

I got pregnant during the war. I'll be honest, I weren't sure whose it was. An Irish chap I thought a lot of called David was probably the father, but before him I'd had summat to do with a little Scotsman from Glasgow called Jerry. I'll admit I was a tearaway. My dad couldn't stand me. He couldn't control me.

Anyway, David had been called up to the front and he'd said his goodbyes an' all that before I realised I was in the family way. Well, what could I do? I had to swing it on somebody. It weren't like it is today back then. I did try to get rid of it with hot baths and gin but I'd seen too many girls butchered by old mother Toms up Slater street. I were frit goo' there. So anyway, I went to the Green Dragon where Jerry and his pals drank and I said I was expecting. He told me to bugger off. Said it weren't his.

I could do no other, I had to tell my mother. Well, she went mad. She marched me straight up the barracks and got in to see Jerry's commanding officer. He said: 'I can't help you, missus,' but he did give her Jerry's mother's address up in Glasgow. Now my mother Fanny, she was a force to be reckoned with and no mistake. She wrote to Jerry's mum, set out the situation and by god, she got a reply by return of post.

His mother said: *'I've telt him to marry that wee lassie or your no son o mine.'*

Well, he did and we were wed on a bitter cold day in December. I had me old coat an' a bit o' fox fur round me neck and Jerry wore his fatigues. Me and him went the pictures after, said goodnight and he were called into the desert the following day. I didn't see him again for four years. I'll say this for him: he did send bits and pieces home, watches an' jewellery to pawn. Stuff he'd robbed off prisoners of war.

I got my old shoe factory job back when the bab was born and my mum and dad looked after her.

Course the bab didn't know him when he come home. I didn't for that matter. My mum and dad said they'd babysit while me and Jerry went out for a drink and got reacquainted. Well, we got to the top of our street and he turned to me an' said: *'I'm awae fer a drink wi ma pals. Awae ye go up the toon an' earn some money. Yer sittin' on a gold mine. Ye can meet back here at hof pas eleven.'*

I didn't know what to do. I couldn't go home. My dad'd have killed me.

So I did, I went up town and met a nice chap. American squaddie. He didn't want nothing like that, but I spent the evening with him and he made me bacon and eggs at his digs. Ham and eggs, he called it.

After that I did see men. I weren't one of them, but I had boyfriends who gave me money. Jerry was quite happy with the arrangement. He used to say it was a man's place to keep his wife and he bragged how his missus didn't go out to work. We stayed together. You couldn't do no other in them days and he weren't violent, not very often at least.

I had three more kids and I weren't ever really sure who their dads were, but the extra money helped out and that's how I bought 'em all up. I don't regret it because I wouldn't have been without my kids. And d'you know, we were the only family in our street who went to Margate every year for a weeks' holiday.

Dorothy Monroe (1922-1986)

Deborah Delano