

## CIVILIAN CLERKS AT THE SCHOOL

Pauleen was one of a number of female civilian clerks who were given employment at the O.C.S. from 1943. Twenty-one names appear on an original list. Their ages ranged from teenager to middle age. A majority was assigned to 'Headquarters' whilst others worked at 'Supply', 'Infantry', 'Air Corps', 'Engineers', 'Dispensary', 'Administration' and 'Ordnance'. Pauleen worked in an important unit called 'Operations'.

One thing that has stuck in her mind sixty years after being at the school was the strict discipline exercised by the officers – from the Commandant to the Colonel. When one realizes that at its peak there were over a thousand troops enrolled at the O.C.S. in a three-month course, order had to be kept in one way or another. It certainly was 'one way' – discipline. Camp discipline reached also to the civilian workers. They had been told never to go to the cookhouse or the canteen (PX it was called), but to ask a uniformed person to go for them. One of the female clerks forgot and did go to the cookhouse.....SHE WAS IMMEDIATELY SACKED!

Accommodation and living conditions at the camp were not four stars, but cleanliness and hygiene were uppermost for the well-being of staff and students. Accommodation was mainly in huts of timber or fibro that could accommodate up to twenty persons. Square four-sided tents were used throughout the whole Camp Columbia area until huts could be erected. Although the National Service Battalion (Wacol) in the 1950s used marquees up to 1953, the huts used for the O.C.S. (1943-45 - southern side of the main road) were used extensively by the National Servicemen. A few of these have been retained and form part of the National Servicemen's Precinct at Wacol today.

Whereas the candidates at the O.C.S. ate at the canteen, civilian female clerks like Pauleen brought their food from home. She didn't like sandwiches very much, instead she brought with her fruit, plus bread and butter pudding. The problem was that there was little or no refrigeration for civilian workers at camp, however, that was not a problem for the female clerks as they turned clean rubbish containers into 'cool containers' by half filling them with ice. This did the job well, at least, for twelve hours until the ice melted. In the heat of summer the time may have been a little shorter!

Bushlands have always been danger zones from attacking magpies, and today, even in settled suburbs, postmen who deliver the mail by motorbike are grateful they wear crash helmets. This is one 'danger'

Pauleen and the other workers had to face when they went from one building to another in the camp - instead of walking they ran....and how they ran! The maggies were rather good dive bombers and they swooped on whoever was moving. Even with twigs waving above their heads clerks, candidates and officers were on the receiving end, and some received nasty bites to their ears.

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One of Pauleen's jobs in Operations was to list and map out on wallboards the areas of troop and unit maneuvers and exercises. This was a most responsible task, especially for a girl of her age, but she excelled at the job and received 'congratulations' from the administration. Commendations and job references that were given her in May and June, 1945, by the Commandant and Director of Training speak for themselves, and are herewith attached. She was a most diligent worker!



Maneuvers and exercises plan in operations room.



Exercises in the field.

The United States Administration certainly provided well for their forces and civilian workers. Conditions were rough and tough in 1942 when U.S. troops first came to Australia. Equipment was at first scarce; living conditions were poor, and food was meagre. These conditions quickly improved as their camps were gradually established along the east coast.

Medical and hospital facilities for their sick and wounded were of uppermost importance, and in or around Brisbane many of these centres were to be found from 1942 to the war's end. At Camp Hill, Holland Park, Tarragindi, Stuartholme Convent, Wacol and Gatton College were just a few venues where American hospitals existed.