# Australians at War Film Archive

## Hazel Mayes - Transcript of interview

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## Tape 1

00:32 **If you could just give us a bit of a summary of the key points in your life?**

Right from the start?

**Yeah, right from the start, where you were born, where you grew up, just in a summary form.**

Yeah. Well, I was born at Repton, which is on the which is on the Bellingen River, the north coast of New South Wales, on the 8th

01:00 of March, 1922, in a house that my father built. And I was the third in a family, eventually there was seven kids, but I was the third, and we moved to Sydney when I was about two years old. And, then I went along and when we moved from Repton to Woollahra, and then we moved to Paddington and I started

01:30 school at Paddington School. And we moved around a bit, my father was a builder, and or well a carpenter in the building trade and eventually I finished at Leichhardt School. I passed the intermediate [certificate] there and started work and worked in office work until the war came along

02:00 and in my late teens I was interested in motorcycling so I bought a motor cycle and then during the war years, when the men were getting called up. Kodak who had developing and printing business, wanted people for their delivering, motor cycles. In those days all the photos were left at chemist shops

02:30 and the films had to be picked up and the prints delivered back to them, so I applied for a job there, which was more interesting than office work, and also paid better. And went and stayed there, this was involved riding Harley and war Indian motorcycles with big side boxes

03:00 on to carry the loads, and we rode every day in winter and summer and the wet weather and everything else and there were eventually four girls going this and I stayed there until I decided to join the air force and as a technical trainee.

03:30 Went into the air force and did my rookies [recruit training] at Bradfield and then we went to Adelaide for basic training and then to Melbourne where we lived in the showground, starting off in the cattle pavilion and then the horse pavilion and to do our flight mechanics course. And then it was

04:00 interesting there we started off as an all girl course, there were 15 of us and you had an exam at the end of each week. The first week was mainly on basic engines, auto cycle and the various parts of engines and the, at the first weekly exam. The exams were always on the Saturday morning,

04:30 six of us passed and the others didn't and if you didn't pass you got another chance, but we went on and we then integrated with male course. And from then on we just went and the first week there was on Gypsy engines out of the Tiger Moths [training aircraft] , and we then progressed

05:00 to the more advanced engines and until we got through at the end of three months we passed out as flight mechanics.

**And then just take us through in steps, where you were posted and then your life after the war?**

Well, we were, three of us were posted to Forrest

05:30 Hill, which was an aircraft depot, of course we had hoped to get to flying stations, where, at Forrest Hill, the engines came in, or the aircraft came in. They did have an airframe section too, but we were in the engine section, the engines were just stripped down and cleaned and reassembled. And I stayed there at Forrest Hill,

06:00 until the end of the war and then after that I came back to Sydney and went back to Kodak for a while. And stayed there until one day I was riding along George Street, in the days when they had trams and a

man leant out of a tram and yelled out to me, “Why don’t you give a man back his job?” So I went back and

06:30 resigned, but I had to wait about a month until they found a man who’d do the job. Some of them would come along, when they found they had to ride in wet weather they’d say, “No way.” So, and then I went back to office work, until I was married and that was in 1947. And then I went on, I was in the motorcycle club and involved in a lot of motorcycling and things, and

07:00 that was how I met my husband who was also ex air force, he’d been a navigator in bomber command. And so we were married and I kept on motorcycling and so forth until I ended up with twin boys. So I stopped the motorcycling and three years later I had a daughter,

07:30 but we were still very much involved in the motorcycling. And my husband was involved in racing, motorcycle racing, both the small tracks and at Bathurst. And in 1956, he was taking part in one of the around Australia

08:00 car trials and he and his co driver were both killed in an accident and that put an end to almost to my life really. And so then when I got myself together. I eventually went

08:30 back to work, once again to office work, and I, well after Bill died. He’d been a partner in a motorcycle business. I worked at that for a while, but it was too far from home and involved too much travelling with the small children and things so I then got a job at Victa and

09:00 at that stage they were making mowers. And I was secretary to the works manager of the mower factory and then they started building aircraft, the Victa Air-Tourer. So, because of my interest in aviation, I was transferred to Victa Aviation, and once again in a secretarial position

09:30 but when they wanted an extra pilot…oh, meantime, while I was there I started to learn to fly and just for something different. I found I was getting into a bit of a rut, and I couldn’t bear to go back to the motorcycling crowd. So I got my pilot's licence and then and then managed to get a bit of flying with Victa.

10:00 And stayed there for a few years and then when thing change, as they do with these places with change of personalities at the top, and things I left there and eventually got a position. Oh, I worked for a while as secretary to the manager of the Aero Club at Bankstown

10:30 but then ended up as secretary to the general manager of Ansett General Aviation which was the light aircraft division, they were involved in the sales of the Piper aircraft and stayed there until I retired.

**What year did you retire in Hazel?**

1984.

11:00 **And you’ve been in Narrabeen since then?**

I moved here in 1985.

**Excellent, that was a really great summary, I think that’s the best one we’ve had all week. Okay, so you moved, obviously you’ve got no memories of the place where you were born, you were only two when you left, what are your earliest memories?**

11:30 Well, where we lived at, when we first came to Sydney, that was when my next brother was born and I can remember Mum bringing him home from hospital and he’s three years younger than I am. And generally,

12:00 I remember when my mother was in hospital, my grandmother came to look after us and things and she was a bit of an old martinet. And she used to make my brother, who was two years older than me, work. Sweeping the yard and doing things like that, so that’s part of the memories there. And then I remember the day I started school,

12:30 which was in 1926, I was at, I was nearly four, but I was a bit of a nuisance at home. So they told the school I was five and sent me off to school.

**What school was that?**

That was Paddington School, the school’s still there on Oxford Street. And, but and then I just went through

13:00 infants school and then eventually got to primary school and fortunately I was not too bad at school. I could always get through, and I then I did what they called the QC, the Qualifying Certificate which we used to do in sixth class to see if you were

13:30 fit to go onto high school. Well I’d have liked to have gone to high school, but this was in the Depression and my father was out of work because the building industry was one of the first things to collapse during the Depression. So there was no question of me going to high school and having a proper uniform and all that. But, and then

14:00 at the end of that year my father got a job finishing a cottage which had been started at Leichhardt and we were able to live there, while he worked on it. And so I went to Leichhardt School and did a commercial course

14:30 and passed the intermediate in 1935 and started work at office work.

**We'll just back up a bit to your childhood. You mentioned that obviously as a carpenter, you father was unemployed for a lot of the time in the Depression, what sort of a strain did that put on the family?**

Oh it was, it was

15:00 pretty tough, because in 1931, October 1931, my mother had a baby who at that stage was the most premature baby to survive in New South Wales. He was a 26 weeks conception and he weighted two pound, two ounces. I know they have smaller ones these days, but in those days, the

15:30 basic humidicrib [infant incubator] and things that they had, it was a miracle. They called him Crown Street Miracle and he was three months old before he left hospital. And my mother was not very well and with the lack of an income and things and in those days they didn't pay out the dole

16:00 the way they do. They used to give groceries and things and you got an order for the butcher and things that they couldn't but Dad used to go off with a big suitcase and come home with it you know with flour and sugar and various things in. And so it was a pretty stressful time and I know I didn't have a school

16:30 uniform and fortunately my mother was pretty resourceful at making over things. So I always had a dress to wear but sometimes it didn't last very long. And so there were that sort of. Although, I suppose as children we didn't regard this hardship and there were so many of our friends were in the same position so we just

17:00 accepted it and went along with it.

**So in the neighbourhood, your family was fairly similar to, in their straits?**

Yes. And, my older sister, was three years ahead of me at school, and so but when

17:30 she left at the end of that year and then when we went to Leichhardt. I don't know what my parents were thinking about but there was another baby on the way and so you know it just was pretty tough with all those kids and no money coming in. But

18:00 I suppose both my parents were pretty resourceful and I mean Dad had been well he was good at his trade, he was the, before the collapse, he was foreman carpenter on what is now the big David Jones [department store] building in Elizabeth Street. And so you know it was quite a change when the job just ran out.

18:30 **What sort of odd jobs and things would you father try to get just to tide things over?**

Well he took anything that he could get and at one stage. I know when we were living at Paddington they had to work for the dole and this was road work and shovelling and pick and shovel work and so forth, which was quite different for him.

19:00 Although in his younger days Dad had had a bullock team and was snigging the feeder [logging] the Dorrigo Mountains, I mean I can't tell anyone that, the greenies [conservationists] would get very upset. So he was used to hard work and probably that was contributed to his fairly early death when he, he was only about 54

19:30 when he died.

**And you kids, what would you get up to for fun, given that there wasn't much money around?**

Well there wasn't much fun I can tell. We used to, well at Leichhardt we had a very big backyard and so it was being turned into a vegetable garden

20:00 and a lot of it. And we had some WAS DOUBLE QUOTE CHOOK s [chickens] so it meant that we always had eggs and things. And then part of the garden was turned over to flowers and my brother, older brother, on Saturday morning. We had to cut the flowers and he'd put them in the billy cart and go around and sell the flowers for about six pence a bunch which brought in a few shillings too. So.

20:30 **These days Leichhardt is a very trendy and Italian dominated area of Sydney, what was it like when you lived there?**

Oh it was just quite ordinary along Marion Street, there was lots of terrace houses and things. Ours was a cottage and two years ago that cottage, which it started off with

21:00 the four rooms. And my father had extended and put the front on it and various other things, sold for $625,000 because we saw it, at the auction. In fact a friend of mine, one of my school friends, who also

lived, she lived close, she saw it in the real estate news. And she went to the auction just for fun, to

21:30 tell me what it was like. And of course she'd been in the place when I was there and it had been changed and sort of tarted [smartened] up a bit. But when I think back to, you could have bought it for about 500 pounds, at the time that we had it.

**What about, you said it wasn't a lot of fun, but you must have had a bit of fun, what sort of things would you eat or do for a treat?**

22:00 Oh, well all I can remember is that when our birthdays came around, there was always a cake and things, but no, I think the food was fairly basic. We didn't get around to many treats and things. But I can remember going to the

22:30 butcher one day to get the meat and he was a kindly sort of friendly fellow and he said to me, "How many kids are there in your family?" When I told him he went away and added to the meat that I was buying I think about half a dozen sausages one each for the kids. And so there was those sort of things that made a difference and then

23:00 of course, you know, when I got home I almost got in trouble, "You weren't saying anything to the butcher."

**So it was a case that your parents might have been worried you'd put them to shame for begging for the sausages?**

No, they just didn't want me getting too friendly with you know sort of these, they didn't want me to as I say being friendly and getting into strife that way.

23:30 **What sort of games would you play as kids?**

I can remember we had squares marked out for hopscotch and things and skipping ropes and at school. I used to play basketball. But

24:00 in fact I played more with my brothers than with dolls and things and my sister used to have to dress my doll and do things. I wasn't very interested when I was given a doll. And so, you know, sort of cowboys and Indians and that sort of thing. Nothing that I remember specifically.

24:30 **Were you a bit of a tomboy?**

Oh I guess you could say that, yes.

**What sort of a student were you?**

Oh pretty good really. I passed the intermediate when I was 13 and you know I was pretty close to the top of the class, and so, in fact I can remember one year, when my report went home, my father said,

25:00 "What's this, you only came second?" Yes so, they had rather high expectations and when I left school, which was, I was only 13 and I begged my parents to let me go onto fifth year and get the Leaving Certificate,

25:30 but to no avail. I had to go to work with all those younger kids and start earning my keep, so.

**The decision not to send you to high school was a financial one?**

Yes. Yes, in fact the head mistress asked me, or sent a letter home asked my mother to come over to the school and

26:00 when they found out that I hadn't applied for Sydney Girls High, which was where they went from Paddington School, and was told. Our Mum went over and the headmistress said, "Do you realise your daughter was top of the whole state in this exam, and she's not going onto high school?" And Mum said, "Well we just can't afford the uniform and the fares to the school

26:30 and the books and extra books and everything that would be necessary, so." But I survived.

**Do you think your life might have been different if you had gone to high school?**

Oh I think it would have, yep. And I mean there were a few things, a few of the positions and things later on, whereas if I had matriculated and with the leaving,

27:00 there'd have been other opportunities. But I should have been like some other people and just claimed that I had it.

**You're too honest Hazel. So as a 13 year old girl, sort of leaving school like that, what sort of options were open for you?**

Oh well, I was nearly 14 so I did stay at home, my

27:30 younger sister was born in the February and I was kept at home so that I could look after the household while Mum went into hospital. There were two pre school children and Mum went off to hospital, Dad

went off to work, older brother and sister went off to work. And I was left

28:00 to look after the two kids and keep house and do the washing and the housework and everything else. And then when Mum came home from hospital I went and got a job and I know I was going to work in the city but I didn't pay full fare on the tram until you were 14. And

28:30 I used to hand and the tram guard said one day, "You're going to work aren't you?" And I said, "Yes, but I'm not 14." So I still paid my penny fare.

**It was quite a lot of responsibility you had thrust on your shoulders then when your mum went into hospital.**

Yes. Because that was on a Friday and Dad, after taking her to hospital went off to work and he came home and on the Friday night, he just handed over the house keeping money to me

29:00 the same as he would have to Mum. And I was expected to do the budgeting and the shopping and everything else.

**Did you have those skills?**

Yep, oh yes. Yes, I was, been taught to cook and wash and always had to help with the housework and things. So, yes I managed.

**What sort of things**

29:30 **would have been a typical meal that you would have cooked in those days on that sort of budget?**

Unfortunately my father was very fond of corned beef, the rest of us hated it of course, but no, yes sometimes, you know, it was always meat and vegetables. And at the weekends we always had a baked dinner and from the time my sister and I were quite young

30:00 we had to take the responsibility for cooking the Sunday dinner. But I could make stews and we used to have, rabbit, the rabbitoh [rabbit seller] used to come around, with the cart selling rabbits and fortunately we all liked rabbit stew and things. And but always with potatoes and

30:30 green vegetables and carrots and whatever else was going. So, yes it was always a proper meal prepared.

**And what about, just out of curiosity, jobs like doing the laundry in those days, what sort of process did that involved compared to today?**

We had a fuel copper, which had to be boiled up with

31:00 sticks and wood and there were no washing machines, we didn't even have a ringer or anything of the sort and you can imagine with all those kids, with the string of sheets and towels and everything there'd be, it was quite a job. And, I know that we used to, things would be boiled up then they'd go into the first rinse, then they'd go into the blue rinse and

31:30 then things, and all getting hand wrung and strung out on lines with clothes props and so.

**I've only got one child and I know how much laundry that generates so I can't imagine what it was like with that many kids in the house.**

Yeah, well I think we used to only changed one sheet a week, the top one went on the bottom and so there was only one sheet from each bed.

32:00 **And how did your first outside job come about, how did you get a hold of that job and where was it?**

Oh from, from the Sydney Morning Herald, from the positions vacant and actually, it was rather funny. There was this job advertised at

32:30 a chemical place, it was in the city and it was to be for typing and things and when I got there, and yes they gave me the job. And I found that I was to start the next day so went in and started the next day. And then I was informed

33:00 that in addition to the typing, that would only be a very small part of it, there was packing these chemicals. Actually they were teething powders for baby, but the whole place had, was Fisher's Phospherene or something, and it was this chemical smell about the place but. And I was

33:30 to work in that and every now and again I was to do a bit of typing, and only typing of labels and things they hadn't explained all this to me, so after about half an hour I went and said, "Is this smell here all the time?" And they said, "Yes." And I said, "Well I'm afraid I won't be." And so, I went out and bought a paper and went, there was a job advertised at

34:00 one of the shops and they wanted shop assistants so I thought, "Oh well." So I went and applied and got that, and asked if I could start right away so I said, "Yes." And so, when I went home they said to me,

"How's the job?" And I said, "Good, but I'm not working where I started this morning." When I look back on that and thing I wasn't quite 14 and

34:30 yet could, had the confidence to walk out of one job and go to another, but only stayed there for a couple of weeks until I got a job in an office where I was working at doing shorthand and typing. Because I had done shorthand at school and I was pretty good with the shorthand so.

**So in those days, applying for a job literally**

35:00 **just turning up at the place and asking for it?**

Yes. Oh yes.

**No formal written applications and resumes?**

No.

**What sort of shop was it you had your couple of weeks in?**

It was one of the department stores, McDowell's, which no longer exists and I was in the dress materials department.

**And what about that clerical job then, where was that?**

That was at a place called OK Elliott's,

35:30 it was on Parramatta Road, Camperdown and they were furniture, they had furniture there so it was. And it was a furniture showrooms and things but the office was in the middle of the showroom.

**I guess these days, it would seem astounding to have a 14 year old girl sitting next to you in an office. How did you fit**

36:00 **in those days?**

Well, there was only, the accountant had his office away from where we were and there was just one senior woman there and me, I was the dog's body [assistant] but. And I had to make the tea and things as well as do the office work.

**So what sort of duties did you have in that position?**

36:30 Oh well I had to do the letters that Mr Elliott dictated and also whatever the accountant dictated and I had to type those and do a bit of a book keeping, just the invoices and things into those up in books.

**Can you remember**

37:00 **what you got paid?**

Twelve and sixpence.

**And you were happy with that at the time?**

Well, it was the going rate.

**It must have helped out the family a bit?**

Well I paid ten shillings in at home and I was allowed to keep two and six and it was a fair walk but I used to walk to and from work.

**What did you do with your two and six?**

37:30 I probably bought an ice cream now and again and one for the kids and the smaller kids and so forth and saved up.

**Can you recall what your working hours were?**

Yes, from half past eight till half past five.

**And how long would it take you to walk each way?**

Oh,

38:00 probably close to half an hour.

**Again, referring and comparing to these days, a 14 year old girl walking around those parts of the city, would be a 'no, no' these days, what was it like then?**

Oh, just didn't think anything of it, in fact, well at that stage we were, I didn't say, we were living at Glebe, we'd moved from Leichhardt. When

38:30 the cottage was finished the owner wanted to move in himself and so we had moved to Glebe and so from Glebe to Camperdown. I used to just walk up Bridge Road there, it wasn't all that bad.

**But there was not the concerns of safety that we have these days?**

No, no, it'd be dark, you know, at half past

39:00 five when I was walking home but.

**What sort of jobs did your older siblings have?**

My brother, I think his first job was at a, Allan was not a good student, in fact while he was older than me, he was in the same year at school. And he left school when he was 14 and

39:30 he was in about second year then and I think his first job was with a boot manufacturer. And my sister, she started off as a millinery factory, making hats and she was the only one that could ever

40:00 tie a proper bow and she, Jean stayed at millinery all, until she was married. But, of course she got to be a senior and then Allan, as he got older he got an apprenticeship with Sonnerdale's which was one of the engineering firms

40:30 and he stayed there until he eventually started his own engineering business, but much later of course. And so he was into engineering and Jean was making hats and I was typing, so.

**Okay we've come to the end of that tape so.**

# Tape 2

00:33 **You were telling us a little earlier that the family moved to Glebe, can you give us a bit of an impression of what Glebe was like in those days?**

Oh, it wasn't the trendy place it is now. We lived in a terrace house and in fact there was mostly terrace houses there and some of the streets had little cottages, but ours was a two storey terrace,

01:00 some of them were terraces. And it was a pretty low sort of, well most people were deprived, the rents were cheap and I think that was the main reason that we went there. And, it, where we lived, the name Glebe means, you know, the property of the church, well it was owned,

01:30 all the whole area I think was owned by the Church of England. And someone came around and collected the rent every week and if there was nothing very much there and along Glebe Road there was trams running then. And there were a few shops like green grocers and

02:00 various other little shops and the grocers and no big shops or anything. And I think the high light of the place was the Chinese temple that was there, that, along further. But out towards Glebe Point there was bigger houses, that had, which are now selling for millions,

02:30 but they were sort of, probably you'd say better class than we were in the terraces. We were a few streets back from Broadway but.

**Was it a friendly community?**

Well, there wasn't much mixing

03:00 amongst the people, most people sort of kept to their own so we knew the people on either side of us but other than that we didn't' know many and sort of the children all got to know one another and so forth. And I still continued to go to Leichhardt School and

03:30 so I didn't get to know any of the local girls of my age or anything because at that stage. As far as I recall it was only a primary school I don't think they had the secondary school there at that stage. They did later on but, I know for, don't know whether it was because I was doing the commercial course,

04:00 that was available at Leichhardt and not at Glebe. But, so.

**So your family paid the money to the church each week?**

Well, the agent came around and collected it.

**Did you have to be a certain denomination to be accepted into one of the terraces, did that come into it?**

No. There was

04:30 nothing like that.

**Was the family religious?**

No, we all went to, all got sent to Sunday school and things, but no my parents weren't religious, my

father was a lapsed Catholic. His family were all Catholics but he had deserted the church in his teens and didn't go back. And, they were married in a,

05:00 Church of England and so were the rest of us, but it was a matter of form rather than faith.

**So the family wouldn't go to a service together on Sunday, it would be just the kids going to Sunday school?**

Yes.

**Up until what age did you go to Sunday school?**

Oh about ten or eleven. Whenever we could,

05:30 although, yeah I still went, to Glebe but at that stage, I think that there was a city mission or something there that we went to the Sunday school there. But I can't recall going to the Sunday school at the Church of England.

06:00 **So what was your attitude towards having to go to Sunday school?**

We got sent so we went. No I wasn't very enthusiastic church goer, in fact when I was in my teens, I, while I was at Leichhardt, while we were at Leichhardt we went to a little Sunday school there. And the group of people there were

06:30 very friendly and they seemed to be all very happy and the rest of it. And so I kept in touch with some of them, even after I left Leichhardt and sort of really went into the subject of religion and because they all seemed so happy in their faith and the rest of it. But when I delved into it I couldn't

07:00 accept all the things. So I think it was about that stage that I became an atheist and have remained so ever since.

**How would you, looking back at yourself around 14 when you left school, how would you describe your character then, what sort of a young girl were you?**

07:30 Oh that's a bit hard. I suppose I was, although it may have been through lack of opportunity, but I was good and obedient at home, of course I daren't not to be. And I, no I think along with my sisters and brothers, we just were brought up to do the right thing and we just,

08:00 you know, I don't know that we did much good, but we certainly didn't do anything too bad.

**What sort of values and traits do you think you got from your parents?**

Mainly the ethic of hard work and honesty, meaning that they

08:30 although they didn't have any money, there was never any question of any dubious goings on or anything. And, my mother particularly was industrious shall we say, because she was quite good at dressmaking

09:00 and supplemented the income a bit with dressmaking, even though she was so busy with all these children. And always sort of managed to make some money that way and she had some fairly influential, or not influential, but fairly good clients of. I can remember one woman who

09:30 obviously had quite a bit of money, but after she got Mum to make her dresses she sort of insisted on Mum doing it. And because Mum was very good at that, at dressmaking and so, and that was the one thing that she sort of treasured in the house, her sewing machine. And

10:00 it was a long time before we were allowed to sew on it and things because she, well she needed it for the dressmaking but.

**Would the sewing machine have cost the family a fair bit of money in those days?**

Oh yes, I can remember that she, she'd bought it on terms and it was one of the things in our family, you didn't

10:30 buy things on terms if you couldn't get. But she bought it on terms and this place down in George Street near Rawson Place that she bought it from. And I can remember going in there to make the payments on it and things. So, I don't know exactly how much it cost, but it had to be paid off, and it was the one thing that was ever bought on terms that

11:00 I can remember. They didn't buy anything else on HP [hire purchase] like some people.

**Where, was it common for a family struggling, the way your family was through the Depression to have a sewing machine, or was that a rare thing?**

Oh but it was the one thing, when we all married, she said, "One of the first things you buy is the sewing machine."

11:30 Because you know, you, so and I know that, even though in the commercial course we did sewing at

school and eventually I used to make all the children's clothes and things when they were small. And so, it was considered a very useful asset.

**Did mum manage to show you the ropes with the sewing machine or you learnt at school?**

I learnt at school and

12:00 my mother didn't quite approve of some of the ways that the school teachers taught us. And I know we had a great argument at one stage over the thing I was making for the intermediate exam. And Mum was insisting I do it her and way and I was insisting I do it the teacher's way and I can remember saying to her, "Well it's the teacher who's got

12:30 to mark it." And so I did it that way and Mum sort of kind of said, "Well, if I was going to do it the teacher's way, well she was bowing out of my sewing instruction." So, but I did get an A for the garment anyhow, so.

**Well done, were there any other items in the household that had that sort of prize status as the sewing machine?**

13:00 No, I can remember when we bought a wireless, because until then the only thing we had was a crystal set that my brother and I had made. And we used to spend hours sort of picking up a word here and there and that would have been in about, oh,

13:30 probably was in the late '30s before we got a wireless. And so, because I can remember hearing the declaration of war on it, but we certainly didn't have it while I was at school or anything. So, and no the, there was nothing else, we didn't have all that much.

14:00 **Was it a large radio?**

Yes, it was in a big cabinet and it stood on the floor and as most of them were at that stage, there was no little ones and it was almost an item of furniture.

**Do you recall what brand it was?**

No.

**Prior to having the wireless,**

14:30 **were newspapers around the house?**

Yes we, that was one thing we always got, the Sydney Morning Herald and I can remember it was that and in those days it used to have all classified advertisements on the front page. The news happened to be in the back part. So,

15:00 yes that was where we got our news from.

**Were you a keen reader of the news yourself?**

Yes, I used to sort of well it was something to read and I was very keen on reading and I used to read, get books from the school library and so forth.

**You mentioned earlier how resourceful mum and dad were. Was that something that rubbed off**

15:30 **on you?**

I think so, I think all of us grew up to be pretty useful and I found that you know, after my husband died, I had to be pretty resourceful. And I suppose the early training came into that and being able to manage.

**Were you more like your mum or your dad?**

16:00 Probably more like my Dad.

**In what ways?**

Inherited his bad temper.

**I'm glad I've been warned.**

And, I know, I just generally, just things in general in the way I looked at things and so.

16:30 **Would that include your aptitude with technical bits and pieces?**

Well, I don't know but, Dad, in my younger days was interested in the speedway racing, not that he

17:00 had anything to do with motorbikes but he did have a friend who raced it. And this was the speedway out at the showground and those sort of things and for some reason he used to take me to the speedway and not my brother. And that was I think where the motorcycling first started.

**How old would you have been when he first started taking you along?**

17:30 Probably about five, and I can remember that this friend who was racing, he also had a road bike and I don't know where he kept his racing bike, probably in some garage or something somewhere, but his road bike. And he boarded in a place down the road from us but his land lady wouldn't let him keep his bike there. So he used to keep

18:00 the bike in our backyard and it was probably that motorbike that started me off on my motorcycling things.

**So the bikes captured your imagination pretty early on?**

Yes, and also this chap had a girlfriend who rode a motorbike and I think she was one of the first girls to get a licence, this was back in the '20s.

18:30 So I said then, you know, "When I grow up, I'm going to get a motorbike." As kids do, you know things they're going to do.

**At the time that that woman was riding the motorbike, how was that regarded by the general public, by a woman jumping on a bike?**

Oh, she was something totally different, you know and yet she was a very pretty, very feminine sort of girl. I can still see her, I can't remember her name,

19:00 but she was, I used to think she was lovely and the fact that she had the bike too.

**When did you start to mix a bit with boys and perhaps take an interest in them and socialise at that level?**

Well, I didn't really. I wasn't all that interested in boys

19:30 and you know having a boyfriend or anything of that sort. In fact I was quite late into my teens and in fact I think I was about 18 before I went out with a boy and then it was just, I wasn't all that interested, at that stage.

20:00 I don't know I, when I, my sister had always, she was in the [Girl] Guides and then she joined the Sea Rangers as she got older. And I was never in the Guides but I did go into the Sea Rangers and we used to go away camping and things. Anything that didn't cost too much money and

20:30 I know that we used to, one girl who's father had a cottage up at Toukley, we used to sometimes go up there. Well it used to cost us about two and six I think for fares and about five shillings we'd all put in and that would feed us all for the weekend and things, and so, I had those, that interest but.

21:00 So I didn't have time for boys and so forth.

**Was there any other form of recreation that you were interested in, maybe going to see movies or anything like that?**

No, I was never a great movie goer, and occasionally my sister and I used to go together to the movies. But no, I probably

21:30 had a fairly boring sort of time until I got older and then I started thinking about the bike and saving up for that. I wouldn't spend money on anything else.

**When was it you started thinking about the bike?**

Oh, when I was about 18 I suppose and then, when the,

22:00 the war started, some of them, the members of Central Motorcycle Club, who were unknown to me at that stage. But, their wives, someone got the idea of being despatch riders because you never hear anything now about the National Emergency Services, during the war have you ever done anything. Now that was a very interesting, there were just so many people the air raid

22:30 wardens and all that and all that just seems to have been forgotten, that's just a sideline.

**We'll talk about that, it will be a good thing for us to explore.**

And so they decided and they put a paragraph in the paper or something, about you know, if anyone was interested in learning to ride motorbike. Well, out I went and they used to meet in Centennial Park, up near the Oxford Street

23:00 gates, and so I went out and met up with them and then I was hooked really.

**Just before we get too far into that Hazel, I just want to ask a few more questions before we get to that point and go into more detail there. When did you start to get a sense that perhaps there was a war looming in Europe?**

23:30 I think from reading the papers, probably twelve months or so from before it started. When there was

all the negotiations with Chamberlain [English Prime Minister] and that and I can remember you know my parents talking about it. And

24:00 then my father was quite convinced that there was going to be another war but I used to remember thinking, “Oh, I hope there’s never a war in my time.” And, but you know from the news, I think it was from the news and reading the papers about.

24:30 And also, I think about that time, I did go to the movies and they had a news reel and I can remember them showing them the Germans marching, you know with the goose step and thinking, “Oh, they couldn’t keep that up.” And so on, so it was those sort of things that made us realise that

25:00 there could be a war but I think most people were convinced that it wouldn’t happen.

**Had you been told much about the First World War?**

No, I hadn’t because, I know that at school at times, you know when they’d be talking about the - I felt so many of my friends had fathers who’d

25:30 be, or uncles or something that had been to the war. And you felt kind of a bit left out of it when your father hadn’t been involved in it and at that stage I didn’t know that one of my father’s brothers had been at Gallipoli and it wasn’t until much, much later that I found that out. It was in fact during

26:00 our war I found that out and I was quite surprised. It was never talked about. I can’t remember Dad ever mentioning it at all. And, so no, we didn’t, it’d get mentioned occasionally at school, you know, when, but on the whole it was, we didn’t know much about it or

26:30 I didn’t know much about it.

**Was your family a family that was particularly patriotic or particularly had strong, a strong connection to the Motherland, to the Empire?**

No, no, hadn’t. I think that,

27:00 my father’s family, as I said were Catholics and their forebears had come from Ireland and things. So they were bit, you know, anti British, but not as far as our family were concerned, but there was never any great talk about calling England home or anything of that sort.

27:30 And don’t know.

**Was that something that they tried to pass onto you through school?**

No, no. No, I don’t think so, I think that England was there and that you sort of realised that it was the English that had colonised

28:00 Australia and so forth. But in those days it wasn’t sort of drummed into us very much at all.

**Just to go back to the furniture showroom. You started there when you were 14?**

Yes.

**And did you work there for long?**

Oh, I worked there for probably twelve months

28:30 and realised that there wasn’t much future in it. And so I then decided to look for elsewhere, for where there’d be, you know a bigger place where, and where I could probably learn more. And so I went to a place called Paper Products,

29:00 which was out at Waterloo. And I was there working for the accountant and I was called an accounts clerk but I used to do, take dictation from him, do his letters and as well as a lot of filing and not very interesting really.

29:30 But it was, as far as I remember, better pay and a lot more varied work. And, so.

**So you were there at about the age of?**

Fifteen.

**And where did you go next, work wise?**

Where did I go next, I have to think, it’s a long time ago.

30:00 Oh, from there, yes, I, actually I had an accident on a pushbike, I went, my mother had a cousin at, up at Ourimbah and I went up there for the weekend. And the only time I ever rode a pushbike and

30:30 I still can’t ride a pushbike even though I rode a motorbike for years, and I came off and I twisted my knee very badly and I was off work for several weeks. And eventually they wrote and said, you know, “If I couldn’t’ come back, couldn’t give them a date to come back, that they wouldn’t hold the position.” So,

I then I'd been there probably a couple of years or so

31:00 and I then went to a place called Cloudust Manufacturing Company. They were agricultural chemicals for fertilisers and all that, their main office was in Adelaide, but they had an office in

31:30 Sussex Street, Sydney. And so I went there where I was doing just about everything and then eventually I was doing everything because the man who owned it went back to Adelaide and left me to run the place. And it was in a building and then he let part of the, he was only renting, this part of the building, because it was just a depot more or less.

32:00 And, to a carrier and so then eventually I worked part time for him and part time for the other one. And, that's where I was until when the war came and before I went to Kodak, I did go to Lark, Nevin, Carters. They

32:30 wanted someone, by then we had the despatch riders running and they wanted - approached one of the fellows who was in charge of the despatch riders and said they wanted to ride their bike, which was an Indian Trike, a one wheel at the front and the box was across the back for courier work. And because

33:00 all the engineering places had to get releases from the defence department before they could buy equipment or material or anything. And all these applications had to be approved which meant, you know, sort of they had to be prepared and then taken to the, office to get stamped and so forth. The man who had been doing it had been called up, so they wanted

33:30 someone so they, I was recommended for it and I went along. And I was very happy doing that and they were quite pleased too because not only could I do the riding the bike, which the man had done, I used to type all these applications and so forth too. And so I went from the agricultural place to, and

34:00 it was quite interesting I mean and so, but then Kodak wanted somebody and they were paying a lot more money. So.

**Just before we go into Kodak, can you tell me how long into the war did you make that change from the agricultural company to the despatch work?**

34:30 Oh, it was probably 1940, yeah.

**So, war was declared, you heard the announcement on the radio, on the wireless with the family. How long did it take before you could tell that**

35:00 **things were changing around you and that the war was having some sort of an impact on the family?**

Well, I think that it was a while before any sort of restrictions applied, well rationing. And things but I think it was really when the rationing started and one

35:30 of the first things to be rationed of course was petrol. And which meant a difference to me because I only got one gallon a month for my motorbike. But, but when the food rationing and clothing rationing and things came in, and I think that was probably in the early 1940, you know when they, as far as I can remember.

36:00 But until then it, and I can remember that it was a feeling almost of excitement around, that with all these things going on and fellows we knew going off to war and so forth. And I think that when it started I didn't realise how

36:30 horrible and dreadful it was going to be, it just seemed another thing that was there. And also the uncertainty of it. I think that was what, but, when it, the war started, everyone was so convinced that, you know, it'd be over in six months and then that'd be it. And then as it dragged on,

37:00 the rationing, I think it was the rationing that effected most civilians more than anything.

**Was there talk at home about participation, as far as your brothers were concerned, or your dad was concerned or other members of the family?**

Oh no, well Dad was too old and of course Dad was, he'd have been about 35

37:30 I suppose when I was born, so he was into his 50s by then. And my brother was working for the engineering at Sonnerdale's and they went onto war production straight away and so he was in protected industry. There was no way he'd have been released to join the services. Of course he'd finished his apprenticeship and was, you know, a tradesman there.

38:00 So and those sort of businesses, were declared protected industries and they couldn't release people to join the services. If they wanted to join the services, they could be held back from, and so.

**And your younger brother was too young at that stage?**

Oh he, well he was too young but he was one of the

38:30 foolish young fellows who joined up when he was 16. And, I can remember Mum coming in and shaking me one morning, she said, “Do you know where Les is?” She said, “No.” She said, “Well, he hadn’t come.” Les was a bit more of a free spirit than, and he used, I think in those days they always had this

39:00 recruiting thing down in Martin Place, particularly on Friday nights. They have chocolate wheels and you know a bit of a fair atmosphere going on and he apparently got carried away by this. And anyhow, this day had just gone out and joined up and put his age up and all sorts of things.

39:30 And so we didn’t know where Les was and it was unheard of, you know, someone being brave enough to stay out. And then in the, when the mail came there was a letter from him saying that he joined up and so forth and so Dad did go over to the barracks and sort of. They said, “Look, these young fellows will never be sent away

40:00 or anything, so, if he’s that way inclined, well.” So Dad reluctantly agreed, but what had happened was that we had a, Les’s name was Norman Lesley but he was always called Les but we had a cousin Les, the same age as myself. And so Les had used his cousin’s parents and everything else and so forth,

40:30 not realising you know, the stupidity of it but just being keen to get into it.

**What year would that have been?**

Oh, he was sixteen that would have been ’41 I suppose and then of course when the, when Japan came into it, those kids -

41:00 Les was up in Darwin for the bombing of Darwin and back home before his eighteenth birthday. So you know it was.

**We’ll talk a bit more about that later.**

# Tape 3

00:55 **Hazel, we’ll finish talking about your brother’s experience there, so he joined up and was taken into the barracks.**

01:00 **Where was he posted?**

To an anti aircraft, a heavy anti aircraft battery and after being around in Sydney for a while, he was posted to Darwin. And they were scattered around there in little pockets out in the bush in tents and so forth

01:30 and he was there at the time of the bombing of Darwin. And he, in one of the early raids, a medical officer was in charge of the medical side of things was killed in one of the early raids and because Les had done a stint

02:00 as a St John Ambulance cadet and used to go out with the ambulance fellows when they went to sporting fixtures and that, to hand them bandages and to this, that and the other. He was the only one with any first aid knowledge at all so he was called upon to do some of the patching up and so forth of people, of the, soldiers

02:30 who were injured, which was a pretty responsible job for a 17 year old kid. So but, he seemed to cope with it at the time but I think it did have an effect on him later on, because some of the injuries were horrific. And he, did come back to Sydney,

03:00 and was here at the time of his eighteen birthday and then straight away after that he was sent up to the islands and was there until early 1946. But when he came home, we could see that he’d been effected by it all, because his eyes sort of used to shift, you know, backwards and forwards and he felt that he could never stay in the city again. But because

03:30 he’d been so young when he went into the army he was able to do a course through the rehabilitation system and he did a builders course. Although he always said he was never going to follow in his father’s footsteps and got work down at the naval base at Jervis Bay and was fortunate that he met a girl down there from,

04:00 had been brought up on a farm. And she was, didn’t expect a great deal out of life and sometimes I think it was just as well but. And so eventually they married and they’re still together and he’s still alive, he’s not in good shape, because while he was up in the islands, he got some horrible skin disease and

04:30 they’ve never been able to cure it. Veteran’s affairs have tried everything, for every new treatment and so forth that comes out, but he’s still got this scungy itchy skin rash and so he has his problems lingering on from the war.

**And you've said you think the war effected him mentally?**

Oh not mentally, he's still got all his

05:00 faculties and things, but only as far as being a bit, when he came back from the islands, he was a bit jittery and so forth. But no he, he's still hold a very good discussion with anyone and remembers things very vividly sometimes more than I do.

**Okay, I think it's time for**

05:30 **us to start talking about how you fell in with the motor cycle crowd around Centennial Park. Tell us how that developed.**

Oh well, I had a little two stroke motorbike which they'd taught us to ride.

**What was the basis of this organisation that was going on there?**

They were just some enthusiasts, mostly the womenfolk,

06:00 attached to the Central Motorcycle Club. The woman who was a really driving force in it, Marg Golder, was the wife of a Central Motorcycle Club member and a little, very attractive blonde, the daintiest little thing you could every see, you wouldn't' think was into motorcycling. And she

06:30 was a bit older than the rest of us, the ones that came along and they were attached to the National Emergency Service Ambulance drivers. Only sort of on an administrative footing, and at times when they were having

07:00 practices and things we'd go along too and eventually we sort of formed into this despatch riders corps. and got our uniform and so and so and we worked in with the air raid board and things like that on the exercises that they used to have on, when the time came.

07:30 **So, you said that you answered an ad [advertisement] in the paper to go along there for training?**

Yeah.

**And tell us, what it was like, how that developed, you said they had a little motorcycle that you learnt on first.**

Yeah, and I had been interested in bikes and was saving my money so that I could buy one

08:00 and then I got very keen and keen and mean. I wouldn't spend money on anything else until I had the money to buy a bike and it was just a little second hand 250 BSA [Birmingham Small Arms (BSA motorcycles)] that I bought. And so, and I was probably one of the keener members of the

08:30 despatch riders and eventually became second to Marg Golder. She was the captain and I was the next and so, and we, when I think back on it, we probably didn't do very much but the time that Sydney was shelled. And there was an air raid warning,

09:00 sirens went and so forth and my base was at Sutherland of all places. And well, the idea was that if the communications got knocked out that they might be able to use the despatch riders for communication between the different NES [National Emergency Services] air raid stations.

09:30 And so forth, so that was the only time that we turned out in, in earnest and we, as well as our own one gallon a month petrol allowance. We were given coupons for one gallon we could keep as an emergency thing so that if you got a call out, you could

10:00 fill your bike and go. And of course my bike used to do well over a hundred miles on a gallon of petrol so that meant when the air raid warning went, scrambling into your uniform, lacing up your boots. And this warning took place just about a week after they'd decided that there was so many accidents happening

10:30 with people using the blackout masks on their cars and bike headlights that you could take them off and run on dim lights well. It meant that you had to put the black out mask back on and I was still on my way in about ten minutes, from the hooter going. And we got down there and of course eventually the all clear came and it was just a matter of turning around and going home again.

11:00 **How long did it take you to ride down to Sutherland in those days, from where you were?**

Not long. Although you must remember on that occasion, it was in full blackout, all the street lights and things were turned out. Probably about half an hour I'd say.

**As a despatch rider in those circumstances, were you allowed to break the road rules?**

No, no.

11:30 In fact I got pulled up by an air raid warden and told to get off the road until he saw that I was in uniform and on my way.

**What did your father think of you on a motorcycle?**

When I took it home, I didn't tell. I went and brought, well I got a friend to look at it and okay it and things for me, then I took it home.

12:00 Dad's first words were, "Get rid of it." And this went on for a few weeks and I said eventually, "If it goes, I go too." And finally he accepted it, at first he thought it belonged to someone else and that I, because by then I did have what you might call a boyfriend, and he was, that I'd met through

12:30 these friends in the despatch riders. And he of course had a motorbike and used to come calling on me on a motorbike but he used to leave the bike there, you know when we went to the pictures or something of the sort, you know. And, Dad at first thought it was his and one of his and said, "Tell him to take it home and get rid of it." And I said,

13:00 "It's not his, it's mine, you know, I bought it." So, yes it was always a bit of a bone of contention, but.

**So this despatch rider club that you were involved with, they were like a voluntary organisation and they worked in with the Civil Defence somehow?**

Well, not with well I suppose you could call the National Emergency Service the civil defence like. I suppose in, what was in

13:30 England was Dad's Army or something of the sort. And mostly the air raid wardens were men who were keen to do something but were too old to be in the services and so.

**So what sort of practice exercises would you do?**

Oh, well we'd, one thing we had to learn in it was the

14:00 location of all things like, the electricity stations and the gasometers. And anywhere that would be sort of a target for bombs and things, although our ideas were very flawed when you look at it later on because

14:30 there was no chance of anyone picking out these individual things. But anything to do with the essential services or communications, so that if we got sent off to one of these places, we'd know where to do. We wouldn't have time to get out a road map and have a look.

15:00 **So you would practise riding around to all those places?**

Yes and then, if the ambulances would be involved in these mock accidents and things and have patients and sort of there was no communication with the hospitals we'd be sent off to tell the hospitals that these cases were coming in.

**And were you all riding your own bikes?**

Yes.

15:30 **Just out of interest, what was involved in getting a motorcycle licence in those days?**

Well, you had to do the theory test, the same as you do now, about road regulations and where you could park and how far from corners and all the things that are in, I think most of them are still in the theory part now.

16:00 But of course, and also you had to do a practical riding test and which wasn't very arduous, you mainly had to show up. I went to Burwood Police Station to do mine. And after you did the written part of it and there were no multiple choices then, you had to know so you could write it out. Then, you had to ride

16:30 around the block, the policeman stood there and come back and park and do everything correctly, and then go up and do a figure of eight in the roadway just to prove you can keep your balance and keep your feet up and things. That was about all there was to it.

**How old did you have to be to get the licence?**

I think seventeen or something. I've still got my first licence and it cost me two and sixpence.

17:00 **And, in the despatch riders association, were you taught anything about the mechanics?**

Yes, there was a mechanic who used to come in and we had an old bike there, that was unserviceable but we used to pull it apart and put it back together again and do various things.

**Were you interested in that side of things?**

Oh yes.

17:30 **Were all the despatch riders females?**

In ours, yes.

**What sort of, you mentioned that that the club president there, or the captain was married to somebody to a guy that was into motorcycles. What about the other women, what sort of background did they come from?**

Oh, some of them were married, and some of them were just working girls. And, well I think most of them were

18:00 working, the young married ones were all working girls. The others, some of them were married with children and they had to have cooperative husbands who'd look after the kids while they were off doing these things, but.

**These days I guess, motorcycle clubs have a rather unsavoury reputation. What about in your time?**

No, it was quite different then.

18:30 I know that with the Hells Angels [motorcycle gangs] and all the rest of it, and all the drugs and everything else that are going now, and all these feuds between them and the fights and so forth. There was nothing like that. The worst they ever did, I think, was assemble at like milk bars,

19:00 or something like that. And some of the were known as 'milk bar cowboys' and things, or after a club meeting congregate at some hamburger place and have a hamburger or something and that was about the extent of the misdeeds. And but could I say that not all of them

19:30 these days are disreputable. This Ulysses club they've got going for the over 50's, mainly, you know for the mature age, they're mostly. Well a lot of them are very respectable business men and my husband was manager of a place and we'd go to work all the week in his collar and tie and all the rest of it. And yet get into his leathers on the weekend and race

20:00 and they, certainly we had, you know the motorcycle clubs had parties and balls. In fact come the night of a ball and quite a lot of them in their dinner suits and some of them even ran to tails and so forth, and all very respectable, and no.

20:30 Oh, there were a few larrikins of course, and bits of fun, but on the whole they were a very responsible and mostly family men and when they'd have their outings and things. There'd be families go and there was, on those occasions, I can't remember

21:00 anyone ever taking any alcohol to any of the picnics and things. The only time you'd see alcohol would be at a ball or something like that and in those days, most of the men would drink beer and then they started with these things like Barossa Pearl [bubbly wine] and

21:30 Palfrey Pearl and things and Star Wine or something. And that was when people were starting to get around to drinking wine, but my husband was a teetotaller and he didn't drink although after all these years in the air force, didn't drink or smoke. And so you know there was no, I suppose some of them

22:00 might have been a bit what you'd call roughies, but on the whole they were, quite a respectable lot of people. I wouldn't have been there if they hadn't have been.

**You mentioned at this stage you had a boyfriend who was also into motorcycles. What was involved in dating and courting with him?**

22:30 Not a great deal. Oh no, we used to go to the movies or things, but nothing too much, and then he joined the air force and also became a pilot and he - I was writing to him and

23:00 then I wrote and told him I was joining the air force and got a letter back saying, straight away saying, "Don't do anything, I'm coming to Sydney and he had a better idea." And which I rejected and so we decided to come to the end of the way.

**What a nice turn of phrase you've got. What sort of motorcycles were popular amongst the club members?**

23:30 Oh all sorts, there were a lot of BSAs and Aerials and Royal Enfield and Velocettes [European brands] , and I think they'd have been the main ones.

**How would you characterise the motorcycles of those days as far as comfort and speed and power and reliability?**

Oh well, you could get them with enough speed

24:00 and there wasn't much comfort, because in those days they were all girder forks and rigid frames. There were no spring frames or telescopic forks or anything that smoothed the road at all and the pillion seats were just the, lump of sponge rubber with a covering on it with put on the back mudguard and you felt every bump that, yeah.

24:30 Yeah, so there wasn't much comfort to it.

**And what about their reliability as far as stoppages and mechanically?**

Well I think that, it depended on how they maintained, and I always felt that mine was quite reliable it never let me down and so. And I think that,

25:00 well most of the people that I knew were, well they valued their bikes so they looked after them and so they were regarded as reliable.

**Tell us how you moved from being a professional motorcycle rider?**

25:30 You mean getting paid for it?

**That's what I mean.**

Well, it was, as I mentioned before, someone from Mark Nevin Carter, when they were losing their man who'd been called up, they knew. Well they'd seen the girls around riding and so they asked the chap who was instructing

26:00 us to recommend someone who might be interested in the job as their courier, riding this Indian. And so he sent me along to apply for the job and I was given it straight away and so that was how I got started. And at that stage I probably was the first girl to be

26:30 riding professionally, shall we say, and around the place. There was one woman who had her own motorcycle business, Parramatta Road Leichhardt and she use to ride a big Harley [Davidson motorbike] with a side box on but I mean that was her own business, she mustn't employed by anyone else.

27:00 **It must have been bit of a dream job for you when you got it?**

Oh, I was thrilled to bits. But, there again I didn't' tell my father that I wasn't working in an office any longer and of course he was gone, had gone to work before I left in the morning. And I used to ride my own bike out to, they used to have a place over at Camperdown and

27:30 I used to ride out there and ride their bike all the day. And of course I had been riding this agricultural chemical place, they had moved out to Alexandria. So I had been riding my bike too and from work, so when I came home on the bike, Dad didn't know that I hadn't been

28:00 sitting in an office all day.

**And so tell us again, with a bit more detail, what the job for Kodak involved?**

Well Kodak was a film processing people and in those days the, there was only black and white photography too in those days. People who had taken their photographs left their film

28:30 at a chemist, mainly, some of the little shops did have it, but mainly it was chemist shops and they, took them there and from there we'd go out on the bike and pick up - they had canvas bags that they used to put all the films and things in. And picked them up and delivered the ones that we had picked up and had been processed

29:00 about two days before. I think we used to call on these places about three times a week and there were various runs, as we called them around. Some of them were the eastern suburbs and that went out as far as Watsons Bay and western suburbs went out as far as Liverpool and things. And

29:30 and we brought them back in, they were processed and printed and then on the next pick up and delivery you'd deliver one lot and pick up the next lot and so that was how it all worked.

**And where was the base?**

In Riley Street, down there just off William Street in the city.

**Can you recall how long it took for people to get their photos back?**

Only about

30:00 two days I think. What we picked up on Monday we probably deliver back on Wednesday and then, what they picked up on Friday, probably didn't go back, because they didn't work over the weekend and so, but only two or three days.

30:30 **What was city traffic like back then?**

Oh, it was quite, quite reasonable, nothing like it is now and I never used to have any bother or hairy [frightening] times when we were riding. Of course there were places in the city with these to be picked up from as well, so you'd be going down places

31:00 like George Street and Pitt Street and Castlereagh Street and the main problem I think was parking. But even then it wasn't difficult like it is now and there wasn't all the restrictions on the parking areas and nothing like loading zones and ten minute kind of, and we never had to park on -

31:30 you'd rush in and drop a bag and pick up another one and be back. And in fact, most of the time we

used to just leave the bike running with the brake locked on which you could do on the Harleys and the Indians. And, although policeman did tell me that was illegal and you shouldn't leave it with the motor running, but it'd save kick starting it.

32:00 I often reckon that, I've just had a knee replacement, but if they'd had electric starts of motorbikes in those days, I mightn't have had to have a knee replaced now.

**What did you wear as a rider?**

Lace up boots and breeches and in the winter time I'd wear the jacket, otherwise just a blouse, and we didn't wear helmets, we mostly

32:30 tie the scarf around our hair. And the only people who wore helmets in those days were anyone who was racing and none of the people who just rode on the roads wore helmets. In fact it was not until probably about, mid '50s before

33:00 people started wearing helmets and the road safety council got the idea that motorcyclists, because of the injuries and things they were getting should wear helmets. And my husband was on the Road Safety Council, Motorcycle Road Safety Council and they provided two helmets and so Bill took one to wear

33:30 and gave one to his brother. And they were both very big strong men and people used to sling off at them a bit at first and I've forgotten just what Bill saying was, but it was something you know, "If you had anything worth protecting inside you'd protect it." So and so, and of course even then they weren't these full face helmets, or

34:00 you know nowadays the helmets all have to be to a certain standard before they can be sold. And it was, as far as safety and things, so that was really the start of the helmet wearing thing back then.

**What about protection in wet weather?**

Well, we had

34:30 not very efficient but, more or less canvas overall things, mine, the one I had was some navy disposal ones that I'd bought at a disposal store. And just a leather helmet and leather, more or less, you just to see the old aviators wearing and so forth.

35:00 And yeah, that was the wet weather gear, but I had bought two or three suits at this disposal store, and when we got back, from a run in wet weather. We used to take them and hang them down in the, close to where they dried he films, which was all dried with warm air and things in those days.

35:30 They'd dry the prints, so we used to put one in there so it'd be dry for the next morning when you'd go in there.

**Riding around all day on those king of heavy and not very well sprung bikes must have been quite fatiguing?**

Oh well, young and healthy, didn't notice it at all. And, yeah sometimes you'd feel a bit tired but

36:00 mostly grubby because as I say, without full face helmets, we used to get pretty dirty in the face.

**And your dad never realised when you'd come home at the end of a day like that that something was up?**

Well no, I did confess when I started working at Kodak because I was around places. In fact once I swung into a driveway, into a dock

36:30 and there was Dad working in that building. I didn't know exactly which building, he didn't see me but I did say and he wasn't very happy about it but. He accepted it.

**And what about your mum?**

Oh, she'd have preferred me not to be doing it, but she didn't. Well, I

37:00 think she realised I was a fairly determined sort of person by then and I was going to do it anyway.

**And did you get any hassles from men about the job that you were doing?**

Oh, occasionally but you know, it just went with the job so you just coped with it.

37:30 **Now, tell us about the masking of the headlights for black out purposes, how difficult did that make it to ride at night?**

Oh, it strictly limited the light, have you ever seen one of these black out masks?

**Only in the movies and things but I have no idea what sort of light they actually put out.**

Oh well, of course it was a black cylinder like so and in front of it there was the front panel of it was, had slits in it

38:00 with shades on which directed the light just to immediately in front of you. You couldn't see 20 yards ahead of you or anything, you just saw what was immediately in front of you and very dim because of the limited light that came through so that anything from the air wouldn't see any bright light and

38:30 so forth. In fact, I think on the whole, we were very fortunately that Japan was stopped where it was, because eventually they had to relax these black out masks a bit because there were too many accidents and so forth because some people wouldn't drive sensibly and within their limit.

39:00 And other people would sort of try to keep to their 30 miles an hour with practically no visibility.

**So it did really restrict your visibility then?**

Yes.

**And what about the other vehicles around you, how difficult were they to see if they had similar precautions?**

Very difficult, but as I say, they

39:30 did relax it and the only time it was essential was if you were on the road during a blackout, you know an air raid warning.

**Did you have any ambitions to join the forces at this early part of the war?**

Yes, that was when we hoped that the army, the navy or the air force

40:00 would take girls in as despatch riders and some of us did apply to both the army and the air force at that stage we didn't know the navy had despatch riders. But then we found out they did and their response was that, "They probably would but not in the immediate future and would keep us on a waiting list."

40:30 And then eventually, I think in about 1943, the navy had said that they would take us and in the weeks that they had decided that, they had five of their despatch riders killed on the road. And they said, "No women."

41:00 So that was when I decided I'd better do something about the air force.

**So at that early stage you had no ambition to join but as a despatch rider. Other things didn't interest you?**

Well, not while I was riding the bike and so forth.

**You weren't a candidate for the land army?**

No. I know the land army is getting a lot of recognition now,

41:30 but they were on a totally different footing from the other services because when, even when I joined the air force, they were all the women services were enrolled. Which meant that if you were particularly unhappy, or about anything you could apply for a discharge and get out. Well, then

42:00 it was, parliament sort of …

# Tape 4

00:38 **There was an aura about riding a motorcycle back in those days, perhaps in the way in various stages it became a glamorous thing, you know portrayed in Hollywood movies in that way. Sometimes, you know there was, it was connected to being a rebel. Did have any sort of**

01:00 **connection to a particular attitude or a type of person back in those days?**

Oh, I don't think so but most of my friends who were motorcycling were kind of independent people and I think it was the freedom it gave you to get around.

01:30 Because there was no way we were ever going to be able to get cars or anything and just the ability to get to places you wouldn't have got to otherwise. And I think too that most of them were sort of individuals, not just a group type or anything.

**So Hazel, we were talking about**

02:00 **some of the common characteristics that people you were riding bikes with at that time.**

Yeah, well as I say they all seem to be more or less individuals and on the whole I suppose, taken as a lot. They'd be interesting people because,

02:30 I mean the ones who rode in the despatch riders, some of them were, sort of reverted back to type and

reverted back to the kitchen again, once the war was over. But the ones who continues on with the riding, they were doing it because they were interested in motorcycling I guess.

**Was there any glamour attached to being**

03:00 **a motorcycle rider?**

I don't think so, because really you didn't look very glamorous when you were riding.

**Were many people having accidents on bikes then?**

No, not as many as there are now and I think mainly it's the traffic now and the speed. See, even the general

03:30 traffic didn't move at the speed and there wasn't the amount of traffic on the road and a lot of the roads were so bad that you couldn't speed on the anyhow. I mean in those days not all the roads were even sealed and the ones that were sealed, there were very few once you got out of the inner city that were sealed from curb to curb.

04:00 They would have a sealed strip in the middle and mostly gravel edges and things, so. And potholes didn't seem to get mended very frequently, so on the whole there wasn't the speed that there is now.

**What sort of speed limits were there?**

Oh, I think it was 30 miles an hour it was and once you got out

04:30 of the area, there were areas where it was 60 and then it was sort of unrestricted over that. So that if the road was suitable and your vehicle was suitable and you felt inclined, which my bike wouldn't do much more than that and so, I think that was how it went at that stage.

05:00 **So those limits were the same for any vehicle at that point?**

Yes.

**Did you come off the bike much?**

I only had one serious accident and that was after I was married, it wasn't in those early days. I got hit by a van and I was riding an Outfit at the time.

05:30 When we were married, Bill and I, I had my bike and he had three, this was his racing one and the other two which he kept registered so that we got enough petrol to run them all because we were still only on the petrol rationing. So he had this bike that had a sidecar on and I was riding that and I got

06:00 hit and I, that was a bit serious, but I had a fractured femur. And of course in those days there was no pins and plates and things and I ended up in Prince Alfred Hospital for eight months. Got out a couple of days before our first wedding anniversary.

**So during the war**

06:30 **years, motorcycles didn't necessarily have a reputation as being a dangerous vehicle?**

No.

**With your set up for the Kodak job, how many of those canvas bags would you normally be carrying around at once?**

Oh, I'm just thinking how many,

07:00 probably about 30 or so, because it, it depended on the number of chemists on that run. But we'd do maybe two, three runs in a day, so that, covering the various areas, as I say the eastern suburbs or the western or the north western and things I know. And one of mine I used to go as far up as Epping and

07:30 so, and it was sort of a quick whip around, but sometimes there'd be several miles between each chemist shop or, pick up place.

**And where, where would you carry those bags?**

The bikes had a side box on.

**Can you describe to us how big a side box**

08:00 **would be, what it would be constructed out of and where it would be attached?**

Well it was attached to the side of the bike and they were made out of timber, and painted, they were all red, painted red, and the box would be about, four-feet-six by about two feet by about two feet deep.

08:30 No, maybe eighteen inches, no closer to two feet, with a hinged lid and so that could sort of put your load in.

**And relative to you on the bike it would be in front of you on the front?**

Right along the side sort of, sort of extended from the front to the back of the bike.

**All along?**

Hm.

**You mentioned that**

09:00 **when you started doing the despatch work, you were really one of a kind did you, did it sort of sink in at the time that you were being a bit of a pioneer in the work you were doing or is that something you realised later?**

Oh probably later, it was just something to do at that stage and I didn't have any ideas about blazing a trail or anything.

09:30 Although I think it was because the man from Kodak, the man who was in charge of the developing and printing, works there in Riley Street. He told me later it was because he'd seen me going up and down William Street to Lark Nevin Carters which was up at the top of the Cross [Kings Cross] there that he got the idea of employing girls for their

10:00 fleet. And so I suppose it was ground breaking in a way.

**Would you get any more interest or attention from the blokes because you were doing something quite unusual?**

Oh yes, particularly the motorcyclists around and things.

**Was that attention welcomed?**

Oh yes.

10:30 **Now at the end of the last tape you were talking about that once you realised that the possibility of doing despatch work with the forces was ruled out, that made your mind up that you'd have to look elsewhere for, to be participating in the war. What was the process of thought that**

11:00 **went on for you at that point?**

Well I was spurred on by the fact that they were accepting girls for the technical trades in the air force. I suppose I wasn't patriotic enough to have joined up to sit in an office and type and so far,

11:30 but when I saw that, about the technical trainees, I thought, "That'd be more in my line." So I applied and was fortunate enough to get called up and whereas clerks and general hands and mess hands

12:00 and things and that, just went in. Of course you didn't always get your preference even though you might have preferred something but for the technical trainees you had to do an aptitude test. This meant we had to front up down there at Rushcutter's Bay at the recruiting depot and do this written exam sort of thing.

12:30 It was mainly there was a bit of maths and diagrams and sort of thing and if this wheel was turning that was, you know it was linked through cogs to some, which may on the end be turning, and I can't remember all the details. But I can remember those sort of things just sort of, so that, I suppose you could prove that you had a bit of aptitude for the sort work

13:00 you wanted to do. And probably of the lot I went in with, I was the only one that had any real mechanical experience and but, they all sort of had enough nous to cope with the aptitude test. And then you waited for your, until all that was assessed, until you got a

13:30 call up to go down for a medical and eventually get in.

**Just before we get into what happened when you did get called up, I just wanted to, we were talking about the attention of men. I just wanted to tell you about the presence of American soldiers, you know the various forces who started to become a feature around Sydney as the war progressed. What was your**

14:00 **attitude towards them, were you interested in them romantically?**

No, in fact, I know a lot of girls did sort of go overboard, of course you probably heard the saying, you know, "Over here, overpaid, and oversexed." Thinking about the American, but no there was quite a few of us that would've stayed

14:30 home forever rather than go out with an American. And I was one of those and not that I had anything really against them but I just felt that, they seemed to have so many advantages and things that our fellows didn't have. I mean their uniforms and everything else, to start with, they were all in these nicely tailored uniforms,

15:00 whereas you've seen what our army were issued with and had to wear and so. And it was just that sort of feeling and I felt that there were enough Australians around without the Americans. And, I did get roped into going to a party at Kings Cross of all places, you know it was

15:30 sort of out of bounds after dark. One of the girls who was I the despatch riders, she was got tangled up with this American and he asked her to bring someone along to this party and just let's say I wasn't impressed. And that was my only experience

16:00 of being anywhere with the Americans on a social footing.

**Amongst your immediate so called girlfriends, just roughly, what do you think the percentage would have been of those interested in the American boys and of those who perhaps felt the way you did?**

Oh, I'd say there were probably more like me than otherwise.

16:30 **And was Kings Cross a place you spent much time in?**

No, no in fact you know, apart from riding though it during the day, I'd never even stopped in Kings Cross. And I know I did tell my mother that I was going to this party with this girl and she had a little flat up there and she'd

17:00 invited me to come and stay the night with her. Well, I'd ridden over on my bike and got out and I, frock and so on to go off to the party. And we went and I know that I was a bit surprised when I decided that I was, enough with this fellow, I said I wanted to go leave then and she handed

17:30 me the key. So I went, she still wasn't there when I left in the morning, so I was a bit shocked.

**And what was your impression of Kings Cross when you were there?**

Oh, we only went to this, these Americans were staying at this big hotel at, I think they'd taken over or they had a whole floor of it or something. And they were

18:00 a much faster crowd than I was shall we say. I mean people thought that because I rode a motorbike and that, that you'd be a bit you know, sort of, rough or easy or something of the sort. Well, when I look back on it I probably was a bit of a prude even.

**So what was the general impression of Kings Cross at that time that**

18:30 **people carried around?**

Well, I think they thought it was a bit disreputable. And I don't know, Kings Cross is sort of been through several different stages. Then when it was just a bit bohemian, or something, I think it

19:00 could have been quite an interesting place, but then when it got to be, known for it's brothels and all that it changed. And then I think it almost came back again for a while but then when drugs and I think that a lot of

19:30 the social change in Sydney, or in fact in Australia has been due to drugs which we didn't have or know about in our young day. And I think that this is what's happened to King Cross and the criminal element that's got into it, but as I say, it's outside of my field.

**When you were socialising at that point, would you have a drink of alcohol yourself?**

20:00 Well, I always thought I was a teetotaller but I did go out with one fellow who, said, "Oh yes, well of course you're a bit of a wowser, [puritan] so here's a drink for you." And, so I had this and it was Advokat and Cherry Brandy which he told me were was a soft drink you see. And so I quite believed it was a soft drink, and

20:30 but no I, I didn't drink alcohol at all. I think that it was probably in the air force that I really, even then it wasn't anything bad but, I know when we got to Adelaide,

21:00 there was one night we were going out. We used to get leave on a Wednesday night which meant that we could go into town and have and meal or something or other rather than face up to the mess, if we had any money and could afford it. And this night there were four or five of us and this girl said, "Let's go and have a beer." And of course this was new territory for me,

21:30 so we went and they, being Adelaide, closing time I think was five thirty it was something, we got there about five minutes before. So this girl who knew all about pubs and things, she said right, there were five of us that's right, she said, "Ten beers." And I thought, what's she going to do with ten beers but that was two each because they were saying last orders now. And that was probably the first beer that

22:00 I'd ever had. And yet my father used to always have a beer at home and Mum would have a beer with him but we kids just didn't ever get involved in it.

**Alright, now let's go back to time when you were called up, that would have been when?**

1943. In early ’43 because we went in July, the

22:30 eighth of July.

**How did your parents react to the news that you were becoming a WAAAF [Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force] ?**

My father had died, and I was over 21. Dad would never had signed the papers for me. I know that, but he wasn’t there and as I say I was over 21 and I told Mum I was going to do it and that was it.

23:00 **How did she respond?**

She just said, “Well, she hoped that that I knew what I was doing.” And I said that I did, and that was what I wanted to do. Partly it was I wanted to get away from home and just to do something different instead of getting stuck there with all these opportunities

23:30 I thought I might as well. And so yeah.

**Had you had a chance to speak to any other WAAAF girls or get any idea of what you could be in for?**

No, the only, I had a friend who joined the navy and she was but I didn’t see much of her because she was sent to Canberra straight away. But she was very enthusiastic and she was,

24:00 someone that I felt you know and she did very well in it actually. The promotion and so forth. But I didn’t see much of her and I knew she was just very happy in the service and so on so. And yes I just went in, you know, not knowing anyone. I just got the

24:30 of course we all had to go for a medical and before we got called up.

**Where were you for the medical?**

Down at Rushcutter’s bay. I know everything happened down there it was the recruiting depot. And a chest x-ray and about a week I got a letter from the would I present myself again, for another

25:00 chest x-ray and I said, “They’re going to try and tell me I’ve got TB [tuberculosis] or something of the sort.” And of course this is rather amusing because I was working on the bike at the same time and I, they said to present myself at any time convenient to me, to you know. I didn’t have to make an appointment so I went down not knowing it was a male medical day, down there. And so I showed

25:30 my letter to the clerk and he said, “Go up to the whatever floor it was.” And I went up there and a very bored looking air force clerk was sitting at the table and I put this down and it was this big room with seats all around it. And all these fellows sitting there all with just their pants on, you know stripped to the, and so I put this down and of course all he could see

26:00 was breeches and boots, he said, “Strip to the waist and sit over there.” And I said, “Where, right over there.” And the whole place went, can you imagine when he barked this at me and the fellows said, “Go on, go on, do it, do as you’re told.” So they eventually had to clear the room and line me up at the x-ray machine. Six months later I got so used to obeying orders, I might have

26:30 even done it, but anyhow that’s just a bit of an aside. So yeah, there was nothing wrong with, when I asked them later on, they said, “Someone had put a thumb print or something on it, or some sort of a print on it.” So there was nothing wrong with my - Then I got my letter to present my self at Rushcutters Bay at whatever time it was.

27:00 **And what happened on that day?**

Got down there and looked at all these girls and I thought, “Jeez, these are the people I’m going to have to live with you know.”

**What was your general impression of these girls?**

Oh well, you know they were just a group of girls, most of them were very much like me sort of very, and what happened, we were then given our numbers. And but the tech trainees,

27:30 they asked us to step aside while they did the others in alphabetical order and then at the end of those. There were 36 and there were 31 of us and five technical trainees and we were given our numbers after them so that, and that’s how this friend who’s 80 today, her numbers were before mine because she was, her name was Delaney.

28:00 So she was D and I was F which came after her.

**So that’s Mercia? When did you start chatting to her?**

On the bus, or probably there and in, being, they took us on the bus out to Bradfield Park. And so, and then they put

28:30 I think in the hut, they had huts with two to a room there which was very civilised and when they came,

it was, the two of us just happened to be put into the same room. And but, we weren't in the hut with the rest of our flight because we had to go on the end of another hut, of girls who were staff

29:00 at Bradfield.

**So they were keeping the tech trainees in a different?**

No, it wasn't that it was just that there wasn't enough room. I think there were thirty to a hut and so four of us ended at up at the end of another and one ended up in a hut with another lot

29:30 all by herself. So it was just we were put in together so that's how we sort of took to each other and that's it.

**So how did you feel once you got going at Bradfield and you had to get used to a whole new lifestyle. How did you feel about**

30:00 **the discipline and the situation that you'd thrown yourself into?**

Well you kind of knew it was going t be all very different and it started right that day. I mean we went in and we were in of course our civvies and we just dropped out cases in our rooms and they marched us down to barrack store and issued with a hessian bag and you went over to a pile of straw

30:30 and you got hold of a pitch fork and sort of filled your hessian bag. Mostly filled them too full, I must admit and then took those back to your room and then you went and you got issued with three blankets and a pillow. And I think someone was silly enough to ask where the sheets and pillow cases were, they said, "Don't be silly, you don't get those."

31:00 And then we were given our mess tins, which just come out of store and were covered in grease because they weren't inhibited before they went into store. And an enamel mug and marched straight over to the mess, by then it was lunch time and we looked at these things, saw some showers. So I said, "Right, there should be some hot water over there." So Mers

31:30 and I and a couple of the others dashed over there and we were washing and someone come, a corporal come in, "You're not allowed to do." You know, you couldn't do that and we said, "But, well that's the way they are sort of thing." But we got them washed by then and so we realised things were going to be a bit rugged, and they were.

**Was it difficult for you to adjust to that?**

32:00 No, not as much as it was for some of the others. And, see these girls came from all sorts of. See some of these girls came from all sorts of backgrounds, some of them had led rather sheltered lives and never been away from home or had to do anything for themselves. And for them I think it was a bit of a culture shock.

32:30 But I'd suppose I had a bit of a rugged childhood type of thing and my friend Mercia come from Young, and living on a farm and things. So she sort of took to it alright and but, no I didn't find the discipline too bad.

33:00 And, but you know, it was full on from the word go. Straight after lunch we went down and we were given our vaccination and inoculations and things, and in those days they didn't have the nice fine needles they've got now. They were like big skewers that,

33:30 and so, the reactions from those, because we were a bit bad, you got two in this arm and one in this arm, which meant you didn't have a good arm to sleep on. On the, without sheets and things, but it was a Thursday when went in and we were given leave on Friday to go home for the weekend. And I persuaded my mother to

34:00 let me have some sheets and a pillow case to take back. So, but then we started and drilling and you drilled for four hours a day you know until you could march you know to their satisfaction. And we had lessons about aircraft recognition. Air force rules and regulations of course and

34:30 oh, all sorts of lectures on how we were expected to behave, and do this that and the another. And, that went on for a month, at the end of which there was an examination to, a written examination on all the things we had learnt.

**During that month, were you sharing the mess with the boys?**

35:00 No, not, it was a WAAAF.

**So were you segregated most of the time?**

Yep.

**Did you ever mix with the boys?**

Not at Bradfield no. They were one end of the place and we were at the other end, and never the twain shall meet.

**Around about how many girls would you have been sharing the mess with?**

Probably a couple of hundred I'd say.

35:30 Because there was staff girls there as well as each week, they took in a flight of trainees. There was about 36 in a flight, of trainees, and some of those would go and another lot would come in. But I'd say there'd be at least three or four flights of trainees at a time in there.

36:00 This is just roughly remembering sort of thing.

**And the lessons and training, was that strictly carried out by males, or were there women involved in that?**

Some males and some WAAAF officers.

**What sort of rank were the female WAAAF officers involved in your training?**

36:30 Well, our drill instructor was a corporal and I think there might have been sergeant, but I can remember one WAAAF officer who was giving some of the lectures.

**Did you get to see male and female officers of the same rank mixing with each other and reacting with each other?**

37:00 No. Not at Bradfield, it was a training camp, you were there to be trained and that's it.

**So what was next after Bradfield?**

We went to Adelaide for our basic training, technical training. And in Adelaide we lived in City Parking Station. Instead of rows of cars there were rows of stretchers and you know

37:30 the beds and with just a locker between two beds and another two beds. And head to head there were another two and so, don't ask me what we did for privacy, because there wasn't any.

**What about shelter?**

Oh, there was a roof over it, in fact it was the ground floor which was taken up with things and then the barracks

38:00 started on the first and the second floor. And the showers and toots [toilets] were up on the roof, up on top, so not very convenient.

**What was the name of that place?**

City Parking Station. And it was just across the road from Exhibition Building, and which was, had been taken over by the air force and that's where our mess was, across the main

38:30 street of Adelaide. And the WAAAF mess had been the city morgue.

**Very glamorous deal you girls get. Were there any males on that base with you or was that just for WAAAF?**

No, that was just WAAAF.

**How did they get you down to Adelaide?**

By train.

39:00 And our lessons were held out at a place called Goodwood and we used to go out there by tram every morning and so we had a couple of male instructors, civilian instructors out there. And they did their best to teach us about tools and how to use them and

39:30 some maths, more maths, about electricity and magnetism. And we were given a lump of mile steel that had benches there and you were allocated to a position at a bench and this piece of mild steel we had to file up until it was of certain dimensions, within

40:00 very close tolerances. I think about five thousand or something of sort and until it was acceptable and then as soon as you did that you had to start cutting it up and making a C clamp out of it. And so, this mean, you know using taps and dies and various other things.

**How were you going with all that sort of stuff?**

Oh, quite good.

40:30 We had to stamp our number on everything we did and my course number was thirteen of all things. So in fact I've still got the castellated and my locking plate that I made there. And my brother took the tool maker clamp and had it hardened and used it in his engineering business.

41:00 And when he died I asked my nephew for it but I didn't get it back and so, yes we did all this for

probably three months. And as I say made various things out of bits of steel and how to used the different tools and

41:30 a bit of general engineering sort of stuff. I know the girls found it very difficult to call a bastard file a bastard file. But, and then we had an exam at the end of that and when we did that exam we were asked to express our preference as to whether we wanted to be.

# Tape 5

00:34 **When you first went into Bradfield was there any sort of aptitude testing or anything that you did?**

No, we had done that before we got called up, that was when I said, you know, we had the aptitude test, that only applied to technical trainees, just to make sure you had a bit of nous for

01:00 all the technical stuff to come.

**So at Adelaide, what sort of technical trades were you training along side?**

Oh well, these two civilian instructors took us and most of the girls, it was all completely new to them, about tools and the, principles

01:30 of electricity and magnetism and those sort of things. But it was mainly learning how to use tools and as I said we got this block of mile steel which we had to file up and make various things out of it and other things.

**And so what options as far as trades were open to you people in that course?**

No, well we all did the one there

02:00 and then at the end of that we were selected to either go on to be flight mechanics, flight riggers which was working on airframes, armourers, electricians, or instrument repairers. They were the five musterings that were open, and when we did an exam we were asked to express our

02:30 preference as to what we wanted to be. Having been told that there was no guarantee you'd get your preference at all. So there was spaces one to five, so I put flight mechanic, flight mechanic, flight mechanic, and so they got the message and I ended up as a flight mechanic.

**Why were you so keen on that particular job?**

Well, I didn't want to work on airframes, I

03:00 didn't want to have anything to do with guns, or electrical works or if it hadn't been that. I guess I'd rather have been an instrument repairer, but. I was fortunately chosen as a flight mechanic.

**The other women that were in the course, were they keen on flight mechanics as well?**

03:30 Most of them were, well, I'd, I think there were about 15 of us. And there weren't only ones from our original flight, we'd been held in pool for a whole until there were enough to make up a course or about 30 odd for the basic course. So

04:00 I'd say about half of them chose flight mechanics. Or I don't know whether they all chose, some of them told me that they had put down a preference for something else, but they ended up as flight mechanics. I think it largely depended on the vacancy in the further courses as to, and they were certainly putting through more flight mechanics than any of the other musterings. So I think that some of them

04:30 might have wanted to be electricians or instrument repairers, but they ended up on course with us.

**Putting down flight mechanic five times was you know.**

Tempting fate.

**You obviously had a bit of an anti authoritarian streak there Hazel.**

Just a bit.

**And what about your friend Mercia, where did she go?**

Yeah, she ended up as a flight mechanic too and came with me.

05:00 **And so what did that mean, where did you end up being sent to?**

To Melbourne, to 1ES, which was One Engineering School, and our, and that was at the Melbourne Showground which was pretty rugged.

**What sort of accommodation were you staying in?**

05:30 The cattle pavilions, and you've been to the show and seen pavilions where they have one beast in a thing. Well instead of a beast they were two beds and two WAAAF allocated to that and we were there for several weeks, then we got allocated to the horse pavilion which was much the same sort of a building. And years afterwards we were talking about it and we wondered why we preferred

06:00 horse to cattle and then we thought it was probably because it was closer to Lat and Blutes [Latrines and showers] which were in the middle of the big compound. And you know, it was less distance to charge off to the toilets or the showers and things.

**Speaking of those hygiene facilities, what were they like as far as facilities and privacy?**

06:30 Very basic, at Bradfield the showers had no doors, it was just a big room, with some hand basins down the centre of the room, and I say room, building, corrugated iron building and around the edges were the showers. But they were just divided off into cubicles, with no

07:00 shower curtains or doors on the showers or anything. And this was a bit of a shock to some of the girls who'd never left home, never even shared a room with a sister or anything of the sort, but. You managed after four hours a day on the drill square, you really needed your shower, so.

**How did you cope with that lack of privacy?**

Well as I say, I'd been away camping with

07:30 the Rangers and things and did a bit of skinny dipping here and there and so it didn't worry me. And being young and not all flabby or anything. There wasn't much to worry about.

**Were there some girls who couldn't take that life?**

Yes, and some of them used to take one of their blankets up and hang it over the shower rail at the top.

08:00 And because they couldn't bear to be seen in the nuddy [nude] but, and some of them were really distressed about it, but eventually they got used to it. They had to.

**What sort of background had the girls on the course come from? Were you typical?**

Well, they were quite a mixture, I mean some of them had been only children

08:30 and one girl confessed she'd never even washed her own stockings or anything. So coming into an atmosphere where, you know, you had to be a bit self reliant and things. Some of them were a bit upset and they hadn't expected things to be like that they had thought they'd come into, have a nice room and

09:00 all the mod cons [modern conveniences] . There weren't many mod cons around and with it being wartime, the one thing there wasn't the materials to make things much better.

**And sleeping in the animal stalls like that, how did you make yourself comfortable?**

Oh well we had out, these little steel wire stretcher things with fold up legs

09:30 and our hessian bags with straw in and so, and by then we had been issued with sheets. And while we were over at Adelaide we had got issued with sheets. And, but only two which meant you know you had to wash them on a good day and get them dry to be back on again.

10:00 No, it wasn't very good and we just had a couple of hooks to hang our uniforms and things on and everything else just went in our kits bags and so. And yet when you went out in uniform, you were expected to be neat and tidy, and so.

**What did your uniform consist of when you were at Melbourne there?**

Well, just we had black shoes and stockings, navy skirt

10:30 and jacket, blue shirt and tie, and our air force cap. And for the summer we had drab skirts and shirts and the hats were felt, big felt hats and that was summer uniform.

**And would you wear that when you were in the workshops doing training?**

No, no we had navy blue overalls,

11:00 notice I'm sitting down in the gutter in that photo. And oddly enough they were always called jeans. And before jeans became jeans and we were issued with a couple of pairs of those and so.

**And, I know it seems I'm obsessed with washing clothes, but what sort of maintenance did you have to do on your uniform and how did you go about it?**

11:30 Oh well, we there were tubs and I don't think there were any coppers in Melbourne or in Adelaide, but we used to just wash mainly in cold water. And I know that the

12:00 girls did our own blue shirts, but they had detachable collars, and you could send the collars to the laundry. And I think it cost tuppence [2 pennies] for a, to get a starch collars done and that was the only

way, because. And there were ironing boards and irons there, but there was never one available when you wanted to do it, because someone else would be doing it

12:30 because everyone had to do their washing and ironing in stand down time, but.

**So you just had to make your own time to do those sort of things?**

Yes.

**And when you were in Melbourne there in the Showground, what were you getting as far as food and what did it consist of?**

Well, it was summer time and because we went there in November,

13:00 to Melbourne and we were there over Christmas and new year and it was fairly basic. There were things like Crispies [cereal] and things for breakfast, cold toast, because they used to make a mass of toast and just put it out. And for lunch there was usually a salad or something of the sort and in the evenings,

13:30 or sometimes there'd be a hot meal in the middle of the day and a salad in the evening, but just ordinary food, but it certainly wasn't very good. And I can remember on one occasion there were trainee telegraphists down there too and because they were always

14:00 nice and clean, not dirty like us, they used to feel a bit superior. And Mers and I still laugh about this night we went in and we were on, when we went for the meal, it was a hot meal and beans were put out and we had beans just about everyday for a week. And one of these trainee telegs [telegraphist] came back and said, "Beans, beans again, there must be a

14:30 slut in the markets." She'd kind of got mixed up between a glut and a slump, and so to this day if there's a surfeit of anything, Mers and I always say, "There's a slut in the markets." I mean there were funny times, but.

**And were you sharing the stall with Mercia?**

Oh yes.

**You guys were really thick as thieves weren't you? You better tell us then about those early lessons that**

15:00 **at Melbourne when you first met up with your instructors.**

Oh, yes, well we got there and were eventually told which room, which classroom would be ours. And so we were there and after we'd been on parade we were told to go around to this classroom, which we did and got around there. The room was open but there was nobody home,

15:30 so we just waited outside for a while and eventually decided to have a look inside. And all these marvellous cutaway things, parts of engines, all sorts of things. So we decided to go in and have a look and because the girls knew I knew a bit about it, they said, "How about telling us what's what."

16:00 So I said, "Well, this is the cylinder and this is the piston and this is the valve." And sort of went all around the thing. And so after about half an hour, a very irate corporal came around, marched in and he said, "I'm your instructor." And he said, "If you want to know why I'm late, it is because I have been around seeing

16:30 the OC [Officer Commanding] and saying to him I would not take a WAAAF course." He said, "I've been told I have to take a WAAAF course, so now you know where we stand." Good start, you know, so he said, "I'll do exactly the same as I do with the men and find out how much you know before we start." So he picked up his pointer and he said, "You, what's this?" "Cylinder, corporal." "What's this?" "Piston, corporal." "You." And he's there and sort of

17:00 getting a bit more astonished all the time and then of course they ran out of answers, so he said, "I think this is a set up, who's responsible for this." Little hand and he said, "Oh, smartass." Now he was not allowed to swear at us, we weren't allowed to swear at him either, but he said,

17:30 "I suppose your boyfriend's got a motorbike, has he?" "I haven't got a boyfriend." And he said, "Well, how do you know all this?" I said, "Woman's intuition corporal." Well, that was where we started. So he went on and taught us all about Otto cycle [engine] and you know timing and this that and the other.

18:00 And, for a week and we used to have lessons all the week and then an exam on Saturday morning. So, Saturday morning we had an exam and then we lined up on Monday morning to get the results. He was slightly mollified when he found that his detested WAAAFs had topped the lot of them. And were not only,

18:30 there were a dozen classes starting that week you know and all the rest of them were male classes. So he was a bit surprised.

**So you'd actually beaten a lot of the men.**

So, then we moved onto another instructor and

19:00 did the Gypsy engine, which was the one in the Tiger Moth [training aircraft] and those type of aircraft and dismantled it and put it together and did various things to it. And learnt all the parts and how it worked and where the oil went and on and but for that,

19:30 the first week, six of us passed and the others didn't. So they got held back and they went in with other people to make up the number and they had to repeat the class. And because there were only six of us, we ended up getting combined with a male class, and we had very good instructor and he was very friendly and he had no objection to the girls apparently.

20:00 And so at the end of that week, we had another exam and if you passed, you went on, if you got more than, if you got less than 70 percent but more than 60, you could have an oral and as they say, talk your way through it, if you could. Because some people found it was hard to write and express it all, whereas sometimes you could talk your way through it so. And

20:30 so of the six who passed that first week, five of us went right through to the end and the one who didn't only didn't because she got scarlet fever and had to go into hospital for a while. But each week we dropped off some of the men who'd fail and they'd drop back and we'd go on and so it was sort of – anyhow, I went through and after

21:00 the first week we did things like single row radial motors and twin row and inline motors and so on. And all ancillary equipment, tanks and super chargers so on. And right through until we finished up at the end of it.

21:30 **So the cycle of the exams that was going on was it was every Saturday, it was a written exam?**

No, well some of the engines took two weeks, the first one the Gypsy was fairly basic so it only took a week but some of them took two weeks and so on. So we went through and

22:00 took three months to get through the whole lot of everything.

**And they were always written exams?**

Yes.

**What sort of study effort were you making?**

Very diligent, in fact believe it or not, my nickname was 'Conshie' because I was not a conscientious objector but because I was so conscientious about my work and about the study. No we used to

22:30 study, well as quite a lot at night and at weekends and church parade was compulsory. And Mercia had started off, she was a Catholic, not a very good one, but a couple of times she went to a Catholic church parade. I used to just go to the Protestant,

23:00 it was easier than objecting and but, there were quite a lot of us and Melbourne was held in a theatre. And I used to get up the back with my books and study and instead of taking part in what was going on and all the hooting and hollering and praying, and so. But then

23:30 someone got onto us and that was stopped from that so what we used to do was go over to the latrines and sit there and study instead of going to church. Then they got onto that and they used to come and look under the doors, because there was only about this much door, so it got a bit uncomfortable sitting there with your feet up so they weren't in view. But, no because that was Friday afternoon, church parade you see, so couldn't waste that going to church when we had to study for the exam.

24:00 **And in what way would the women help each other with the study?**

No, I think we mostly just did it on our own, occasionally if you had to repeat something by rote like you, with some of the engines, you used to have to trace the path of the oil from the time it, in the tank until it got returned to the tank, mentioning every bit and bearing that it

24:30 went past. And if you had to do that and you wanted someone to hear you through that you'd might get someone to do that, but mostly we just studied on our own.

**What sort of social life did you have with each other during that time in Melbourne?**

Oh well, there was a picture show on one night a week and

25:00 occasionally we'd get the bus into Melbourne city and go and have a meal or something as that sort. And while I was there I did, well it was while we were standing in the room, outside the room waiting to go into this classroom on the first morning. But a squad was getting marched past and they

25:30 were doing an NCO's [Non Commissioned Officer] course and it was one of my friend's that I'd met through the motorcycling and he called out to me. And then he found out where I was and he used to go ice skating, so I had done a bit of ice skating here, and so occasionally we used to go ice skating together. And

26:00 a couple of times we went out to St Kilda where there was Luna Park [fun park] I think it was, it wasn't called Luna Park, it was the same as Luna Park out there, got the tram out there and so, but nothing very exciting.

**What about just in the barracks in the evening, any cards or?**

26:30 No, we sometimes went up to the canteen and had a cup of coffee and a lump of pastry or something. They used to have big tarts about this big, and but nothing very exciting. I don't remember any dances or anything, not even on New Years Eve there.

27:00 **And you were saying there was a little bit of rivalry between you mechanical woman and the telegraphists and so on.**

Yes, nothing, but we were just different and they thought because, you know, we used to get our overalls a bit dirty and things and they were always so neat and clean, that

27:30 they were a bit superior.

**Now the corporal that you had for your first week of instruction was obviously quite a chauvinistic type of character. Was that typical of the other instructors that you met?**

No, not at all. He was the only one.

**What about the trainees, the male trainees?**

No, they just accepted us,

28:00 we were in the class and they, you know we were all treated much the same and all just did much the same things.

**What about what we would know today as sexual harassment?**

Well, this didn't come into it at all. Or if it did we didn't,

28:30 didn't rate it as such. And I know that much, once I can go forward to when we were on the station, they had a couple of other flight mechanics there but they worked in, what was called inspection bay, where they inspected the component and so forth. And they was certainly working with the men,

29:00 they all sat at benches and things, but the three of us, Mers and the other WAAAF who'd been posted with us from Melbourne to Forest Hill, we were putout in the hanger to work on the actual engines out where, when the engines were assembled. They were sent out to a

29:30 test stand and to run for so many hours to make sure everything was okay. And they would then bring them back into the hanger and test stand was a couple of miles away and there'd be six or eight engines going 24 hours a day. The noise was just, you talk about this noise, it was just this engine noise when we got there we couldn't sleep because of the

30:00 noise. And eventually if it, it only ever stopped once, and it woke us all up because of the sudden silence. But they'd come back from testing and by this time it was winter when we were there and they come in with a sheet of ice and something under them, because of course Wagga it used to get down below freezing. And they all had to be, all their tolerances had to be finely checked, it was called

30:30 final check before they went into store or they went into an aircraft. They'd have to be finally checked and blanking plates put on. But they were all mounted on these big circular stands which you could move around, because they were far too high to reach the top cylinders. And while we were working in that,

31:00 if you wanted a, if the grease on the stand was too stiff and you couldn't turn the engine, you'd get someone to - one of the men to give you a hand to turn it around. Likewise, if they couldn't turn it, they'd say, "Hey, give us a hand." And when you've finished they might give you a pat on the bum [backside] and say, "Oh thanks." Or something but, no one thought anything of it in those days. I mean there was nothing intended by it, they just give you a -

31:30 And so all the time I worked in the hanger, from there I got moved down to Herc [Hercules transport aircraft] assembly, and working with the fellows all the time. And there was never anything, any talk of any sexual harassment or anything of that sort, they were just there, just worked beside each other and that was it.

32:00 **When you graduated from the Melbourne training course, how did you feel?**

Oh very good, yes, sort of something accomplished.

**And you were sort of obviously certain you were going to be interested in this job, if it was the thing for you?**

Yes. Would have liked to have been sent to a flying school or somewhere instead of an aircraft depot, but.

**Can you explain the difference to us,**

32:30 **what you mean by that?**

Well, at some. Pardon me, at the stations where they were flying like, flying training or navigation training you know where the aircraft were flying in and out all the time, whereas we only ever saw engines.

33:00 There was a bit of flying there but only when they were testing aircraft that had been fitted with a new engine or something. It wasn't an operational flying school, and so we didn't get to work on aircraft that were actually flying and I suppose we all hoped that we would. Some of the others got posted off to where they were working

33:30 on the aircraft that were actually flying. Like the aircraft would fly and come in and have to be serviced, before it flew again, but.

**Why were you more interested in that?**

Oh just because of, I suppose it seemed a more interesting and typical sort of thing, instead of just getting engines and engine parts.

34:00 **Were any of the women posted to those flying?**

Oh yes.

**So you just had an unlucky draw there?**

Oh well it was just, like everything else it was just the luck of the draw. In a lot of cases with the services, they wanted someone there, they wanted some flight mechanics there and at that stage they were training more flight engineers. And

34:30 I know a couple of the fellows who are in this final check part, but when we went out there, they got selected to go away and train as flight engineers and these were engineers that actually flew on the aircraft with them. And so I suppose it released them to go and do that. But I just

35:00 didn't seem all that interesting.

**Do you know out of all the people you graduated from training school with, do you know roughly where you finished in the course?**

I know exactly where I finished.

**Can you tell us?**

At the top of couple of hundred men.

**You came first in the course?**

And Mercia came second. And she, she wouldn't have known a bath plug from a spark plug when she

35:30 started. But she's a couple of years younger than me and also she hadn't long left school. She went on and did the leaving certificate and things, so she was attune to studying and so on, so.

**Was any comment made about how well you'd done?**

Yes, quite a bit.

**What sort of comments?**

36:00 Well, oddly enough, most of the men came up and congratulated us and said that they didn't think that any women would ever beat them and so forth. And some of them of course, had been motor mechanics and various other things. One fellow you know sort of said, "You know, I reckoned I knew all about it, and I reckoned I was going to do pretty well." So, and

36:30 actually after the results were given I was asked to go down and report to the OC of engines, and which I did. And he congratulated me and then he said, "Would you, by any chance be interested in staying

37:00 here, as an instructor for WAAAF courses?" And I said "No way." He said, "You realise I could make an order for you?" And I said, "Well, to start with, you know with the ACW [Aircraftwoman] ," and I said, "I know that when we came in, we were told that there was no promotion in the mustering that we went in. So you couldn't even aspire to be a corporal

37:30 or anything of the sort." And he said "Well, we've talked it over and we could give you temporary rank, put you through another course, through a fitters course, and give you a temporary rank, and do it." He said, "But only," he said, "I'll only do that," he was an English RAF [Royal Air Force] officer who was out here assisting with the training. And I said, "No, I would much prefer to get out

38:00 and work on the engines and things." So he accepted that. But it was rather unusual.

**Why do you think you did so well?**

Well, probably I started off with a bit of an advantage and then worked very hard at it.

**This must have been quite an eye opener for the air force**

38:30 **you know, that they begrudgingly accepted women in the first place and here they were doing so well?**

Oh well, it was the same with a lot of things they found that the women, given the opportunity could do these things.

**Do you think the air force was prepared properly for women to enter those technical trades?**

Well,

39:00 I think the air force was, I think, see at first it was the politicians, they didn't want to have the women in the services at all except in the nursing service. And then of course they realised that they'd sent so many of the men overseas, look at all our

39:30 fellows who were at the middle east fighting, for the British more than anything. Look at all the air force who were over there in England right from the start they were sending them over. And it wasn't until they realised the shortage of manpower, I think that they accepted that women could go in and

40:00 eventually there were about sixty-eight thousand women in the services here apart from the nursing services. Twenty-eight thousand of those were WAAAF, it was the biggest of the women's services, and the first. But I think probably some of the old fellows who were hangovers from the

40:30 First World War who were still in the senior positions in the services, probably thought that a woman's place was in the home and the kitchen and rearing and so on. But fortunately some of them were a bit more progressive and agreed to the women and then I think they were a big surprised when they found that so many of

41:00 the women could do as well as the men in some things. And well, look at the women in the army who were the anti aircraft gunners and all those things that you normally wouldn't have thought a woman was at all suitable. But no I think that, I mean I've got nothing

41:30 against the women who just wanted to stay home and rear kids and so forth. But if you didn't, why shouldn't you show what you're able to do and what you want to do.

# Tape 6

00:55 **Just before we move onto Forrest Hill,**

01:00 **you were talking about the reaction to topping the class so to speak, in the course. And there was obviously a positive reaction to that, were you aware of any negative reaction to that in any quarters, was anyone feeling uncomfortable about that?**

No. There was just one section of that whole course that I didn't top, I came second

01:30 in that and the young fellow who did, he came over and said to me, "I was just determined to beat you once, and if only once." And that was in the middle of, well about two thirds of they way through I suppose, but he wasn't nasty about it or anything. And when the weekly results would be given out, one of the chaps used to say,

02:00 "Alright, tell us who came second." So, no they just, they accepted it and I mean I didn't make anything of it. I didn't go around sort of 'I am-ing' or anything. But, no.

**Did you feel quietly good about the fact that you were maybe teaching some of these guys a bit of a lesson that they weren't necessarily naturally superior in these things?**

02:30 I don't know. I just did it and that was it, and so.

**How much of your success do you put down to natural, a natural flair, a natural talent for that line of work and how much do you put down to hard work?**

Well,

03:00 I think it was a combination of things. I always been a good student at school and I had a good memory. Doesn't always go together but I had a good memory and I was just so very interested in what I was doing and I'd been used to

03:30 applying myself one hundred percent to anything I did and I just kept it up.

**So you found you had a real natural interest and you were really quite fascinated by the world of mechanics?**

Yes.

**Did you feel at that stage that that was what did you want to do, how far did you want to go in that world of**

04:00 **you know, going further into the intricate details of mechanics?**

Well, I'd have like to have been able to continue it further, but of course, I didn't have the opportunity. And because see when I left school and was old enough to go to tech [technical college] ,

04:30 I'd enquired at Sydney Tech about doing a motor mechanics' course, and there was no opening, no way. And, would you believe, one of the reasons was they didn't have female toilets in that section. I mean this is the attitude back in the 1930s, that he's were he's and she's were she's and that was it.

05:00 So, there was that, I suppose bit of an inkling that I could do something in that line but. And of course, with the, once the men came out of the air force, who'd done these sort of, they could go on, and get their licensed aircraft engineers

05:30 certificates and things to go and work in civil aviation. But there was no way that, at that stage there were any openings for women to do that.

**Are you aware that if a male had topped the course, the way you had that perhaps he would have been given a different opportunity**

06:00 **at that stage than you were offered?**

No, I don't think so, because they had their set structure for the classes for the men and undoubtedly each time up until then come man had topped the whole lot. I don't think anything was ever done about it. I mean they just went on it

06:30 was, just a class and you, if you got your place in it and that was it.

**You obviously had a real passion for what you were doing at that stage, do you think any of the other girls were really sharing the passion at that level, or for them were they just sort of doing what they had to do?**

No, I think Mercia had been, or was sort of very successful in what she had done and

07:00 had been dux [top student] of the school and that sort of thing and she wanted to keep up, but the others. I suppose wanted to do well but they were more interested in passing than sort of excelling, whereas even in school, I just didn't want to pass anything I wanted to do well.

07:30 **Alright, well lets talk about what happened next. Just if you could just pick up the story where you were told you were going to Forest Hill and how you felt about it and how you got here and what happened?**

Well, I remember we were posted the day before pay day, which meant that we were all broke, we were given our rail warrants and

08:00 driven to the railway station. And we had to get the train to Wagga and when we got there we had been told, you know, that we'd be met there and when we got there, there was no tender there to meet us. So we went and saw the RTO [Radio/Telephone Operator] who rang the station who rustled up a driver to come and get us. But we certainly weren't expected at the station, and it was

08:30 oh, quite late at night.

**Was it just the three of you travelling?**

Three of us, yes. And, oh and one male. And, one of the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] , and so we got there and got out the duty corporal to come and then it meant going,

09:00 she found an empty room, in a hut, for the two of us. And in the next room there was a spare bed, so Leila got put into there but it was a matter then of going to barracks and getting some straw and some things and settling in for the night. And we said, "Well look, we haven't had anything to eat." "Oh, the mess is closed." You know, so breakfast will be at seven in the morning.

09:30 **Not a very glamorous welcome.**

No, no, but we weren't sort of put out. And so then in the morning we got up and went to orderly room and got ourselves on strength as they said, you know and then got directed across to the hanger where we were, had to report to the OC.

10:00 And so he said, "Do you like working with micronometers and things?" And I said, "Not particularly." And he said the same to the other two and he said, "Well, that's what you're going to be doing." So, we got put down in this inspection bay, but we're, I was there and trays of these components came past and

you had go and no go

10:30 gauges and micronometers and things. And you measured up a part with a tray of things that would say what the tolerances were and if it were repairable, you put a daub of it, if it was serviceable you could put it into the one thing. If it was repairable, you put a daub of boot paint on it, if it was US [unserviceable] , put a daub of red paint on it.

11:00 **So you were telling us about the inspection bay.**

Yes, after we'd been there a few weeks, there were two other girl flight mechanics who had been in the first course. They were working in there but they were quite happy doing that and they'd been there, I suppose only a month because it was only a month since they'd finished their course. So then they came down one day,

11:30 corporal came in and said, "I want you three to come with me, you're going out to work in the hanger." So, and that was when we to this final check that I was telling you about. And, there were three, the RAAF chaps, there and they put one of us with each of these fellows, one of whom I'd sort of known from

12:00 my motorcycling days, he was a friend of this Marg Golder I mentioned from the despatch riders. And he just said, "I'll have this one." And so, but they had to more or less supervise the work that we were doing and anything that we did they'd have to check because we couldn't sign for it. They'd have to sign because you had to sign

12:30 for everything you did, so that you are responsible for whatever had passed through your hands.

**Is that because of your level of experience?**

Yes, yes.

**Nothing to do with the fact that you were a woman?**

Oh no, if they'd had men flight mechanics there, these were engine fitters you see, so, and so.

**Just before we go further, my coughing interrupted you just giving us the**

13:00 **details of putting the marks, the different marks on the different pieces, could you just go over that again, because I don't think we got the whole story?**

Yeah, well as I saying, these trays of components, we were, I was only working on small components there. Like there might be gudgeon pins or, you know, piston rings or something of the sort, and if they were serviceable,

13:30 they went into one bin. If they were repairable, you put a daub of blue paint on them and they went away to be repaired. They might have nicks or bumps on them that had to be smoothed off. If they were not repairable, they were US [unserviceable] , you put the red paint on them and they were discarded and so. I suppose in a way it was responsible work,

14:00 because you had to be sure if something was which category it went into. But it was a bit tedious sitting there with these gauges and micronometers and things. And all day, tray of bits going past, but so, I was quite pleased when we got moved out to the real work. So,

14:30 and this involved engines that had been reassembled and gone out and been tested and come back to be prepared, either to go into aircraft or into the store. And all the tolerances of all the parts had to be rechecked and just to make sure that everything hadn't shifted or loosened

15:00 during the testing. And any of the apertures had to be, had blanking plates put on them, having internally inhibited. And then when all that was completed they were washed down with white spirit and shoved out and someone took them away to go to the store or wherever.

**And what were, what type of engines were they?**

15:30 At that stage we were working on Wright Cyclones [engine] , some of them were single row and some of them were twin row. And the twin row, quite hefty and heavy but much the same things were done to them.

**Was the, was that side of the work, the some of the weights involved and some of the hard**

16:00 **work, how did you cope with that side of it?**

Well they were all fitted to these big bolted to these big stands, which revolved. The twin row one were fairly heavy to move because you had to move them around to work on these couple of cylinders and move them around to work on the others. And that was when sometimes we used to have to get someone to give you a hand to turn the motors, turn them around on the stand likewise,

16:30 the men would get us to help them do that. And so although heavy, there was no actual lifting or anything with it, but you know needed a good hefty pull.

**How long would it typically take to prepare those engines?**

I'd forgotten just exactly the time we spent on each one.

17:00 But you'd, as soon as you'd finished one, you'd go over and wheel another one over and get another one because they were on these stands that were on wheels. That's what I say, they had these big drip trays underneath to catch the oil and the dew which turned into ice in the winter. And sometimes they come in with a sheet of ice in the drip tray. And things, but

17:30 I really can't recall each one took.

**So in a typical day, you'd be getting through quite a though?**

Yes.

**And was there a certain period of time where you had to have everything double checked by your partner, did you get to a point where that no longer had to be procedure?**

Oh well, that was standard procedure, because we were still flight mechanics.

18:00 But the usual thing was you'd do the work and they'd just give it a, because a lot of them was wiring locking and things like that which were visible, and after we had a bit of experience, they'd sign it off if we had done it and so.

**So it became a fairly**

18:30 **straight forward rubber stamping exercise?**

Yes.

**And how long were you involved in that work?**

Oh, I was involved for, I suppose, about six months or more. Mercia found that, her hands, she was allergic to this white spirit

19:00 and all the rest of it and she'd suffered dreadfully with her hands. One day they were putting a call over the loud speakers, any fitter who could type, could they report to orderly room. Put this over several times and there was no response. So she said, "I wonder if they want, would take a flight mechanic?" So she went up and reported to

19:30 orderly room and when they found out she was a competent typist, they were rewriting the instruction manuals for the overhaul. That was why they wanted somebody with the technical knowledge and admitted they hadn't thought of a flight mechanic of course. So she was transferred to orderly room and although she has enjoyed doing the course, she wasn't really enjoying working with the hard wire, the nuts and bolts part of it.

20:00 So, and she would come down in the winter and say, "I'm sitting up there with a radiator at my feet, you know typing and so forth." And I'd say, "Oh well, you do that." But just after that we were transferred down to Hercules, Herc bay, as

20:30 they call it, Hercules Bay, that's the photo I've got there of the workshop and this was where they were assembling these Bristol Hercs motor for the Beaufighters. And of course we had quite a lot of Beaufighters at that stage. And so, Leila was put to work on the rear section and I was put to work on the front section.

21:00 And your friend here will be able to vouch for the fact that there's a great radial motors and the front section has got the timing for the sleeves. Do you know about the sleeve valve engine?

**Not a hell of a lot but I'd be happy for you to explain it to me.**

Well, instead of having a piston coming up and valves at the tip, it's got sleeves that move up and down and which opens the ports and that's how the compression

21:30 the mixture comes in and gets blown out and things. And all this timing is done by a whole lot of, I guess you call them cogs or gears, gears not cogs and they all had to be put, fixed in their proper sequence and so forth. And then when all that was done,

22:00 a big aluminium cover went over the whole lot and this sat on thirty-two studs which surrounded the whole thing which meant that you had to get it evenly on that. This is after it had all been checked and all these gears had to be wire locked and so forth so that nothing could come loose. So, and then when this aluminium cover went on

22:30 the method of getting down on these thirty-two studs evenly was to get a hide faced hammer and sort of gently tap it around about. And couple of Beaufighter pilots came through one day to have a look at what was going on and one of them said, "What's the WAAAF doing over there?" And the sergeant said, "Oh she's troppo [mentally affected by war experience] , we let her get loose with the hammer now and again to belt into it." And then when that was done,

23:00 all those thirty-two studs had to be locked on too and doesn't sound much but it was quite involved.

**It sounds very pain staking.**

Quite involved so.

**So you mentioned that there'd be two of you working on it or would there be more than two of you working at once on the engine?**

Oh no, well the fellow I worked with would be doing one part of it while I was doing

23:30 the other and he would just, he'd still have to sign off what I had done, and so.

**Did you already have a good knowledge of these engines?**

Not, hadn't seen those type of engines before. I'd only worked on the ordinary piston engine ones.

**So how did you respond to the new task you had, were you happy with the change?**

Yes, something new to learn.

24:00 **Can you give us an impression of what people thought of the Beaufighters at that stage?**

Well, I think on that station, everyone was very enthusiastic, because that's where thirty squadron had operated from, and they'd left from there to go up to New Guinea under

24:30 Black Jack Walker. He was the CO and he was a bit of a local hero down around Wagga and he had lived down there with his wife, with his then wife. And he was probably a bit of a glamour boy, he was an excellent pilot, you know one of the top notch pilots. And

25:00 he stayed on in aviation after the war and was test pilot for De Havillands [aircraft] and so on, but yes they and of course, having had the Beaufighters there for so long. They were all very enthusiastic about the Beaufighters compared with the Beauforts [bomber] which were just bits of biscuit bombers more or less. They weren't, you know, fighter aircraft

25:30 and so, no, but it was while I was working in the other section that they decided that to put a lot of these Beauforts. I'm going back to Beauforts now, to convert them for extra work and at that stage we were put onto ten

26:00 hour shifts, six hours a week, to get through the number of engines and the modifications to the airframes that they needed. So that was a bit tiring and but, there again, it all just come out and you do it.

**And, the Beaufighters**

26:30 **were renowned as being very quiet weren't they?**

Yes.

**What did the Japanese think of them?**

Well they were the ones who called them the "whispering death" because they didn't hear them coming, it was because of these sleeve valve engines, that they were so quiet. They didn't 'pop, pop, pop' like the valves did. And, that's very, simplistic but you know.

**I understand what you're saying.**

Yeah, and

27:00 so, no I never did get a flight in a Beaufighter, but I had a flight in a Beaufort. But when they went up for test flights, sometimes if you'd worked on them then they'd let you, but the pilot said, "How do you know you worked on the engine that's in this one." I said,

27:30 "Well I've worked on so many, it must." But I had no way of knowing of course, but he took me up anyhow. They were allowed to do this, just.

**Did you have a bit of a hankering to be a pilot yourself at this stage in your dreams, perhaps?**

Well not really but I was fast becoming

28:00 as hooked on aeroplanes as I was on the bikes, so. And of course I hadn't been on a station very long when I got permission to take my bike down.

**Tell us about that.**

Well it was, there was my bike sitting at home and me down there. There was no way I could have had it on the training station or anything so I decided to ask the

28:30 WAAAF officer, so I asked for a parade to her and went in, chucked her my best salute, and things. And told her what I wanted and she said, "Well, she'd never had a request like this before, she would have to

talk to the CO about it." So, I said, "Oh well, he'll say no." But anyhow, I duly got summoned to her and she told

29:00 me that, "Yes, the CO had approved, provided a whole list of things that I had signed to keep it, which they thought was going to stop me. Because they did have garages there because see some of the men had cars and bikes and things, and that I did not use service fuel in it, which I wouldn't have. That I obeyed the speed limit while I was on the station.

29:30 And oh, I don't know a whole heap of things but I agreed to the whole lot of them, so when I came home on leave I didn't have enough petrol to ride it down there. So I took it down to Central Station and put it on the train and when it got there I went and got a gallon of petrol. I had my petrol coupon, I went and got it and picked it up and took

30:00 it to the station and one of the girls who'd been on rookies with us, was going out with a sergeant from Wagga. She got posted to Wagga straight away and when we went off on course and this fellow had a car and a garage and so he let me put my little motorbike in his garage so I was able to. And even after he got posted I just kept the garage,

30:30 and so I had somewhere to keep it and it made all the difference because at weekends and things I could get off and go places that other people couldn't get to.

**And I believe that you came across a fairly helpful chap at**

31:00 **a garage too who was fairly generous with fuel, is that right?**

Oh yes, yes, halfway service station which was halfway between the camp and Wagga township, when I called in there first to get petrol, he was most astonished to see a girl. And so

31:30 his son was in the air force and this fellow was a bit elderly but he was keeping things going while his son was away. So he told me that they were allowed so much for spillage each month, so thereafter I became his spillage and he said, "Anytime I went there with a one gallon ticket, he'd give me two gallons for it," which was

32:00 very good. And so someone was always running out of petrol, so I'd go back and drain a gallon out and when they wanted petrol, for a petrol ticket and a the price of a gallon I'd sell them a gallon of petrol which meant I could go and get another two gallons. So this kept me going very nicely.

**And I also believe that you found a**

32:30 **travelling buddy, someone to ride with, who also had a bike?**

Yes, one of the RAAF fellows had a bike and we used to do a bit of tracking around together. And, so sometimes I had to share some petrol with him, but I never did

33:00 use any service petrol, which of course was stained. And you know anyone that was picked up with it was into the brig [lockup] but for a WAAAF it would have been immediate discharge because they couldn't put you in clink. [jail] So there was never any fear of me doing that, but occasionally if I was running short I might mix a bit of white spirit with it or something like that. And that stretched it a bit

33:30 but it didn't go very fast, or didn't add to the power at all, because the petrol we were getting in was pool petrol which wasn't very good at all. It was not very high octane.

**How was the fuel stained?**

Oh it had a purple dye in it. And, I only know that from seeing the

34:00 aircraft being refuelled with it. But some of the fellows I know did take the risk but, but every now and again they'd put on a garage inspection. They'd just call this while you were on parade, you'd have to fall out and give the SPs [Security Police] your garage key and they could go down and check it for anything that was in there. And they always took some of the testing stuff down and

34:30 tested the petrol and I know that some of the chaps did get picked up with it in their bikes or their cars. You know they took the risk and got caught and paid the penalty. But, there again, I was never even tempted.

**And what about the challenge**

35:00 **of riding your bike in your uniform?**

Oh well yes, after I got the bike there, I then went and saw the WAAAF officer again and explained the difficulty and she said, "Well, having let you get the bike here, we have, you know, have to do something about it." So she just gave me a permanent chit to leave the station out of uniform, and which meant

35:30 that I could wear slacks or anything too, in the summer of course. I shudder now when I think of it now, how I used to ride in shorts and things and I wouldn't like to see anyone riding in shorts these days, but.

**So that overcame the problem of the skirts?**

Yes so.

**So, can you give us a bit of an impression of what the camp was like at Forrest Hill?**

36:00 Well, we were very pleased when we saw our quarters, because it was a permanent RAAF station and some of them, you know, only had Nissen huts and things in but we, well particularly the WAAAF quarters were very good. We had huts with rooms divided off into two to a room and I think that,

36:30 there were about fourteen rooms, about seven each side and then at the end one end, in an enclosure there were, when they say enclosure, part and there were three showers there. Once again no doors or anything on the showers and on the other side of the hall, there was a hall running right through it and then on the other side of the hall, the

37:00 there were two toilets and three hand basins and with hot and cold water. And so it was, we thought this was very good. Once again we just had the ordinary stretcher type bed and hessian filled with straw , but you got used to that after a while and so.

37:30 **And how was the mess?**

It was quite good. Sometimes a bit monotonous, depending on what rations were allocated there. But I think any of the permanent stations were, where they had permanent staff were better and at the, when you're a trainee, they

38:00 sort of fed you with anything. But they're, the fact that the cooks were there and you knew them and they became friends and things they always did their best with whatever was available and the meals were acceptable and certainly better than we had up until that time. And

38:30 sometimes the RAAF and WAAAF would go off early in the morning because there were lots of mushrooms there. And they'd bring back the mushrooms and hand them in the kitchen and we'd get mushrooms and things. And also this, man who let me share his garage, he

39:00 and a couple of his friends used to go out shooting rabbits. In fact they had a couple of ferrets and they used take these out and put them in the, and chase the rabbits out and if they shot enough of them they would take those back to the mess, this was the days before myxomatosis [rabbit killing virus] and things. And they'd skin them and they used to sell the skins, and

39:30 then the cooks could do up very nice rabbit stew and things. Sometimes they'd give them to the WAAAF mess, well quite often they would because there weren't as many WAAAF there. And they could distribute them better because there were two hundred WAAAF and two thousand men on the station. And so there'd be enough to go around for the WAAAF but not enough for the men.

40:00 So there were those sort of extra things but no the mess was pretty good.

**So the quarters and the mess were segregated?**

Yes, and they had a theatre there and they used to show films, couple of times a week and

40:30 I think it only cost six pence to get in, for other ranks, sergeants and above paid more. I think they paid a shilling.

**Was that segregated?**

Oh no, no, you go along there and they had a recreation hut and they used

41:00 to have a dance there quite often. They had a very good orchestra there and they used to play for the dances and the canteen was very good. They had hairdressers and tailoresses so that you could get things altered and so, on the whole it was, it was very

41:30 good. And they had gas coppers so that you could boil up your clothes and things and. No, it was quite good.

# Tape 7

00:33 **While you were busy fixing engines and all this mechanical work, how much did you know about what was going on in the war?**

Well, probably as much as anyone knew and at that stage. I must confess that the powers that be didn't let everyone know just how bad things were. And for instance,

01:00 we didn't know until after the war, just how bad the bombing of Darwin had been because that news was suppressed. And mainly it was if someone had a member of the family that was up in New Guinea or up in the islands or somewhere, who would be able to

01:30 pass on what some first hand news. Because, like all politicians, they weren't very honest as far as disseminating information, particularly if it was going against us. And I can remember in the early days, my father used to say, "If only they would say that the

02:00 Australians or the allies were taking a pasting, they would get a lot more people rushing to enlist to help than all this sort of pretending that things weren't too bad." And but, I suppose on the station, we didn't have that much information about what was going on

02:30 and just, you know, some of the fellows we knew were getting sent away onto active service instead of being down there on the station. We'd realise that there was something going on, but I'm afraid, I really do believe that the Australians were kept in the dark quite a bit. I don't know whether you've heard that from anyone else but.

03:00 **What, at that time what were thoughts and your feelings about the Japanese?**

Well, I think about the only thing we heard about the Japanese, really was the outbreak at Cowra [prison camp escape] and but once we heard that they'd been turned back from up there in New Guinea. I think people started to get a bit more hopeful, but until then

03:30 I think that most people thought by sheer numbers they'd probably overrun our troops and particularly after Singapore fell. I think that was a big blow to everyone's moral. And the fact that so many of our troops were prisoners of war. At first people didn't seem able to believe this, that

04:00 you know whole battalions and things could be captured and taken prisoner.

**When you were working on the engines, did you ever think about who was using them?**

Well, not really, except for the fact that, just inside our hanger was a big showcase and

04:30 enclosed in that were some parts of, shattered parts of an aircraft where someone had fitted a wrong Collet pin or something of that sort, some very minor component which had lead to the crash of that aircraft and the destruction of the whole crew. And it was there to make us realise that even if it was only a nut of a bolt you were dealing with,

05:00 every component was vital and it made you realise that someone was going to fly the aircraft that you were working on and so you'd better do it properly.

**So you took the work seriously obviously?**

Yes.

**Were there, did you,**

05:30 **I'm going to talk a bit about the socialising here, whenever I talk to female personnel of the services. I've got to ask, was there every any cases of pregnancy that you saw?**

In all my time that I was in, there was only one case that I knew and that was a girl at Wagga. She

06:00 was well, we were told that she was pregnant and the last I ever heard of her, she was sent back to Sydney, being escorted by the Salvation Army officer who was on the station. This woman was a very kind person and they used to fall for all these sorts of jobs,

06:30 but, in the air force. Now Clare Stevenson, you've heard of her, she was director or WAAAF, she was a very progressive woman. And she had university degree and before she was seconded to the air force she was an executive to the Berley Corset

07:00 foundation garment company. So she held a pretty high position there and she was a woman ahead of her time. But right from the start she told me, she ended up in Kanandah village along here and towards the end, after she broke her hip, she needed a bit of assistance. And so I was able to help her a bit and so got to know her very well.

07:30 But she'd said that she realised that there would be girls who'd become pregnant but her instructions were, she found out that in the army, if a girl became pregnant she was immediately dishonourably discharged and out. Clare gave instructions that no WAAAF was to be discharged

08:00 until it had been ascertained that she had some support from her family or from somewhere else and that arrangements had been made for her and the baby, before she'd be discharged from the WAAAF. Which, I mean for back in those days was a pretty advanced thinking. And in the history of the WAAAF that Joyce Thompson

08:30 wrote that Clare, not that you can say was anything to do with the officers or anything of the sort, that the lowest incidence of pregnancy in the services was in the air force. So we were talking about this not so long ago, a group of we oldies,

09:00 and one of them said, "Well it was because we were so good." And the other one said, "No we weren't, we were so good and scared." So, but it wasn't as common as the civilian population like to make out. I

mean, some men, particularly civilian

09:30 men believed that the women joined the forces, you know just for a bit of a play around with the men. And the men thought that the girls were there just for their entertainment or whatever, but as I say, we worked with men the whole time in the musterings we were in and on training and things. And I'd say that most of them were,

10:00 could you say well-behaved, and didn't get into those situations. And so, there was only one case that I ever knew of.

**You said the reputation of female personnel was to have a bit of a play around, was there playing around?**

Oh, I guess there was, but if

10:30 I mean there always be playing around, there always has been playing around. But if I suppose the only thing, if you can't be good, be careful was something that amongst the groups that I was with, I mean even the ones that had boyfriends and things. They were mostly just, shall we say platonic.

11:00 **You've just talked about the head of the WAAAF and how progressive she was, what about your immediate officers, what comments would you have about them?**

Oh, they were a mixed lot, some of them, particularly some of the earlier ones who went in, were, more or less

11:30 from a social sort of background, not socialist, but social. You know they'd been involved in charity work and good works and so forth and but, then some of them sort of went in and didn't last very long because they found that even they were subject to very strict discipline and rules and

12:00 so on. But on the whole, only ever came across one I didn't care for and that was when I was at Melbourne and she was known to be a bit snobby and things and crossed swords with her once. But it was an occasion

12:30 when I had been out of the station, with a RAAF fellow and it was very, very hot, down there, and when we came back in. I took my hat off and took my tie off and unfortunately didn't take much notice of

13:00 the time and it was, we used to have bed check at ten o'clock at night and if, on the nights that you weren't on leave, you had to be in bed tucked up by ten o'clock. And anyhow, this WAAAF officer and a corporal came out of the barracks just as I was about to go in, and she said to me, "You know have you been off the station?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "And when did you remove your hat and tie?" and

13:30 I said, "Oh after I came through the gate, you know once I was back inside." Which was quite acceptable, and she shone her torch up and down me and she said, "And what else have you taken off?" Well, I sort of told her that I objected to that sort of thing and she objected to my remarks and she said, "So you will be on a charge in the morning." And I said, "And madam, so will you."

14:00 That was the last I ever heard of it, because, you know, she was out of line to have said something like that and with the inference, you know, because I didn't have a hat and tie on. So, but on the whole they were quite good and particularly the ones when we got the station and as I'd said,

14:30 things were a bit more relaxed when you're on a permanent station than when you're on a training school and you're just a trainee.

**You sound like you were quite capable of standing up for yourself Hazel, do you think that was a blessing or a curse for you in the air force?**

Oh, I think it was mixed, but in cases like that, I just felt that, you know, you shouldn't let them get away with it.

15:00 **What about your NCOs, what were they like, for example at Wagga?**

They were good. Yes, so no problems there, you mean the WAAAF ones, yeah, well the fact that they lived with you and lived in the same hut and so forth.

15:30 Because we had corporals and sergeants in our huts as well as aircraft women and you became friendly with them. I mean if they were in charge of a squad, when you were getting marched somewhere, you took notice of what they said and but when you're a off duty you were off duty and all friends together.

16:00 **I'd like to talk a bit now about engines. You said you were working on the Hercules engine, mainly there at Wagga, why did you have these engines, where did they come from and where were they going?**

Well, they were engines that were out of time. All engines, as you know have

16:30 a limited life time and after a certain number of hours, they have to be overhauled, the degree of overhaul depends on the number of hours that they have been in operation. They're some checks that

have to be done at forty hours, which are usually done just on the station and then, at varying times, until they come up for a 240 hourly, which is after two hundred and forty of hours service.

17:00 They have to be completely stripped down so when they'd operated for the number of times, it got up to the limit, they'd be taken out of the aircraft frame and brought to an aircraft depot. And when they were overhauled and tested they went back into aircraft

17:30 and back into service again.

**Can you describe the sort of overhaul process you were performing on a Hercules engine?**

Oh well I was only part of it, see, there were, when they came in, they had sections which did nothing except strip the aircraft down, and clean all the components and things. Then they started the journey back through inspection bay and

18:00 then to assembly and then some of it would be, sort of right from the start. Well the ones I worked, the engines I worked on were partly assembled, they'd had the rear section done and they were just waiting for the front section with the timing of the sleeve valves. And then when I'd finished

18:30 my part, which was about the last part of it, they'd then have to go out to test stand and have an airscrew fitted. And then be run for the required number of hours and then come back and be checked and then go into an aircraft, or go into store ready to go back into an aircraft.

**How long might that process take from the time an engine**

19:00 **turned up at the depot?**

Well, it would depend on how many engines were going through at the time and sometimes we'd have a backlog and they'd be quite a while waiting to move on to the next stage. Other times they'd come, sort of straight through and I really couldn't tell just how long but it'd be quite a number of hours, because even stripping down.

19:30 As you can imagine, taking every component out of an engine, or practically every one, would take some time and then the process of, they'd have to go through to once again take on, lot of hours.

**What sort of variation did you see in the condition of engines?**

Well,

20:00 by the time they, I didn't see them in their worn condition, by the time I was working on them was when they'd been partly reassembled. Which meant that practically, their parts would be considered practically new condition again.

**Do you think that the jobs that you**

20:30 **WAAAFs were given to do there were given to you because of your gender, what I mean by that, were you given certain jobs because they were giving other jobs that they thought only a man could do?**

No, we just, as I say we worked alongside them and did the same things as men were doing. I mean there were men flight mechanics doing just the same work as I was doing so that was.

21:00 **Hazel, tell us about how you heard about and then celebrated the end of the war?**

Well, I'd had a very severe bout of tonsilitis not long before that and I was told to go into,

21:30 be admitted to one RAAF hospital to have my tonsils removed on August the 15th, 1945. And so I had to go into hospital a couple of days before and I went out there. And the doctor came and on the 14th and

22:00 examined my throat and said, "Your throat is still too much inflamed. So go back to the station and come and see me in three weeks time. So, they took me back to the station and I was there and the next morning we were there and I was

22:30 about, just in my working clothes. Because I was about to go up and get myself back on strength and go and start work in the hanger when the word came through that the war was over. You know and it just, and so they broadcast this announcement that there would be tenders [transport] the station, if we could be on the tenders, there was a train due fairly soon, that they would issue us, on the tender, they would issue us with

23:00 leave pass and rail warrants and anyone who could make it. Yeah, so here was me still in my working gear so I quickly sort of started to peel off and get into uniform and realised I was running out of time. And they're singing out, "The tenders are coming down the road." So I put my shoes on, my skirt and jacket and didn't worry about tie, collar and tie or anything

23:30 and shoved some things in the kit bag and I rushed out and at the WAAAF gate the tender was there and they were saying, "Come on, come on." And so flung the kit and two of the fellows lifted that and pulled me on, there was a WAAAF officer there sitting in the back who was making out these. And she

looked me up and down and she said, “I don’t think you are properly dressed.” And I said, “No, but I will be in a moment.” So proceeded to put the collar and tie on

24:00 and even dared to put my stocking on with a few of them standing around there. And, so right we, got managed to get the train and of course there was, you can imagine the train trip, it was a bit noisy and so forth. I had no time to let my mother know that I was coming home so I bowled in and of course they had the, the big parade,

24:30 next day in town. I always regret that I didn’t go into the city for that, but. My mother wanted me to stay home, she thought that there would be too much wild going on in the city. She was right, and

25:00 I was very sorry that I wasn’t part of it. So you know and so there wasn’t all that much celebration for me. But I was a very exciting time and we just, there’d been a couple of false alarms before that, you know, when they thought that it was

25:30 going to be announced that the war was over and so on. But, so it was a bit hard to believe that it was over. But that was the August, I think we were only given about four days leave and had to go back again and I was there until the end of the year. By that time the,

26:00 about a month or so before, the end of the war, the engines had stopped coming through, and so things were pretty slack in the hanger. And I’d been transferred over to headquarters to work in the chief officer’s, technical officers officer and

26:30 well, it was a, either that or the mess, so. So I thought I’d rather go there. See when I went in, my previous occupation was motorcycle rider, well the only times I admitted to being a typist or anything was when I was in pool and if you were in pool, you got allocated to any job that was around the place. And if I looked like

27:00 going to the mess I’d suddenly remember I was a typist and get myself a shiny job somewhere. And so I ended up there and there were still aircraft coming back from the islands and being dispersed around the place. And so all these, the chief technical officers office was handling all this so they needed

27:30 someone and the clerk had been posted away, for discharge probably and I didn’t apply for early discharge so I ended up there until December and my discharge was effective in January. So, but things had

28:00 changed and everything was much more relaxed on the station, you know once the war had finished and we didn’t have to work so hard and so.

**What did you know about the atom bomb attacks?**

Well, that was one thing that we were told about on the station,

28:30 I think they made an announcement on parade one day that the Americans had dropped the atom bomb and at first it sounded as though half of Japan had been annihilated. And then when we heard the second one had been dropped, we thought well, thought it was all done with the first one. And it was

29:00 generally thought then that that was the end of the war. And, of course it was only a short time later that the Japs had to surrender.

**So when you were told that an atom bomb had been dropped, what did that mean to you, the phrase had never been heard before?**

No it hadn’t, but when they told us about the destruction and the extent of

29:30 the damage, and I think the main line that was pushed was the fact that, even though they’d killed those hundreds of thousands of Japanese or whatever it was, that actually it was a means of saving so many of the allied forces. That if it hadn’t been for the atom bombs that the casualties in the allied forces and

30:00 so, I think they were trying to justify it and balance it up that way. And that was what we were told and but, I know that you know. We’d heard about the atom bombs being built and experimented with and so forth, but I think everyone felt that they were far too dangerous and that they that they would never be used, but of course,

30:30 they were.

**In hindsight what do you think of that equation that dropping the bomb saved allied soldiers?**

Well, I think as far as the Pacific was concerned, because at that stage, of course they’d, the European war was over and

31:00 at, I was always glad that it was the Americans who’d done it and not us really. And I still think that it probably was justified in the long run and well it was like the blanket bombing in Europe, and that.

31:30 It was a dreadful thing too but, it was a means unto the end and I just feel that well the war had to be finished somehow or other. I was just glad that it was our side that finished it and not the others.

32:00 **With the war over and you, sort of more or less killing time, in the services until the end of that year. What were your thoughts about where you were going to go and what ambitions you had?**

Well it, Mers and I had talked, she'd been posted to Richmond and then because she had admitted to being a top, she ended up down in records, handling discharges and things.

32:30 But we'd talked about travelling, probably going to Queensland somewhere, when we got out of the air force, and working and maybe you know doing a bit of travelling around. And blow me tight if I didn't get a letter from her saying, "Geoff had been down to Melbourne and they were going to get married." And I thought, "Oh blow her, leaving me

33:00 in the lurch." So I thought, "Oh well." It was a condition if you'd been in the services, your previous employer had to offer you a job if there was one there, and things. So when I was home on leave at one stage I went and saw them at Kodak and they said, "Yes, the job would be there." An interesting thing about Kodak, I mean I know it was an American

33:30 company and all the rest of it, but it was the Australian part of it was here. They used to send me a parcel and things now and again, a few goodies and things. But for all the men who enlisted, they made up their pay for the full time that they were away. I was the only one who joined the women's services and the same was not extended

34:00 to me. I didn't know about it at the time, but I thought, you know this was the attitude then to women and I'm glad things have evened out a bit since then, but no it was because I met up with some, with one of the fellows. And he said, "Oh, how'd you get on with the comforts fund and things for Kodak." "Oh," I said, "I got a couple of parcels from them." And he said, "Yeah, but wasn't it good about the pay." And I said,

34:30 "What about the pay?" And he said "Oh, they made up our pay." Whatever they'd been getting they sort of stashed that away and when they came out of the services they were given that lump sum of the pay, irrespective if they'd been in for twelve months or four years, or something. So,

35:00 things were different for the women in those days.

**Just on that thing, what do you, where you worked in the services sounded like the male and females were incredibly well integrated, and worked well together, what opportunities and what legacy do you think World War II gave working women in Australia?**

Well, I think it opened a lot of opportunities for them

35:30 to prove that they could do more than they'd been assigned before. That they could get out of the kitchen and the child bearing and so forth if they wished, if a lot of women of course were quite happy with their life. And they didn't ever aspire to doing anything other than leaving school, going to work for a while, and getting married, and having a family.

36:00 That was the end of their ambitions but I think that given the opportunity and being able to prove that they were capable of doing things that hadn't been regarded as quite the female role before, meant a lot. And

36:30 sadly, some of the women just went back and reverted to type but others of course, I think it was the start of something for them.

**Now you went back to Kodak and worked as a pick up courier again, what caused you to stop doing that?**

Didn't I tell you before?

**You told us briefly but could you talk us through it again?**

37:00 Well, I went back and was doing the same job and I was coming back one day through the city and pulled up beside a tram at the corner of George and Park Street, which was where I used to turn right to go down to Riley street and man in one of the old

37:30 toast rack trams leant out of the tram and sang out, "Why don't you give a man back his job. You know, the war is over why don't you give a man back his job." So, kind of hurt a bit, because it was my job too, but I went back and resigned and said, "You know I can't take this." And when they got someone to replace me, they did have a few of the men back by then, a couple of them.

38:00 Two of the, one of the girls was still working there and the others had left, you know, because they more or less wanted to. And I then went back to office work for a while.

**Why did that comment hurt you so much?**

Well, I think that was the feeling after the war that some of the men came back and couldn't get their jobs

38:30 back. And I think too that okay people were pleased enough to have us doing it, when they weren't the men around to do it, and it just sort of got under my skin a bit.

**Did you feel**

39:00 **guilty about having that job?**

No. And when they advertised straight away and someone, and they had quite a few applicants who, when they found out the conditions and things, that they said, "No, we wouldn't ride all day in the wet weather in the rain and so forth." And I know at one stage,

39:30 when we were doing it, Parramatta road was flooded out there at Homebush under what we used to call Cocky Arnott's bridge, you know there was a bridge across with the big - and I can remember riding up on the footpath to get around it and things like that. But it just didn't stop us, we kept going and I know that Bennett & Woods, the motor cycle agents were in

40:00 Wentworth avenue and they had several men on, in outfits and things, you know delivering parts and various things around the place. And they went on strike because it was too wet and were surprised to find that the Kodak girls got through. Because, we felt we had to prove ourselves.

**So thought you didn't feel personally guilty you kind of, you sound like you worried what the public perceived?**

40:30 Yes.

**Was it a big blow to you to give up that job?**

Oh yes in a way, and it paid better than office work, that's all but, anyhow.

**So where was the office job you got?**

It was at Glebe quite handy to the home in a

41:00 building place where they did building repairs and so forth. It's just a matter of doing the office work and book keeping and various other things.

# Tape 8

00:40 **Can you talk to me about how it felt making the transition from the regimented life that you'd been living as a WAAAF and then going back to 'civvy [civilian] street'?**

Oh, it was certainly different,

01:00 didn't have anyone telling you where you could go and when and all the rest of it. And I think that probably my mother noticed things more than I did. Whereas before I went into the air force I was used to sort of more or less getting her, not permission, but you know okay, with anything that I was going to do

01:30 and so on. And I found it quite difficult to go back and sometimes I wouldn't just say, "Well, I'm going out." But I wouldn't give her much detail of what I was going to do, because for so long I hadn't had to refer to a mother or anything. She mentioned this quite some years later that I came back sort of so independent of the family and

02:00 well, while I was in the air force my brother had married and moved out of home. And Mum was there with just the two little girls and she, so that way it was quite different. And also not being

02:30 tied down so much to times of getting trains back to the camp and various, those sort of things.

**How do you think your experience with the air force changed you as a person?**

I think it made me a lot more self reliant, I'd never been a very clingy sort of person before but having found out that I could

03:00 do things and do what I wanted to do, but. That was one thing, and also I found that I was probably a lot more tolerant than I had been before. That might sound a contradiction, being independent and tolerant, but being in the air force, you had to mix with so many different types.

03:30 Live in hut with people, whom you may not have had much to do with in civvy life, and yet they were there and just as entitled to be there as you were. And so, and probably I was less judgemental than I had been because I found out

04:00 that people could do what I thought were rather startling things and yet be quite nice. That, I don't like that work, quite acceptable people and but still get along quite well with them.

**What do you think you missed the most from the air force?**

I think it was the constant company,

04:30 and even though it wasn't all that exciting and things, there was something going on the whole time, and but you know, but there was always something to do and people around to do it with. So, I think going home and

05:00 as I mentioned before, Mercia did come home to my place to live when we got out because her parents didn't have any accommodation for her. They'd come to Sydney and were staying with relatives themselves. And so she was there, but by that time she was quite taken up, her time was taken up with Geoff and it took me a while to find someone.

05:30 And do I think that was it.

**Did you keep in close contact with any of the other girls apart from Mercia?**

Yes, with Leila who was on course and then came to Wagga with us and as I say I am still very friendly with her. She lived at Goulburn and I

06:00 used to go down there and stay, and she'd come up here after we were married, you know, she'd come and stay sometimes when she was in Sydney. And she always came up for WAAAF lunches and things, and there are a group of us who were at Wagga there who meet every year for lunch in October. We have an annual lunch and the numbers are getting fewer, because some of

06:30 them are no longer with us and others are getting too frail to get into the city to meet up. And so that's kept up some of them, friends and there's another one. I didn't know her so much on the station but I had met her before I went in. And through the motorcycling group, she wasn't a motorcyclist but,

07:00 and she was going out with one of the fellows who was and a chap I worked with in the hanger. And she and I've become quite close friends now, so we've got a lot in common with mutual friends and so.

**What do you think the worst thing was about your time as a WAAAF if you had to pick something?**

07:30 I can't think of anything that was really, really bad except the cold weather at Wagga, it was just so cold and living in huts, unlined huts, with no heating and

08:00 it was not very pleasant. And another thing that I thought was a big grim was when we were on rookies at Bradfield, as I said it was July when we went in, so it was very cold and quite often, they would turn the hot water off at night.

08:30 And there'd be no hot water for you to have a shower and there'd still be no hot water if you waited till the next morning so having cold showers in July was not a bit of fun. But they were just more or less uncomfortable things, but as for anything being bad or nasty, I can't think of anything.

09:00 **So what would be the best part of the experience for you?**

Oh, well I enjoyed doing the course, I really did. Because learning all that stuff, it appealed to me and then you know, getting to work on the engines and doing work that I liked and sort of it was very

09:30 satisfying and I liked that a lot.

**When you did leave the air force, did you want to continue to do those sorts of things, to have that degree of satisfaction, was that high priority for you?**

Well, I realised that there really wasn't the opportunity to do it, so it was back to the motorcycling and filling my time up with that.

10:00 **What were the obstacles?**

Well, there just weren't the openings for women at all in those days in that line.

**Was that a source of frustration?**

Well, I suppose it was but knowing you couldn't change it, there wasn't much good fretting over it.

**You said earlier that you think things have, perhaps evened up these days, have they evened up**

10:30 **enough do you think, have we made progress?**

Well, I think so, because a few years ago I was taken out to Richmond Station, where 22 Squadron still go back there and for various celebrations and things. And they were restoring an aircraft that they'd found down in Tasmania

11:00 in pretty poor condition and they had the engines there and the officer in charge of that whole project

was a WAAAF officer, a WAAAF engineering officer and I thought that was good. And then, some years ago, they opened the flying musterings for the women and I knew two women that went in as the first

11:30 trainee pilots and that I thought was very progressive. And of course the women going into the airlines as pilots, the first one who went in was Debra Wardly who had a great old fight with Sir Reginald Ansett [airline operator] there are girls flying for Qantas. And they were

12:00 for Ansett but of course Ansett is no longer [defunct] .Things have come about and I think mainly it is because of what happened during the war with various professions and trades being opened to women.

**And would you say because of what happened, during the war, as far as opportunities are concerned,**

12:30 **for women, that that also had reverberations for broader society as far as the status of women is concerned, as far as perhaps launching the women's movement?**

I think so and I think partly, this came about through the universities when women were accepted in courses that had been reserved, more or less for the males before that. And now

13:00 they can enrol in any course that they qualify for and this has to be good, if that's what they want to do. So yes, maybe there were some advantages that came out of the war, much as I'd have preferred not to have a war. And, but you've got to take

13:30 the good that comes out of it I think.

**Were you ever involved in the women's movement as it developed, was that something you took an interest in later?**

Not really because that came after my husband died and I'm afraid that when he died a lot of me died

14:00 with it and it took me a long, long time to get interested in anything. And I was aware of what was going on but I had no wish to get involved or do any pushing or burn my bra or anything of the sort. But no, I think that

14:30 I was glad to see others were doing it and progressing but I felt it was too late for me. Maybe if I had been younger and still fired up.

**Have you, has your passion for aviation remained constant over the years?**

15:00 **And where has that sort of interest taken you?**

Well as far as getting a private pilot's license, but that happened because I was working for Victa. I went there as, after Bill died, he was partner in a motorcycle business. And I tried to keep on with that

15:30 for a while and but eventually realised that it was dragging me down too much. And I although I'd had so much wonderful friendships and things in the motorcycle club I felt that I couldn't face those people again and I certainly couldn't get involved in the activities they way we had together. And so

16:00 when I left there I went to work for Victa who only had the mower factory at that stage. But when I went there I applied for a temporary job but the man I went to see said, after talking to me, well to start with when I walked through to his office, he was in the spares section. And he said to me, "I noticed a few of my workers there,

16:30 greeted you as you came through, they seem to know you." And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, how do you know them?" And I said, "Oh, through motorcycling and so on." And so he interviewed me for this temporary job and then he said. "Look, I would like you to talk to our works manager who is looking for a secretary." And I said, "Well, I've told you I only want a temporary job

17:00 until the school holidays and so forth." And he said, "Well, can I ring you?" So he rang me at home, later and he said, "I've made a tentative appointment with our works manager for you to see him in the morning if you would." So I went and you know how you meet some people and you just sort of click right away. And that's what happened

17:30 with this fellow, and he talked to me about things and about what I'd done and the other chap had told him of course you know that I'd been involved in the motorcycle business. And so we sat there and I still hadn't said that I'd take the job or anything and he pushed back his chair and he said, "Well, I've decided you'll be my secretary." And at that stage, Victa

18:00 had this profit share scheme going where, and new employees, and temporary employees, because they used to put on a lot of casuals during the summer when the mower season was really going. This is when Vic Richardson was making you know, millions out of mowers. And he said, "I've decided you're going to be my secretary."

18:30 He said, "Most employees start on half profit share, you will start on full profit share, and I'll see you at eight o'clock in the morning." So that was how we ended up and until he died a couple of years ago, he and his family, he had two boys and a girl about the same age as mine. And we all became very good

friends and

19:00 even though they moved away from Sydney we kept in touch with him, this is all a bit on the side. But, he, not that there was a bit on the side, and our two girls are still the closest of friends and but, and then of course Victa got interested in producing the air-tourer,

19:30 the Victa Air-Tourer and Cec was learning to fly. And because his writing was so dreadful, he used to, for his theory course he used to dictate it all to me and I'd type it out and sent it in. So just about the time he got his license, I said to him, "Look, I know so much about this, all I've got to do is learn to point the aircraft." And he

20:00 said, "Well, why don't you?" And so I just decided to learn to fly which I was able to do only because of this profit share pay and all the rest of it. Because flying, at that stage, I don't know, I think it's probably dearer even now, but it was pretty expensive. And then he was transferred to aviation and I was transferred too and from then on,

20:30 you know, I was still employed in a secretarial capacity but one of the tours they did around the state shows like the Royal Easter show and Brisbane had the Brisbane Exhibition and South Australia and Western Australia when they needed an extra pilot. I was able to do the flying

21:00 and so I, but I flew with the aero club, the Royal Aero Club, that was where I trained. So I kept up that interest until eventually I couldn't pass the medical because of some of the medication I was obliged to take but I still remained active in the Women Pilots Association

21:30 and took part in their, helped in their fear of flying clinics. And until even after I came here and then I ran into some more health problems and couldn't get around and do as much as I used to do so that had to go too. But, so that was.

22:00 **How did it feel being up in the air as a pilot after spending all that time with the engines on the ground?**

It felt great and I don't care what anyone says, there's nothing quite like the feeling of your first solo flight, you know when the instructor finally says, "Off you go." And that's it and particularly if you come back and make a good landing. But, and no I really did enjoy my flying

22:30 and got to do some aerobatics and things, unfortunately I was too old when I learnt to fly. I mean I was about 40 when I took this on. And, well, nearly 40 and but no it was that was something I really enjoyed.

**Was it difficult for you to pluck the courage up to**

23:00 **do it or you felt really comfortable about it?**

Well, it took a bit of plucking up the courage, because by then I'd lost a lot of the confidence that I'd had when I was younger, when I was motorcycling and tearing around, and doing that and while I was in the air force. And I think one of the reasons that I really

23:30 decided to learn to fly because I had let everything go, you know, after Bill's death. And certainly I had the three kids and I had to look after them and get them somehow or other grown up but I felt that I was getting really into a rut because, sort of having - I still kept in touch with some of the old motorcycling

24:00 crowd but not many and I didn't go to any of their activities or social functions or anything, just felt that I couldn't face the crowd. And I realised that I was getting into this rut of doing absolutely nothing. And thought if I don't get out of the rut, the edges are going to close in over the top of me and so forth.

24:30 So, and I thought this is something that is going to take a bit of effort to do I'm not going to be able to just walk into this and take to it like I have other things. And I didn't find it particularly easy and it took me, well quite a few hours, well about sixteen hours to solo and other people do it in about eight.

25:00 But once I got going, I found that it was quite exciting and it sort of brought me back to life a bit. And, then of course having the opportunity to get some flying in, with Victa and it was, that

25:30 helped.

**So it was a bit of a personal turning point?**

Hm.

**Your involvement in associations, has that been a constant thing for you since the war?**

I've always maintained my membership of air force association, and on the day that

26:00 we were, I was over at Bradfield for final discharge and things. And they had a row of people there all holding out their hands with something and they said, you know, join air force association, five shillings and so you paid your five, just got quite a big pay. Well, thirty-seven pounds or something of the sort. And so it's something that I've kept up. There for a while

26:30 I was quite an active member of the WAAAF wing of the air force association and even after I was married, because with Bill being ex air force took - I still kept up with that. And but there again it was one of the things I let go. I still paid my subs [fees]

27:00 and been a financial member all the time but I didn't keep up with it the same way as with the motorcycling. When the women's international motorcycling association started in America I'd been writing as a pen friend to a girl over there who was involved in starting this. And so, she invited me

27:30 to be a member of this women's international association. In fact the first member outside of America and so, and I kept up with them for a while. And but it was another thing that I let go you know after Bill's death and so forth. And it was only recently in the last three or four years that

28:00 I've had anything to do with them again because the whole thing lapsed when I didn't, wasn't doing anything about it. And it was I think in about 1970 or something, one of the girls in South Australia started it up again and everyone thought that that was when it started in Australia and so. But there again

28:30 one day in the Herald, they had a paragraph in the RSVP [Repondez S'il Vous Plait; Please Reply] page, saying, did anyone have any knowledge of this association. And so I tore it out and put it there and my daughter said, "Are you going to do anything about it?" And I said, "Oh no, it's too long ago." But she persuaded me to write to them and they were about to have this international conference down at Kiama where they had visitors from all over the world coming.

29:00 And so they trotted out the first member and so, and I get their newsletter and go to a few of the things. They usually, one of the girls comes and drives me in a car. I've told them with my bones the way the are I can't ride motorbikes any longer. But I haven't been a great one

29:30 for clubs and associations and things other than the things I've been interested in like the air force and this association.

**Do you feel a part of the Anzac tradition?**

Well, more so since I've been here when we sort of have so much ex service activity around us and with the Anzac services,

30:00 they have here.

**We should clarify here being the?**

Here in the village.

**The retirement village in Yarrabin.**

Yes so, and of course I've been here for about eighteen and a half years, so, yeah you get sucked into it.

**And, Bill's squadron during the**

30:30 **war was?**

He was with 514 Squadron, which was an RAF [Royal Air Force] squadron, a lot of the Australians when they went over there got allocated to RAF squadrons and he was in bomber command and he did

31:00 more than a full tour of ops [operations] . He was a navigator, not a pilot, through choice, he wanted to be a navigator, he was one of the ones who wanted to be a navigator and got his wish. As he said, he wanted to tell someone else where to go and didn't want anyone telling him where to go. And, but no he was a real wizard with maths and that sort of, all the things that were needed for navigators.

31:30 And he was another one who was always dux of his course and very…

**So you were a couple of smart eggs?**

And, no he had the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] and so forth.

**You used the phrase 'a woman ahead of her time', earlier, do you think you were a woman ahead of your time?**

32:00 Not really, I sort of, I suppose I broke through a couple of the barriers that were there. But I didn't' regard it as anything exceptional at the time or I didn't seem to be making, wanting to make any great strides and influence anybody or anything. I just wanted

32:30 to do it for myself, what I was doing.

**So you feel proud about your contribution to Australia's war effort?**

Well sometimes I wonder just how much it did matter, the things that we were doing,

33:00 but. And then when I think of the men who'd have been held back to do those jobs, if we hadn't. I mean

we collectively as WAAAF hadn't done them because, I'd say that practically every ex service woman released a man for active service. And whether this was a good thing sending them off to

33:30 to the fate they, a lot of them met, but they were jobs that had to be done. And yes I suppose I am in a way I am proud of the fact that I was able to do it.

**How do you feel about war these days?**

Well, the types of war that they have now, like

34:00 with this, I really don't think that Australia should have got involved in this Iraq war. I was very disappointed that they followed America so blindly when so much seemed to point against it and it seemed to be all for the wrong reasons.

34:30 I mean this insistence on it being about weapons of mass destruction, well what are the Americans using? They're not using single shot rifles are they and it just seems all so contradictory and I know this might seem strange after what I said about the atom bomb sort of being justified

35:00 to bring about the end of World War II. But I just feel that I know that things were going wrong over there but I think that America is just too inclined to rush in and want to rule the whole world and dictate to other people what they should be doing

35:30 when they're not really setting a very good example themselves. And, but war has been going on for so long it seems that the main causes of it are, a lot of it's religion and greed, greed for territory.

36:00 And sometimes I think it was a shame that people invented the wheel and the boat otherwise they'd have all had to stay where they were and not go and invade other people's territory. No, that's just a bit, being facetious, but I don't think that anything can justify the loss of human life in wars. I mean,

36:30 what did the First World War achieve for all those hundreds of thousands of men who were slaughtered and then World War II was different but it was still mass destruction, on both sides and because once -

37:00 Well, because Germany wanted to dominate the whole of Europe, in fact it left themselves the whole world and I'm against war in principle.

**How do you spend Anzac Day these days?**

I usually go up to the dawn service up here at six o'clock and it's just a simple service

37:30 but it's very good. And they have a guest speaker but fairly brief and no great fanfare and they have the Last Post and the flag and all the usual things. And then one couple up here, both of whom were ex service, they always have

38:00 an Anzac Day breakfast for about a dozen of us when they go to the dawn [service] , well Frank's not able to go to the dawn service, but his wife always goes. And then they have this thing and then we watch the march on television. Because most of us have got past the stage where, oh, some of the chaps who go,

38:30 particularly the air force ones, they've got time to get in town and still join in the march. Because as you know, the air force are 'tailend Charlies', they always come at the end of [the parade] , you know the Australian services. And I know when I used to go in, you'd be standing around for hours waiting for the others to move off but of course it's not taking quite as long now because there are fewer of them to march.

39:00 And but, yes, so that's usually Anzac Day.

**Hazel, I just wanted to give you the opportunity to maybe pass a message on, or if there was anything else you were keen to talk about today, that perhaps we haven't touched on, bearing in mind that these tapes are going to be around for a long time**

39:30 **as an Australian resource, is there anything you'd like to pass on?**

I don't know, I seem to have covered quite a lot, more than I expected we'd be covering. And no, I just, I'm not in favour of sort of really

40:00 drumming these sort of things into children but I do think that it is a good thing to see that so many of the younger people are now taking an interest in what has gone before and what the people in the services have done. And if they could

40:30 realise their lives would be if it hadn't been for the service of the navy, the army and the air force and I think that people are becoming more aware of it and more interested in finding out, like you people are, what we did in the war. And that's about all.

**Fantastic Hazel, I think that will be a lovely point to hit the pause button, thank you.**

**INTERVIEW ENDS**