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A TIME TO REMEMBER, INVASIONS FEARS

During those dark days in 1942, West Australians lived in fearful expectation of a Japanese invasion somewhere along our vast coastline.

I was an operator in the telephone exchange in the small wheatbelt town of Lake Grace. One evening as the daylight was fading a distressing call came through from Hopetoun, 100 miles away on the south coast, with the fear that the invasion was about to happen. A seaplane was reported circling around and then landing off the end of the jetty. The telephonist, Sylvia, with her mother and grandparents and the hotelkeeper were the only residents in the tiny holiday and fishing village during the winter months, the off-season.

Our orders in such an event were to immediately contact the Emergency Controlling Officer in our zone in Narrogin, who took control of the situation. The telephone line from Narrogin to Hopetoun was to be kept open while one of the brave residents ventured out to investigate. After an agonizing time of waiting the reporter revealed the seaplane belonged to the American Navy. It had apparently been blown off course and was almost out of fuel.

The drama over, the excitement began, the unexpected visitors a sensation. Local people came in all modes of transport from miles around to view the plane and welcome our Allied friends.

Later I joined the WAAAF and as a telephone operator on several RAAF stations experienced more of the wartime dramas, some excitements too, like hearing, "the war is over". The wonderful friendships, the caring, and sharing lasting down through the decades are truly something to remember.