"Archerfield Memories." 2017

I am Jean White - nee Forrester, in my 90th year.
I worked at Archerfield Aerodrome from when I was sixteen until twenty one years of age.
They were exciting times - the best of years!

When I was just sixteen I worked for A.P.L (Aircrafts Pty. Ltd.) a small company with flights to Maryborough and Bundaberg.
The company was greatly expanded to build Avro Anson aircraft for the war effort.
There were many people doing shift work.
I worked in the personel office.
If we girls came to work early some mornings we were fortunate enough to be offered a flyover the City and near hinterland.
I remember a Captain Davis, and a Captain Blackmo
our company chairman was Captain Adair, an early famed airman. Our works manager was Marcus Clark. I was much in awe of them.

There was a four minute promotional film made, and the Director came into the office and chose some of we girls to partake. It was very exciting! It was shown widely; a small moment of fame!

We witnessed many interesting things - e.g.:
The Americans were still in charge when I started there early 1944. There was an American Guard at the gate. We were issued with Identity cards During the lunch break some of the men would

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play a game of football. One day the ball went over the fence. One of the boys crawled under the wire to retrieve it. A shot rang out over his head. There was absolutely no need for that!
Another time, many American airmen were parachuted over the airfield for practice, it was quite a sight. One man suffered a broken leg. We witnessed many strange events. The Americans departed – the British Airforce arrived – a little late to save us – but we welcomed them. We were no longer in fear!
By the time the War in Europe ended in May 1945 things were much calmer.

However, Japan fought on!!
In August when victory in the Pacific was declared on August 14th 1945, we all went crazy with joy.
We downed tools and took off for the City. The girls from our Office ended up at the Bellview Hotel. I was seventeen years of age.

We began typing Pink Slips (dismissal notices) for all the workers involved in the War effort. By this time our firm had merged with Australian National Airlines, a dominate Company. We could see the end of our happy jobs coming. Some of us applied for jobs at Archerfield, as did I.

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The Dutch airforce was stationed in the Igloos at Archerfield. They were called the Netherlands East Indies Transport 19th Squadron. N.E.I.T.S. Many of the Dutch airmen who were living in the then Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) had escaped the Japanese Invasion and joined with the R.A.A.F here. They flew Mitchell Bombers during the war.

By the time I began working for them in September 1945, they consisted of both Dutch and Australian staff plus some few Indonesian airmen. They were engaged in flying supplies to the Indies, and bringing back refugees for rest and recouperation.

I worked in the Engineering office, my job entailed taking the log books from the engineers on the arrival back from their flights to the Islands. I then had to type the engine hours flown by each engine. Then to cut a stencil of this information and print out the information for all sections of the works department. This knowlege was necessary to know if the engines needed a hundred hour check or complete overhauls. We flew mainly C-47: the forerunners of the faithful D.C. 3's It was an important job in the scheme of things! no mistakes allowed!

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My immediate Boss was named Doug. Stuart, a typical ex-sergeant, with a bristling moustache, strict but O.K. Our office Stenographer was a girl named Eunice Mary Gray, a very efficient worker. Eunice and I got up to frequent mischief. Such as going up on test flights against the will of our Boss. We had to sign an indemnity against their risk. One day Doug became enraged when we wanted to go on the next test flight. He said, but for the fact we were both excellent workers, he would dismiss us instantly. That was the end of that. –

The aeroplane, a C47 ditched in the passage-way between the mainland and Stradbroke Island, with the sad loss of all aboard; Some of whom were our friends. Such sorrow followed – there was a memorial Service at St. John's Cathedral. Among those lost there were some Indonesians.

There were great friendships formed between the Dutch and Australians. One such friendship I formed was with a girl called Maria Proost, she did the Dutch typing for our office. Her father was a much loved Senior Officer, and a diplomat. When he left, the men who worked with him loved him so much, that they presented him with an Australian painting of "Gum Trees".

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This painting hung in his home in Holland ever since 1947 until 2016.
Now his daughter Maria (92 years of age) is returning it to Archerfield, where it belongs.

The Dutch were about to leave us in 1947, as there was was great unrest in Indonesia as they pressed for Independence (Successfully)

I had known many aircraft engineers from when I worked at A.P.L. previously One of them was a gentleman named Frank Silverthorne. A small band of Airmen had formed a company named "Queensland Aerial Ambulance and Taxi Service", The two partners were an eminent Brisbane photographer, and part-time flyer named Harry Paulsen and his friend called Alan Cunningham, also an eminent pilot. They needed an Office girl, Frank Silverthorne suggested myself. He phoned the N.E.I.T.S. office; I left to join them.

There were two bosses, another young airman The engineers, Mr Silverthorne, George Ashley and their apprentice Russell Close, and another man named Ivan Unwin from A.P.L. They were mainly booked for Special events and by Theatrical people e.g: Bob Dyer, and Harry Loren. I had to work as secretary and meet and greeter, and do all the Office work

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I had to work weekends, as that was when they were busiest. We had a great comeradre, but I was overworked and underpaid. After six months I left, they were very surprised.

I applied for a job in the Office of the Qantas engine overhaul section, which was at the Hamilton Road Moorooka, in walking distance of where I lived. The engine overhaul shop was later transferred to Sydney, with the loss of employment. I was transferred to the Qantas office at Archerfield. I left there at twenty one years of age. - I was offered the position of Chief Booking Clerk in the City - I declined! What an adventurous life for a shy young girl!
I sure learnt a lot about life, responsibility, and friendship.
I made life long friendships, those surviving - Eunice Mary Gray 94 years old Maria Proost 92 years old, and myself in my 90th year. So lucky!

signed: Joan J. White (nee Forrester)
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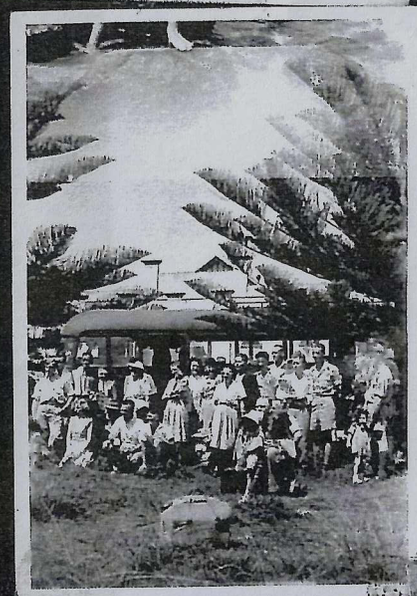
Left to right
Jean Forrester
Eunice Gray
unknown
"
next girl later worked at Guam for the U.S. Army
Stephanie Carrick

(given to Moorooka History Group by Jean Forrester - later White)
J.W.

Girls who worked for N.E.I.T.S
Archerfield
1945-47.



X from Jean Forrester later White

Fa. D. - Ins. Netherlands East Indies Transport Service Bankstown Field 1944-45

workers for N.E.I.T.S. (Netherlands East Indies Transport Service)
x Jean Forrester (later White) Archerfield 1945-1947