

I was what they commonly used to call a cut lunch commando. And you know what that was? Because you worked – you were in the army, you worked in an office and you went home at night.

I stayed with the Department of the Army because I was young and I enjoyed working there. It was the first time I had worked with other girls and with men, you know, who were workers. Before that I was sort of a loner in an office so I didn't have the company. So I really enjoyed the company of the girls that I met. And my education was enlarged there (laughs). I didn't know what – we had to copy things and I remember this man said to me “now everything you see, initials, put them out in full”. So I came to this ‘VD’ and I thought what does that mean? And so I went to one of the men and I said “what does VD mean?” and he said “oh you better ask one of the girls” so then she told me it was venereal disease (laughs) but I did enjoy working with the We were in an office, in a big hall, in Arundel Hall which was opposite where I went to school in James Street, they'd taken over that hall for the Army Records Office.

After we'd been at Arundel Hall in James Street for a certain time (I can't remember) we then moved because we became a bigger unit. We were then moved to Adelaide Terrace where I think the Police Traffic Office or the motorbikes or something, they were there. The Fisheries Department took over after afterwards I think. But when we took it over it had been an orphanage for little children and we felt very sad for those children because there were so many bugs, you know bed bugs? We used to have to go home and just drop our clothes off and put them straight into wash - we didn't have washing machines of course - and have a shower because there were so many bugs there. That went on for about a fortnight until they fumigated the whole place. It must have been terrible for those little kids living there.

So where were the children moved to?

Well they were dispersed to other homes in the country I think it was sort of, they were getting as many children out of the city as they could because things were warming up quite alright. Even here we didn't know whether we would be under threat at all so they took as many children as they could to the country. Especially those that were in institutions.

Was there any preparation for the defence of Perth?

Oh yes. We had bunkers like air raid shelters everywhere. We had – in Forrest Place there were a lot of them I remember. They were very ugly. Well I suppose in comparison to people who were really in the war zones it's nothing but they were, there were bunkers, there were big earth ones and if I remember rightly they were earth and then they were sort of cladded with timber or something. I can sort of see them like that. I suppose there are photos in the archives of them. Where we were in our office, we had trenches and we did have a couple of air raids – not raids but we found out afterwards that there were planes over but we didn't get bombed of course

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in Perth. But we did, we had to go. And the part that amused us was the fact that we had to – the instructions were in the case in an event of an air raid alert we had to proceed to the air raid shelter and sit there with the typewriter on your knees, sort of squat there with your typewriter on your knee or something until the all clear came and then you picked up your typewriter and went back to the office.

Why did you have to take the typewriter?

I don't know! I suppose it was to protect it or something, I don't know.

They didn't expect you to keep working?

(Laughs) No, no it was just to – I suppose in case there was a – well at least we protected our equipment. That was our equipment, in whereas soldiers I suppose they had to pick up their guns and things like that.