



## FEATURE STORY

### Margaret Tremble: Evacuation Drills, Boarding School and Growing up During WWII

By Jack and Matthew

St Raphael's Catholic School, Cowra, NSW, Australia

Margaret Tremble was born in 1930 and lived on a small farm near Gooloogong in Central West NSW. Meals consisted highly of rabbit and homegrown vegetables. Her father left to fight in WWII and was based in Syria. This left her mother to look after the two remaining children and to run the kitchen in the local pub, forcing the children into boarding school as there was nobody to look after them. Margaret recalls food coupons which were used to buy tea, meat, clothing and dairy products. If they did not use their rations in time people would often trade the rations for other products.

Although not personally known to Margaret, she knew that many women gained positions at the Lithgow ammunition factory. She had an aunty who did a daily mail run between Gooloogong and Eugowra. These mail runs consisted of orders from those living on the farms. During one mail run, Margaret and her Aunty became curious as to why one of the parcels had not been collected after being carted for an extended period of time. The curiosity took over and they opened the package which turned out to be the ashes of the customer. Mother Nature often wreaked havoc on mail runs, mainly with the issue of floods making it much harder to reach properties.



Whilst boarding in Sydney, the school was proactive in having evacuation drills in case the war ever reached Sydney's shores. During the event of an emergency, the older students were given a junior girl to look after throughout this time, Margaret had been assigned this role of leadership. Unfortunately, Margaret forgot her important role and slept through an evacuation... Although this time, it was not a drill; a Japanese submarine had snuck into Sydney Harbour. Margaret still defends herself in this situation saying that "Somebody running past could have woken me up".

Margaret was entering her high schooling years at the time of the war and remembers no significant changes in the mood or feelings of the town in Cowra or whilst boarding in the city, it was something that they just had to take on as it came. This was mainly because children were not to speak of, or ask questions about what was happening abroad.

Margaret's father, was significantly affected by the horrors of war so as a result, Mrs Tremble was forced to leave school at the age of 15 in order to make money to assist her Mum in paying rent and to allow her more academic brother to complete his schooling. Margaret's brother further went on to be Dux of St Ignatius and completed a degree in Civil Engineering. Although Margaret sees this as a less important and insignificant event in her life, it shows that even as a teenager she played an integral part in holding the family together.

Although the war did not have a direct impact on Margaret, the course of her life was drastically changed. Whilst in school, she grew in maturity due to being trained to react quickly to evacuation drills and care for younger students. At the time Margaret no longer attended school, she had almost completely lost her fatherly figure.

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