
Glenice Elizabeth Duffy

Born During WWII

I was born during WWII in Perth, WA. My father was over 40 years of age and therefore above military age and was manpowered in his job at Plaistowes making chocolates and canned fruit for the troops.

In mid 1941 he was asked to join a group of workers to train to work in a very secret ammunition factory being built in Welshpool, an eastern suburb of Perth. His first job was to choose a team from the only available work force, namely young women and older men. Once chosen they then had to all travel overland by train to South Australia to skill themselves ready for their work once the Welshpool complex was completed.

Most of the young women had never left home before and my mother found herself, with her two young children, friend and chaperone to the girls and helped them settle into their new surroundings.

After 6 months intensive training they came back to work long hours turning out the much needed ammunition for the allied troops during one of the darkest times of the war.

My sister, who is 4 years older than I, remembers helping the nuns at the local Catholic primary school to dig the bomb shelters at the school. However, a siren was sounded all over the metropolitan area when a submarine was feared to be cruising around Fremantle harbour.

All the children were sent home with their emergency bags around their necks and a cork in their mouths! They never knew what the cork was supposed to do but when they felt scared they just took out the cork and screamed as they ran home to their own raid shelter in their backyards.

In 1946 my father won first prize in the local lottery, which was only two thousand pounds, but that was a lot of money at that time. He threw a big party and all the people in the street and those he had worked with in the munitions factory came along and there were still returned soldiers amongst our friends and family who were there in their uniforms.

When my cousin Dulcie, who was a boarder at St Joseph's boarding school in Pinjarra came to the party in her brown school uniform I ran up to her and said, "have you gone and joined the army after the war is all over?" They were confusing times for a little girl!

Families, friends and neighbours really had to help each other during those difficult times and friendships formed then were to be lifetime ties. When my father died at age 93 many of the 'girls' he had trained and worked with him at Welshpool came to his funeral. They came back after the service to share stories with my sister and I of that long ago trip across the Nullarbor and their wartime work effort.