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Interview with June Stone (When the war came to Australia)

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Details

Mrs Stone joined the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in September 1941 aged 19, as her contribution to the war effort. She discusses her air force training in the "Rookies" course, from which she was posted as a general clerk to the RAAF station headquarters in Bankstown, Sydney. Mrs Stone relates her duties in the Fighter Control Operations room, which was located underground in a tunnel near the Mitchell Library. The Army and Navy had groups there. The WAAAFs lived in the Metropole Hotel, which was used by the Americans, then moved into RAAF accommodation in Macquarie Street. Mrs Stone describes how Fighter control operated, and mentions the contribution of the Volunteer Air Observer Corp (VAOC). There was a lot of enemy shipping in 1942-43 who were tracked by the Operations staff. Mrs Stone recounts her engagement and marriage to her first husband, a young airman. He was killed nine months into his posting in Iraq. She describes how the women kept working but were always worried about the men overseas. She transferred to Townsville in 1944 to the 6th RAAF Base Postal Unit as the Orderly Room Sergeant. She tells of picnics to Magnetic Island and bouts of Dengy Fever. She recounts the lifestyle and entertainment- balls, dances. She met her present husband on a blind date. Mrs Stone describes the WAAAF's uniforms- no actual uniforms were supplied. She mentions that the girls made swimming costumes from fabric available, eg tablecloths. The war gave her a different outlook on life and a greater understanding of many things. She comments that there were 28,000 women in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force(WAAAF) 30,000 in the Australian Women's Auxiliary Service (AWAS), WAS, 2,800 Women's Royal Australian Navy personnel and 8000 in the Australian Medical Women's Auxiliary Service. She mentions that the women's services were not recognised after the war, there was a lot of discrimination. Women's services have now been absorbed into the defence forces. She concludes that none of the women had problems adjusting to civilian life after the war. The men had trouble, but they had lived a very different life overseas.

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