
Kathleen Isabel Haines

My name is Kathleen Haines. I am the older child of Mort and Mort Corby and was born in September 1932. I have a brother who is two years younger. We lived at the bottom of Greenmount Hill (near the railway crossing, now a bridge) in Great Eastern Highway, (known as York Road when I was a youngster).

I was educated at Bellevue Primary, Midland High and Perth Modern Schools and trained to be a teacher. I started School in 1938 and was in Std 1 when WWII started.

The first part of 1939 hadn't been very good for our family; I missed almost a full term of school with severe whooping cough, my mothers' beloved older sister Mag Holman M.L.A. died following a car accident and mum was diagnosed with quite severe diabetes.

I think I was probably a bit young to be aware of what these things and the war staring meant, but in 1941 – 1942 the war certainly became more confronting. These are a few of my memories;

Bellevue School was very close to the Watsonia Bacon Factory, the Government and Midland Railway workshops, a large wheat silo, and Army depot and some very deep water filled clay holes and because these were thought to be bombing targets, during 1942 for a period of some weeks, Bellevue was one of the schools to be evacuated.

We were sent to Greenmount Primary and for half of each day for the period of evacuation; those of us who could knit made many balaclavas, scarves and other simple items for the soldiers.

My mother was well trained in St John's First Aid and Home Nursing; dad made her a stretcher and she taught the rudiments of First Aid and home nursing to the neighbouring women who came to our home for classes.

Dad was an A.R.P. Warden (I understand that means Air Raid Precautions Warden). He had to make sure all homes in the neighbourhood were kept in darkness. This was done by pasting black (painted) paper over all the windows and glass doors. He also had to learn to recognise different kinds of aircraft.

At night, searchlights could be seen regularly from our home flashing across the sky. My brother and I had birthday parties in alternate years and in 1942 on my birthday we asked our guests not to bring presents but give money and we sent that to the Prisoner of War Fund.

Dad had our blood groups identified and we wore a necklet with a disc showing our home etc and our blood group. Mum made us emergency shoulder bags in which we had bandages, a mouth stopper (presumably for protection against noise in case of an air raid) and chocolate.

Most public places had air raid shelters or air raid trenches and it was in early January 1944 while visiting the zoo with some friends, I attempted to jump across

one such trench and instead fell in and cut my rear end on a broken bottle. It was very embarrassing but could have been a lot worse!

As the war advanced in Europe and later Asia, I remember cutting pieces from the daily papers showing the progress of the war.

We lived quite near the East-West Railway line and near Helena Vale Race Course, which was serviced by a railway station from a spur line; it was used on horse racing days. For many months during the later part of the war there was a hospital train parked at Helena Vale Station – painted white with red crosses. Don't know if it was ever used.

We had severe rationing of just about everything and from time to time trucks used to come around selling excess fruit, especially apples and pears.

In our last year of primary school the principals were instructed to measure the heights of all the students – if we were over five feet tall our parents could get extra clothing coupons. I only just made it and the extra coupons were handy as we were starting high school the next year. (I have attached a copy of my clothing coupons, which we continued to get for some years).

Both the European and Asian battles ended in my first year at high school and I can remember the joys when peace was declared. Over the next few years our lives gradually got back to where it was before.

My parents were both pacifists and I am proud of the efforts they made to help us through those times – small though they may seem.

Two uncles and a cousin were in the Army in WWII. My brother did National Service.

