
Tell us Your Story Program

First Story - Friday, 19 August 2005

Phyllis Annie Johnston (ne Quigley)

Born: 23/6/1918, Boulder City, Western Australia

After two years serving as the only Flight Clerk in Geraldton at 4FTS (Flying Training Station) where the Flying Squadron trained, I joined 24 girls from WA were sent to Melbourne to be stationed at various offices and depots. I was stationed at RAAF Records Dept, Hyde Park Central Station, as a Clerk, Main Office Personnel Records, on the 5th Floor

For 2 months, we lived at "Homeden" Toorak, a huge private home belonging to the Nicholas family of the 'Aspro' Company. The family had offered the use of their house and it had been taken over by the military to house Servicewomen during the war. We lived in a dormitory of 20 women

While we lived at 'Aspro House' as it was called, most of our pay - 3 shillings and fourpence per day, was used to pay for our board and keep. This meant we received hardly any cash money during the time we were there. That would have been alright, except we never got fed! We had very little money to pay for anything, and all we received was a very light breakfast each morning. In no time at all we were absolutely starving. Every day we would work out which of the Services Clubs to visit at lunch time, to try to get enough sandwiches to see us through the day. Most of the time we were very hungry by the end of the day

Finally, it got so bad that one of our party of WA WAAC servicewomen, who was a Salvo, arranged for us all to go most days to the Salvos and get fed. It was marvellous - food! She then arranged to leave 'Aspro House' and she also arranged for my sister and me to go. We lived for the rest of our stay in Melbourne at the Melbourne Salvation Army Citadel in Spring Street. This was for most of the year

I had some Hairdresser training before the War and had cut the Squadron Leader Thompson's and the other officer's hair in Geraldton for 2 shillings a cut. Now, in Melbourne I made some other money haircutting again - sixpence a cut and set for the other servicewomen. I lived in Melbourne until I was Manpowered out in April, 1945. The Government re-opened the Wyndham Meat Works and they sent me back to my home town as Manager of the Bag Floor of the Wyndham Meat Works. When I got to Wyndham, the male Junior who used to work with me before the war did all the hard manual work of running the Bag Floor and I ran (serviced and fixed) the machines that sewed the bags. For the first six weeks we two were the only ones working on the Bag Floor. We had a friendly arrangement where he was Manager every alternate day. After about six weeks, machinists started to come in and there were more workers than on the Bag Floor