



Brisbane Open House to evoke war-time memories

Jean White of Moorooka hopes to be among visitors to Brisbane Open House 2017 at Archerfield Airport on October 7. Like many long-time Brisbane residents, Jean has strong personal links to the airport.

Now in her 90th year, Jean (nee Forrester) worked at Archerfield Airport for five years, partly during the war. At the time, American soldiers stood guard at the gates and took part in parachute practice over the airfield.

Jean joined aircraft builder, APL, fresh out of school early in 1944. She worked mainly in the personnel office where towards the end of the war, she typed 'pink slips' or redundancy notices for her colleagues. Eventually she decided to look for alternative employment before she had to type her own 'pink slip'!

Jean took a job with the Netherlands East Indies Company, also based at the airport, and worked with Australian and European colleagues in the 19th Transport Squad flying supplies to Indonesia on mainly C-47 aircraft. Jean's job maintaining flight log records was extremely important for aircraft engine maintenance (no errors permitted!), although she

didn't realise this until years later. Jean made lifelong friendships; but with the independence of Indonesia, Jean once again sought a new job.

Jean then managed operations of the Queensland Aerial Ambulance and Taxi Service where she met many high profile entertainers. The job was extremely demanding, so she joined the QANTAS engineering overhaul workshop at Moorooka where she was the only woman working in a 'man's job' keeping parts' records. When the workshop moved to Sydney, Jean was transferred to QANTAS' office, a move that took her back to Archerfield Airport.

Jean remembers her time at the airport as the most interesting phase of her life. She had a brief moment of fame appearing in a cinema newsreel feature. She witnessed the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester – and narrowly missed having her foot run over by their official car. Jean also experienced the thrill of flying, jumping at every chance for a seat in a test flight. However the day her boss finally put his foot down, the scheduled flight ended in tragedy, with the aircraft crashing into Moreton Bay with all lives lost.



Jean White today and pictured above (second from left) when she worked at Archerfield Airport.
