

Transcript of Patricia Pennington Audio Clip

Well, believe it or not my earliest real memory was the announcement on the radio that we were at war with Germany. I know that's hard to believe but I can remember the fear because my mother was actually washing me in the kitchen sink and she left me standing on the draining board ran to the radio and I have this very strong memory of my mother sobbing and I was screaming because I was petrified, I'd just been left standing on the draining board. I obviously didn't know that was what it was all about, that I found out from my mother a good time later. You know, I remember asking her I said, 'I have this memory' and she said, 'Yes, that's right', she said, 'I did leave you', she said, 'I was'. My mother was the sort of person who thought once the war was announced that the very next day the bombs were going to start dropping. So that's my very earliest recollection. I've got very distorted memories of Anderson shelters and Morrisons being built, putting in the garden. Again I'm getting this all wrong chronologically, I know, but sorry if it sounds like I'm rambling. I remember in the Anderson shelter that it filled with water. It was always water at the bottom of this shelter in the garden outside and my dad said he hated it ever since I peed in his ear because I was it the top bunk. He thought the water was coming from above, in actual fact, I had done that so the Anderson shelter was not used after that and we used the Morrison shelter, the indoor shelter. Of course, I loved it all the excitement because I was too young to realise how frightening the whole thing was. To me it was tremendously exciting. I know my mother used to cry. I used to say, 'I don't know why you're crying? We're in the shelter; if a bomb drops we're fine'. And I totally believed that. So for me the war was quite good fun, most of it. But I have to say when the air raid warden – siren used to go off I used to feel the tightening at the time but the excitement took over. I do remember on one occasion and was standing at the back door after the siren had gone off and I watched the searchlight dancing across the sky showing up the silver barrage balloons and I could hear the thud of the guns and see the puff smoke whilst I searched desperately for the object of the attack and I wasn't disappointed. There it was, an enemy plane, int – intermittently exposed by the searchlights. I stood mesmerised, I was totally ignoring the fact that my mother had been calling to get into the shelter. I'm afraid I ignored her to my cost, in her panic to get me to the shelter she grabbed me by whatever came to hand and it happened to be my pigtails. I can remember physically being dragged by my mother by my pigtails into the shelter [laughs].