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## Spuds fed our troops

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**BY THERESE MURRAY**

TO YOU, it may be known as the "Toy Factory" at Gumeracha behind the Big Rocking Horse, but it was once Brian Harvey's family farm with a crucial role in World War II.

Now a resident of Resthaven Port Elliot, 94-year-old Brian and his family owned the Adelaide Hills factory, using it as a facility to dry potatoes for the troops.

"When I was growing up, Mum and Dad owned a farm at Kersbrook where we grew apples, cherries, plums, peaches - everything," Brian said.

"Our business was CP Harvey and Son, and we would take the fruit to the market once a week. Any produce that was not quite up to scratch, we would dry and then sell as dried fruit. We made the most of what we had grown and what was available. My dad didn't like to waste anything."

When World War II broke out, the Australian government contacted Brian's dad and asked if he could also

dry slices of potato to be shipped to the troops on the battlegrounds.

"At Kersbrook, we had no access to power," Brian said. "So, we looked for a new property that would allow us to meet the demand of the new work."

The four-hectare site at Gumeracha was purchased for £1700 and the family moved in on July 1, 1940. Their first shipment of dried potatoes was sent off in November.

"We started with a wood-fired furnace, which we had to fuel from trees that were chopped from the surrounding scrubland," Brian said.

The potatoes were placed into four-gallon tins and it was Brian's job after school to solder the lids closed to prevent air from getting in.

The shipment was sent to Port Adelaide where it was transported to the Australian Army in The Philippines.

They also sent shipments to the United States Army when they were stationed in The Philippines under General McArthur.