay with us. We didn't talk about, two things
- 12:30 were taboo in the house, the Labour Party and Aborigines, and Dymphna, his wife, was very keen to get me enrolled. I still belong to the Manning Clark House. They send me all the brochures and everything. I send money to stay belonging to it. And Sebastian, Manning's son, is a very good friend of mine. He keeps me up to date with everything, but I've never really joined anything. So I can't really go down to see
- 13:00 them. Well, it's too far anyhow. I can't drive down there now. I don't drive out of town, so -

**And your father, what did he do?**

He was with the Water Board. He was a foreman with the Water Board. I don't think it was a great wage, but it kept us all pretty comfortably. Mum taught piano, as I said, every day from seven o'clock in the morning until school time when the kids ran off to St Peter's School. And then

- 13:30 after school from about half past three up until seven. She'd come out and have a bite to eat sometimes, then she'd teach till ten o'clock at night. She was a very hard worker. She was determined, out of five children one of them was going to play the piano. She took me in at a fortnight old, put my fingers on the piano and played the five finger exercises. Then fortunately I liked it. When I grew up and when I was seven
- 14:00 I had honours for the elementary examination. I'd gone through all the senior and preparatory and all that sort of thing. And that was an experience too. Growing up in St Peter's. It was different then. It was very, very different to what it is now. I don't go back to see the house anymore, I used to go back, I've got great photos of it. But my grandmother lived in the street behind and we could go straight through to her place and
- 14:30 that was great. But I don't remember my grandmother. She died when I was two years old. And I used to say that I remembered her walking up and down the street with me on her hand, you know. But I don't remember her.

**You say St Peter's was different then, could you explain in what way it was different and what it was like growing up?**

Well, it was still, I suppose, a working class area, but there were great houses and I went to my own church up St Peter's Church.

- 15:00 It was a great church. I was very grateful for that church because I've always gone to church. I go to church down there every Sunday. When I was in Japan I went up to the churches there, and in Lae. Father Dayish, I think it was, he kept me going to the church in New Guinea. When I came back to Australia we were going to be married
- 15:30 and we decided we didn't have a church to go to. And Warren's mother and father, well, his father was Presbyterian but his mother confided to me that she was Church of England and when Warren was born he was baptised by Bishop Hilliard in the Church of England Church. So that made it easier, and we were married in St. Andrew's Cathedral. It was a very, very nice wedding. My mother had a heart attack before we went down, but we got through that somehow.
- 16:00 We had a doctor sitting with her at the time. But it was very, very, a very stressful time then. That word stress wasn't in the language then, though. I dunno what we called it, but it wasn't stress.

**As a child what kind of things would you do to play around St. Peter's?**

Well, I didn't have much time for playing. I played the piano for two hours in the morning before I went to school and for two hours in the afternoon. We had three pianos in the house. There was one in the

- 16:30 front room where Mum used to teach. There was one in the lounge room and there was one in a back room where I used to practice. So I didn't really have much time. But I joined the Youth Group up at the church and the fellow that was there was a Mr Newth, which I was very grateful for, as I said before, because when I came back I went down to see him at St. Andrew's Cathedral and he said, "I'd be very glad to marry you, Gloria." So it didn't pose a problem at all. So that's where we were married by Canon Newth. He wasn't
- 17:00 Canon then. I don't know whether he's still alive, I think he was very sick last time I heard from him.

**You mentioned to me that you were involved in radio. Could we talk about that and how that came about? When was the first time you went down to sing on radio?**

Well, that was Uncle Tom on 2SM and we used to go in of a Saturday afternoon. And the studio full of kids, and he'd just pick out somebody and we'd just get up and sing. We did

17:30 that for quite a while. Then I graduated to, I think it was the Harry Yates show.

**Can we talk about Uncle Tom first of all? Whereabouts was the studio?**

Up in is it Clarence Street, up at the top. I know I'd get out at Wynyard station and go across somewhere there. Up on the, I dunno which floor. But Uncle Tom. Tom Dunn, his name was, I think. I think that just came back. But

18:00 he had this session for younger children to sort of introduce them to singing and whatever they did on the radio. And I used to go religiously every Saturday afternoon, so I was one that, I was on every Saturday afternoon.

**Could anyone go along to that?**

Well, I think they could. All the kids, I used to go into eisteddfods against them. I used to go into the vocal in the eisteddfods and the

18:30 elocution and piano. And I've got all the certificates over there that I got from there. But yes, I think it was open to anyone. As for getting on the show I think he sort of picked who went on. I'm not quite sure on that. I was only about seven and eight years old. I wasn't very old. But after that where'd I go to? I went to the Tex Morton Show. Following that

19:00 was the Bob Dyer Show and I was with a foursome there. Olive Lester, do you? You wouldn't know Olive Lester and her sister Betty Lester. They were all singers at the time. They used to sing in the nightclubs too. And I went to one nightclub. I went to Rose's and I had a job there. I've got a little thing over there, a little thing that the boys wrote to me, it's on a Rose's card presented to Gloria Robins for her outstanding,

19:30 her what, outstanding something or other, I don't know what it was. And they put a little cup on it. That was in my early days.

**How old were you when you were starting to sing in these nightclubs?**

Sixteen, I think. I went up to Paradance. Paradance circuit, we used to sing at Rockdale and Lidcombe and Petersham Town Hall and Rockdale Castle Palais and I'd go Tuesday,

20:00 Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, four nights. I dunno when I ever had time to play. I don't remember playing very much. I remember I was clearing a block of land next door to us, I don't know why I was clearing it except I wanted to use the scythe. I'd been forbidden to touch the scythe. It was a great hand thing, you know. You went like this and I went down and got my foot and I had to hold it in and went into the toilet in the backyard and my brother Bill

20:30 saw me and he said, "What are you doing, Glory?" And I said, "Oh, Bill. I've cut my foot." "I'm going to go and tell Mum." That was the life I led with my brother. They were always picking on me for something. Even when I wagged school they told on me. But I had fun, but I don't remember. I remember playing the boys. They were three Indians and I was their prisoner. And Mum used to hear me screaming and she'd come out and I'd be on the clothes

21:00 prop. We had a clothes prop in the backyard, tied up by my plaits and I'd be, "Aahhh." It was really dreadful, but I wouldn't part with any of them. They were all fun. They've all passed on now. I only have one brother left in Western Australia, brother Bill. He's still going, he's 82 now. Waiting for me to reach 80. But he's still married. He's been married 60 years. He had

21:30 his word from the Queen. His congratulations, and from the Premier and the Prime Minister and the Governor General and the Governor, all except his sister. Me. I forgot it. I thought it was the 31st of January and I've always sent my card on the 31st of January, but he told me it was on the 8th of January. So I missed it. I sent him one after, a funny one, and I hope he got that. He got it alright,

22:00 but I hope he forgives me for not remembering his 60 years married.

**I'm sure he does. You were involved in radio at a time where everyone was, when that was one of the main forms of entertainment, did you listen to a lot of radio yourself?**

When I was home I turned it on for a little while in the morning. But I was never there in the nights. I was out working every night at Paradance. I'd have to get

22:30 a train to Arncliffe or to Rockdale or to Castle Palais out at Lidcombe and no, I used to work well Gladys Ives, I belonged to her choir and she taught me a lot about singing. It was a long time ago, though. But I don't think, no, I didn't listen to a lot of radio. I didn't have time.

**Could you explain what the**

23:00 **nightclubs were like?**

Well, of course when it was 1944, before that, 1942, they were filled, of course, with Yanks, that's all. There were only American soldiers there. I was never allowed to go down and join them or to drink

anything. I never drank anything, I drank coffee by the gallon. I could go out the back and just have my coffee. But I used to sit there all night

23:30 and just get up and sing. I wasn't allowed to fraternise at all with anybody. I wasn't allowed to dance with anybody even with Paradance. I wasn't allowed to dance with anybody, I had to sit on the stage all night. I worked at Paradance with three other girls. We sang as a quartet. There was Virginia Moxham, Joan Fraser, Gwen Griffiths and me. Gwen Griffiths lives in Port Macquarie now. She's Gwen McLean.

24:00 Yes, it was not much time for fun. I didn't get to go anywhere, really. I think I'm making up for it now. I'm going everywhere. Travelling a lot.

**The nightclubs themselves, if you could explain what they actually looked like when you walked through the door?**

Well, I can remember Rose's. You walked in the door and it was very dark and just tables all around. It was very dark,

24:30 but I just had to walk through to the back and we'd start playing and I'd be on the stage. At Christie's it was downstairs into the dark again. They were very dark. They were very nicely set up, but no, I can't remember much about those. Romano's was the same. It was a bit lighter, because it was mainly about 6:30 till 9 or 9:30, I'd

25:00 work in the dinner session when I was in the army. I wasn't supposed to, but the boys all knew what I did and they knew I loved it. I went down there and worked with Reggie Lewis, but it was a lot of fun.

**What did you wear when you were singing?**

I had about a dozen evening frocks and I'd try to alternate those frocks to wear at night. Frocks, you like word frocks? My son always comes round and says, "Mum, which frock are

25:30 you wearing today?" No, I. Or just tops and skirts. I was always dressed in long frocks going up to the station. I'd have to walk up from St. Peter's up to the station. I remember coming home at night, I'd get my frock and just throw it over my shoulder and we'd just walk up and down the stairs. One night we had a bit of a scare,

26:00 there was another girl, Joan, she used to live near me and she used to work with me now and again. We were coming down and I just looked around and I saw this big boot on the step behind me. So I said to Joan, "Throw your dress over your shoulder and just run like the devil, because there's someone behind us and I don't like the look of the boots." So we ran, but they didn't follow us. They were just a couple of American boys. They were just trying to be friendly, but we used to meet a lot of them. I met one of them one night

26:30 in the park. He'd taken a girl home, apparently, and he just come and he said, "How'ya honey?" I said, "I'm fine." He said, "What are things going, how are things going?" And I said, "They're going pretty well, thank you," and he said, "How 'bout coming over and have a little talk with me?" and I said, "Not on your life." And my Dad, he was worried about me working at night. So he went out and bought me a loaded stick. Have you heard of loaded stick?

27:00 I hadn't either. It's just a little stick like that which I used to put in my briefcase and I'd have my hand on it all the time, the end of it was full of lead. And he said, "You carry this and you can defend yourself if you have to." Well, I used to hold my hand on it, but I don't think I could've ever used it, you know, I wouldn't have. I didn't ever have any occasion too, anyhow it was quite OK. The American sailors, they were OK when they knew you weren't interested in them, so

27:30 I just walked through, took no notice of them. But they were a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun with them, but nothing serious. No.

**So when you're up on stage what kind of response was there from the audience to singing? What was the atmosphere like?**

Well, I used to get drinks sent up to me and asked incessantly to come down and

28:00 sit at their table. But of course I explained as my boss at Christie's, Monte Richardson said, "If you go down for one you'll be asked all night." So I just said, "No I can't go down," that's all. But it was very good. The Americans were very good to me. I didn't know many. I just skittled through out the back and I went home about, I used to get the last train home at midnight. And then they'd go on to all hours, but I didn't know about that. But

28:30 we didn't have any trouble with them, really. Of course a few'd have too much to drink and all that, but that was understandable. They were going back to war. But no, I didn't fraternise with them much. I met one boy, that's the one I had the broken heart by.

**Would you like to talk about him?**

No, no, no. He was very, very nice lad but a girlfriend of mine that I joined the army with, Ricky, she told

29:00 me she found out that he was married and I didn't know. And she told him that I knew, so I didn't see

him anymore. He just disappeared. That was very, well, very disturbing for me at my age and that time then. But yes, I was very keen on him. I don't think it was love though, it was just that first bloom. We all go through that, I think But he just went off in the blue. He wrote to

29:30 me a couple of times. I didn't write back anymore. That was the end of that.

**Was that common at the time for that kind of thing to happen?**

Oh yes, yes, yes. A lot of the girls went out with them and they were really, I don't know whether they were keen on them or not. Well, you couldn't blame the boys. They were out to have a good time. I wasn't a girl like that, I just used to say to them, "No, no." But anyhow,

30:00 yes, a lot of the girls did fall for them and had broken hearts too, I suppose. That's when I joined the army, to join the Foreign Legion. They sent me to Victoria Barracks, I couldn't believe it. I used to go there every day and go home to Mum and then back. It was a bit of a heartbreak.

**How did your parents respond to you having an American boyfriend?**

They liked Johnny very much. He was very, very nice. He

30:30 used to come home to Mum and he'd just sit there. He'd have meals with us. He just sit in the lounge room if I wasn't home, if I was working or anything he'd sit with them. I think he was glad to have a place to go to. But it didn't last, did it?

**Did he used to talk to you much about what it was like to be so far away from his home?**

No, no, he didn't really. He used to talk about how good it was here in Australia.

31:00 How much he enjoyed it and all his friends too. They had a place, Elizabeth Bay somewhere. I went there a couple of times and saw all girls there that were going in and out the bedroom, I thought, "That's not for me." And so I, well, it ended very quickly.

**Was there, I mean, for girls, for young girls and with a lot of Americans being in town, what was the feeling in terms of relationships at**

31:30 **that time about how girls were meant to behave and what kind of fears that they had?**

Well, some of the girls didn't care very much. They were out for money and I think they sent stockings or something over. The Americans used to give them a lot of presents. They thought that was fun. But no, I just happened to fall for the guy, really. But it wouldn't of mattered if he was American or -

32:00 I met a few. Another one was a Leon Zawisza. He was in charge of the philharmonic orchestra. It was a different time. Johnny had gone then. He used to come out home too. But he was a very nice fellow. He was married, he told me from the beginning so we knew where we stood. It was just wanting friendship, and he enjoyed my company, apparently. I dunno why, but he did.

**For some of the girls, were there**

32:30 **some girls who became pregnant during this time ?**

There were lots and lots, really. I didn't know very much about it. I was only, you know, I was only 16 then, I was on to 18 and 19. I didn't go into that very much. There were girls around my own district did become pregnant. Some went back to America. Some stayed here. I dunno what they did. Some had babies. Some had abortions. That was the rule,

33:00 apparently. But I didn't like that idea, so it wasn't for me. I was terrified. I always had a fear, even when I was in Japan I always thought, you know, the fellows'd say, "Nobody'll know. Nobody'll know." And I'd say, "There's somebody up there who knows. He knows everything that's going on." So no, no, no, no, not for me. I was good, wasn't I? A good girl.

33:30 **The girls who did become pregnant, what were the options like for them at that time?**

I didn't know very much about it, truthfully, I didn't really. I didn't know anyone personally. It just happened to them somehow and they dealt with it the best way they could. Their families, I used to think about the stigma on the family, on my Mum and Dad, and just wasn't the thing to do.

34:00 I think it's ingrained into you. I couldn't go to church on Sunday and sit down in church if I knew this was going on. But that was for them. They picked their mark, the Americans, and that's how they got on. But no, I didn't have any trouble at all with them. They were nice friendly blokes all of them. All of them. 'Cause I met a lot of them, really, being how I was

34:30 positioned in all these nightclubs, and I'd see them in the daytime. We'd go to Taronga Zoo. We'd go out on trips. I don't remember much about that either. I suppose it's conveniently forgetting things. But no, they didn't worry with that much.

**How did the Australian boys respond to the Americans?**

They didn't like it very much, and I didn't blame them either really, but they didn't,

35:00 a lot of girls were making fools of themselves, you know, just throwing themselves at the Yanks. But I went, I ran through one night to an Australian, he was standing there at the gate of the St James station when I was frightened, I saw these Yanks all in a group and I thought, "Oh oh, what are they on about?" So I ran up to him and I just stood there and talked to him and he looked at me, sort of, "What the devil are you doing?" I said, "Can you please just talk to me for a few minutes till these Yanks go?"

35:30 So they just walked up the tunnel, then they turned around and walked back, so we didn't have any trouble otherwise. But I know it was going on all the time. There were fights and brawls, things were happening, but it didn't happen in the nightclubs. Of course there weren't very many Australians there. There were some, but it was mainly all Americans. In Romano's there were more Australians. I don't think they had the money to go to nightclubs anyhow, really. The Yanks were splashing it around everywhere.

36:00 But no, we didn't have that trouble.

**How much would it cost to go to a nightclub?**

I have no idea. Truthfully, I don't know 'cause I never ever paid anything. And few times I went was either to a dinner session or something like that, but I don't know what it cost, but they used to throw money around as though it was going out of fashion.

**I'm just trying to get an idea of what those nightclubs were like inside. Did people**

36:30 **have, like, favourite drinks that they had at that time or - ?**

Well, yes, they did, they did. They all had something, I don't know what they were 'cause I couldn't. I didn't drink anything in those days. When I did drink I drank beer. Only beer. I stuck to beer. Beer was my drink, that was it. And I knew if I had two of those I wasn't anybody's fool. But I wasn't, no, I didn't drink very much at all.

37:00 **How about the boys, did they, was there a particular drink at the time that was popular?**

I don't know really know because I didn't drink myself. I just drank beer when I did, but when I was in the army I drank beer all the time and so did the boys. They only drank beer, I don't think they could afford anything else. I don't remember them drinking whiskey. My drink now is scotch and soda, but

37:30 I don't know what they drank, I really don't. I can't help you there. I'm not much help, am I?

**No, no, you're doing fine. You're doing fine. Inside the nightclubs what kinds of songs were you singing?**

Oh dear, all the popular songs at the time. Any Dinah Shore songs. Any Petula Clark. Frank Sinatra, all of his songs. Perry Como. The

38:00 band used to play all the time. They'd have a little break now and again, and I used to have to sit there all night, go out and have a break out the back, but I'd just hop up and down. At the Paradance, I'm jumping from one to the other, aren't I?

**That's OK.**

But we did all the Gypsy Tap and barn dance, and I used to have to just hop up and down and sing Peggy O'Neill and all those sort of things. I can't remember them now. I've got a list of them over there somewhere. But

38:30 all the popular songs. I've got a one CD here I made up in the Islands. It was made from when we did, I did a show every Sunday night with Dudley Simpson. Did you ever hear of Dudley Simpson? He's over in London now. He composed the music for Dr Who and he composed a lot of things. I sang his songs with Ian Neil. He was an announcer from Queensland 4BX.

39:00 He used to, we used to sing duets and things. I've got a recording with his voice with mine too. John Stawell was my OC, he sent me this for my wedding present. He sent it to Warren and I just as a memento to remember the Detachment 12. He sent me a magazine too, a whole magazine of our everyday experiences when we were on tour, from when we left Pagewood Studios

39:30 on the 26th of September, I think it was, 1944. '44, and we went down, we did a southern tour down as far as Balcombe, Bandiana, Tatura, Cowra, Heidelberg Hospital, Bathurst and all those places there, he's got a day-to-day diary, I have what we did every day and when somebody put some,

40:00 a penny in the henna to make her hair red. That was the other girl, Pat, that was in the show with me. And yeah, that was, I dunno what I was talking about now. What was I talking about?

**That's OK.**

I'm going back and jumping from subject to subject.

**No, that's quite OK. No, I was asking you what kinds of songs you were singing in the nightclubs.**

That's right, yes.

### **Did you have a favourite song or couple of favourites?**

Yes, yes I've got a couple of favourite songs. One is I Love you for Sentimental Reasons.

40:30 That's my husband and my song. I've got a recording of that too, and Embraceable You. I used to go into all the messes in Cowra and everywhere we'd go into the sergeants' mess and they'd have a piano and they'd play things and I'd sing Embraceable You and go round and sit on the fellows' knees and - when I was young, I think they'd have a fit if I did it now.

41:00 Anyhow, I can't sing anymore the voice has gone completely. I think I'm allowed to do that. Joan Sutherland lost her voice. It went, so mine's gone too. I just can't, I just sing in church, that's all, on Sunday morning.

### **What kind of voice do you have or did you have?**

I'll play you the record after when we've got time off. Like Deanna Durbin. I liked Deanna Durbin's style and I sang ballady type things,

41:30 sort of love songs. I used to sing the fast ones too when we were doing the barn dance and all those sort of dances. But oh dear, I don't know what I'm talking about here, it was so long ago. It's a long, long time ago. I can't remember the words of any of them now. Memory's gone completely. I can remember some things. Things that stand out in my mind, but not the words of songs anymore. They're all gone. Now, what's

42:00 your next question?

### **How often -**

## **Tape 2**

00:30 **Mrs Berry, can you recall when you thought that you first wanted a singing career?**

Yes, it was when we were going to the eisteddfods and I'd go up and watch the singing. I'd watch the dancing more. I used to love to watch the dancing. My mother'd have to come looking for me. We had about 160 in every section and

01:00 I used to watch these girls sing and then when I started on the radio I loved the singing and I found I could harmonise, so that's when I got the jobs with the quartets and trios and sextets and everything. But it was, I loved music. I had my ear when I had time for the radio listening all the time. I got all the records, the Dinah Shore.

01:30 Yes, I loved singing, but I just wanted to do it. It came easily. I found that when I went on the radio that my voice came across alright and they asked me to come back every time. And of course I could read music, they'd pop me in anywhere with background music. It was very nice.

### **Before television came, if you wanted a career in singing what did you,**

02:00 **like, what were the avenues for a woman who wanted to sing? Like, where would you get to sing?**

Well, I joined the army when I was singing and Lieutenant Pearson was in charge of the LFC Band and he used to go down to the Martin Place with the Loan - War Loan Rallies. The War Loan Rallies, that's right, and I used to sing with them.

02:30 I don't know how often, it was a couple of times a week. The whole big band, they'd put us all in a bus and off we'd go down to the Martin Place and sing there. I've got all the programs still of when we did then. All the War Loans and the letters of thanks after we'd done them. And I did a concert in the Sydney Town Hall with Peter Dawson, Heather Kinnaird. Who else? I can't remember who else

03:00 now. I've got the program still. I keep all this evidence with me. That's why there's so much rubbish in this house.

### **Were your parents supportive of you becoming an entertainer?**

They didn't have much say really. I was the last of the kids, my three brothers had joined the army and my sister had decided she wasn't going to do her schoolwork and I remember I didn't see my mother, but my sister said she was most surprised when Mum came in

03:30 one night and she was in bed and she said, "Well, you haven't done your homework tonight, have you Gwen?" And she said, "No." She said, "You're not going to do it, are you?" She said, "No." So she said, "Right, you're not going back to school. You're going to stay home and help me in the house." And she stood beside here and just tore her books to shreds. Gwen said she was never more surprised in all her life. But she liked it. She liked being a homebody. So she used to stay at home and in the afternoon



she'd teach elocution. All in the one house.

04:00 And then she was married later on, but that's how that went. What was the question again?

**How supportive of you were your parents, of you becoming an entertainer?**

Well, my Dad didn't have much say in it really. He just went to work and came home. He used to drink a little bit. That was the trouble. My mother, she was the backbone of the family and she just, she supported me all the way. But

04:30 when I joined the army they didn't have any say in anything I did. I just went to work, came home at night and told them what was happening the next day sort of thing, and they didn't have any say in all this business with the War Loan Rallies or the LFC Band or anything like that, but they were supportive. She was supportive in her own way. As much as she could be. She didn't have much time, you see, she was teaching all the time to make ends meet. But no, she

05:00 was very supportive. But she didn't ever stop me from doing anything really. I suppose I was a spoilt child. Last one. I was a girl. I had three brothers before me and one sister way ahead. She was nine years older than I am and when I was born my grandmother was there. I don't know, I think she delivered me. I was born in the house in St Peter's and she came running out. Mum had cooked Christmas dinner and everything,

05:30 had everything ready to have and she came running out and she said, "Glory hallelujah, it's a girl." So that's that how I got Gloria. I was to be Noelene. 'Cause it was Christmas day, but I got Gloria instead. Gloria Aileen.

**I think Gloria's better than Noelene.**

Well, I don't, haven't heard many Noelenes. Only one I know here in town, but I've never bothered much about it. I don't know very many Glorias, or I didn't then. They've turned up everywhere

06:00 now.

**I think it's a better entertainer's name.**

Thank you. Well, it stood me in good stead.

**What sort of exams were you sitting when you were learning singing and when you were music?**

Well, I had all the exams over from when I was - I've got the papers there. They were in the photo of me in the paper with all these corkscrew curls. You'd be alright. But my sister used to do my hair up

06:30 in rags every night. How I slept I'll never know. But anyhow, I used to have to do it. They put my paper in the photo one year for, I got honours. No, I passed an exam then the next year, the paper put it in themselves. They just had early honours on the top of it and here's this little kid sitting up like this with those little curls everywhere. But that was, that's how I started with the piano. Then I did all these

07:00 eisteddfods. In the meantime Mum decided that if I could sing she'd put me in an eisteddfod. She did put me in one eisteddfod and I got highly commended or something and then I went on and I won a couple of cups and first prize and all that sort of thing and I liked it better than I liked the piano. I couldn't play a note if you asked me now. I don't even play. I like to try and keep going to keep my fingers moving, but I don't

07:30 play. I have a friend and he comes down and he sits on the piano and plays it all the time, but yes, that's when I started singing, round about when I was about, I'd be about 10, I think. Not seriously, but then when I was 16 I went to Gladys Ives. She had a, we used to have a radio spot. We went in Harry Dearth's Amateur Hour, was it?

**Can you explain who Harry**

08:00 **Dearth was?**

Well, I don't remember him really. But he was in charge of this show, the Amateur Hour. I think it was called that. People would come from all over and just sing one after the other and do things. He ran, I don't know how long the show went for. It went for a lot of years. That's how I started, and then I went off into a quartet, the Gladys Ives Quartet. We used to sing, where did we sing? We sang at the Paradance for a while.

08:30 And then on the radio we did radio shows. 2UE, 2KY, 2BL, 2FC.

**Was Gladys Ives a prominent teacher?**

Well, she was well known. She lived at Lakemba, I think. I had to go up there for lessons. But I graduated from her when I joined the crew at 2FC with Humphrey Bishop. His brother was

09:00 Walter Kingsley and I learnt then from Walter Kingsley. He was in town. Only for a while, but that's where I learnt when I joined the army, and I didn't bother about learning anymore. I knew enough.

**Who were the popular radio personalities during the war?**

Jack Davy. Bob Dyer. Allan Toohey. Uncle Tom was long gone then.

09:30 I don't remember anymore.

**And for the benefit of people that are not, know nothing about radio at that time what would actually be in the radio shows? What would they come on and do?**

Well, let me think. I'm speaking about radio now. We'd be sitting there waiting, then you'd get up and go to the microphone, then you'd just sing and they'd have all these things for

10:00 the clapping and the applause and we'd just sing our songs and walk back to the seat and sit down again. But we had to dress nicely just to do that. We had to wear evening dress and all. I think they had an audience there too, really just watching us. But they weren't on the air it, was only just a radio show. The other radio shows with Uncle Tom and the other one, 2KY, you'd just be sitting in the studio and they'd say, "Here she comes now." I used to do

10:30 a show with Goody Reeves, I think her name was. It was The Stars Shine or something. That's the one in the - Anyhow, I just had to come in and sing and then the next one'd get up and do their bit and just nothing in front of us, you'd just look at the microphone.

**And was that live?**

No, no, no. It was on air. No, never live.

**Was it being transmitted live into, or would someone record it?**

I think

11:00 it was transmitted straight away, it wasn't recorded. Some were recorded. You don't know Joy Nichols, I suppose? She was a very prominent, Robin O'Dell, he was another one. And Colin Croft. Colin Croft was a particularly good friend of mine. Yes, he was, some people say he was a bit queer. I can say that poor old Colin, he's dead and his mother Flossie and his brother and all, but

11:30 he was a very, very nice fellow. Very nice. Very good to me. It was him that sort of introduced me to the crew out at, or not introduced me but he was there when I went out to the entertainment unit. He went to the Islands with us and to Rabaul. But -

**How many men would you be singing with on the group on radio?**

The whole band. Whole band, they'd be right across the table. I don't know how

12:00 many I'd say were in the band. I've got some photos there of the band. Then it'd be just me, I'd be the star. There was then, we had the quartet, the four of us. We'd just get up and sing. And a trio. We'd just get up and sing our songs and sit down again. Go back and sit down. The dancers, we used to sing and the people dancing around, we'd just get up and sing and sit back there and

12:30 try and look happy.

**How many songs might you sing in one show?**

About a million. You'd just sing your little solo ones and then something like the barn dance or something'd come on like that. At Christie's and Romano's they were just, and Rose's they were just, you'd do special songs, I suppose about two dozen a night. You had to know them all. I knew all the words of all them. I can't sing any of them now.

13:00 **What were the really popular songs on radio when you first started? What did people want to hear?**

I don't know. Anything that was recorded that was like one of the stars of the moment. I don't know what Frank Sinatra was. There's a lot of Frank Sinatra over there and Perry Como. What they were singing? Killing Me Softly. What was another one? I can't think.

**I guess,**

13:30 **how much did the war have to do with what you were singing?**

It had a lot. Of course Vera Lynn came on the scene too. She did a lot, We'll Meet Again, sort of songs like that, and we had to sing those at night for the boys. And all American, all the American songs that they came out, we had to learn those and do those. Monty Richardson was either an American or a Canadian, I can't remember which,

14:00 but he had an accent. He was very uptown. He used to know everything. So did Reg Lewis. They did very well. I don't know all these numbers. I've got lists of them there, I should get it and read them out to it.

**I might get you to. Yeah, it'd be nice to hear some of them. What do you remember about when war was declared in Europe?**

Not much at all, really. I knew

14:30 it was pretty dreadful, it was pretty awful. My brothers were going to join up. One joined up and he wanted to go away. He desperately wanted to go away. Well, he went away alright, he went up to Malaya. The other one joined up and they said he had flat feet and he was working at The Sydney Morning Herald at the time. They said his job was more important so he had to go back to that. The third one joined up and he joined the Black Watch [Scottish regiment] and they

15:00 sent him over to Western Australia where he is still. He married a girl there and stayed there. His families all grown up there. But yes, we're all in the army. The three boys and myself. I've only got photos of one or two of them and myself.

**What did your brother do at The Sydney Morning Herald when war was breaking out?**

He was a compositor. He used to sort of put all the things in the – And he just did that all the time.

15:30 Stayed there all through the war. We tried to get him in the army and they said he had flat feet and put him out. But he went back to The Sydney Morning Herald and worked there.

**What sort of discussion were there at home about the war, given that you had three brothers who could all potentially be fighting?**

Well, we didn't talk very much about it. Because Rossy who'd gone to Malaya and he was very lucky,

16:00 he wasn't lucky in a way. He had blackwater fever and dengue fever and he was on the wharf and they were shipping him back home here to Australia. I don't know how long he was there, I can't remember. But he said he was one of the last troops to be taken onboard the ship before they left and he said he looked back and he could see all his mates left there and he didn't know what was going to happen to them. But of course when the Japs [Japanese] overrun them,

16:30 and they were all taken prisoner or killed. So he was very morose after that.

**How soon did he leave after war broke out?**

It was war alright and they were there but it wasn't very, very long because he was on one of the ships that came back to Australia. It wasn't very long at all. I can't remember really how long.

**No, once war was declared how soon did he go overseas?**

17:00 I think he went over probably straight away, because he wasn't home and I was there sort of singing and he wasn't there and Bill wasn't there. He was over in the west too. Stanley was still there. I can't tell you those times. I have no recollection whatsoever of that.

**That's OK. I believe that when you were 16 you**

17:30 **left school and you became a lolly and biscuit girl. Can you explain what a lolly and biscuit girl is?**

Confectionery and biscuits, please. Not lollies. Well, I had to walk over to this place where I worked with Mr Collins. My little domain was in the front of the shop. You came in the shop in either door but this little island was out there. I just had to weigh up biscuits,

18:00 and in the meantime when we weren't busy I had to go out the back and weigh up sugar and all that sort of thing, and salt. And we had everything in bags, you had to do it like that. I'm going to be contradicted here. Someone's going to say something I don't know. I can't remember that.

**That's OK. Can you remember what you wore?**

I wore a uniform. I think it was a blue one. Just sort of straight up and down. That's all I can remember that.

**And where was**

18:30 **the store?**

In the main street of Marrickville. I can't tell you now, but it was right in the middle of the main street. It was a long walk, I'll tell you, on a winter day and it was a long walk. I stayed there until I'd applied for a job down in York Street with a fellow that was in Bercare House, I can remember that. I can't remember what his name was. But

19:00 he turned out to be a bit of a lecher [lecher].

**What was Bercare House?**

It was a house in York Street, just a house they named Bercare House. I don't know what it was, but that was just the name they gave it. They all had names along York Street there. That was the one I worked in for a while.

**And what sort of work did you do in there?**

I was a secretary. Not a very good one. I did shorthand and typing at school,

19:30 so I still continued that on for a while. Mainly, the typing was most things. Soon forgot my shorthand. But that's what I did there. That's why when I went into the army. I'm jumping from one to the other. I went in as a clerk typist. They sent me to AEME, Australian Electrical Mechanical Engineers, and that's where I was at Victoria Barracks when my captain heard about the,

20:00 or the boys out there knew that I was going into Romano's at night singing and they put me onto the entertainment unit, which was great. Made my day. I really enjoyed that.

**Can you describe exactly how your singing career took off and how quickly you became a star?**

I wasn't a star. I was just one of the troops that you had to fill in. They had

20:30 vacancies, they'd ring me and say, "Can you come on Sunday night to do the show?" and I'd say, "Well, OK, yes." "Can you come on Thursday night to do another show?" I'd say, "Yes." It didn't ever really take off. If I'd have been more outgoing I think I could've done more. But I didn't really have enough confidence in myself. My voice was OK, it was good. I went to all these places

21:00 and did a lot but I don't think I could've sung soprano sort of very well. I was always conscious of that, so I never ever tried to overdo it. But I could blend in with the others and sing the parts. I'm getting back to that again, aren't I?

**That's alright. So how would you, did people have agents or managers back then to get them work?**

No. Up the top of the street a lady had the phone on.

21:30 It was the only lady in our street that had the phone on, Mrs Foster and she said she'd take - she was the milkman's mother. She said she'd take messages anytime, so she used to take messages for us. A friend of mine lived next door to Mrs Foster so she used to call her and tell her to run down and tell me. But the friend used to take the messages herself and she'd go in. Yes, that was very. She was a very,

22:00 very good friend of mine. But anyhow, we were still friends until she died. Her mother used to be very sorry for her because she said if Joan had followed you and joined the army, she wanted to but her mother wouldn't let her. She said she thought she'd be away from home. Well, here I was down here in Victoria Barracks. She said, "Joan might've been still with me." She went up to Raffles. She used to sing in Raffles

22:30 Hotel. She stayed there for a couple of years and she finally married a Swiss coffee planter and went over to Switzerland and her mother didn't ever see her anymore. She was very sad about that, but then that was her penalty.

**How competitive was it amongst the singers on radio?**

Very competitive. There were a few very well-known names. Very good singers they had, too.

23:00 I dunno why I was lucky, I got a few breaks came my way. I think mainly because I could read music. And I don't know, I think I had more breaks than I was due for.

**You mentioned that you could read music because of your piano training, what was the level of that ability amongst the other singers? Could they read music?**

A lot of them, no

23:30 they couldn't. Well, Joan couldn't for a start, this one and that's why when I rang up about something they said, "Look, we told you to come in for such and such a day." I said, "I didn't get the message." They said, "Another girl was here, this girl." I said, "Oh, was she?" She said, "Yes. She said that you weren't available." So I thought that was funny. So then I got the phone on at home on my own place. That was the end of that story. Then things started to happen for me. It was great.

24:00 **So who would call you and how would you get the work then?**

Well, in the army I think they must've had people that had a list of people that did things. Well, in the army when I used to sing down at Martin Place that just came naturally because I was the only one that sang with the band. I just was a part of the band. But I don't know how I got the jobs. I think you, they advertised or

24:30 they may have advertised on air. I really don't know now, I can't remember that. Can't remember at all.

**Can you explain to me what those war rallies were that you talked about earlier and what happened at those?**

Well, they were trying to raise money for the loan and they'd just go down there and they'd take about the band. They'd have about three singers. What's his name? Robert somebody, or Robert.

25:00     Anyway, he'd go down too and we'd get up and sing. Other people'd just do their bit too and then we'd go back to the barracks but that was just to raise money for the war effort. I think there were about five or something war loans we used to do.

**Can you remember what memories do you have of when Japan entered the war? The bombing of Pearl Harbour?**

Yes, I can remember that day. But I don't remember

25:30     about them coming into our harbour, into Sydney Harbour. They bombed in Sydney Harbour, you know, and sent midge subs in. No, can't remember how or why, but it was going well and truly. I was in the army up in the Islands at the time, and we had Japs there. There were a lot of Japs prisoners of war. Actually in Rabaul, there were a lot of prisoners there.

26:00     They were still in Tunnel Hill. We had to cross Tunnel Hill to get to the Talili Theatre, they built a theatre for us there and some of the boys would be on stage and someone'd say, "Look out there." And I'd say, "What?" and they'd say, well you'd get a moment when you weren't speaking on stage and they'd see the Japs in the audience. They were watching our shows. And they'd disappear before the show was finished, but back to the Tunnel Hills. There were some

26:30     in the hills apparently when we left to come home. They didn't know the war had ended and they were free or something, but they captured a few of them anyhow. Not our boys, they didn't see them. I've got a, I'm just reading it the other night. I'd forgotten about it, our boys went to a Japanese theatre. I don't know where that was. I didn't even see it. But the boys lived in different camps to we but they apparently got on well with them.

27:00     **The day that Japan bombed Pearl Harbour, what do you remember about that day and what you were doing?**

No, I can't remember that at all. I was in the army somewhere. Probably out at Victoria Barracks somewhere. I can't remember much about it. I remember we were all aghast and Mum and Dad were beside themselves, you know, with worry what was happening. But I really don't remember much about

27:30     that. I don't dwell on those things if I can help it. I just get away from it as quickly as I can.

**How did you notice that Sydney changed once that had happened? In terms of preparing or - ?**

Now when was this? That was '42 wasn't it, when they bombed?

'41?

'41. No, I can't remember much about that.

28:00     There wasn't very much change to me. They didn't seem to do. We didn't have all this bomb scare or any terrorists or anything like that, we didn't have to. Everything was blacked out, you had all your windows blacked out and you couldn't show any light anywhere. Coming home at night was a bit fearful. I had a little torch but I could only use it now and again. I don't know anything about that. That's blanked out completely out of my mind.

28:30     **What was that like as a young woman travelling through Sydney late at night while there were blackouts on?**

It was alright, I didn't mind it. It was all adventure, you know, I didn't mind it at all. There weren't any rapes or anything then and men molesting women or anything. Didn't seem to be in vogue or something. But I didn't notice that at all. I just made my way there. I didn't have much of that

29:00     with the torch. I don't know why it was or when it was but I was working in Sydney. I think I just used to stumble along the best way I could to get to the station and get home.

**How long had you been singing professionally in the clubs before you joined the army?**

How old was I? I was 18, 1944.

29:30     I'd been singing at Rose's and Romano's and Christie's for quite some time. It must've been a couple of years from when I was about 16, 17, 18, 19 Yeah, I suppose it'd be about two or three years I was singing in clubs.

**And what thoughts had you had about joining the army during the war before you did?**

I didn't think I ever would.

30:00     I didn't mind the thought of joining the army but I didn't know what I was in for of course. When I went to rookie training I soon found out. Get in the shower at cold as cold, six o'clock in the morning be freezing, try and wear your greatcoat down to the shower and then strip off and get in. No, I don't remember much about that, and the route marching we did and all.

30:30     I remember my needles, I had my smallpox and all that, we had injections and we had to all have them when we joined the army. Smallpox and typhoid and cholera, I think it was. I passed out twice. I've

never passed out in my life. I was marching and I heard a voice behind me say, "Get that girl in the middle," and I just was going from side to side and finally I went down. The next -

**What made you pass out?**

31:00 The needles. They were horrific apparently then. Cholera and typhoid and smallpox. I had to have them again renewed when I went over to Japan, that didn't affect me the same way. It was alright then, I knew what to expect, I think.

**What were you told about the needles and what they were for and where you might be going?**

You weren't told very much about it.

31:31 - with the little needle. But it didn't, I don't remember much about that at all. Hey, c'mon, it's about 60 years ago. I can't remember that. I only remember all the important things.

**What sort of, what were the girls like who were enlisting at the time?**

They were very, very nice. One particularly, Ricky, she was my friend. I went down to join up and

32:00 she was there and we sort of both signed on the dotted line and she said, "I can't join until July." And I said, "Well, OK, I'll wait til then. I'll make sure I go in with a nice girl," and I used to keep in touch with her. She lived at Haberfield and I lived at St. Peter's but we, I went to her place and she came to mine. We were great friends when we joined. She was the one that alerted me

32:30 about Johnny the American. She found out that he was married. She told me, but no, I kept in touch with them for a long, long time. She married a fellow, Victor Vardis, and the last time I heard she lived at, where'd she live? Last time I heard from her she had died. So I lost touch there with Ricky. But they were nice girls, they were really nice girls. There was only one of them. Her name was

33:00 Stenson. She wouldn't have a bath. So one night we all got together and took her down to the showers and threw her in clothes and all in the cold shower. It was awful, it was a dreadful thing to do but we decided she got too much for us all in the hut. So we took her down, threw her in the shower.

**Why wouldn't she have a bath?**

She didn't like it. She didn't believe in bathing. Didn't think it was good for her. I don't know why she didn't. She just didn't. She smelt. It wasn't very nice either.

33:30 **Where did you first go to enlist in the army?**

I can't. I've got my papers up there where I signed up and I've got the day I started. I don't know where it was. But they told me that I could put it off till July. So the 4th of July, Ricky and I lost our independence on the American Independence Day. I remember that very well.

34:00 Haven't remembered it since.

**What do you mean you lost your independence?**

Well, we weren't our own boss any more. We had the army telling us what to do. We had to do everything they said. Had to dress in army uniform all the time. Couldn't wear our nice jewellery or anything. That was our boss and we believed it. We always did what they told us. We were good girls. But when we finished rookie training, I don't know where Ricky went

34:30 but I went to Victoria Barracks.

**What happened during Rookie Training? What were you trained in?**

I saw a passing out parade the other night of a young fellow that's gone through his training to be a technician in the air force. It was absolutely magnificent. Those boys were just in lines and lines and - I can't imagine our rookie training. We had to go on long, long marches in all our army gear. A big,

35:00 greatcoats and carry all your gear. They taught us things, we had physiology and hygiene. Things we should do. Should do for ourselves. I guess we did other things, I don't know. I don't think I did any typing there for a while when I was in the rookie training. But that, they taught us how to look after yourselves, mainly. It was good. It was great. I didn't mind it at all.

35:30 You had tests on it. It was like being back at school. But that only lasted for about, gosh, I think two months or something like that. I don't know how long that rookie training was.

**You mentioned that you weren't really told anything about what you were going to be doing, did you have any ideas about where you might go or if your singing would or?**

Well, I didn't take singing as an option. I thought I'd finished with my singing. I was hoping I'd be banished to

36:00 Timbuktu. I wanted to get out of Sydney, out of everything. Away from everybody, that's how I felt then. But I was most disappointed when they sent me to Victoria Barracks. When they found I could type and take shorthand they sent me down to, Captain Poppleworth was my CO [commanding officer] and he

used to tell me what to do there. It was very good. Very nice for me but I was bored to sobs.

- 36:30 Typing up screeds on all the equipment they had to send out to all the different army places, all the bolts and screws and things. You know, I had to put three somethings and something or other. It was boring.

**Why did you want to get out of Sydney so badly?**

I was suffering a broken heart. I didn't want to see anybody. I was finished. I thought, "Finished with everything, I'm joining the,

- 37:00 I'll join the Foreign Legion," you know, go away and hope you get killed somehow. I had great ideas when I was 18. I was a bit late hearing the bugle.

**What did you know about the Foreign Legion?**

Only what I'd seen in the movies, you know, about people going away. If they had a lost loves and sort of, they'd go away and join these things and never come back. That was the story then. I'm so pleased they didn't send me to the

- 37:30 Foreign Legion or any of these dreadful places. Timbuktu. Everyday I hear that on the news. Either the hottest or the coldest place in the world, I think it is. I'm sure some very nice people live in Timbuktu.

**How much did you talk to your girlfriends about joining?**

Nothing. Nothing. I kept it all inside. I didn't want to know anything about him or talk about him at all. I've still got the letters he wrote to me. Isn't that dreadful? My husband knew

- 38:00 about him. But he was very tolerant.

**What did Johnny look like?**

I can't remember. He looked very nice. He had very, very blue eyes. He charmed my Mum and Dad, they liked him. He was a good-looking boy. No, he was alright. He was just another American soldier, an officer. He was in the air force,

- 38:30 can't remember now what it was. But no, don't dwell on him, he wasn't worth it really. Dwell on my husband, he was worth it. We had a lot of fun in the short time we had. We had 48 years before he died. But it wasn't long enough. We'd only just started to travel and we'd only been over to England. I wanted to go there, then we went to Paris and to

- 39:00 Scotland and Ireland and Cornwall and to Wales and to Austria. We did all that tour, you know, French through there. It was beautiful. And he came back in '91 and he said to me then, "If you want to travel, travel with Ted." And he's a friend of mine. And so I've been a lot of places since then. I've been back to Gallipoli. Went over there, what was it about? The same year

- 39:30 Johnny Howard went over there. We didn't go with them, we went at a different time. We took the bus out at a different time and all. Everything was gone when we went out there. We saw all the trenches that the troops were in and went down into the troops into the trenches. We looked at the hills that they clambered up. How any of them survived I'll never know. The Turks were on top just ready to shoot them. We talked to one another from the foxholes

- 40:00 where they were as they did then. They used to talk to one another. It was very sad, you know, that they were given the wrong. They landed in the wrong place, that's right. But -

**What did you know about World War 1 when you were younger?**

Nothing very much. Except my Uncle Will and my Uncle Ted, my father's two brothers. Dad couldn't go because he was at the Water Board and they said that was a restricted area. But his two brothers went.

- 40:30 Uncle Will and Uncle Les, they both. Not Uncle Les, Uncle Ted, I've got all the letters up there still, they wrote to Mum and Dad from there. And Uncle Will was killed over there. He was killed in the April. I think he was killed in France and when I went over to Gallipoli I went round looking at all the gravestones, but he was in France, he was buried in France too.

**Given that there had been family members**

- 41:00 **killed in World War 1 how did your parents feel about their sons fighting?**

Well, they didn't do much fighting. See, Stan was soon out and Billy went up to Balikpapan, but I don't think he did much in the way of fighting. He never, I didn't know much about him then I was in the army myself. But he didn't talk much about the war.

**How did your - are we OK?**

Finished another one.

## Tape 3

00:31 **I did that the other day. I took my shoe. Recording. OK. How long were you working in Victoria Barracks for before you were told that there was a job going at the entertainment unit?**

I suppose it'd be about, well, how old was I? 1944, not very long, just a couple of months I think, because one of the boys came in and Captain Poppleworth said, "Well, do you want to

01:00 apply?" and I said, "Yes, I'd like to." So he said, "Well, I'll help you fill in the application." So we filled it in and then I sent it off and one day they said, "There's someone out here wants to see you, Gloria. There's a sergeant from the entertainment unit." I thought, "Oh great." So I went out and it was Peter Finch [actor] just leaning against the wall just looking very nonchalant. And

01:30 I said, "Hello." And he said, "Hello." I said, "You've come on a wild goose chase." And he said, "What?" I said, "You've come on a wild goose chase." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, you want people that act." He said, "Oh, what do you mean?" And I said, "You want them for your shows, don't you?" And he said, "Well, can you act?" And I said, "Well, I've acted in school plays and church plays and things like that, but I haven't done anything seriously."

02:00 So he said, "You willing to give it a fly?" I said, "Yes, of course." So then he, I asked the OC if I could go and he said, "Yeah, sure." So I went out and hopped in the truck. I had to hop in the back and I could see someone sitting in the front and I was trying to see who that was and she was trying to see who it was getting in the back. That was the other girl, Patricia McKenzie. She got the other role. She got Lady Elizabeth in

02:30 While the Sun Shines, and I got Mabel Crumb. But we went out to the barracks out there and had the auditions straight away. You knew the female impersonators, I said that before, didn't I? The female impersonators took our place before, Billy Donaldson. He handed me my script. He said, "Here, read this." So I put my interpretation on it. And it was Peter Finch, actually, that said he was talking away there and

03:00 they were talking and I thought, "I wonder what they're talking about." They were talking amongst themselves. He called Billy over and Billy tressed off and came back and gave me these awful things to put in for my false bosom. I never had any bosom. Anyhow, I put them down and he said, "That's better." But anyhow, I got evens on Peter because we're doing a rehearsal of one of the shows and it was, I was Diana Lake in While the Sun,

03:30 French Without Tears and one of the scenes I go away from him. He pulls me back and I have to spin around and bump into him. I spun around and I bumped into him and I winded him. He said, "Oh God, she's winded me." But it was these awful busts I had to wear to make me look a bit like a girl. They used to call me the boy soprano when we were out in the water, in Rabaul it was.

04:00 We were all playing around in the water and I was on a fellow's shoulders and they said, "Look out for the boy soprano, here she comes again." They didn't know I was a girl till I spoke. It was awful, wasn't it?

**Aren't they mean?**

They are mean, yes.

**What did you know of Peter Finch at that time?**

I knew he was a great actor. I'd seen Forty Thousand Horsemen

04:30 along with Chips Rafferty, who was also in our unit and Grant Taylor, who was also in our unit. I thought it was a great honour to be even considered to go into any show that he wanted. But it was Peter's dream, he wanted to put real live girls in the shows and take the female impersonators out. He thought for the troops overseas it might be a thrill for them to see a real live girl, as they call us. Or the flatties,

05:00 and he thought that might be an idea. So he chose, he had lots of girls out there for auditions apparently and Patty got one role and I got the other one. And then we had another girl, Vera Tighe, she was the third girl, we were the first three girls to ever go overseas in the army as entertainers. Nobody else has. I mean, what's her name, Lorraine, no.

05:30 That one, she sings a lot. She goes up to Vietnam and all, they're not army personnel though. We were just taken from the ranks of the army and we had to make the most of what we had. So Peter Finch took us over and we believed everything he told us. He used to get us on stage and we had to say our exercises every day, you know, it's p-low and p-low [pillow] and all these things for our diction. Mine's gone to pot now, but still,

06:00 he taught us how to move on stage and what to say and how to do it and all. It was good, but a lot of it did come naturally. You know, sort of when you started you put yourself straight away into the real, the role. My first entrance in While the Sun Shines is, I had to wear a bathing suit. Can you imagine me in a bathing suit? I had a robe over my shoulders, but. Another



- 06:30 story. When we were in the Islands, the poor old natives, we performed in front of them and we had to go up to Nadzab strip and all the natives were in the audience so they had to delete all the drunk scenes and all the love scenes or any kissing or anything was not allowed. And Johnny wrote in a magazine, "And Gloria with her muffled charms." I had to have the coat well
- 07:00 done up around me and all that. It was a bit hard, but still we just went through the motions. It was hard for the white boys that were there amongst them amongst the. We had a lot of fuzzy wuzzies [indigenous Papua New Guineans] and that there. They were great. Great audience. They laughed in the right place and that. But still, it wasn't the show we usually put on. But still, it was done for the troops anyhow. But -

**What was the idea of the entertainment unit, the history of how they came about in World War 11?**

- 07:30 It started long before we went up there. I don't know how it started, but our mentor or our CO was Jim Davidson. Remember, Jim Davidson tour down at the Trocadero. He used to have an orchestra. I've got a book over there that he wrote. But he augmented it all. You know, he sort of ran the whole show. There were all sorts of detachments. Detachment 4. We were Detachment 12.
- 08:00 Well, apparently up to number 12 they were all only detachments the different ones that went. I think they drew musicians from the ranks. They were in the army anyhow, and perhaps they advertised that they wanted to start this entertainment unit and they came from everywhere, you know, the boys in the band, Charlie Monroe and all those boys, they were all in the
- 08:30 army. They went to the entertainment unit too. Horrie Dargie. I went over to Japan, the first person that I meet's Horrie Dargie. I said, "Hi, Horrie, how are you?" and he said, "Hey, come and sing with me on the WLKS [radio station]." I sang with him on WLKS with his orchestra. And he was, you know, he used to come back with us. We'd have a little party after the show. In Lae, I, on 9AL
- 09:00 I sang on that one and 9AB in Rabaul. Dudley Simpson and Ian Neil. Dudley, I told you before he was the one that composed the music of "Dr Who." I've got music of his here now. I dunno, I think he's still alive over in England I think, but I don't know for sure.

**What did Peter Finch look like? What were your impressions of him?**

- 09:30 He looked handsome, very nice. I was only a kid. He was married to Tamara Tchinarova the Russian ballerina. He treated me like well, just as one of the, all the girls. He didn't treat us any different to anybody else. We were just one of the crew and we just had to do our lines. We didn't do anything properly, he just soon told us all about it.
- 10:00 He was very nice looking. He, yes, he was nice looking but didn't appeal to me somehow. I don't think I appealed to him either. Just as a member of the crew, that's all we ever did. He went on a southern tour with us. I've got lots of photos there with us. We used to take our lunch out in a, we had a big bus. I've got a photo of the
- 10:30 bus and all the crew in it and he used to, we used to have a barbecue on the river bank or anywhere we stopped. We had everything in the bus with us. No, I've got photos of him lying on the grass, you know, sort of relaxing having a beer. We all had beer, I think. But we'd picked up a hairdresser then too, a girl from one of the camps down there. I think it was
- 11:00 Tatura or somewhere there. Anyhow, we had this girl. She'd been advertising and wanting to go into the entertainment unit. She couldn't do anything, but she wanted to get into the unit as a hairdresser, so we took Mary onboard and Mary, she came with us on the southern tour but when we came back she wasn't on the schedule to go up north to New Guinea. There were only the three girls, Vera and
- 11:30 Pat and I. So we had to drop Mary, sadly. But then they, Major Davidson decided he was going to send a musical comedy over there and he sent over the Maid of the Mountains crew and a whole lot singing and dancing and they found out that Mary had good legs and she was a beautiful figure so they put her in as a soubrette and she used to tress her way around over the stage. But -

**12:00 Could I go back to your particular group, could you tell me who was in it?**

Well, we had Grant Taylor but he got, I dunno why he got out but he did. He's in the photo when we were taken, all our group and Peter Finch too. He had an operation. He had to go into hospital, so we lost Peter. So then we had Ron

- 12:30 Folkard, Ron Patten. Ron Patten is now still with JC Williamsons down in Sydney somewhere. I see him every year we go down to a reunion. Ron Patten, Ron Steele he's over here in Kempsey, he's dead now. And Kenny Carroll. Who were some of the? Oh, John Store. How'd I forget John Store? He was our OC, that's the officer commanding, not the commanding officer, the OC,
- 13:00 and he looked after all of us. He did a fantastic job, John. He was an announcer on 3XY in Melbourne. I think you'd know him from, what was the show he did? Somebody's daughter or something. I don't know, I can't remember. I've got the magazine there though, I can tell you and show you. I'll show you photos of him. I had a lot taken with him when I was with Sydney. He used to take me out for lunch and

13:30 all that. He was a very, very nice man. He's big man, he's dead now too, I know. Isn't it awful, I'm talking about all these dead people? Oh well, anyhow, he was our OC. He compiled the magazine of our day-to-day excursions what we did, and what else can I say about John? He was a fantastic fellow. He wrote down every day and then he got -

14:00 Patty came in on the end of that, Patty Rhodes. She was a typist too, and she used to go down and type all the manuscripts out for him and he sent us all a copy. It was very, very nice of him. But I don't think there was anybody else of note in the show.

#### **How big was the group?**

Well, when you see the group we had to have. We had our own green monster. We had to put up our own stage. We'd go to places where they

14:30 didn't have a stage. Particularly in the Islands. We'd just arrive at this camp, then they'd have the truck, they'd have to erect this big stage over it. It was a dreadful job. We had to have a crew for that. I'd say there'd be about 20 altogether. Actors there'd only be about seven or eight.

15:00 And the rest were crew that used to have to put up the stage. We all had to help. You all had to do something. I was not in charge, but of wardrobe. I had to put the clothes away at night, and the props for the shows. We had all sorts of candlesticks and lamps and everything to make the place look like home. It, French Without Tears is about a French professor and his daughter and this American commander, and then I was Diana Lake,

15:30 I was a femme fatale that came in, just caused havoc. That was in that show. But this putting up and putting down of the green monster was terrible. That took all the staff. They were just bush boys. It was, we got more of them up in the Islands 'cause it was too much for the boys to put the stage up and down. In all sorts of weather we had to perform in, you just standing out on the stage and the rain was blowing

16:00 in on you like mad and you had to stand there and say your lines and go through all your actions. I remember one night the rhinoceros beetle, you know that at all? It's like a beetle, it come in, one landed on my arm. I said, "Get it off me." Anyhow, got it off in the end. But you couldn't stop or anything. You had to put up with all that. And all the greasepaint and all the, everything you had to have for the stage

16:30 was all packed away each night and got out next day. When it rained we had to air the clothes out and stage props. We had lounges and all sorts of stuff all put on this big truck with the green monster.

#### **Why was it called the green monster?**

That's the boys nicknamed it themselves. They'd say, "We have to go and erect the green monster or we have to pull down the green monster. The green monster needs this." So one night something was

17:00 missing, one soundtrack that. Not the tracks that worked the stage anyhow and couldn't find it anywhere. They had to go and try and find it get a new one. They got a new one and then months later we unpacked everything from the green monster and there was the track on the bottom there. So this one track is languishing up in the bush up in Rabaul. We dunno where it is or - Glad to get rid of it. We got our own one back. It was

17:30 quite an experience though, walking onto this stage, very, it was good, it was solid. It was part of the body of the truck, you know. It was on as the stage. It was good. I don't know how they made it. I don't know how they did it. I don't think there's any, perhaps one of the boys could tell you, Ron Patten, he's the only one alive from the company now, I haven't heard from Ron Folkard, he usually sends me a card at Christmas but he didn't

18:00 last year so I guess he's passed on. I've written to his address in Palm Beach but nothing's happening there so I think he's gone. He was an only child and he never married and he was 83 last time I heard from him. But Ron Patten is still alive and he could tell you. I must get in touch with him.

#### **That would be good, actually.**

He's in Sydney, so - He'll tell you some tales. He'll tell you tales.

#### **Could I take you back to that first meeting with Peter Finch and what the first**

18:30 **trip was you did with the group?**

Well, that was the trip down south. We just loaded up this bus and we had to make a stop on the way through for Ronny Steele to go and see his wife. She was an usherette in one of the theatres in town and we had to stop, and another time for Peter to see Tamara Tchinarova. She lived in a unit in York Street somewhere and we stopped there. Then we took off

19:00 and just went on the road down to Bathurst or somewhere like that, I dunno. But that was a really hard trip. We were trying the show out. They hadn't tried it out before. Heidelberg was the big tryout. They've got photos of me on the internet doing the show with Allen White. Allen White, he was one of the shows. That's right, I'd forgotten Whitey. How could you forget Whitey?

- 19:30 But that was it was a long time ago. In Heidelberg they did a grand concert and all the big wigs were there you know. Major Davidson went down that one in Melbourne and a lot of the OC, Major Aspinall. That was the Major in charge of the AWAS [Australian Women's Army Service] she went down to see what we were doing. And she had to give her
- 20:00 OK so we could go overseas. But she wouldn't give it because I wasn't 21. So we had to hang around and they fought and fought and fought to get it. That was just before, that'd be in July, I think and in the August I think they got the OK and we left in the September to go up to the Islands. As a fully fledged corporal. I got a corporal's stripe when we went. She
- 20:30 come over and put them on my shoulder or my arm when we were about to go. Great ceremony it was. But now, what did you ask me first?

**I just wanted to talk to you about that southern tour and if you could explain what the show was that you were doing first of all?**

Well, the first show we did was French without Tears. That was about, I told you, a Frenchman and his daughter and

- 21:00 I've got the whole script over there but I can't remember it all. I came in and mucked things up between Jacqueline the girl and this boy, she liked the commander and I came between them. Anyhow, they all ended up very well in the end. He ended up with Jacqueline, I think he did. And I dunno how I ended up. I think I ended up on my own,
- 21:30 like I did in the other one, in While the Sun Shines. That was another show about, it was in England. The fellow's in the army, he was an American again and gosh, I can't remember really. I don't come in till the second act and then Mabel Crumb makes her appearance. I was a prostitute actually, and I used to sleep with this
- 22:00 bloke and the photos of me, I was sitting on the lounge he was handing me his pyjamas. And another one, we were standing at the door and we're just talking about things. I dunno what it is. I can't remember the shows now, I can't really. I should've read the script before you came, shouldn't I?

**That's OK.**

I can't remember them all.

**Who wrote the plays? Who was - ?**

Terrence Rattigan. Terrence Rattigan, we did two of his.

- 22:30 When I went to Japan we did a third one, George and Margaret and The Church Mouse and The Patsy. I don't know who wrote The Patsy, I can't remember that. We did a lot of, we were up there for 12 months or 13 months just going up and down the coast. I'm going from one to the other. It's alright. We'd just do our
- 23:00 show that night and the next day we'd take the props down and everything to go away. We had a train in Japan and we'd be rehearsing the next show. What to do in the next show in the afternoon, and then go on in the night. I don't know how we did it, I really don't. I can't remember the lines for one thing now, let alone two of them. Anyhow, that's what we did and how we did it.

**Do you have a memory of where you went**

- 23:30 **on that first southern tour?**

I can remember some of the camps. We went to Bathurst and it was so cold. It was freezing cold and not very encouraging to look down into the audience, and they're sitting there with radiators all round the walls and their greatcoats on and blankets and everything over them and I had to appear in a bathing costume. My teeth were just chattering like mad. I was freezing

- 24:00 cold. I was practically blue and, well, Peter Finch left us then, he had this operation he had to have and who took his place? I think it was Ronnie Patten then and Whitey, they alternated and they'd say between their teeth, "You cold, kid? How cold is it?" I'd say, "Shut up, shut up." I don't know how I remembered my lines and the
- 24:30 lines between we used to say to one another. You do, you get used to it though. You get used to it after a while. It just becomes second hand. I don't know whether you play the part. I didn't play the part of Mabel Crumb, not very well off stage. It was just part I took and you just throw yourself into it. That's how it happened.

**What was the reaction from the troops when you came on in a swimming costume?**

Well, it was astounding really. They were very, very good.

- 25:00 They were good. They appreciated the show. They hadn't seen three-act plays, a lot of Australians. A lot of Australian men had not been to the Minerva Theatre or the Royal, one of those theatres where they used to show these shows. I must admit I hadn't been to very many myself. But anyhow, they were very

good, very controlled, only one crowd were absolutely dreadful

- 25:30 and we didn't realise until after we had, like, the stage put up and our dressing rooms were the sides was a tent and we had our makeup lights and everything on and they can show everything we were doing in there. From you taking off your bra to putting my swimming costume on and wriggling into it and all that and they started before we even got on stage, this 'ho ho ho ho' business, you know. And we thought, "What's going on?"
- 26:00 Anyhow, this went on for quite a while. And we said to John, "What do we do?" And he said, "Just go through the actions. Don't do your show properly. Just have a rehearsal, kids. Get out there and have a rehearsal. Don't worry about this, they're an animal audience. Nobody appreciates this. Nobody appreciates. We dunno where it's coming from." Anyhow, we just went out there and did it and after we realised we were backed up to or fronted up to a
- 26:30 hangar and in the back of the hangar was a plane parked and another one on the side and all our sound was going down there and hitting it and coming up and they weren't hearing a thing. They could only see what was going on the stage. It looked good, you know, and bloody gorgeous and just the love scenes and everything. We just did it automatically. But we didn't get an apology from them. So we didn't apologise to them either. But we vowed we wouldn't
- 27:00 ever go back to a Labu whoop. Where it was. No we thought that wasn't worth it. But that was the only one. The rest were very good. We had American audiences up at ANGAU [Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit]. We played to their troops. They were very appreciative. I suppose they were used to the shows or used to those sort of shows, I don't know, but they were good, very good. But our troops were very, very good. They,
- 27:30 some of them sat there and it was pouring rain. We were on stage and oh God, you'd look out there and you'd see a few with their hats and everything on sitting under their greatcoats and their capes and things and I thought, "God, fancy sitting through this." But they sat right through til the end and they just clapped and clapped and I thought at the end when we finished. Some of the shows were only about three dozen left in the audience, they'd all gone home it was raining too hard. But John said, "We've got to do the whole
- 28:00 show," so we got up there and we did the whole show. But John was an absolute delight. I'll never forget him going up on the - we went up on the Morella, the ship. We were the only three girls and there were 18 missionaries going back to Rabaul. They were on this ship and they were dropping us off at Lae and we had a Goanese crew. Little dark fit people. They had big, big eyes, I can
- 28:30 remember. Anyhow, the bathing situation was difficult for John. He was a big man and he went in here to this bath and he looked and he could see the bath and he could see a little thing of water and he thought, "What do I do with this?" He didn't quite know what to do with it. The idea was you washed yourself on the outside before you got into the bath, then you poured the water over yourself. The seawater it was, really. And he didn't know that, so he just
- 29:00 got in and sat on the thing through the middle and it just went straight down. He broke the plank and he said he could still remember the Goanese crew. He said all he could see were these eyes and the crew and they're all standing round the door laughing like mad. They thought it was the greatest joke. "Big man picka many pep." I dunno what language they spoke. It wasn't ours though. And they were really splitting their sides laughing at poor old John
- 29:30 in this bath. That's one he didn't forget. We didn't let him forget it either. But they were a lovely crew. I used to get up every morning. I didn't get seasick because I determined. We met some the fathers from the missionaries and one of them was a very, very nice young fellow. His name was Father Arkfield, and I had a card of his for
- 30:00 so long. He gave me a Bernadette card and on the back of it in memory of the days we spent on the Morella and he used to come round every morning and knock on my cabin door and I'd go out briskly and walk around and we'd go round and round the decks. We used to walk round the ship every morning for the weeks we were going up to New Guinea. Then we had to say goodbye to them. They went on to
- 30:30 New Guinea, to Rabaul and we got off in Lae and it was raining when we arrived there and we thought, "We're never going to get out of here, this is going to be an awful place." And they had to side along the ship and then we had to be taken over by lighter over to the deck where we finally landed on shore. But it was miserable when we arrived there. It rained for a couple of days but then we had good days as well.
- 31:00 We also had floods. I remember one night we were going up to Yarlu, we had to cross the Yarlu River to Nadzab and when we started out they said, "The river's flooding, so be careful." So we got across alright. We went up. We did the show that night and it was raining a bit that night too. But we came off the show and then we had to come home. They wanted the girls back in the barracks. We were still
- 31:30 army corporals, we were two corporals and Vera was a sergeant and we had to be brought back to the camp and be let in the camp and the fellow on the gate'd all sort of see us go through. Anyhow, this night we were stuck out there and John knew he had to get us back that night. There'd be great trouble if he didn't. So we just heard a story about,

- 32:00 some American nurses had been raped and murdered by some Negroes, and it was an isolated case, but still we were all very mindful of that so they said, "Don't get out of your jeeps. Just sit in the jeeps." So we had to have two in each jeep and two fellows with a pistol on the front and they'd got out to help with it.
- 32:30 So we were sitting there and I thought, "I can't sit in there any longer so I'll just get out and stretch my legs." So I got out of the jeep and I'm just standing there and I'm suddenly aware of these around me and I thought, "Oh oh." And I looked and it was the biggest blackest fellow I've ever seen. And he was just standing there and he's smiling at me and I said, "Hello," and he said, "Hello." But he was quite alright. He was quite alright. But I didn't know that for sure. I said, "I've got to get back in the jeep," and I just got back in the jeep and
- 33:00 I thought, "Oh my God, I wonder what that was?" But there was nothing wrong with him, nothing at all. He was just glad to see a white lady, that's all there was. There were a lot of them around me at the time. That's why we weren't allowed to get out, but we did. Then they finally decided to try and get us across and a big tree came down. It came down with a resounding thud into the middle of the river. So we thought, "Now we'll never get across." But they stacked a few other few old trees up over
- 33:30 beside it and the jeep went up and we leapfrogged over. So we got back. The girls and John Store, our OC, we got back to camp, but the other boys had to stay and go back up to the camp. But that was the only night incident. Another night, I decided I had to have this little nervous wee before my show. So I'd just sneak out the side door and you weren't allowed to leave the premises. You had to stay
- 34:00 inside, 'cause they were very protective and very mindful. But there were a few scoundrels amongst the American Negroes. I'm not blacklisting them, but they were just caught out a couple of times. But anyhow, I went down this time and I was mindful of the shoes again. This fellow was in front of me this time and I said, "What do you want?" and he
- 34:30 said, "Ma'am, you know you're not supposed to be out here." I said, "I'm sorry. But I just had to go." And he said, "Well, just make it quick and make sure you go straight back inside." And he just stood there all the time and I thought, "Oh he's not going to stand there?" But he did and he took me back to the side door. I went inside. So after that John arranged for the chick sale one hole up. He arranged for a toilet to be put on the stage backstage,
- 35:00 and we used to have to, if we wanted to go, to use that. So you had to time it between the laughs and the applause to do what you had to do and get back on because you could hear it everywhere. It was a very embarrassing moment. You needn't put that part in? It was, it was good, but John arranged for that. He mentioned it in the magazine too, the one hole up. It was good.
- 35:30 **Do you remember just going, before we go and talk in detail about your time overseas?**
- Oh God, what?
- Do you remember much about the shows that you did for the troops back home? Like, how long the southern tour was?**
- I could tell you exactly if I looked at my magazine, because I've got all the dates of when we left and when we went back. But I think it was somewhere in, when did I join the army, June, July,
- 36:00 I think it'd be only about four to six weeks we went down on tour. We did all the camps from Bandiana, Bathurst, Bonegilla, Tatura, Cowra, Heidelberg, I think that's about all, about six camps. We'd just do a couple of days. We did two shows. One night we'd do French Without Tears, the next night we'd do
- 36:30 Sun Shines. But that was only before we went up to - Then when we got back Major Aspinall decided that I couldn't go because I was under age. But she came good at the last minute. So we had our date of going down to the ship. It was great excitement then.
- Where did you leave from?**
- Number 13 wharf,
- 37:00 Sydney Harbour. I can remember that. Can't remember where I left to go to Japan. We went on the Merkur to Japan. But I remember it was the Morella from Number 13 wharf. I didn't take any photos then. I didn't even think about it. I was so excited at going. My Mum came down to see me off and yeah, my brothers were all away. Yes, we just took off into the blue and I waved Mum
- 37:30 goodbye. Off on my big adventure.

**What did you family think of you going?**

Well, I didn't hear much from my brothers because, well, one was still there, he'd gone back to work and the other two, one was in Singapore and one was over in West, I didn't hear much from them. I'm a very bad letter writer, very bad. I don't write letters very much at all. I did when I was away. I used to write long letters to Mum,

38:00 not very often. She'd say I'd rather have a letter of three pages once a month instead of 18 pages every three months. That's how I used to write to them. I used to be too busy, we were very, very busy.

**So your parents, what did they think of you going?**

They thought it was a chance for me for, it's what I wanted to do. Dad didn't say much at all, he was just in the background all the time. But

38:30 Mum was sort of just very mindful of what I was doing and she never ever told me anything, you know, how to look after myself or anything. I didn't know anything. I was just a babe in the woods. They didn't know what they were sending away, it's true. But I soon learned, you know, from the other girls in the huts, I'd listen to them all talking at night and I'd think, "Oh oh, what's that, when's this going to happen, what's going to happen?" But I think it was a mistake that they never told me anything.

39:00 My sister told me that I was growing up and something'd happen to me every month and I thought, "Oh oh, what's this?" And I went to her but she told me but my Mum didn't. That's one thing she never ever mentioned. She was too nice and polite to say anything about that. But I soon learned. You soon knew, as I said before I used to think I was frightened, very frightened

39:30 of tarnishing the family name. What it would do to my family. And most of all I think, well, God knows. He knows everything that's going on. He knows what you're doing, so it helped me a lot. It did really help me.

**When you left Sydney what was the scene? Were there people saying farewell?**

Well, there weren't very, very many there. They were just from our show, there was nobody else.

40:00 There was Father Arkfield, the 18 missionaries and a couple of troops on board. One of the seamen was an engineer and he made me an engineer. He was a friend of a girl I used to sing against in the eisteddfods. I can't remember his name. I know it was something Smith. But I can remember hers was Gwen. But anyhow we, he put me in a boiler suit and took me down to the bowels

40:30 of the ship and I went down there. I got a certificate for it. It's a pilot's certificate, you should see it, it's great. But anyhow, that was my first experience in a big ship. My first experience on any big ship. Went up there on the Morella. It was very, very nice. We had an irascible old Scotchman, Captain Donaldson, the captain, and everything had to be correct and we sat at his table, of course, the

41:00 girls, and we had beautiful meals on the ship, it was lovely. But that's, I'm just remembering things now as you're talking about it. I can't remember it all. But that was very good, very nice. I dunno what's happened to Captain Donaldson. He's been long gone, I think.

**Was it a large ship?**

## Tape 4

00:31 **When you left Sydney for the Islands what shows did you have in your repertoire?**

Only the two, While the Sun Shines and French Without Tears, they were the only shows we had prepared. We only did those all the time we were away. The other one, when I went to Japan that was different. They did different shows altogether. Another company did While the

01:00 Sun Shines up there. We did Church Mouse and George and Margaret and all those, sort of, The Patsy and all those sort of shows. We didn't do While the Sun Shines up there. The other show did it. So we didn't do French Without Tears either.

**What happens in While the Sun Shines?**

It's very hard to tell. As I said, I don't come in till the second half, and

01:30 it's about a girl, I dunno what she does in the first half but I come in with as Lord Harpington's mistress and I just put a spoke in the wheels of everything because he really likes me, he doesn't like the other girl. But then I think they finally get together in the end. I've forgotten whether they do or not.

**What sort of rehearsals did you**

02:00 **have for the shows?**

Well, Peter Finch was very, very severe on what we had to do. We had to do it every day. Up in Japan Beverly Miles was our thing. John Alden and Beverly Miles, they ran the company. There were only eight in that company, four girls and four boys, and she used to call rehearsals but they weren't as strict. I think she thought

02:30 we all knew how to act. We all knew what to do. She didn't know how raw I was and Lois, another girl that went with me, Lois Roby. It's a dreadful thing, but everything I talk about now, they're all dead. In

that company there's only, I'm alive, I think. Lois is dead. Beverly's dead. Poppa is dead. John Guest is alive and Alistair

- 03:00 Roberts. Alistair Roberts lives over in Port Macquarie now, I think. He was in Bowral for a long time. But they've all gone.

**How would you organise your wardrobe and hair and makeup?**

I wish you hadn't mentioned that. I had a huge trunk. Had this big trunk about that wide and big, they took it as my luggage so it went away and I had all my suits in a line in it.

- 03:30 It was very, very handy. And I could put things in the bottom of it too. I don't know who carried it. It was very, very heavy. They managed to get it onboard. That's how I travelled in Japan. In the Islands I didn't have that, I just had the ordinary army kit. Just a steel trunk. The wardrobe was all different story altogether. It was wardrobe. You had supposed to have a wardrobe mistress.

- 04:00 Well, we all took turns in looking after the wardrobe and repairing it and washing it. We had to wash it a lot in the Islands because it got so hot. Every night you wore it it'd be very, very stinky. But yes, that's, we just all did it between us.

**How did rationing affect what sort of costumes you could wear?**

Well, I don't think it was rationing as what was there at the

- 04:30 time. We didn't have planes coming in all the time with different clothes or things, we just had to wear what we had and we couldn't wear it out. Like, when we were in the army we had to wear our army uniform when we weren't there. But up in Japan we could wear street dress or anything. So we could wear those anywhere. Clothes, anything, whatever you had you wore.

- 05:00 **So where would the costumes for the plays come from?**

From the army, who was the - I think the wardrobe mistress was one of the female impersonators to start. But there wasn't very much wardrobe anyhow. I wore a bathing costume for a lot of the play. I dunno what I wore for the rest of it really. But the second show I was,

- 05:30 I just came on the second half and I just wore any street clothes. Anything. My dress that I wore in the show. I wore a dress and a little hat I gave to Mary when we came back. Mary became engaged to one of the officers on the ship we came back on. We came back on the Westralia. I'm giving you a plug here, Mary. She met John just as he was going up the

- 06:00 gangway and he thought, "Whoa, who's this?" Anyhow, they became very friendly and we came back to Brisbane and Mary had a date with John. She said, "Please come out with me tonight with another boy. Come out please." I said, "I don't want to go out tonight. We're going to a restaurant." So I went with her, and my fellow was Ron Reed, he was very, very nice. But I

- 06:30 went with him but when he came to the stage where he took his Burberry [coat] off his arm and he was putting on the ground I said, "Hey, hey none of that." and he said, "Just sit down here for a minute." I said "No, no, I want to go back." And he got me by the hand and I ran through a bush and I came out, right on the other side was Mary and John. I wasn't very popular, but it was funny at the time wasn't it? But anyhow, we had a date with them

- 07:00 that night. We went and had some nice dinner but I was sick as a dog at not having good food. They'd been used to it. They'd been coming up and down on the ship and I was just sick all night that night. That reminds me. Haven't been sick like that since last week.

**What sort of attention did you get from the troops?**

Heaps. Really. I felt

- 07:30 very sorry for them. I've got poems over there, that sergeant wrote one poem for me down at Cowra camp. It was lovely, it was a long poem. It was very good. I often wonder what happened to him after, and I had other little fellows that brought me little roses and little things from what they could get up there in the Islands. They'd come round to the stage door. But we'd always say, "We're packing. We've got to clear up all this and
- 08:00 go home." And quite often John used to whisk us out into the jeep and just send us home before they'd finished and they'd just, did all the packing themselves. We'd try and get the wardrobe away and then we'd leave them to it to do the rest. But we had lots of attention. We were invited to all the messes everywhere. When we went back to Japan we were going up. We went up on the Morella we came back on the Merkur, we went

- 08:30 up on the Merkur, we came back on the Westralia from Japan. What was I going to tell you then? Something about the plane, the train or something.

**I'd asked you about the attention you were getting from the troops?**

One of the officers, well, I met him, he was a sergeant, he was in Lae in the mess, he used to be in the sergeants' mess. It was all open air.

- 09:00 He used to be standing there with his swagger stick. I used to think, "You conceited so and so." I thought he was awful. Anyhow, we went up to Japan and we stopped at Rabaul and they let us off, they let me off. Nobody else wanted to get off but I said, "I'd love to go back and see the old Talili theatre. See if it's still standing." Said, "How are you going to get there?" I said, "I don't know yet, but I'll go down and have a look." So I came down the gangplank and there was a sergeant standing there. I looked at him and
- 09:30 I said, "Bluey Jewson?" He said, "Yeah, that's right. Hey, how are you?" and I said, "I'm fine, thank you." And then the fellow turned round beside him, he was standing there with his hands behind his back and it was this Casey, the fellow I'd hated over in, what's it's name, in New Guinea. I said, "Hello." And he said, "You want to go for a drive around?" And I said, "Yes, I'd love to go and see the old Talili Theatre." And he said, "Well, how about if we go for a tour." And he said, when we were driving along he said, "You know what," he said,
- 10:00 "It's my birthday today." I said, "Is it?" He said, "Yes, and we're going to see Stan White, it's his birthday too." I said, "It's not really, is it?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, you won't believe it, but it's my birthday too." It was on Christmas Day. So they said, "Right, well, we're going to have a celebration now." So we went and we went all day. We went to one camp and another camp. I didn't know any more of them, they were all overgrown and I couldn't find the Talili at all. It was, the creepers had all grown over it and
- 10:30 where they used to sit the audience at night. And I didn't know where our camp was, and Tunnel Hill. I don't think I even saw Tunnel Hill. But anyhow, we got back to the ship just before sailing time, four o'clock in the morning. We'd gone all day, we went and visited, some of the people had their wives there and we had a lovely day, it was really nice. It's one Christmas day I won't forget in a hurry. But still,
- 11:00 yeah, we had a nice day. But all the kids and all the fellows there, they were all pleased to see me, very pleased to see me. I didn't do much in the show and all that but they remembered me. And then when I went to Japan we had to start again for the Nips [Japanese]. That was a bit of a different story to start. But it was OK. 'Cause our troops were all there in the camps. We went straight to Kure. But anyhow, I'll get back to your story.
- 11:30 **You mentioned that there was an officer that you didn't like. How did the officers behave differently to the sergeants or the privates?**
- This one was a sergeant when I met him in Lae and I didn't like him cause I thought he was conceited and he was taking out a sergeant out from the AWAS at the time and I didn't know her but I think she took a dislike to me. But, and I didn't feel anything really, not any real animosity. It was
- 12:00 just that silly business, I just thought at the time he's conceited. But he turned out to be a nice bloke, a very, very nice bloke. As a matter of fact he married a girl from Taree. Of all things, I go to a lady's place one day for morning tea and I looked at photos like that up and I looked and I thought, "That's Casey." And it turned out to be her husband. She said, "Oh, how well do you know him?"
- 12:30 That's my husband." I said, "Oh, really." I said, "I met him in the Islands, in Lae." That's as far as we went into it, didn't discuss that.

**How did the women in the entertainment unit get on with the AWAS?**

We didn't see them very much. They were doing their thing and we were doing ours. We'd see them in the morning. Pat and I were corporals. Vera was whisked away to the sergeants'

- 13:00 mess somewhere, but we were both corporals so we were in the middle of the hut in, they had two big wardrobes up, one there and one there, and we were opposite one another in the middle until one night we'd come home from a show tired, just jumped under the, had mosquito nets everywhere, jumped under the mosquito net. Needless to say we didn't have very much on, and during
- 13:30 the night we could hear this thumping and running and running and I thought, "What the devil's that?" Anyhow, then somebody's shaking me by the shoulder and I thought, "What are you doing? What is it?" Anyhow, he said, "Outside, outside, a bomb's going up," or "a bomb's been dropped," or something. I thought, "What?" So we went out, it was just the ammunition dump was blowing up. I dunno how it caught fire or what, but it was going up. It sounded like everything was happening at once.
- 14:00 But anyhow, we got over that. And the girls were all, they were all friendly, they seemed to be alright, quite alright. I met a sergeant up there, it wasn't the sergeant that I was talking about earlier but her name was Amy Millgate. She is now Amy Taylor, in charge of the army down in Sydney. I see her every Anzac Day, I go down and I say, "Hi." She says, "Hi, how are you? Have you done anything about that?" She always wanted me to tell my
- 14:30 story to somebody. And I said, "No, not yet." So I'll tell her this year, I've told my story now. Somebody's heard it.

**How do you think your job in the entertainment unit was received by other women in the army?**

Fine. They came along to the shows. They sat there and they came back after and we went back to the



messes and things and said, "We loved it. We've been starved for shows like that." Some of them had never been to a show like that. It was

15:00 just a straight out, it was a culture shock for the troops. That's what it's supposed to be, and apparently it worked that way. They enjoyed them when they saw them. Some of them came back time and time again. We had another concert party there with the female impersonators. I was supposed to go back to Japan with another concert party, with George Wallace Junior and Tom Tobin. But I got married instead and didn't go back to there.

15:30 **How was Peter Finch received by the troops?**

Well, he didn't go with us. He took sick in Sydney. He had to go and have an operation. So he didn't go over to the Islands. He only went on the southern tour, but he didn't make the overseas one. Which was our loss, but then the other boys filled in very admirably. Ron Folkard took over as the - Well, John Store was always there, he was our OC.

16:00 He was the professor in the thing, Professor Maignot. He was a big fellow. They spoke French half the time, I didn't know what they were speaking about but they just had little captions in French, you know, sort, they'd explain then what it meant. But that was in the script of the play. The other girl was supposed to be Jacqueline, that was the daughter. She was speaking English, ordinary English, but

16:30 she did know a little bit of French. We didn't have to speak any French at all.

**What sort of props or scenery did you use in the plays?**

Scenery, I wish you hadn't mentioned that. We'd have scenery all round us, you know, they'd be up like flat things standing up. Props, we'd have candlesticks, we had a breakfast scene once. They had bread and butter plates and knives

17:00 and forks and pepper and salt and all that all had to be packed away and got out again that night. It was a lot of fun. A lot of fun.

**And was there anyone to help the other men in the troupe pack up and set up?**

Well, that photo that I showed you, that little photo there, a whole lot of those are the crew and, as I said, we, there was Steve Meehan, he came from Brisbane, and Darkie,

17:30 I dunno where Darkie come from, and somebody Shearer. A lot of them were then, Lofty, you can't forget Lofty. When we were in the Islands we attained three more bush boys, as we called them. They were all from the bush and they just wanted to help us. They just wanted to help put the things up and they were absolutely, well, you couldn't replace them. They were beautiful, they were wonderful people. But Lofty ended up being the Mayor of Geelong

18:00 or something. I think it was Geelong, somewhere down New South Wales somewhere. But he's gone too.

**The bush boys, so they were local men from the Islands?**

No, no, no. They were all Australians, no, all Australians. All Australian Army, they were army boys. But they were just recruited to come along and help us. Because we'd ask for help, we'd asked for more staff to come. 'Cause it was

18:30 very hard for the boys to put that great green monster up and pull it down every now and again. They'd be exhausted. Be just the crew, even the fellows that stared in the shows. There was about one, two, three, four of them, they had to, Ronnie Steele was a little Frenchman, they had to help with the. Vic Arnold too was one of the boys that were on the crew putting up the things. They're going to

19:00 kill me when I forget all these names. I keep remembering one after the other. Vic was in, he was in, you couldn't replace him. But I dunno where he's gone now. But -

**Why were they called bush boys?**

That was our name for them. They all came from the bush here in Australia and they didn't know anything about acting, about shows, they'd never seen a show. They just loved it, though. They said, "That's, you don't do all that, do you?" They'd just sit there with their eyes popping.

19:30 It was fun, really good. Yes, I dunno where they are now.

**You mentioned the green monster, would that be set up in a venue or out in the open?**

It had to be out in the open. When we'd get there. The boys'd go up a day ahead and look around to see where they could put the monster. If they didn't have a stage there already. If they had a stage there they'd be OK. One place we went to they had a stage,

20:00 it wasn't much good. I think that was out at Yarlu, anyhow, they didn't have to put it up. But those occasions were very few and far between. They'd have to erect the stage because the boys'd come from all over the place in the bush. They'd just squat on the ground in front of you. In the civilised places where they had a stage or where they had shown shows before they had sort of just logs and they'd sit on those logs

20:30 in the pouring rain or the stifling heat. I just thought about it the other day when it was so hot here. I thought, "Oh my godfather," it was so hot up there in the Islands, I can remember some of the times. I got Dengue fever and I've had malaria several times. Not lately, but when I was going up to Japan I had it when I arrived in Japan. I've still got the doctor's letter telling me what to take and what not to do and

21:00 all that. The things you keep. I've got that much in there.

**What were you told before you left Sydney about what to expect?**

Nothing at all. Nothing, I can't remember. Maybe I was air headed and didn't listen or thinking of other things while I was going there. But I certainly didn't know what I was in for, but I still would've gone.

21:30 But I didn't realise there was the continuity of everything. Every day you had to wash, every day we did our own washing, except when you got to Japan. You wouldn't put a handkerchief down on the bed at all, it'd be gone. Mamma San, she'd come and take it away. It'd be out on the line hanging there drying before you could say Jack Robinson. They did the washing for us there. But not the stage washing. We looked after that ourselves all the time, 'cause it had to be repaired too,

22:00 'cause the girls had a little sewing bee. Vera's Sewing Bee they used to call it. That was the sergeant.

**You mentioned that when you arrived in Lae there was a thunderstorm, what were your impressions of the environment? Can you describe what it looked like to you?**

"What is this hell hole? Where am I? What am I doing here?" No, I was still excited about the trips and I thought, "It'll pass away." But it didn't

22:30 pass very quickly. Sometimes it did. A shower'd come over and it'd be gone. You'd be all wet and clammy on stage but you'd still have to look bright eyed and bushy tailed. But no, I liked, I loved it. I loved every moment of it. We didn't have very much to do with the natives at all. I used to just meet a few. I'd go on a little bit of a trip on a Sunday. I went looking for the church and I found Father Dayish.

23:00 He saw me, I used to go and sit in the back of the church or even other days through the week when I found a church, but then he came in and asked me who I was and what I was and why I was always coming to church. But we had a little talk and he got me to join the choir when I was there. But we were away a lot, sort of, but I used to enjoy it very much. Then in Rabaul, we didn't ever see a church over

23:30 there, we weren't near it. I didn't ever go to church there. We were only there for about five months, I think, or three months. But it didn't enter into things. We had a beach right in front of us and we had, all day we'd swim. Have to go in and wash our hair, and then Mary came up with the Maid of the Mountains Company. They came up five months after we did. We went to Lae and then they joined three months

24:00 after. They came up for three months. She couldn't do our hair then because they were doing their own shows. We used to alternate with the Maid of the Mountains then. We'd do our shows and then they'd do Maid of the Mountains. It was quite fun.

**You mentioned hair, how easy was it to get makeup?**

Well, it was old makeup. You had, I've still got sticks. I've got a makeup case there made for me by a Japanese soldier up there. Colin Croft had it made

24:30 for me. He said, "You need a makeup kit." You know, and it's a little box that had all the things, cubicles or something. You lifted it up and you put things in the bottom. But you had different colours for lyca, something or other they'd call them. We'd just put that on our face. Eye shadows and things. It's a dear little box. I should've had something going to do with it but my husband, when I came home he was

25:00 frightened there might be borers in it and he wouldn't let me have it in the house at first, but it's been here all this time and there's been no borers.

**How did it come to be that a Japanese soldier made that?**

Well, they were prisoners of war in Lae and we used to see them a lot on the trucks and Colin just thought, you know, he'd get him to do it for me. He's got his name and everything on the bottom of it. He signed it. But it was made in Lae

25:30 by a Japanese boy. Dunno where he got the timber from, but it's just wood. Just plain old wood.

**Can you remember what you thought when you first saw a Japanese soldier or prisoner?**

I wasn't frightened, but I couldn't get over how small they were. They weren't very tall and they looked a bit funny to me. They didn't look the same. They didn't seem to, they seemed to

26:00 be getting better looking now with the different cultures being, going through the strain, you know, marriage and what have you, they're coming out a bit different. But no, they all just seemed to be little short men. They were great. I made a friend with a few of them, you know, sort of, they were in the truck and we'd talk to them and they didn't understand our language but they'd smile and smile and smile. And they were quite OK.

26:30 Nothing to be frightened of. Not there. I wouldn't like to meet one in a dark corner somewhere I think they'd be pretty ferocious then. But they were well and truly plenty of soldiers around and plenty of, we were very, very, feeling very protected.

**Where were you when you saw the Japanese in the POW [prisoner of war] trucks?**

In Lae. They were all round Lae, you'd see them working everywhere, and the Australian

27:00 soldiers looking over them. But no, I haven't got any photos of them. I did have photos of them but I can't, I dunno where they are now. No, but they were just, they were very, I think, very pleased that their part of the war was over and that they were they were treated very, very well indeed. They didn't mind doing their day's work digging and whatever. They used to dig the latrines, but that's the toilets

27:30 for us and the deep pit latrines. That's a dig. We had one over in Rabaul, it was like a great big hut and they just had them one after the other, you know. But, and a big deep pit down beneath. That was frightening, you know. We had an earthquake in Rabaul and I thought, you know what,

28:00 if you were over there at the time and fell in you'd probably drown. It'd be a terrible death. I couldn't bear that. But no, the Japanese, they did their job alright as far as we were concerned. We didn't see anything wrong with them.

**How did the troops seem to relate to the Japanese given what had happened in New Guinea in the jungles?**

Well, I think they screened us a lot from that. We didn't see them that much. We were just, when

28:30 we were out on the road going anywhere, to a show or in the town, if we were sort of just in the town they'd be going past in a truck or working somewhere, but they were giving them orders, you know, real orders, and the Japanese were, I dunno whether they understood but they seemed to understand what they said to them. They'd learned a few words in Japanese and they were sort of barking them at them and they'd do as they were told.

29:00 No, they were OK then, those prisoners of war, quite OK, I think. I don't know what went on in between. Maybe they weren't so good trying to get them back to camp or something. But I think they were pleased to be out of it, really. I don't know but still, that's my opinion.

**What did the town of Lae look like?**

I just wouldn't know it now. It wasn't a town. It was just a place

29:30 where they'd put up the church, and I don't remember at all. I don't remember anything about that. I don't remember at all. No, I can't remember Lae as a place. I can remember more about Rabaul. We weren't in the town, but we were off Tunnel Hill at Ramali Mission. It was we had huts there. We, in Lae we had a camp built for us with

30:00 barbed wire all round us. They found a couple of times that the barbed wire was cut, the boys doing their routine night would report back and they'd go out and fix that. I don't know who cut it, whether it was girls going out. Some said it was girls going out or Japs trying to get in, we'd never know. The army would, but we wouldn't know. We

30:30 weren't worried by it at all.

**Who was housed in this barbed wire section?**

All the army. All the army girls. The boys, that was a different place altogether. They had a great, I dunno how many troops they had up there. They had army sigs [signalmen] and cooks and what else did they have there? Telegraphers and all sort of thing. But they were all, I've got a photo of us all marching. One day we had to go out, they'd go out for a route march during

31:00 the day and then they'd come back that night. That's about all there was. The girls were only there together, sergeants and corporals. I think the officers had a different quarters. I dunno, there weren't very many officers there. We never ever come in contact with them. They never bothered us, so -

**And where you slept, actually slept, what did that look like?**

Just a big hut and two beds opposite one another. I don't know whether they were pop up

31:30 beds, sort of, you know, you could make them up, I dunno how to explain it but they were just beds. They weren't made of anything, weren't sort of beds they'd knocked together or anything. They seemed to be collapsible but they were all made for us anyhow. We didn't know and we didn't want to know. We had to make our own beds when we got up in the morning, but only a sheet anyhow to pull up. It wasn't much trouble at all.

32:00 It was good.

**Who did you share your tent with?**

Just about 40 other troops on either side of the wardrobes and Patty opposite and Patty used to arrive home every night, no matter what time it was she'd get into bed and you'd see the light go on. She'd have a little torch and she'd be writing. She was in love with our officer commanding, David.

- 32:30 He was a nice enough bloke. But she'd write to him, it was hearts and flowers we used to call them. Hearts and flowers. She spent all her time with him. I've got photos of them on the beach. They were. It was very, very nice but it didn't last. She's down in Narrabeen now. There's Patty over there in that photo on the end.

**How did she meet him?**

Just when he came to take over the unit,

- 33:00 and she liked him straight away and she made no bones about it and he wasn't my cup of tea and he wasn't Vera's, certainly, and Vera married up there too. She married Drunken Duncan. Duncan McDonald. He was a lot of fun. He was a lot of fun, but she's, I don't know where Vera is now. I haven't heard from her at all, and what's happened to her or what's, where she is or Duncan.
- 33:30 We just had a night in New Guinea, Duncan was in the army but he was on ships, I dunno what he did on ships. I can't remember him coming, but he used to come up and wait for Vera till the end of the show. He used to lie up, when we weren't using the lounge he'd lie on the lounge at the back there. And one night Mary thought it'd be a bit of fun and she went round and Duncan had a big
- 34:00 moustache and hair and he looked great. He looked, Duncan, well, we called him Drunken Duncan, but Duncan McDonald, and he looked like it too. Anyhow, she went over and shaved off one part of his moustache, one half of it. I went out and found her doing it and thought, "What are you doing, Mary?" And she said, "Shhh." He was a bit worse the wear for drink. Anyhow, she saved off this half. When he came too we had to hide Mary, he would have
- 34:30 killed her. He went berserk. However, he got over it. Vera soothed him, I think. Anyhow, that's in the book too. Remember the night Mary shaved off half of Duncan's moustache. We've got some memories. Real memories.

**Were there lots of antics like that?**

Well, we didn't see it, not the girls. We were protected. See, the boys got up to things we didn't know about. We hear about them now.

- 35:00 But I don't think they did very, very much. They didn't do any damage anyhow. But no, I don't think so. The boys, I think they did a lot of things themselves. We hear about, well, I know for a fact when I had my 21st birthday there. Through the very kind courtesy, he was a friend of mine, I made a friend of him. He was a sergeant, I think, or was he a lieutenant?
- 35:30 I've forgotten now but his name was Fred Ruddock. I dunno whether he's related to Phillip Ruddock - lot but he came from Western Australia and he got turkeys and things. Got us some beautiful food for my 21st birthday party, and he provided a lot of grog too. The kids, they made up a punch. When they ran out of that first punch they'd finished they made another punch of lemon essence and that was drastic.
- 36:00 I didn't drink in those days, I said. But we spent all night trying to get one fellow to calm down. He was really, really bad, but we survived.

**Where was your 21st birthday?**

Up in Lae. We took over an old GGD camp [General Depot]. They, the boys came home one night and they said, "We've found a place for your party."

- 36:30 And they went out and all day they strung up parachutes and they wrote a big sign, "Gloria 21 today." And they had parachutes all round the ceilings and all, it was really lovely. Lights hanging down. They did what they could. There was nobody, it was deserted the camp. They'd left the camp. I dunno whether they'd gone someplace else but we had the whole camp there. Very much against the rules, but that's what we did. And I had a lovely party.
- 37:00 But we had to take poor old Whitey home, he was absolutely paralytic. He was confessing his love for Mary, not Mary. Who was it? Mary wasn't there then, she went over to Rabaul. I don't know. Oh, it was me, I think. That's right, it was me. He wanted to marry me and all. He married a Gloria, funnily enough, when he came back. Her name was Gloria.
- 37:30 But it wasn't me.

**How much were you being paid when you were in the entertainment unit?**

We were paid, actually we were given a corporal's stripes and we were paid a corporal's rate. I don't have any idea. It just went into our pay books every week. We didn't have to pay for anything. We didn't need any money. We used to draw some money now and again if you wanted to buy anything in the officers' shop

- 38:00 or the sergeants' shop or at the mess, you could go and buy drinks if you wanted a drink. That's all we needed money for. So I don't know what the wage was. I've got it all there. I've got how much I had when I came home. It was all banked for me. It didn't matter to me, I didn't care what it was. I knew I was getting, I knew I wasn't doing it for nothing, that's all. And I was being looked after. The food,
- 38:30 I don't ever want to see goldfishes again. We called them goldfishes. They were little fish, like, in gold sort of, that was dreadful. And the M and V, meat and vegies. I had enough of that too. We had fish now and again because they used to catch a lot of fish up there. What else did we have food? The sweets, they had tinned fruit a lot and they had pineapples and mangoes,
- 39:00 not mangoes, rockmelon. No, mangoes it was. We had those for sweets more or less. I didn't ever complain about the food. I don't eat very much anyhow, I eat very little. But yeah, that was fun, good.

**Was the mess within the barbed wire compound?**

Yes, in Lae, yes. In Rabaul we didn't have a compound as such. We had all huts and there was a mess hut was one and living quarters was

- 39:30 another one. We could walk to from one to the other. They were quite close to the theatre where we had to work. The Talili Theatre. I don't know why, but they had guards around everywhere, guards were patrolling all the time. Gee, I dunno how I can remember that. But they were walking round a lot. We didn't, we just did our shows and we came home at night. That's all there was to it, we didn't really need much in the guarding. Except a few nights we
- 40:00 slept out, we sort of. One night we decided, when we were in Rabaul, I'm slipping from one place to the other, but still you can sort it out. We went to Rabaul and we were going to this mess and we decided that there was another detachment in town, I think it was the 4 Detachment or someone, they had a female impersonator with them and we decided it'd be funny to take Danny along this night.
- 40:30 I didn't decide it but George Nichols, he was the lead in the other show, The Maid of the Mountains, we all combined up in Rabaul. The girls all lived together in the hospital with the nurses and the boys all lived in the camp somewhere else. But we decided we'd take Danny along. His name was Ian Mahl. He was absolutely brilliant. Anyhow, we went
- 41:00 along this night to the mess and we went in jeeps. We had to have two girls and two boys in every jeep and they had a rifle they had to put on the dashboard in case they were pulled up on Tunnel Hill and the MPs [Military Police] pulled you up all the time checking on you. You had to have a leave pass to show where you went and everything. So we went this night. The boys all went in one truck or something and we went in jeeps and there was only, well,
- 41:30 Mary had joined us then, from the other show there was just who? Irene Bodner and Babe. No, Vera didn't come. There were about three of us there, and Danny. Anyhow, Mary and I were given the duty of watching Danny all night to see that he didn't, she didn't disappear. So we were watching her just having a drink and watching her and then I looked around once, I thought -

## Tape 5

- 00:32 **Recording. OK, Mrs Berry I'm going to ask you that question again. When you arrived in Lae you were living in a compound, who was in the compound?**

Just all the army girls, the women from all walks in life. I think the lieutenants and that were there too, but I know the sergeants and privates and NCOs [non-commissioned officers] were all there. They were all either signallers or

- 01:00 whatever, they did for a job in the army, we were all in that big compound. The men lived in a different one at the other end of the island, I dunno where it was. I have no idea. They used to pick us up on the way to do the shows and then drop us back at night.

**And how long were you in Lae for?**

Five months, yes, that's right. We were five months in Lae and three months in Rabaul. We flew over from Lae to Jacquinot Bay and to Finschhafen

- 01:30 and then to Rabaul. That was another place we sort of looked and thought, "Whoa." It was nice, it was a camp there. Just the camp, the buildings where we lived, and then the theatre was along not far from it. But there wasn't any barbed wire or anything there. I dunno why, because there were more Japs in the hill, Tunnel Hill, that weren't even discovered yet, but they never ever came out,
- 02:00 well, they came out to watch our shows. The boys used to say, "Over that side there. Look over there." And they'd be all sitting up and I don't think they understood. Wouldn't understand a word we were saying, but they seemed to enjoy it.

**In Lae, what kind of security did you have as a woman?**

Well, our own boys. We couldn't go out with one of the fellows, and they all had to have approve their pistol as they

- 02:30 took us out. We went in a group, so I don't know whether there was any security with us when we went. But that's, we just went all together to do the shows at night.

**And where were you doing the shows in Lae?**

All over Lae, I can't remember the names. Mainly in the township of Lae itself. It wasn't actually a township as I remember it. But we went out to Nadzab. We had to cross the Yarl

- 03:00 River, which was exciting when it was flooding. We didn't think we were going to get home one night, but we did, and all around Labu, across the water I think it was there. It wasn't Rabaul. Went over to Labu, that was another company. Wherever, they'd had different companies everywhere in Lae and we'd go around to the different camps. That's all I can remember about that. I can't remember much about Lae

- 03:30 It was all, I was still excited about getting up there and having the trip away. It was great.

**You mentioned there was a theatre in Lai?**

No, in Rabaul. They built a theatre. We didn't know about it. We had to use our stage at first, then they built this Telleelli Theatre. It was lovely the way they built it, it was very good. Got a picture of it over there, but still,

- 04:00 it was big and airy, had plenty of room on it but we didn't use it so much. We used it, but we didn't need it as much there as we did in New Guinea, in Lae. One's New Guinea and one's New Britain. But no, no it was built, I think the, I dunno whether Nips

- 04:30 built it or whether the dark people built it. But what do they call them? Papuans or whatever they are. But it was just standing there beautiful.

**What was it made out of?**

I don't know, I have no idea. I'm not into that sort of thing. I just knew it went up like houses go up. I dunno what they're made of either, it's just a good solid theatre it was. But it wasn't standing there when I went back in,

- 05:00 when'd I go back? '46 to Japan, we called into Rabaul and I say this sergeant was there and he was now an officer and he took me all over the island celebrating birthdays that day. But we tried to find, I couldn't find it. I think it was all overgrown. Everything grows so quickly up there. All the seats and everything,

- 05:30 they just had logs for the troops to sit on but it was all overgrown, didn't know it at all. Didn't look like my Talili Theatre, I was most disappointed. Maybe he just couldn't find it because of the, how overgrown it was. But I didn't find it at all.

**So when you were in Lae how aware were you then of how close the enemy was?**

I don't know, I

- 06:00 must've been rather feather headed. I didn't think much about the enemy at all. It didn't even enter my head. We had a show to do and I used to go and do the show at night and go home exhausted and then we'd get up to face another day. I don't think I ever faced them at all. We didn't see very much of newspapers. They used to put out a Guinea Gold and you'd get the headlines, but that's about all. And we didn't sort of really know what was going on.

- 06:30 I dunno whether troops did. I suppose they did. They kept in touch somehow, but we didn't know much about it. We were more concerned about getting that green monster on the road and putting our show on. Well, one day one fellow woke up and he had wobbly knees. So I thought, "Oh my godfather, how's he going to go on stage tonight?" He couldn't. So we had to, we started then having understudies. The third girl, Vera,

- 07:00 she used to be an understudy for me and for Jacqueline. I dunno how she did it. I think I called on her once to do it for me. I had a sore throat and I couldn't go on so Vera did it. But she was mainly in charge of the wardrobe. But she did Mabel Crumb for me a couple times over in Rabaul, very good. They decided then they'd alternate the

- 07:30 role to give me a break so we did. It was lovely, it was good.

**When you were on Lae could you explain what your day-to-day existence was like? What would be your routine?**

Get up in the morning and wash your smalls and get them out on the line and go and if we didn't have a show on we'd be rehearsing for the other one. That's all we did. We didn't go out and have cups of tea or go and

- 08:00 visit the other messes in the daytime. We did that at night time after the shows. They'd take us straight to some sergeant's mess somewhere and they'd have a pretty good, do you know, they'd have the chiefs or whatever they call them then. Just the cooks in the army, they used to try to make cakes and things for us. It was very nice just to have something like a bit of home. No, it was good. I think they were spoiling us, of course.
- 08:30 They were very, very appreciative of the show. Any show. The boys just absolutely loved it. I thought we were a bit of a culture shock for them but they just sat there with their mouths open and watched it and just clapped when the end of it came. I think they appreciated the show. Well, we had lots of letters from them that they did. But I don't know. I didn't ever wait for any feedback. I was busy. I dunno what I was
- 09:00 doing, I was always busy though. Busy doing something.

**Did the same play be showed to the same troops, would they be seeing - ?**

No, no, we went to all the different camps. I have no idea how many camps there were in Lae or in Rabaul but we'd go round to different ones every time. We wouldn't do every night. You'd do about two or three nights a week, or maybe three or maybe two.

- 09:30 The weeks soon flowed by, you know, we were only there for a couple of months. When we got to Rabaul there was a radio show, we used to do that. That was always in the one place and we used to go to it every Sunday night, we had a show there. It was one New Year's Eve I was there and one of the announcers came over and said, "Happy New Year," and
- 10:00 gave me a big smush and all the boys, they were in the audience, they had some audience, they all said, "Hey-hoo," then they'd send phone messages in. Everyone'd ring in from everywhere and say how they enjoyed the numbers and what we sang and what we did and one fellow rang in and said, "Tell Gloria I want that same big kiss she just gave to Ian." And the
- 10:30 boys all yahooped again and they said, "Who do you know in ANGAU?" I said, "Not a soul." The boys, whooeey. It was just a ploy. Very nice though, good for the ego.

**You've mentioned the radio plays, where was the radio station?**

At 9AB, I don't, I have no idea where it was in Rabaul. There was one in Lae too, as a matter of fact, a fellow lives round the corner here

- 11:00 in one of the units on the end of the street there, he was one of them that was instrumental in doing the recording for me. He sent it down to John and John sort of sent it to some lab somewhere or other and they couldn't get it all. It had a lot of, what are they? Not the crocus. But at night time everything, all the sounds of the night. It was very, very quiet up
- 11:30 there but you could hear every sound and it came in, you know, you could hear all through the recording but I got enough of it out to take it up on a CD. We've got just a little bit of a CD so I've got a little bit of memorabilia, from when I was in Rabaul mainly.

**Can you just explain, I'm trying to, I'm finding it hard to understand where the radio station, what it actually looked like. When you walked in what was it, what kind of building or - ?**

It was

- 12:00 just like a hut. I can't remember a lot about the station. I can't really, because I'd be just so, well, I'd be rehearsing all day, then I'd have to go there at night and I'd just want to get there and have the show. We had a lot of fun doing the show. I can't even remember what the other acts were. You know, what everybody else did. I just knew I was there, I had to do it and I did it and I can't even remember what the station was like. Or I can't remember 9AL at all.
- 12:30 and WLKS up in Japan, I don't know. I just walked in and they said, "There's the microphone and here's the orchestra," and Horrie Dargie'd say, "What are you going to sing?" And he sort of played a little bit, then he said, "Righto." Then we went on the air and did it.

**So was there an orchestra in Rabaul as well?**

No, no, it was just a piano. Dudley played the piano and played it beautifully. He was very keen on a little girl that was there, Laura Batty, she was the image of,

- 13:00 who's the girl that played Laura? Was it Jean Simmons? She was just a very, very brown too. She looked like an Island girl. She wasn't. She was in the army, but he was very keen on her. I meant to write and ask him whatever happened there. Nothing, I don't think.

**So the radio station in Rabaul, as far as you're aware, was just basically a hut with some recording equipment?**

I think so, yes that's all they could. They didn't have anything else.

- 13:30 That's all they could sort of afford. Just put something up temporarily. They only broadcast, they'd play records for the boys for them to hear and of course the news broadcasts and the weather and all that, but that's basically all they did in the radio station. I truly can't help you there. I don't know much about

it I just knew I had to be there at such and such a time and we did it and then we came home again.

**What was your role in the radio?**

Just singing. I used to sing with them,

- 14:00 different songs. They'd, on New Year's Eve I sang a couple of songs and they were all swooning all over the place. But yeah, it was nice, it was fun. But it wasn't anything dramatically big or good, it was just something the boys put together and we did it on a Sunday night.

**When you were on Lae, and you mentioned that you went to the different camps, how would you travel?**

- 14:30 In a bus. We travelled everywhere in a bus. That was our mode of transport. In Japan we had a train, just a carriage of a train and we used to pack everything, all the props and the whole of the stage. I didn't do any of that, thank goodness. We had to just get ourselves there. But the boys, I don't know which crew we had there. We had a lot of help there. 'Cause the boys didn't have very much to do in the camp. They were all sort of
- 15:00 waiting and waiting cause the war was over. But my husband went from Morotai to Japan and he arrived in Hiroshima. I think he arrived in Hiro and he was camped at Kaitachi, that's just outside of Hiroshima. I have pictures there that I took when I arrived there of the camp
- 15:30 how Hiroshima still looked. It's just a skeleton of a place. There's only, you can see miles and miles of devastation but just one building standing up, it was quite alright or some of it was still there. And I didn't get photos of the people but Warren did in his album and he's got all the radiation on the women and babies. They were dead, of course, but he's got lots of photos like that. I didn't
- 16:00 go in for those, I just snapped what I could see, which was quite enough. I've got lots of, the Japanese kids were beautiful, they were delightful little kids, you know. They'd just all swarm around you like mad and I was going out with a Canadian officer then and he was very, very nice, Bill, and I've got a photo, and I'm teaching them to sing Mary Had a Little Lamb. They were looking at
- 16:30 me and they all caught on and they, "Ah-ah-ah-ah." But I've got quite a few photos there. Still got some. But it was really bad to see what we saw. Just the, I didn't see any people 'cause I didn't arrive there. He arrived there straight away. He went straight from Morotai to Japan, the first troops to go to Japan. I went there. Well, he'd been there nine months when I met him,
- 17:00 so it must've been nine months after. They were starting to build. Build up places, you know, for couldn't believe it the things that they were doing. They were so quick. They were sort of makeshift places but that's what they were very good at, doing it straight away. But it was very, very interesting. I've nearly forgotten that now though. I can see all the men,
- 17:30 there weren't very many there because a lot of them were still prisoners of war and a lot had been killed and they weren't so keen on us. Any men we saw, they sort of shifty look at you and sort of, you felt a bit uncomfortable. But that was war. They didn't have very many men at all and the old fellows, some of them were delightful. Old blokes getting around and -
- 18:00 They had some customs I didn't like. I'm never going back there. I've said to Ted, "You can go anywhere you like, but I'm not going to Japan or China." I dunno why China, but because they're the same as Japanese. I said, "I don't like their customs. I don't like what they eat. They upset me. I don't want to see them again." So I've never been back. But my son now flies for Japan Airlines. And he's, he goes back every
- 18:30 ten days. He comes out here for about ten days, then he goes back there for ten days and sometimes it's about a month and then he goes back there for a month. He's doing that for ten years until he retires again. He retired from South African Airways and took up this job with Japan Airlines. But he said, the people, they're very nice. They won't lose face though. Whatever happens they won't be to blame,
- 19:00 you know, sort of.

**What were the customs that you found so difficult?**

Customs? I don't know now. We didn't live with the Japanese. We lived in our own places and they lived in their own places. One of them was the sanitation. I couldn't stand that. We walked into our hut when we arrived there and we were walking through it and I was called 'Glow Girl'

- 19:30 when I was away, I dunno why Glow Girl, but my friend Lois went ahead of me and she said, "Glow Girl, come here quick." So I said, "What is it, Lo?" She said, "Come on in here." And I walked through and these rice, well, they were huts made with rice paper. It was cold in the winter, it was very cold in the winter, but it was hot in the summer too. But anyhow, I opened these doors. They all pushed aside and walked through after and the lady
- 20:00 from the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] was trying to show us over the hut where we were going to live and I went in and Lois said to me, "Now what do you reckon you do with that? Do you face it or you turn your back on it?" and it was a toilet. Down on the floor a little thing like this, around



like that with a little hood on it. So I said, "Well, I guess you face it." But she went ahead then, she went to this thing and she was trying to have a drink and wash her hands and the lady

- 20:30 ran through behind me and said, "No, no, don't do that." And Lois said, "Why?" She said, "That's a urinal." It was dreadful to realise that's what it was. But I had never seen one before. I wasn't doing it. Lois was doing it. But anyhow, that's, she found out you don't wash your hands or have a drink or anything out of that. But that was one of the customs I couldn't stand. When you walk along the street the ladies,
- 21:00 if they want to go to the toilet they just squat in front of you. And you, oops, you nearly walk over them. You've got to stop, otherwise you trip over them. Then they, if they're doing a big job they were in little cubicles, no doors, nothing on them, just little cubicles, hello, hello, as you go past you'd think, "God, I'm not going to look in there." But that was one of the customs, another custom.
- 21:30 And the way they dispose of their faeces. Anyway, they sort of, they had these honey carts they called them. They were just a big long cart with these round cylinders all the way along on either side and they were full, and an oxen pulling it along the road. And it'd go past, it'd nearly take you hat off. You know, you couldn't
- 22:00 stay in the same street as it. But one night one of the fellows came in, not one of ours but one fellow, he came in and he was terribly distressed. He'd had an accident and what had happened, his jeep had run into a honey cart and he had been splashed with everything that was in the cart, you know. And I felt sick after that. I thought, you know. But we weren't
- 22:30 allowed to eat anything off the ground. No strawberries. They were growing the most magnificent strawberries and lettuce and all that sort anything that grows on the ground, we weren't allowed to touch that because how did they fertilise their land? From these honey carts. That's where they're taking them, to the farms. So that's another custom I didn't like very much either. What were the others? I don't like that bowing and bowing.
- 23:00 It doesn't mean anything to me. I see them doing it on television when they see anyone. It's a nice custom. They're very, very gentlemanly, the fellows, in their own way. They just go along and you're just as, like you hear a (spitting sound) right in front of you and I'd think, oh. I'd run a mile. But that's another custom I couldn't take. We went to the Takarazuka
- 23:30 Theatre, in Kyoto I think it was, and we went in there and we were the only white people in there, there's about four of us and we were sitting there and they're all eating dried seaweed and dried octopus and all sort of, and the smell was nearly driving me insane. So I had to leave before the show was finished, but it was great what we saw. We saw their theatre, what they did on stage and they all
- 24:00 Have, the hero's come in and the heroine's a poor little girl. But they all liked it. They loved it. They were all, "A-ra-hey." But no, I could never live there. I believe they say it's the cleanest city in the world and it wasn't when I was there and I didn't like what went on there so I just can't bring myself to go back. I thought about it for a while. I thought, there was a trip going and I thought, "I'll just go and just to have a - " 'Cause it was only a couple of weeks. It was on this ship and
- 24:30 back again. I love ship travel, but no, I didn't go. So I don't think I'll ever go back now, it's too late now, too late now.

**Going back to Lae and Rabaul, you mentioned that you travelled by bus when you got to these camps that were outside of your normal camp, where were you sleeping?**

We'd go back to our own camp. We'd just go in the bus for that trip. The boys'd go up the day before and put the theatre up,

- 25:00 the monster, then they'd come back and then the next day we'd go up and do the show and we'd just come home that night and they'd go back and - Some nights they stayed and pulled it down that night. But if they didn't they had to go back next day and - The camps weren't so far apart. I just don't have any recollection of those days, you know. I have, I've got where we went in the magazine over here, I should've read it last night, I suppose, to
- 25:30 remember where I went, but there were only a few camps up there. Labu, Salamaua, Nadzab. There were, most camps were around the town really. But we did travel out, but we didn't stay out at night. That's why they were very anxious to get us back that night, the river was up. But we did. And in Rabaul?
- 26:00 I think it was much the same. I think it was.

**How different was Rabaul from Lae, was there much different?**

I thought it was greener. I don't know whether I'm just imagining it. Things seemed to grow quicker. Maybe it wasn't inhabited as much as Rabaul was. Lae, there was probably more people there and they settled themselves in and put buildings up and everything. But

- 26:30 no, I don't think there's very much difference in one place and the other really. Perhaps one's greener. We came in by plane to Rabaul. I think that makes a difference too. We just sort of landed on the strip

and then we were at the theatre in a couple of minutes. Well, at the camp where we had the theatre. But in Lae it was different, we came by sea, we had to travel a bit to get to the camp. But I

27:00 don't think there was terribly much difference. I didn't notice in those days. I was just having a wonderful time. My eyes were wide open looking around me, looking at all the trees and wondering where the Japs were. But they weren't there, but of course I'm imagining they were, and the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' and that, they were very, very nice. But they always, we went down to a couple of their markets, I dunno, they don't call them lubras [term for Aboriginal women] there. I don't know what they call the

27:30 women, but they were just sitting around and their mouth was absolutely blood red and I thought, "What the devil's the matter with them?" It was just the betel nut. They used to chew these betels from some, these nuts from something or other and all their mouths were all, their gums and everything was just blood red. I couldn't get used to that very much. But the little children were beautiful, they were lovely everywhere. Children are no different. You meet them, they're just lovely.

28:00 They haven't learned the bad ways of their forefathers. Not yet. But -

#### **What were the markets like?**

I didn't get anything there. You could see they were just little baskets all made from leaves. They didn't have any money or anything to sell really. We just sort of went and walked. They had foods there, we could buy foods but nobody, well, some did, I suppose.

28:30 They'd take it back to their camp and have a nosh up but we didn't ever buy any food or anything. We just took what was given to us up there. Plenty of goldfish, M and V, but I thought I was on the right track, I wouldn't get sick or nothing would happen to me if I did that, if I ate all the right food. But I don't think they had very much at all to sell. Not like the markets of today. You go over to Turkey and they're absolutely laden with jewellery and all

29:00 this sort of stuff. I got that on the way down the Nile. We travelled down the Nile and it was in this gift shop there and I looked at it for about three days and I went down the fourth day just before we landed and he said, "Mmmm," he said, "You like?" I said, "Yes, I like very much." But I didn't it, was under a light and it looked absolutely beautiful. It doesn't show up in this light though.

#### **When you were in Rabaul and Lae did you talk to the soldiers, the troops very much about what**

29:30 **kind of action they'd seen?**

No, never mentioned it. You could see the ones that had been in action. We went to the hospital, the 2/7th up there, the AGH [Army General Hospital] at, where was that? That was in Rabaul. We lived in the hospital, the AGH, all the girls from the Maid of the Mountains company and our company, Detachment 12, we had some fun. We used to go

30:00 swimming at night time in the nuddy. We'd all giggle and giggle and go down to the water's edge. Weren't supposed to, but there was no sharks or anything there. We didn't even hear of any or know of any, anyhow. And we all went in, and you can delete this part. I remember one night we all went in the water, we were all swimming around, and Mary it was again, she sort of looked and she went out, she

30:30 swam over to one of the other girls and she said, "What's that?" It was her bosom. It'd come up to float. I couldn't believe it. There were about three of the Maid of the Mountains girls, very big bosom and they were all floating on the top and ours were all, she's as, she's like me. Tiny little rose buds, they'd say. Little rose buds. That's awful, isn't it? Don't you put that in!

31:00 **What kind of things socially were you allowed to do outside of the confines of the army camp?**

Well, actually I think we had a very good time. I went out one night with Naughty Nicky. Nicky from the other show, he was in the Maid of the Mountains show and we were coming back, I dunno where we'd been. To somebody's camp somewhere, we had a party

31:30 and we were coming back and I was sitting on this side. It was a left hand drive and he was driving and I was hanging onto the thing and we're going along the road and I looked back and I think I saw a staff car behind us and I said, "It looks like the officer getting back at the same time." It didn't matter because we were allowed to go around. But anyhow, we went over a bump and my knee went forward and switched the lights

32:00 off. They were just lights that you pulled out that just switched them off. Well, I looked forward, it was pitch dark, you couldn't see a darn thing. I thought, "What's going to happen?" So I just hung on tightly and Nick thought he'd follow the road and instead of it went round that way, he went straight ahead and we went straight up and turned over completely. We were completely capsized, and I remember coming out on the other side and I thought my hand

32:30 was jammed in my mouth, I'd pulled it down from there and I thought, "What have we done?" And Nick was out, he was running around, and Nick. Excelsius. Gloria and Excelsius, he called me 'Excelsius': "Excelsius, where are you, where are you?" And I pulled my hand out of my mouth and I said, "I'm here. I'm alright, Nick. It's alright," and I got just, pulled myself out and as I did I could see the wheels still

spinning round on top, I thought, "Oh my godfather," and I pulled myself out. As I did that the staff car pulled

- 33:00 up behind it and they jumped out and it was what was his name? He took my tonsils out. Anyhow, they all jumped out the car, ladies and men. Lady officers and men, and they came running over and they said, "Are you alright? Are you alright?" I said, "Yes, I'm fine." My hand was absolutely full of blood. I just put it behind my back and I said, "Yes, we're alright,
- 33:30 madam. Yes, yes, we're fine. We're fine. Yes, Sir, no, Sir. No, no, Sir, no, we're right. We'll go on now." Well, we couldn't. Because the jeep was smashed we were in. So we had to pile into the staff car and the major said, "You're going straight to the hospital." I said, "We can't go to the hospital, because Nick's going back to Sydney tomorrow on the ship, he's been demobbed [demobilised]." And he said, no, she said, "You're going to the hospital, that's all." So we went to the hospital and I was sitting in a chair at the time and I
- 34:00 dunno what happened, I must've passed out, I just fell on the floor. I just said, they said, "Pick her up, pick her up, quickly," and I sort of just sat up and looked at my hand. I said, "It's just a little cut." So anyhow, I don't know how the boys did it but Nick was alright and they sent him back straight away to his camp and he rallied the boys around and they came and they scraped every bit of evidence of the jeep off the road. It was nothing had happened, nothing on the road.
- 34:30 And he was leaving next day to go back so I went down to the wharf to see him off and he said, "Did you notice anything on the road as you came past?" I said, "No, what happened to the jeep?" he said, "The boys went out last night and cleaned it up so that the military police wouldn't come after me." And I said, "What's going to happen to you?" He said, "Nothing, I'm going home." So he just took off. But that was really scary, I thought my days were up, my number was up, and all sorts of things. But it was just, the
- 35:00 lights just went out and it went as black as anything, you couldn't see a thing in front of you. I experienced one of those nights just recently on Norfolk Island. We were up there and they have a night thing and you look up and you can see every star in the sky and I could see the Milky Way for the first time in years. You can see all of it. It was beautiful. But I hadn't seen a black night like that since I'd been in the Islands. It was very nice.
- 35:30 **As being in the entertainment unit did you have a bit more freedom than the other army girls?**
- I wouldn't say so if there's any officers listening, no. But yes, yes, we did. We had a lot more freedom. Nobody really, we didn't ever try and break the law, we did what we could but we were allowed out at night to go to these messes and things. They couldn't stop us, I don't think, but we didn't overdo it. We
- 36:00 really did. We'd have little parades when we used to have to all be in our uniforms and parade. But mainly the boys were allowed to go round in just their shirts and shirts hanging out and all that and they had a hard job to do to put that monster up and down. We were different from the other troops, really. We didn't think we were different but we knew we must've been. We were allowed so much more freedom. We were really allowed freedom.
- 36:30 I can say that now I'm out. I've been discharged for a long time. They can't get me now.
- And what were the, I suppose the, you said earlier that you could tell which boys had seen action, why was that? What was different about them?**
- Well, they didn't talk very much and, well, a few loudmouths did but they just had a
- 37:00 look in their eyes, you know, sort of, they looked a bit haunted and you felt sorry for them. I don't know. I don't know why I said that, I just felt that it was rather poignant to me. When I was there I could see the boys that were, had been in action were sort of very quiet but we didn't see much of that though. Not much at all. They'd either been up to the front line and they were back again. They'd been on Bougainville or Finschhafen. No, not Finschhafen, to
- 37:30 Morotai or wherever they'd been, but I think they were, all of our boys were all stationery there and they weren't seeing very much action at all. It was all past then. We had the Japs in tow. Yes, they were, some of the Japs were quite nice and they seemed to be quite educated and quite polite, but some of them didn't talk to you at all, they just, you wouldn't want to know them. We just
- 38:00 skipped them. It wasn't much point in drawing attention to yourself.
- So when you were in Rabaul what kind of action was happening around there at that time?**
- Well, nothing so far as we knew. The boys were all just there, just waiting like staging. Actually, it was getting close to the end of the war. It was the end of the war. The war had finished. It finished while over in, when we were in Lae. But when we got over to Rabaul
- 38:30 the boys were all just waiting to go home. The only thing that would happen would be a stray Jap would come out of the tunnels or something or they didn't ever do anything. I don't think any of them. We had an ammunition dump go up one night and it was a terrific bang. I nearly jumped off the stage, it was so loud. It went right in the middle of one of my scenes and I - But anyhow, we didn't think of it then

39:00 but I've thought about it, I wondered if one of them had set the ammunition dump up or what had happened, but it sure went up and there were bullets. We weren't close to it but we could hear everything that went on, just a bang, it was a terrific, terrific noise.

**So you said the war actually finished while you were in Lae, can you remember that day when the news came through?**

No, it finished before I went to Lae, because they wouldn't let me go up there because I wasn't 21 and we went up in the

39:30 September and war finished, I think, in September. But we went up on the 26th, I think, of September, we were on the water. So I don't know much about when it was finished, what happened or anything. We weren't here or there, we were en route.

**So the entertainment you were doing was for the troops that were waiting to come home?**

Well, that's right. They were getting bored stiff. You know, we were supposed to go up but, as I said, some

40:00 major wouldn't let me go because I wasn't 21. You had to be 21, a girl, to go overseas, so that was the whole story of it. I turned 21 in the December and it was September. I had my 21st birthday in Lae, it was beautiful. But the war had finished. We did all our entertaining then. And as for Japan, that came later after I'd come back from the Islands, from Rabaul.

40:30 **So when did you come back from Rabaul, when was that?**

About the 5th of May, I think it was. I think I read that in my diary just a while ago, 1945 and it was, yes it was. I think that's what it was. I'm getting a little confused now of my dates. But that's about what it was. Then we went straight to Greenslopes up in Queensland and had our first meal and I lost the lot.

41:00 I got sick as a dog. Couldn't take rich food after all the time on M and V and stuff. But that's when we had our night out for the boys from the Westralia that brought us home. What am I now? Yes, so I came home from, no it wasn't. Delete that. I'm in the wrong place. I came home from Japan on the Westralia. So we were in Greenslopes though in Queensland. That's where that

41:30 photo was taken of us all walking off the ship and one of them could see that I was Atebrin. I'd had so much malaria and I did an interview then. I don't know who it was with, but it's all past history now.

**We might change the tape there, I think.**

## Tape 6

00:31 **Mrs Berry, before you went to New Guinea what were you told about how long you would be away?**

We weren't told anything about time. We just knew we were going overseas and if we were good and we did good shows we'd probably go back again if there was time. If there was no war. But we went over to Rabaul and didn't go back after that, it was finished. The war was finished and everything was over. The boys were home then, or most of them anyhow.

01:00 Coming home.

**How would you know if you'd done a good show?**

Just by the audience reaction. They'd sort of clap like mad and come backstage and say nice things to us. Maybe they were just being nice, I don't know, but it gave us fortitude to carry on for the next one, you know. You'd go on to our next show.

**You mentioned backstage, what did your backstage area look like in, say, Lae?**

In Lae that was

01:30 just our green monster. It wasn't backstage, it was the door of the truck, you know, they'd just come there as we were coming out or something. But they didn't very often because invariably it'd be raining like mad and they'd have to scuttle off home or they'd have jeeps and things to go back home. They'd have to, well, catch a ride with somebody else to go back home and we just were so tired, we'd just fall into our jeeps and go back, back to another mess. Sergeants' mess somewhere.

02:00 **What sort of things would be happening in the sergeants' Mess?**

Just fellas letting their hair down, within reason. You'd have MPs patrolling round the place and they'd just be singing army songs and we'd all join in. Maybe they'd have a little dance and we'd have a dance. I could dance with the soldiers up there but I couldn't in the nightclubs.

02:30 That was, stay right away from the people down there. But it was all just good fun. Everybody singing songs, things. And I'd always sing. Whenever I went in the mess I'd sing for them, some love song. They seemed to like that.

**What sort of facilities would they have in the sergeants' mess?**

They'd have a bar and they'd have plenty of glasses.

03:00 Probably plenty of grog too. I only ever drunk beer, and I'd put one down and, you know, go off somewhere else, get another one and put it down, that's the way to drink when you don't want to drink, you know. I had to get up and do a show the next day. But none of the girls drank very much. We didn't, I don't think girls did then. They didn't seem to drink very much anyhow. We didn't, I can't ever remember any of the girls drunk or anything like

03:30 that. I think I would remember that. But we had a good time with it all. It was a different breed.

**What did you see of drunken troops?**

I didn't, I never looked down on them or anything because they were having a pretty hard time up there and they were just letting their hair down. There's always the one lout that'll carry it a bit too

04:00 gar, and possibly they'd say something to us. But they didn't get away with it because the boys were always very protective of us. The boys that were with us, they were very, very protective. We always, if we went anywhere, a mess, there was always a team around us, you know, they really looked after us, the boys. Most of them, well, they weren't married, even some were married but they still looked after us, didn't seem to let us get into trouble. I think they would've stopped

04:30 anyone from drinking too much too. That was a thing they seemed to take in their stride, it was their job.

**What was the bond like amongst your troupe?**

Our troupe?

**Your unit, yeah.**

It was fantastic. That's why we still meet. We still now, after all these years, well, the Detachment 12 is only one of a lot of detachments. Smokey Dawson is in one of them.

05:00 Michael Pate is in another one of them. Buster Noble he was until he died. We had a whole lot of, well, notoriety, as on the television and what have you, but they just come along and have a drink with us. We just have a luncheon. On Anzac Day, we have Anzac Day, we march and then we go to Redfern RSL [Returned and Services League] where two of the boys were Alan, and I forget his name, Asbolt, anyhow,

05:30 they were one was a manager of the Redfern Club so he suggested we go back there. We used to always meet at the Journalists' Club, that's how it started. We used to get mixed up there with a lot of the war correspondents. And the boys didn't like that. They'd sort of come in and crash our party because we had girls and they didn't have any and so they moved out to the Redfern RSL. But we meet every year. I get a letter, I'm expecting one any day now from George

06:00 Pomeroy. He was in another unit, they all get together. We have a marvellous time really. But our own little unit they were great, we were all good. Even when Peter Finch left us we still, John Store kept us all together, very much so. I still see, not Allan White, he went over to London, and Colin Croft died. Ronny Patten he's still around,

06:30 and Pat McKenzie, she's down at Narrabeen Nursing Home. She did an article like this. I've got it over there, it was in the paper. Who else? No, Vera Tighe's in. Mary too. Mary's, she's over here now. She came from Melbourne. But she married John and she lives in Sydney now. No, they had wine. They had vineyards up in Denman, but I don't know what they're doing now. They were out of the vineyards.

07:00 Probably retired. Now wouldn't that make you -

**You mentioned that the war ended when you were on the boat going over to Lae, can you remember how you actually heard that the war was over?**

Actually, it finished before we left. We left on the 26th of September and it was some time early in September that - but no, I don't remember much about that. We were busy trying to fix everything

07:30 up to come away. Very excited about our first trip away anywhere. That's how I can't give you any more details there.

**Do you remember what the atmosphere was like in Sydney the day the war in the Pacific ended?**

Everyone let their hair down beautifully. They sort of thought it was marvellous. It was wonderful. Just the thought of their boys coming home again their husbands, their fiancés. But I didn't have any of those, so it didn't really

08:00 affect me much. I was either going to work or I didn't really pay much attention to it. It's awful, isn't it? But I didn't. I knew it was over and I was relieved like everybody else, but it didn't really affect me.

**You mentioned that you were working really hard, obviously, what sort of time did that give you for dating?**

Not much at all. I didn't have very many dates. I used to

08:30 just live for the singing. No, I didn't have very many dates at all. I suppose I fitted a few lunches in and five o'clock drinks or something, but I didn't go out for many dates, like the girls talk about going to the movies or going something, I couldn't do that. I saved that all up till I got to Japan, I had a lot of dates up there.

09:00 **What sort of music was in your shows, that you did in your shows while you were overseas?**

Well, we didn't have any music. It was just straight out plays, just people coming on stage and acting their parts and going off. We had, no, I don't think we even had recorded music before and after. I used to sing with Horrie Dargie in Japan. He just played the same,

09:30 usual, you know, the usual, what was topical at the time. Fortunately I knew them. No, we didn't have much music around. Not our show, the other, Maid of the Mountains, did. They had that Vilia you know? Vilia, and I don't know, beautiful music it was. I loved the show. But I've forgotten it now.

**So what other entertainment units were in**

10:00 **New Guinea and Papua while you were there at the same time?**

It was, well, Gracie Fields came over there. I got her autograph. Gee, fancy forgetting Gracie. Her show was there and -

**Can you explain what her show involved?**

I can't even remember it. I just looked the other day and I saw her signature, Gracie Fields, and I thought, the boys reminded me in one of the shows here.

10:30 One of the, in the magazine John talks about the night we went to see the Gracie Fields show, I can't remember it.

**Can you explain who she was?**

You don't know Gracie Fields? She was a great British actress. She wasn't an actress, she was a comedian, I think. She used to sing all the funny little songs, but she was very well loved. She'd been on it for a long, long time. She came over with a show.

11:00 Bob Hope came over too, I think, with Carole Landis, 'cause I've got photos of Carole Landis. With Carole Landis with a dark little baby. It was one that's there with its mother, it's feeding properly, and then this Carole Landis, what she's feeding something or other. I can't remember where that photo is but it was very, very naughty. They shouldn't have done that.

11:30 They didn't like her over there. She didn't go over very well, apparently.

**Can you explain what actually happened, I don't understand?**

Well, this, he bought this Bob Hope, bought this girl out, Frances Langford and Carole Landis. I dunno what she did, I have no idea what she did. I don't know what she did to become so unpopular, but the boys didn't like her and they put out this little photo. They superimposed her face onto one with

12:00 the dark lady that had the baby suckling on her breast and they had her head and the baby suckling on her breast. Which wasn't very nice. I dunno why they did it, but that was one of the horrific things, one of the pranks the boys played.

**What boys did that?**

I don't know. Somebody up in the unit, one of the units over there. They wouldn't have liked them. But no, she, well,

12:30 I dunno what she did in the show either. She shouldn't have been there, probably.

**How did the American facilities for entertainment compare with the ones for the Australian units?**

Well, we didn't have many facilities over in New Britain or New Guinea, but in Japan they had fantastic theatres. They had theatres and they had groups coming out there and professional dancers and

13:00 beautiful girls and really great shows. And they had the big theatres with all the lights and everything, we just still had to trundle around and use the little, whatever we could get in the camps, and they all had theatres apparently. I don't know why, but they did. But the Americans always had everything, the best. We did very well for what we had there, but

13:30 no, they definitely had the onus on us or something's, on us onus on us. Who said that? I'm getting tired now. You'll get some funny things now.

**Were there any picture shows in Rabaul or Lae?**

No, they had the screen, they'd put up a screen and they'd have the fellows go out and sit in the rain or anything again. I went to a few shows at,

14:00 one night when we were off and about one or two, but just saw any old movies, I wouldn't know what they were now but they were old movies. But in Japan when we'd finished our tour up there I'd had malaria a couple of times and I was just recovering from one when we were sent to this holiday camp at Beppu, I don't know where it is in Japan so don't ask me. I don't know whether it's in the north or south island, but

14:30 anyhow, it's in Japan, and that's where I met my husband. He used to stay with me when everyone else'd go out. Go out for dinner and have a lovely time and I'd be sitting there and he'd just sit with me and talk to me all night, so that's when I started, I thought he's a nice fellow. He's a very nice fellow and, but as I said, it was eleven days after, and he asked me to marry him. I said, "No, no way."

15:00 But we did after the 15th day. We were going to be married in the following month. That was in the September, the 30th of September. The 15th to the 30th, and then in October we were going to be married and we were getting all set. I'd had an engagement party and all, what we could scrape up there, and his release came through. His father had been working with Billy Hughes down here. Billy Hughes was a member of Parliament,

15:30 and he'd - Warren - he'd got his retirement from the army because he'd been there for two years, anyhow, and you only had to do a two year stint and he'd been longer than that. So it came through that he was to go home in the November. So I started to get cold. Not cold feet, I was thinking about our families and I thought, "Well, my family won't be there and neither will yours, and I haven't even met your family," and I thought

16:00 I'd be starting off on the wrong foot with the in-laws to go back as a bride and never having met them. So we decided to wait, which we did and when I came home his Uncle Harry was the first one on the ship, he was the movement officer in Sydney and he come up to me and said, "Hello, I'm your Uncle Harry," and I was looking everywhere and I couldn't see Warren anywhere, but I could see his two brothers as plain as

16:30 day, they were so much like him down there in front of me and I was looking everywhere and I could see his mother, I could see, I knew her face, and I thought, "There they are," and I was waving frantically at them all and said, "Where's Warren?" And he was right underneath me, under the ship looking up. So I found him. But before we left Japan we were engaged, as you know, and then I had been sick and we decided to

17:00 have a holiday, so we were out at the Kawana Hotel. Now, my son asked me, the other night he said, "I was out with a friend the other night from Japan and he just wanted to know where this Kawana Hotel is, he said, he'd like to see it." So I said, "Look, I can't tell you, I'll have to look at a map and have it all marked on it," but we went out there. It was beautiful. It's absolutely lovely. I've got some pictures there we had taken in the dining room or from upstairs and we were sitting up

17:30 like Jackie there. There weren't very many people there and you had all the facilities there. You had a swimming pool if you wanted to swim. It was too cold, but we could play golf. We had a game of that. I'd never played golf in my life, looked like I was playing hockey or tennis or something. But anyhow it was very nice. But I don't know where it was. But he said this friend of his wants to, Japanese man that he's befriended up there in

18:00 Japan. He's, funnily enough he's gone back there and he lives in Tokyo. No he doesn't, he lives in Osaka. He was in Tokyo, now he's in Osaka. The buildings there are beautiful, everything. He has to fly out, he goes to all the Islands, Nauru and all sorts of things. That's his job. But they're very, very nice people who he's mixing with now.

18:30 I didn't find any of them there when I was there, of course, because as I said there weren't very many men there and the ladies were lovely. Canua-san, my house girl, she was beautiful, and Mamma-san, dear old soul. She had no teeth and she was all bent up and funny looking but she used to run around behind us all the time. If you put anything down it was on a hanger. And Lois used to say to me, "Look out, Glow, you're going to be put on a hanger in a moment."

**What did your living**

19:00 **conditions look like in Japan?**

We lived in a hut when we lived in Hiro, that's where we lived, where we were stationed. That was the YWCA and very, I think had said four to a hut. They had huts all around, and anywhere else we'd just bunk in with the, what was the WVS [Women's Voluntary Services] or something or other, the women from the English Army.

19:30 We stayed with them and Indians, we stayed with them too, and Americans. We didn't very much, 'cause the Americans had their own shows coming over all the time. But we did a bit up in Tokyo. We went up

to see a few marches there at Empire House. We stayed at Empire House. It was very, very nice, the accommodation. Different to ours, it didn't seem the same but it was very nice and quite clean.

- 20:00 Very clean. Very clean. But the, where we lived was very, very nice. Lois had her hair permed while she was in Japan. I've got photos of her down at the hairdressers getting a - She was sitting on under the dryers and things and she couldn't speak a word of Japanese and they couldn't speak a word of English and they're, "Da da da," and she's saying, "Oh God, Glow, what are they doing to me? They haven't shaved it off, have they?"

**How did the hairdresser and the equipment and supplies**

- 20:30 **that they were using, how did that compare to what you were used to?**

I didn't know, but her hair turned out alright. It was very behind the times, old fashioned things hanging down here. We were past that a bit, I think. I hadn't had my hair permed when I went over there but I had it done when I come home, but I always used to get, wear my hair long and just hanging down. But it looked to me as though it

- 21:00 was very old stock, very old, early conditions but it did the job. Did the job beautifully. Lois was pleased with it.

**What did the young Japanese women look like?**

Some of them were very, very pretty. Very giggly and all, they seemed subservient, you know, they'd been dominated by the men, I think, for so long. I didn't see any that,

- 21:30 sort of, out there in front marching around, you know, sort of leading the troops or anything, but no, they seemed subservient, and to us too. They wanted to please and they were very, very nice. I couldn't complain about the women at all. The women and the tiny children and the oldies. The oldies seemed to have accepted what went on, and maybe they accepted the fact that they were getting better conditions at that time after such a

- 22:00 devastation when that bomb fell on Hiroshima. Another one up in Nagasaki but we didn't go up that way. But it was, we went from one end of Japan to the other all the time. We'd start off at Kure. I was very lucky, I met a colonel there. As a matter of fact he was my husband's CO. I didn't know at the time, but he let me have his driver and I could go anywhere and

- 22:30 he gave me his boat too. I could go out on the boat and we used to go out onto the Inland Sea and on little picnics and I'd just ring [Colonel] Cisco and say, "Cisco, are you doing anything?" And he'd come and take me if I wanted to go into town, have a look around. I dunno where I went to have a look around at now. I haven't a clue. But we went to a lot of officers' shops, that's what they were called. They were camp shops, and one we went

- 23:00 Into, Lois was walking around looking around. Lois and I were very, very close when we were up there. Unfortunately she got cancer and she died when she came back here. But we were very, very close and she said, "Come over here, Glow." And I said, "What?" She said, "Come over here." So I went over there, and here's this girl and she's nursing a baby. It was a lovely little baby with the bluest blue eyes I've ever seen and I thought,

- 23:30 I said, "I see what you mean," and the little girl she looked at me and she said, "You want, you want? You want this baby? You want this baby?" I said, "No, no, no, I just saying he was pretty." She said, "You can have, you can have." And I thought, poor little bugger, she was just one of the girls that had white babies, you know, sort of a, there's so many of them, so very many. We couldn't control that anyhow. We just had to close our eyes and pretend it didn't

- 24:00 happen. It happens there, it happens everywhere. But it was out of our control. This dear little baby, I often wonder what happened to it. I have no idea. Still.

**So that baby was a product of what?**

American, Canadian. Not Indian. English, New Zealand, Australian father I don't know anyone.

- 24:30 Lots of them there, lots of them. They did alright in the end, a lot of them did. But some of them grown up beautiful kids. You've probably seen photos of the kids. Ones that come out here that are marrying now and they're tall, strong limbs. Totally different to the little kids we saw over there. But they're very, very nice.

**So what did you see of the occupation**

- 25:00 **forces and how they interacted with the locals, the women in particular?**

Well, you didn't see anything. That was kept from our view. We were too busy running our own lives. We'd have to arrive in these messes and settle in. We'd only be there for a couple of days and then we'd move on to the next one. That's how we spent our life. Three months we'd go round with one show, then we'd, while we're rehearsing the new show, while we're doing it, then the next

- 25:30 year we'd go round again, next few months and then again. We did it four times but, so we didn't stay in



one place and we weren't aware of them anywhere. But at Iwakuni they had a beautiful swimming pool and we used to go swimming there now and again when we were up that way. But, and I had a friend that was, he was a diver a good diver and he used to come down there from Beppu and we'd meet there. It was

- 26:00 great. We had lots of freedom, really. You could've done anything with it. You could've gone the wrong way and done stupid things and, but no, we, they wanted me to come back. I was going back again, as I said, with George Wallace Junior, but I got married instead.

**What knowledge did you have of the brothels that were operating at the time?**

You should've asked my husband that.

- 26:30 He used to go with a doctor and, see, Warren was there for two years. He used to go with a doctor to the brothels for inspection. I don't know how often, but they used to go round doing that and a fellow'd look at their - Warren would look at their mouths and he'd said you couldn't believe all the trench mouth and diseases they had in their mouths. And the other bloke, he'd do the other end,

- 27:00 and he said it was just as bad what they had there. So our troops weren't all that good. I don't suppose they're any different to any other troops that go overseas. They did what they thought was natural, I don't know. But no, it's was a lot of devastation they left. Still, that's war, isn't it? I won't see another one, so I can say it.

- 27:30 **What's trench mouth?**

It's a disease in the mouth. All, your mouth comes infected, swollen, pus-ey and awful. I found it I knew a bit about that because Warren was a dentist, you see and he had a bit of it when he came back here, a few of the boys came up with trench mouth. So it wasn't new to him. He could tell you some good stories. I can't remember all of his stories now but he had some exciting times there.

- 28:00 We had an earthquake over there too. We thought the earth was moving alright. We thought, "Whoa, why is it doing that?" And -

**Which city was that in?**

I think - No, it wasn't Osaka. Kyoto, Yamaguchi. No, I think it was when I was in Kure. I don't know, I can't remember. I haven't got a diary on that one. I just

- 28:30 wish we had, one of us wouldn't have enough sense to write down every day what happened, what we did. It would've been lovely to look back now. But I can remember names of places I can see some places. I can see Kobe and Kyoto and I just don't know where they all fit in, you know, it'd be nice to do that. I must sit down with a map one night.

**What impressions did you have of Kure, what did it look like?**

Devastated.

- 29:00 Absolutely devastated. It was close to Hiro, but not, it was an old town, sort of, you know. I didn't have much of an opinion at all of it. As Phillip says to me now, you wouldn't know it if you went back. He's in Osaka most of the time but he goes to Kyoto a lot and to Tokyo itself. The old Empire House, I've got photos there that Warren took of the Empire House.

- 29:30 He was in the first big march they had with all the troops marching and it's all been done again. They've made a beautiful - They're great builders, they can build like mad. In no time at all, too, they can get it back like it was. They're pretty good.

**What happened at Empire House?**

Nothing happened, but that's where the troops used to congregate, you know. I'm not sure what happened

- 30:00 there, because I didn't go there very often. I had invitations to go there. We went there to parties with different troops, but I don't know, I think it was like an administration building. The palace was not far away, but it was away from it. It had a great big moat around it. Can remember that. We never ever got close enough to the palace to see it. But no, that's all I can tell you about

- 30:30 that.

**Was it run by the British?**

The palace? No, no, never. It was the Japanese.

**No, the Empire House?**

Empire House? Well, Brit Com [Commonwealth]. Now let me see, there was, from Canada, from everywhere. Britain mainly, and Australia I think, Britain were more or less in charge and Australia and Canada, they sort of all had their headquarters there at the Empire House.

31:00 I don't know what else went on there. It was a pretty good place to stay away from, I think.

**Why?**

I didn't want to get tangled in the red tape and things that went on there. They're not, they're OK. But they might be asking me for a leave pass or what was I doing there and I didn't have any real reason for being there. Just to visit, just to look around. But I can't remember what I saw.

31:30 **You mentioned that there were British and Canadians and Australians and Kiwis and Indians. How did all of the different nationalities get on?**

Fine. They used to have. At Iwakuni they used to have a swimming meet and there'd be like a Commonwealth of Nations, they'd all meet there and they'd all swim together, compete. There weren't very many girls there to worry about. There were a lot

32:00 of girls in the army there but they didn't seem to be fighting over women though. They had a few good stoushes down by the docks and that. I can remember them blackening one another's eyes but I wasn't very interested in that side. I never ever, never put my nose into that. I stayed right away from it all. I'm a coward.

**What sort of competition was there for female attention?**

32:30 None. None. There weren't very many, there were just the Japanese girls. There were some beautiful Japanese girls there too, really beautiful. But they were very strictly controlled. They were nearly all wearing kimonos when I was over there, they weren't in western dress. A few of them were around the house, the housemaids, they seemed to have picked up clothes here and there but when you went to

33:00 the real Japanese places, I went there to buy a silver fox fur and I was taken in and the little girl in a kimono came out. She, they all, it annoys me the way they've always got their head down and they don't look up, you know. They did then, but anyhow, I went in and had to sit down. We had sake, which I don't like, you drink it hot and it's not very nice at all. But

33:30 it was, they were very, very gentlemanly. He was a real gentleman. I don't know what, he was a doctor or something over there, but it was very nice, he was nice, the whole outfit was nice. I went to two weddings over there. One of them was a boy here for Port Macquarie, the Delahuntys, and I can remember I was sitting at the top of the table, I

34:00 dunno why, but they had the long one with the bride and the groom and the bridesmaid and best man along across and I just was the next one, I dunno why, but still I was there and I was just sitting there, I had a hat on at the time and I just looking down out of the photo, I could see that's where I was. But we had to sit there with our legs under the table, a little tiny table, and I couldn't do that, for a start I've got such long legs. I said, "I'll have to pull them out."

34:30 So I did and I was sitting on my legs, most uncomfortable, then they brought me my dinner which was a whole raw fish. I just took one look at it and I said, "Tell them to take it away, I cannot eat it," and the bloke that was with me, I don't know who I was with, he said, "I can't, they'll be upset. You must try and eat some." I said, "I cannot eat it." He said, "You must try and eat some." I said,

35:00 "It's raw. I couldn't eat raw fish." And he said, "Try to do it," and while he was telling me what to do she came up again and, "Dozo, dozo," and she cracked a raw egg over it. I said, "That's it. I'm going to be sick." So I don't know how I got out of there, but I didn't eat anything that time at the wedding and the sake was hot and they'd pour it. Come along in a little cup, only had a little tiny cup but you've got to drink it down. And that wasn't for me either.

35:30 I have a nice slow beer, that was good.

**Who were the bride and groom?**

They were both Australian. Delahunty. Philip Delahunty, and her name was Joan Mickey, I think, or something. I've got the invitation here still. And another one I went to, another girl she was an Australian girl and she married an Australian boy. Sheila, I can't remember her name either, but that was a nice little wedding.

**And that traditional**

36:00 **ceremony that you went to, what were the circumstances by which the bride and groom met? Where had they met?**

If you knew the Delahunties you'd know. Philip had to do everything differently. Since he's been home he's been doing everything different. Are you listening, Philip? Anyhow, he's he just wanted a Japanese style wedding and that's what they gave him.

**And were they both in the armed forces?**

Well, she was and, well, he was in the air force, I think. Yes, he was

36:30 in the air force and she was in the army. She was a little dot, but I dunno whether they're still married, I don't think they are. But it was different, a bit different.

**Overall those romances that happened while people were away, how successful do you think they were?**

Well, some of them lasted, but I don't know, you can't gauge them now. I mean, by the law of averages now

37:00 nearly every couple gets married for a couple of years, then they're divorced. I can't understand that. I mean, we were married for 48 years and Warren died, but I can't understand how you can get a divorce so quickly. It just happens so quickly, they can get out of it so quickly. Some of them, they should never have married. They don't think enough before they - what am I saying? I knew him 15 days. But they don't really. They don't think

37:30 anything out, they just I'll get married. I think it'll be good. But I don't know why they don't last but.

**How genuine do you think the romances were that happened while men and women were serving?**

Well, it can happen so easily. You're away from home. You're away from all the niceties and everything from home, someone comes along who, you like him anyhow, but he's nice to you. He's very good to you. He looks after you

38:00 and you think he's going to be heaven. When you get home you find it's not really. But I didn't find any of that.

**Were there many incidents in New Guinea or in Japan of married men dating?**

I don't know about that, I don't know. I know they tried to ask me to go out with them, excuse me, but I wasn't very interested, and

38:30 as soon as they know they cool off and go someplace else. But I don't think there's, I don't think there was a lot of it in the Australian, amongst the troops, I don't think so. There was more so over in Japan. Everyone thinking they were away from home, way, way, and they could go home and leave their troubles behind, which a lot of them did. But I think the girls are silly to rush into it like that. I know ours sounds like rushing into it, but we'd

39:00 both thought about it and we'd talked about it. But no, we were very keen, very, we were very lucky in what we did. It was the right thing to do.

**What would you do at night time in Japan?**

Well, we were so busy doing our shows or rehearsing for the next one. We used to go out to messes to dinner. To some homes, to some people that lived up

39:30 there. A lot of the Australians were living in homes. As a matter of fact we were going to be married up there in the October and, well, Warren said, "What more do you want? You've got house girls doing all your housework. You've got nothing to do all day but just sit around." I thought, "Well, that'll do me, thank you. No more shows, it'd be great." But, well, we found out that his release was through and he was going to be demobbed and in the

40:00 November. So we he left on the 4th of November to come home. I came home in the following January.

**What were the Australian homes that you visited in Japan?**

They were Japanese homes with Australian people in them. They were lovely. They were quarters. They just put them in those quarters while they were in Japan. I don't know whether they paid rent or anything. I suppose they did, but they were quite nice. Newly built

40:30 for the occasion. They looked quite alright, the billets as they said, quite nice. But I'm glad I wasn't there though. I'd hate to be bringing up a family over there I'd hate it.

**What sort of Australian people were living in these homes? OK, alright.**

## Tape 7

00:29 **OK. Mrs Berry, can I just talk to you, we were halfway through an anecdote which we haven't finished yet which I will ask you to talk to us about later. But can you first of all explain who the female impersonators were that you were replacing?**

Well, the one I was replacing was Billy Donaldson and he was particularly good at his job. I dunno what he's doing now. The one that came away with the Maid of the Mountains company.

01:00 I dunno whether he was with the Maid of the Mountains company but he was the one we took to the party, was Ian Neil.

**So that anecdote we were talking about, you'd got as far as saying you'd taken him out and that you'd. So we got to the point that he was out with you, what happened then?**

That's right we were in the Mess and Mary, they said to me, "Where's Danny?" And I said, "I don't know." And the other one said,

- 01:30 "Mary, where's Mary?" I said, "Mary doesn't know either." Anyhow, we didn't have a clue where. So George said he'd better, he said, "I'd better go out there quick smart and find him. So he ran out the door, then we all ran out the door, all looking for Nina she called herself. Danny Thorpe, that was another one, no, it was Nina. Anyhow, we couldn't find Nina anywhere, and we asked the guard on the gate and he said,
- 02:00 "Major somebody just went through the gate with a female, long blond hair," that was Nina's wig on. So off they went. We thought, "They've gone off over Tunnel Hill." So George and that started to go after them and there was a great consternation on the side of the road. It was the MPs, they'd pulled the jeep up and said, "Where's your leave pass?" and
- 02:30 Nina said "I don't have a leave pass." And they said, "You must have a leave pass. The nurses aren't allowed." "I don't have a leave pass." Anyhow, this went on for a while and the upshot was that she got upset with everybody and just said, threw her wig in the air and said, "I don't need this bloody thing anymore." And poor old fella that was with her, nearly said his name, he absolutely
- 03:00 collapsed. They had to take him to hospital. He was in a dreadful state. He was taken home. He didn't know it was a boy. How he didn't know I don't know. You've only got to look at their hands. We all wore gaiters and long sleeved jackets that do up round your wrist, you're, your ankles, and we wear boots with gaiters on. The boots came up to her, but the men's boots are so much bigger than women's. We had little dainty
- 03:30 boots. Anyhow, he didn't know. So the poor fellow, he ended up in hospital. I think they had to ship him home soon after that. But Nina was alright, she came back the next day. It wasn't our camp, but she came back to the camp and said, "Everything's fine."

**The female impersonators, were they simply actors or were they transvestites? What was the - ?**

Well, I never ever have been able to really distinguish the difference between the two.

- 04:00 The ones I knew were very nice fellows but they did speak funny and they walked funny. They just should've been born a girl. There wasn't a thing like any change operation then. They were just straight out men trying to be girls. But I think it's very unfortunate, very unfortunate for the boys that don't want to be, but they are.
- 04:30 I don't think they have a choice. I don't know what it is. I don't understand it at all. I didn't even think about it when I was having my babies. The only thing I was worried about, I might have a mongoloid child. I don't know why, but I was absolutely petrified that I would. But as for these transvestites, I don't know. They weren't born then. It's like this gay Mardi Gras, I'm going to offend somebody now but I don't believe in it. I think it's a lot of rubbish.
- 05:00 As for seeing the police march in it, I just don't believe that at all, I don't really like that at all. But still, they still do their job I suppose. But yeah, they didn't have any distinction in those days. We had two people in our show that were, as they say, camp. They were a bit funny. We'd used to go into the messes and we'd have to defend them. We'd say, no
- 05:30 they'd say, "How's his girlfriend?" and all this sort of business. I'd say, "You mean so and so?" "No, you know what I mean." And I said, "No, I don't know what you mean. I think you're barking up the wrong tree." But they were nice people. They were nice to us. They never did anything to upset us or it was just, they didn't live like us. It was different. I feel very sorry for them, I do indeed. Now it's not the same game.
- 06:00 All these kids professing to be gay and the things that are going on with, I think everyone's publicising what they're doing and all. I think that's a mistake. They shouldn't be doing that, but anyhow, that's the way the world goes now.

**What were the troops' reaction to the female impersonators?**

They loved them, I think. They only ever saw them on stage. I don't think they ever saw them off it. They didn't see them undressed or anything. They sort of, they wore as little

- 06:30 as they could without giving too much away, but I don't know what their reaction was. I think they loved them. They filled a part. They did their part in the show, that's all I want to know about.

**Was there any time any violence was directed towards them?**

I didn't ever see any. I didn't, only one I saw any violence and that was from its own parents. 'Cause he wanted to give it up and

- 07:00 live a straight life, as he said, and they wouldn't let him. They were making too much money out of him

the other way and that was sad too. I thought that was rather nasty. I don't know whether that goes on now or not, but it wasn't very nice for me to see. But that's what he wanted and he didn't have a say in it.

**I wanted to ask you about your trip over to Japan, how did you actually get over there?**

We went over in the Merkur. It was a beautiful

07:30 old ship. It wasn't the same as when we went up on the Morella when we were the only three girls. There were quite a lot of people going, I don't know where they were going but they were going back to Japan. I don't remember much about the trip over. I remember more about the trip home. We came home on the Westralia and, as I say, we walked up the aisle, the gangplank and John spotted Mary and that was OK,

08:00 but when we got on the ship there was no accommodation for women at all on the Westralia. So they had to put us in the sickbay and there was six of us. Yes, the girls from The Maid of the Mountains and us, three of them, three of us, that's right, and there were only five beds. So who drew the table? Me. I had to sleep on the table, and one night it was very, very hot

08:30 down there. No air conditioning or anything like that, so I used to just sleep with a sheet over me and of course with as little as possible on and this fellow that I went out with, he told me the night I went out with him that he went down there one night he said, "You know I had to straighten the sheet on you?" I worried about that but I didn't go out with him again either.

09:00 But that was how it was. I mean, the boys, I dunno where they went. They just fitted anywhere, but they had to try and get us in somewhere to keep us together and away from the boys. That's why we were in the sickbay of all places. We weren't even sick. But that's how I came home from Japan. It was quite a trip too. The Westralia, very nice.

**What do you remember about that ship that was**

09:30 **so nice about it?**

I don't think there's very much I can remember about that. I just remember we were going home. We were thrilled about going home. I was so busy keeping my eye on Mary. I had to look after her. She's only she's five months younger than me and I was worried about her.

**Why was that?**

Because she was engaged to, she thought she was engaged. She was, this fellow

10:00 had just met her and he was very keen on her and I thought, "I'll fix this up." But they went ahead and they're married. They're still married, they've got five children too. So it was right too.

**When you were in Japan could I ask you, you've mentioned your accommodation at the YMCA, what kind of beds were you sleeping on? Was it western-style accommodation?**

It was, yes in the huts.

10:30 They just had cots. They sort of put up cots for us. I think that's all it was. I don't know any others, can't remember much about the accommodation at all. Just somewhere to put my head down and go to sleep.

**Did you ever go into any Japanese homes?**

I went into a few. I went into one where I bought this silver fox fur. It was very, very nice. I didn't look through it or anything, I just went into this room and

11:00 we did the deal and another one. Another one, a girl had to go to the doctor and she went to this doctor's place and we did the same thing, it was just in. But everyone was very, very nice about it. And you'd just sort of, you know, bowing, and that bowing gets me. But anyhow, they were very nice about everything.

**Did you have to do anything in particular when you walked into a Japanese home? Were there particular customs?**

11:30 You had to take your shoes off. That was always the thing, you took your shoes off at the door and you walked in bare foot. That's about all. I suppose they had their own customs, but we didn't know them so we didn't do anything. They just accepted what we did. They were glad to see us there, I think.

**You mentioned that most of the women in those days wore kimonos, what were the men wearing?**

12:00 Well, there weren't very many men as I said, very many men around. Just a fellow on a honey cart and he just had a pair of, looked like an old army uniform. Like tight pants down to the ankles and sort of like riding breeches and a shirt and just the men walking around. The men seemed to mainly wear like, you know how they have those tight pants and they have gaiters or something wrapped round them? They didn't have the gaiters round them, but

- 12:30 they had the tight pants on. That's all I can remember about the men. There was only these few people around the place that we saw. I don't think there were very many more. We didn't mix with them. When I went up to the hotel there were men there and they were in western style. Just pants and shirt or suit coat or something,
- 13:00 that's what they wore, but I didn't see many, not very many men at all around. I wasn't looking for men though. I was looking at all the scenery around me. There's some beautiful scenery there, absolutely fantastic. At the cherry blossom time you've got to be there quick though. Only about two weeks it lasts, if you're there, you're lucky it's beautiful. But then it's gone. Nothing.

**Were there any festivities for**

**13:30 cherry blossom?**

Well, we didn't see any. I think they had them but we weren't invited to that sort of thing, it was strictly Japanese thing. We didn't go to that, no. Didn't see a cherry blossom ball or anything. No. We didn't see that at all.

**What else was the scenery like? What can you remember of Japan?**

I can remember it was cold as charity.

- 14:00 It snowed, of course, the first Christmas we were there. We went out, I met straight away, I met a little driver from the driving pool, Ron Rippingale, and he used to give me, well, he'd come round and pick me up and Lois, she chummed up with Charles Wheatley, I think his name was and we used to all go out together, the four of us, just in the, just for a picnic or something
- 14:30 and I've got photos taken, I took my long johns down to here, into my pants, into my boots, and it was really cold. So I had all these things on and jumper and a scarf round my head. I took a photo of me with my pants pulled up to show these long johns. But it was very, very cold. Another day I'm sitting on the burnt bonnet of a car, just absolutely freezing. It was, I think the winters were very cold.
- 15:00 I hadn't been in snow like that before. It was the first time ever. I've been in it since over in Canada and everywhere but no, it was cold, and at night time we'd go back to our huts and we'd think, "We've got to sleep in this hut," and it was just this rice paper on the side. It was freezing, but we had plenty of blankets on and what we did a couple of times. I dunno how we
- 15:30 managed it I don't know how we did that, but we used to pull all our huts, four into the centre, where there was a brazier, it'd be going all night, this little fire'd be going all night and we used to put our blankets over it and the heat used to radiate out to all of us. How it didn't catch fire, how we didn't catch fire, I don't know. I really don't know. We must've done something else, it was better, something saved us somehow. But it was so cold we had to do something
- 16:00 to warm up. I used to walk into the hut, there'd be a little heater there, I'd used to go over and sit on it for a while and just thaw out, but we had to do shows, too, in that. I don't know how I survived that. I wouldn't do that again. Yes, I do. No, it was lovely.

**When it was that cold, what did you do with your costumes when it was that freezing?**

Just put on as much as we could underneath

- 16:30 them and look all brawn and no, we couldn't do anything with them really. We had to just wear them. Wear it and grin it and bear it. We'd go off the stage and you'd warm your hands up and you'd get as warm as you could and run back in and blah-blah-blah. No, it was very cold I remember that. But I used to love going out in the snow. We used to have these snow fights and it was fantastic.

**You mentioned earlier that**

**17:00 travelling around Japan you used a carriage of a train. How did that system work?**

Well, they used to arrive, the train would arrive at the station and they'd leave that thing there, carriage, or up at the depot a little bit further up they'd leave it the carriage there, then the train'd go up there and somehow come back and pick up the rest of the train. I don't know how it happened. Don't ask me, I wasn't even looking. But it'd be there for us to go the next day or couple of

- 17:30 days, when we'd go it'd be there for us to go just the same. They must've just shunted off and shunted back to pick the other carriages up and off they went again. Maybe they went back the other way. I dunno.

**Were all the camps where you were going were they all on the train line?**

I think they were. No, there was the one up at Yamaguchi wasn't, but we got jeeps up there. I dunno

- 18:00 how the luggage got up there. No, we didn't do a show there. We just went up there on a day trip. No, I think they must've been very close to the line anyhow. I don't think it was always on the line, but very close to it.

**You mentioned you did a show for the Indian troops. Where was that?**

Well, they were combined with the British, they went back in the mess there that night

- 18:30 and we had Indians and British there too. I dunno where that was. I haven't even got it on the back of the photos. One of the girls in the show, Beverly, she did some sleight of hand trips, tricks. She'd do card tricks, you know, with your hands and make things disappear and all that. She was very good, and one of the boys, Bob Robbins his name was, strangely enough, but it was a double B, his
- 19:00 stage name was Melini, and he did little sleight of hand tricks too and I'd seen, it's what we used to do for our supper. That's about all I can tell you about that. But Beverly was very good with the cards. She was a little bit of a card herself. She used to like the commanding officer of every station we went to. She just made a beeline. She was our, in charge of the company in a, so
- 19:30 she made a beeline for them. She was quite welcome to them. One of the fellows lived here in Taree, he lived, he was a wing commander, he was an air vice marshal when he died. He's been dead now for a while, Ron Susans, it was great to come, you know, find him here. We've got other friends from Coffs Harbour and they come down to see them, they fly down here. Fly the plane down. She flies it or he flies it and they go out and pick him
- 20:00 up and we have quite a good time. I haven't seen Ron for a while though. I think he must be, he was one of the Battle of Britain boys and he's getting on a bit, I'd say.

**What was the atmosphere like amongst the troops in Japan, seeing as it was a different kind of job for them?**

Yeah, it was quite different. It was all free and easy. The war was over. They'd had the bombs. They felt that they were in command.

- 20:30 The troops, they were fine. They were beautiful on the trips, on the camps we went to Miho, there was a very nice little amenities officer there, he was, I always met the amenities office, they always looked after us all, they used to look after me particularly so I went straight to them, but he was very, very nice. No,
- 21:00 they were all very nice at the stations, we went to the camps and the troops, very respectful, really they were. The only thing is, the WVS, we used to come home from the shows and we'd want a bath or something before we went to bed, get the makeup and everything off your face, so we used to usually do that. But these camps, we'd go in and be this
- 21:30 big thing, this big bath in the middle. We'd look around and we'd, wouldn't be a soul there, it wouldn't be terribly late but the idea was you soaped up and washed off before you got in the bath and we got in that bath night after night and there wasn't a ripple out of place. Nobody ever seemed to have a bath. I don't know whether they put clean water in for us to come home at night or not or what, but we were the only ones
- 22:00 using this bath. We decided the English ladies weren't as clean as we were. Who's going to see this? Nobody, I hope, well, I'll be well and truly gone.

**So was it quite common for you to have that Japanese style bath?**

Yes, yes I've got photos of my husband. He lived in

- 22:30 Kaitachi on his own in the bath. You all got in together, everybody got in together. But he was on his own in this bath, just lying back having a lovely time. It was like a hot bath, I think a warm bath or warm springs or something. Yes, that's what they had mainly in the in those camps. Not where we lived back in Hiro, not in the YWCA. They had a showers like
- 23:00 the British have.

**Did you go sightseeing to temples or sights around Japan?**

Not very much. We, I'm sorry that I didn't but we didn't have very much time. We didn't do as much as my husband did. He did a lot. He went up to Nikko and he took a lot of photos and we've got them here in the album. But I didn't do very much of it. I was,

- 23:30 we just went round from camp to camp and did our jobs. I didn't see very much in the way of the countryside, only when we went through it in the train or in a bus or anything like that. It was beautiful country, beautiful country, but no, I didn't see any temples or anything. I saw enough of those when I went to England and that with the friends here from Taree and my husband, we went over
- 24:00 there. We joined the ABC club over there. 'Another Bloody Castle' or 'Another Bloody Cathedral', and also we joined the KIDS, what was that? We joined the SMKI club: 'Spending My Kids' Inheritance'.

**So in Japan, when you were travelling around you mentioned the cherry blossoms and the snow, what was the prevailing sense of the landscape with the agriculture**

- 24:30 **that you were seeing out the train window?**

Well, that was very, very, they'd till the soil wherever they could, and they'd put things in and grew

things wherever they could. Actually, we were going along in the train and between the two train lines the land was all tilled to be, something was growing up, something small, but something was growing up there and then, and I thought, "Fancy with the train going over it every day." But they did it right up to the

25:00 train line each side and in the middle this time. It was really great. But they were very, very industrious.

**Could you see people working in the fields while you were travelling through?**

Well, there weren't very many men but the women certainly did. The men weren't, either they weren't back or they were prisoners of war or they were killed, but there weren't a great deal there. That was in 1946. I came home in 1948, just

25:30 the beginning of 1948, but I don't know. There weren't. The boys and schoolboys and things around, but there didn't seem to be a lot of men. So that was the penalty of war.

**Do you remember talking to people much about Japan and its future at that time? Like what people were saying about the country that they were in?**

No, we didn't worry about the future then. We sort of thought, "Well, this part of the

26:00 war's over, and we've won it," and everything was hunky-dory so far as we were concerned. I was very young though. I was always young. When I was in Japan and when I was in the Islands I didn't think too far ahead, I don't think. I was a bit featherbrained, I suppose and just looking for a good time. It wasn't terribly important to me whether they sink or swim.

26:30 So I didn't worry too much about the landscape. It was very pretty, I could see that, but it was so primitive, really. The way they, out in the fields, chop, chop, chopping away. You'd see these poor women all day and their ways of manuring the place, I didn't like that. But no, no I didn't notice anything about that particularly.

**What was your**

27:00 **favourite part about being a part of the entertainment units?**

I've never even thought about that. I think my favourite part is now. We're having all the reunions. We're all getting together and we're seeing one another for the first time in years sometimes and sometimes the first time ever. But no, I think it was great to see the faces on the boys out the

27:30 front in New Guinea, particularly when we didn't know how we'd go over. We were a mystery and a sort of surprise, a culture shock, as I said before, and just to look out and see them, they were laughing in the right places at the right jokes. The commander was, he got drunk one night and he was saying some funny things and that was funny. But no, I think that

28:00 was the best. But the boys seemed to, they were waking up to a new sort of business in their life and new sort of entertainment. They hadn't seen these shows before and they seemed to adapt to them quite well. We had some very nice reports back to Major Davidson that were sent to him. So I said we were a success, keep going.

**Did you get nervous before you went on stage?**

I did, yes, and sometimes more than others. I

28:30 don't know why. In the beginning I was very nervous, 'cause nobody knew how the shows were going to go, how the troops were going to like them, and I remember going out on the stage there one night and thinking, "God, what if they don't like it? What'll we have to do? They'll throw things at us or what." But no, there wasn't any of that. They were a bit stunned, some of them, just to start off, and then they sort of caught on to the idea that there were laughs to be had and they laughed along with

29:00 everybody else. It was quite good.

**How important do you think the entertainment units were in keeping the morale up amongst the troops?**

I think they were very, very important, really important. I don't know what, not our show, not particularly, just our show or anything like that, but just to see girls or even female impersonators on stage singing and doing some silly things and

29:30 the comedians doing very silly things. I can remember George Wallace Junior, he was a terror at it and no, I think the shows are very important. I think the troops must have them.

**The shows you were doing in Japan, could you explain a bit about what they were and what their story was?**

No, I tried to a while ago, that While the Sun Shines. I can't remember much about that. We didn't

30:00 do that so much as the Hasty Heart, but George and Margaret. No, I don't know much about the shows now. I've got all the scripts over there, I could read them. I didn't follow them very much. They had



plenty of laughs in them. Silly things we'd do on stage and you'd have to stand there straight-faced not a smile, and go on, and they'd be just killing themselves laughing down there and you'd hang on,

30:30 but it was good. It was good training for you. But I dunno what the shows were about. They were all just froth and bubble. That's how they passed for me. Cut it out, I'm nearly 80. It was when I was 20.

**Were there particular challenges in performing to troops as aside from performing back home?**

Well, not the sort of performing. Well, I just sing at home.

31:00 I sing with bands and that sort of thing on radio and things, but performing a show, it's quite a challenge for me to do that. It was, for a start I've got dreadful posture. I had to remember to stand up all the time with my posture in the photos and things trying to look sexy or something, but they came over alright sometimes. I don't know how it went all the time. I never ever heard.

31:30 I couldn't see myself so it didn't matter. No, it was a challenging thing for me to do but I did it and I must've been successful. We went on for 13 months and then I was to go back again within the next couple of months but just with a singing show next time. But no, I liked it, loved every moment of it. I'd love to do it again. I'd be more serious about it now and I'd look around

32:00 me and notice what's going on. I just sort of focused on what I had to do and get that over and done with. That's how I got through my shows.

**What were some of the letters that you received from people and what kind of things were they saying?**

Just little, I've got those poems over here that were written, another one was just to Gloria and just all

32:30 just nice things. They said nice things. I had letters when I was a tiny girl from my minister he said, "Little Gloria Robins, when you used to come into the rectory and you'd bounce in there," and something or other. He said, "I didn't ever dream you'd be serious enough to carry on with this." And I thought, "Well that's a bit of a putdown, isn't it?" But that's, I can't remember them all now. But they'd get a letter in general. Not for one

33:00 person, a letter in general to say how they enjoyed the show. They used to write back to headquarters and say how much the troops had enjoyed it. But no, it was very gratifying to know that they did enjoy it.

**When you came back to Australia did you still perform?**

Not on the stage. Not like that, no. Peter Finch was doing something at the Mercury Theatre and Colin Croft was busy at the

33:30 Tivoli Theatre and Ronnie Patten was with J.C. Williamsons. But they all were doing something and I thought, "What am I going to do?" But I didn't have much time, you know, I just came back and I decided I was going to sing. So I went to sing again and I did that until I was married. My career.

**Where were you singing? Were you singing back in the night clubs?**

I went back to Christie's. Christie's, I didn't go to Romano's again. I

34:00 went just to Christie's. A couple of nights a week and my husband used to listen into the broadcast we did every Tuesday night. He'd sit with his head in the radio. Everybody else'd be talking around him and he'd be sitting there listening. But that's when I got married, soon after that. Not long.

**How had Australia changed in those years that you were away and coming back and singing in the night clubs that you'd once sung in before, how different was the crowd?**

34:30 Well, it was different, because the Americans were gone and they practically made the whole crowd there. It was still the same happy place, you know, they were all very, very happy there, but it seemed to lose just a little bit of the get up and go somehow. I don't know. I can't remember much about that now too, either. I just sort of decided to put that all out of my mind. When I came up here to Taree

35:00 I used to sing at every afternoon tea and everything they had that, they had afternoon teas for ladies and I used to go to all of those, there were about four of us and I used to see the same ladies there every time. Joan Saxby and Pam Phillips and who was the other one? I dunno. But anyhow, we used to all get up one after the other and sing, and that was OK, and we did a lot of shows out at the golf club. We had,

35:30 Nancy Bow was a lady that, she worked at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney and she married a doctor that was on their ship, a Dr Bow, they married. They're living out at Old Bar - not Old Bar - at Black Head, and she was absolutely marvellous for the shows out there. She had all the ideas and she knew what. She was a dancer and I always wanted to dance but look at the size of me. I can't do anything like that. But she was absolutely

36:00 brilliant in her ideas. We used to get in the men in and everybody. It was, but no, we had some lovely

times out there. Good shows.

**How do you think entertainment has changed since those war years? I mean, the plays, as you said they were simple plays, they were comedy?**

No, it's changed a lot. Even to this Idol [Australian Idol, televised talent quest] thing. You don't just stand there and sing. I just stood there and

36:30 sang. That's all I did, just looked around me and sang. You've got to be able to do everything and you've got to be able to act and everything with it. You don't just do one thing, you do the lot with it now, otherwise you're no good. Doesn't matter too much about your voice, but so long as you can move that's the main thing. It seems to be to me anyhow. I don't go along with this "Idol" business. I don't even watch it. It's awful, frankly. It's good, I

37:00 like the boy, he's doing very well. But nope, it's not for me. I can't stand them standing up one after the other and singing, doing their thing.

**What are your thoughts when you might see on, perhaps, say, the news footage of concerts in Iraq that are huge concerts?**

I haven't seen any. Have there been any concerts in Iraq?

**There have been concerts in Iraq.**

Have there? I haven't seen any. I wish I was there.

37:30 I'd love to be there. I think they'd be great. Are there Australians or what? [(UNCLEAR) audio crackling]

37:41 No, I would like to be there, but I'm afraid that's past my time now. I think it's a great idea, but I think they need that. Something a bit different to get their minds off what they're doing or what's happened to them. But no, it's past my time.

38:00 I'll pack up my toe shoes and gratefully put them under the bed now.

**Mrs Berry, thank you very much for being involved in our archive project. It's been a pleasure talking to you.**

I'm getting a dreadful cramp in my leg, unless you can tell.

**Are you? Well, you can stand up now and stretch, 'cause we've finished.**

It's gone to sleep, I think that's the trouble.