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## **George Craggs**

### **Part of my story 1939 – 1945**

When war was declared in September 1939 my brother Bern and I were living in Parkerville Children's Home, our mother having died two years earlier.

When America finally was drawn into the war I was living with friends in Claremont. I was still too young to join the services so I volunteered and became an Air Raid Warden, achieving a 100% pass at the examination.

As wardens we were issued with gas masks, steel helmets, and arm bands, which gave us a certain amount of authority in the event of an air raid.

The Japanese were bombing Darwin and several towns in our north-west, and we experienced several air raid warnings. All warnings were taken seriously because we did not know whether the warning was a practice run or an actual air raid.

The sirens would sound and people would go to the nearest air raid shelter, or to the zigzag trenches in the parks. Public air raid shelters were built in the streets throughout the cities and at shopping centres, usually constructed from heavy timbers and surrounded by bags. Most homes had an air raid shelter in the back yard.

Wardens had the authority to stop all traffic movement during an alert, but there was no point in trying to stop the speeding taxis taking servicemen back to their submarines and ships at Fremantle. Usually an officer's cap would be held out of the window of the speeding taxis to indicate to wardens the reason for the traffic movement.

I recall the rationing of food and clothing and the shortage of petrol. All the cars and motorbikes and even bicycles, had hoods on the headlights. Many cars were running on gas producers burning either in the boot area of the car or on a separate trailer. I remember the dances at the Embassy and Anzac House where the girls out-numbered the boys by about five to one. I remember the thousands of American servicemen in our city, and of course, our own Australian servicemen.

Some of the most fortunate years of my life were during the period of World War II. I, the same as everybody my age that I know, was quite prepared to be called up for military service on turning 18 years of age. However, as I turned 18 we were advised that the war was nearing its end and we were not required to report – which was a disappointment to many of us. Having almost reached the age of 78 years, apart from the tragedy of losing two wonderful wives as a result of cancer, I consider that I have had a most fortunate life.

Western



Australia

Nº 8748

Civil Defence (Emergency Powers) Act, 1940  
CIVIL DEFENCE COUNCIL

# AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

## Certificate of Examination

Regulation 30 (j)

Signature.....*G. Craggs*

This is to Certify that.....GEORGE CYRIL CRAGGS.....  
of.....33 Victoria Parade, Claremont.....  
whose signature appears in the margin hereof, has qualified in a course of study in  
AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS in accordance with the scheme approved by the  
Civil Defence Council of Western Australia.

Dated this.....23rd.....day of.....May.....1942.....

*J. H. Burrows*

Instructor

*A. S. Rayner*

Chief Warden

*R. Egan*

Under Secretary for Civil Defence