

Jack Boag And His Wife Isabella



Jack and Isabella Boag, who you can see on this picture, were among the good people that took me in as a young refugee in England. They lived in a gorgeous bungalow on the outskirts of Rugby, and the view from their dining room windows looked out over meadows and fields of ripe wheat. So that we could get our fill of that beautiful view, all three of us used to sit on the same side of the dining room table, and fed not only our bodies with food, but also our souls with beauty.

The town of Rugby lies not far from Coventry, and so when Coventry was subjected to destructive German air raids, Rugby had its share, too. It was always a very unpleasant experience, when German bombers were flying above our heads. Jack was a member of the fire department, and always when the air raid siren sounded, he'd take his safety helmet and flashlight, and go to work. In the meantime, Isabella and I would hide under the stairs to the attic, and from scratchy khaki wool knit scarves, gloves and socks for soldiers.

When after several nighttime air raids, Coventry was almost razed to the ground, one morning the Boags brought over an older married pair from Coventry and their mentally ill daughter, who'd lost the roof over their heads. Because that lady was bedridden, Jack and Isabella even gave them their bedroom. And this isn't the end of the list of new occupants of our house at that time. In England my sister Eva was attending a nursing school at the orthopedic hospital in Birmingham. At the time of the Coventry air raids, she was helping out at the Rugby hospital, and the Boags arranged for her to live with us, too; she shared my tiny little room with me.

Back then, all this seemed natural to me, but today when I look back, I feel a deep admiration for my foster parents, which in their attitude and actions showed an almost unrivalled example of selfless service. They definitely set the bar of my obstacle race through life very high.