

Excerpt from Oral History Interview with Adele Popper

A CSUN student named Janice interviewed Adele Popper as part of an upper-division English class assignment on September 14, 2001. The interviews she and her classmates completed are now the World War II Survivors Oral History Project. In this clip, Popper discusses her experiences as a civilian living and working in London during the Blitz from 1940-1941, especially two instances in which she narrowly escaped German bombs.

Transcript:

Adele: And I remember one time my friend, who died four years ago in England, my mother was evacuated at the time, and she didn't want to go to the shelter, so we stayed in the bedroom, and she and I were sleeping, and my father came in. And he knew we were sleeping there but he had no other place to sleep, his bed was there—it was his room, so he went to sleep and say from here to the house across the street...

Janice. Uh hum...

Adele: Not even that far. The window—our bedroom window was there and then there was a street and then the other side, it wasn't quite as far as that, and a bomb dropped on the house on the other side and it shook us all up. My father slept right through it. Didn't even wake up. Didn't bother him. Me, I was like this. I was terrified.

Janice: Did you stay in your house then or did you head to the shelter?

Adele: No! It was too late, the bombs had dropped and you can't run while the bombs are dropping. You know, 'cause that's stupidity. One other, I'll never forget this. They had what they called firebombs. There's another name for them, but I can't remember what they called them [incendiary bombs]. They were little bombs that when they dropped they caused a fire, okay?

Janice: Uh hum.

Adele: Well, I came home from work one day and the sirens had gone, and the bombs were dropping. And I knew there was nobody—that my mother had gone to the shelter—so I knocked next door to my neighbor, her name was Yvonne, and I said 'they'd gone can I come in', and she said 'sure'. And I was in her parlor, we all three, there was her, her daughter, and myself, who sat there and she was praying, 'Please God don't let the bombs hit us', you know, 'cause we didn't have time to get to a shelter. And there was a knock on the door. There was a rap just like that [raps once on counter], one knock. So she said, 'Oh, must be somebody who wants to come in.' We went, what it was, was a firebomb—a small fire bomb had hit the door, bounced back on the other side of the road and caught fire on the house that was on the other side. So all I can say is God was with me the whole time. 'Cause it bounced off of the door and bounced across the street which wasn't—our streets are narrow back home—and caught the building on fire. Thank God there was nobody in it. They had already gone down in the shelters.