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Memories of Civilian Life – World War II 1939-45

I was fifteen when war broke out and during my teen years, there was the deep emotional experience of seeing relatives and friends losing their lives in England, Europe, Singapore, Burma, and the Kakoda Trail.

All eligible males were called up for service. I devoted my interests to learning First Aid and Home Nursing courses, also a Correspondence course in Psychology. The closest I came to using the First Aid was being put in charge of this unit at my place of employment. All three skills later proved invaluable as a mother of four!

I passed out of Eastern Goldfields High School at Junior level with ten subjects, then a Commercial Junior with four subjects, then worked as Secretary to the Manager and the Accountant at the Eastern Goldfields Transport Board for six years (this included the War years).

I had to learn all departments so that I could fill in for each male as they turned 18 and were called up, while a replacement was being trained. As the War dragged on women were being called up for the services, the Land Army or munitions making. My preference was for the WRENS (Navy) but when my call-up came my boss, Mr Dave Thomson, rushed down to the enlistment office and had me officially "Manpowered" as an essential service so that was where I stayed for the duration.

An inland Air Force Station was created at the Boulder Aerodrome and many young Airmen who had seen service overseas or Darwin were posted there to train new enlistments.

All of a sudden, our twin-city was a-buzz with eligible young men! They were usually only there for a few months then posted back for active service. One night, when attending the Saturday night dance at the Railway Institute with girlfriends, I was introduced to an immaculate and very handsome young Air Force Sergeant. The attraction was mutual and Ern organized a foursome outing with his mate and my girlfriend.

We became engaged several months later when he was posted to an English Aircraft Carrier base in Queensland. He returned to Kalgoorlie after the War and we were married in 1946, celebrating our 51st Anniversary on 6th January 1998. Sadly, he passed away on 24th February 1998.

When my sister asked me to write down my memories of every day life during the War, I thought of passing a huge barn in Hannan Street where hundreds of women worked shifts making ammunition, air raid shelters in our backyards, air raid sirens. Americans on leave from their submarines, ration coupons for clothes and basic foods.

However, the overwhelming thing is that if it hadn't been for the War, I would not have met my wonderful husband, Ern.