The eldest of three children

Father, Albert a veteran of the WW1, suffered from “bad lungs” as result of war injuries. In common with other returned men he was granted the lease of some land on which to establish a farm. Many of these “soldier settler” blocks, in fact most, were too small and of too poor a country for a viable family farm to be established and of course, the soldier settler had to pay back to the government the assessed value of the land (an inflated price).

Due Albert’s poor health, Mum was his “right hand man” from a very early age. At four she was rising before dawn to bring in the cows for her Dad to milk. Often in the evening Albert would read to her from a tattered copy of “On Our Selection”.

She was seven years old, when the farm was abruptly taken back by the government due to Albert having insufficient money to make that year’s payment.

Her mother, Jessie, had just given birth to delicate baby girl; her little brother, Mac, was just four years old.

The family owned a few head of stock, a couple of horses, a sulky and so few household items that these all fitted into the sulky.

Albert had had to take a few days’ work on a neighbouring property, money was in such short supply that he had to take the job, even though it left his family to find their own way to another property where they could stay.

Albert had one horse and the other was hitched to the sulky.

So off they went, Jessie in the sulky with the new baby and their worldly goods; Trudy at age seven, on foot, solely in charge of droving the stock as well as keeping an eye on Mac who sometimes rode in the sulky, but more frequently wanted to walk. The journey took three days and they slept under the stars.

Mum loved learning and at age 5, took to school with great enthusiasm. A favourite game was to play schools with her younger siblings. She was such a good little teacher that when Mac and later Joy, started school they were promoted straight away to the second grade thanks to big sister’s instructional skills!

When Trudy received a Sunday School prize at age 10 – a storybook – it was the first new book the family owned.

By age 14, when she left school, Trudy had achieved high levels in her subjects especially - business principles, bookkeeping, shorthand and typing and immediately started work in an office. Her career advanced as she moved onto evermore challenging jobs in legal and accounting offices - always seeking to expand her knowledge and to teach others too.

Then came WW2 - The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) was formed in March 1941. Trudy quickly signed on, without asking her parents and almost immediately was on her way to camp – her first time away from home. At 90 years of age she still spoke of her joy of being issued with brand new pajamas patterned with carnations!

Mum loved her time in the WAAF, serving in various sections where her exceptional skill in shorthand, love of learning, and leadership abilities took her into certain secret operational areas. She never spoke about this and information has come from another source.

After the war ended Trudy married Bob and together they embarked on a journey of family life and community service. About a year after they were married, Trudy was approached to join a branch of Australia’s fledgling peacetime secret service. Being a continuation of the work she had loved and shown such aptitude for, it would involve working away from home occasionally, but the technology existing even then allowed for “work from home”. Her fledgling business venture (providing bookkeeping and other administration services to local businesses) was considered a perfect cover. Trudy mulled this over for a couple of weeks, confiding in no one. There were obvious advantages - fulfilling personal drives such as service to country, realising her own potential for intelligence work, as well as financial.

The social mores of the time though, dictated the male as decision maker/bread winner and she chose to reluctantly reject the offer, rather than having to basically deceive her life partner.

The approach was made by Harry Harcourt – although this is unlikely to be confirmed by government sources as Harry Harcourt was merely a Tasmanian public servant – however researching HH’s “career” he appears in many behind the scenes roles, as well as materializing mysteriously in active frontline situations in conflicts taking in WW1, the little known Russian hostilities (Arkhangel), WW2 and subsequent clandestine Australian operations in Asia. Bob and Trudy met Harry at the end of WW2 and they forged a deep friendship that endured until Harry’s death. In fact, amongst Trudy’s possessions is a suitcase left with them by Harry.

‘Mentally alert, observant, prompt in decision, attention to detail, steady and dependable, a sense of humour including a sense of the ridiculous, understanding of and sympathy with human nature” – from note taken by Trudy during a lecture on the qualities required in an officer.