



A Chance to Serve

Long winters, lifetime friendships and serving your country. Nancy Moore, who turned 100 years old this year, talks to *Navy Today* about her war service at the Waiouru Wireless Transmitter facility.

Nancy 'Pat' Moore says she never had much confidence as a young woman. Her family – and the Navy – are likely to disagree.

Mrs Moore, who turned 100 years old in April, achieved the rank of Petty Officer in the Women's Royal New Zealand Naval Service, serving as a 'Wren' telegraphist at the Navy communications facility at Waiouru during World War II.

On her table at her flat in Eastbourne is her birthday letter from the Queen. "Isn't it lovely," she says. She is also delighted with her letter of congratulations from the Chief of Navy, but ruefully remarks, "I have no Wrens left to ring and say, I've had a letter from the Admiral."

As Pat Clothier, she was living in Lower Hutt when the war started, and prior to enlisting in the WRNZNS had joined the Women's War Service Auxillary (WWSA). "All the young women had joined," she says. "You could do all sorts of things. I choose communications, and we had an old soldier who took us one night a week, and all day Saturday, teaching us Morse Code and semaphore. I think this was 1940?" She had a fiancé at the time, overseas in the Air Force, but she wanted to join the Navy. "I had read a lot of naval stories."

The young women learned Morse Code at 20 words per minute, then furthered their skills with the Union Steamship Company. Eventually enlistment opened for women to join the WRNZS in 1942 and by then the women were reasonably proficient. "I remember, we got asked to put in our applications, then six months later we had an interview. There were 12 of us at Defence Headquarters in Stout Street, we were the first intake. Petty Officer Biggs (later Warrant Officer Telegraphist E.H Biggs, first officer in charge at Waiouru) taught us the Navy way of doing things." They were issued uniforms, although the Wrens lamented they didn't have bellbottoms like sailors. Many would add them on later.

The Wrens were assigned to the Post Office wireless station on Tinakori Hill (called Te Ahumairangi Hill today), where the Wellington Naval Radio Station was based. "We used to go up there on night duty, walking up the hill. It was quite a hike. You could get a tram, but in wartime they were slow."

The stations ran full watches, day and night. The Wrens would receive coded messages in Morse, from all over the world. "It was very energetic," she says. "It was hard work, and

Former Petty Officer Telegraphist Pat Moore celebrates her 100th birthday on 11 April.