

A WARTIME REFLECTION

By Ann Prud'homme

Last Wednesday, I was given an easy assignment. Go to this couple's house, get a picture and get a story. Now, I will be the first to admit that I do not have a lot of experience with reporting, but I thought what the heck, how hard can it be. Well here I am one week after my meeting and I am perplexed as how to write this article. I guess the beginning is a good place to start.

Ray and Joan Greve are an older couple who live down the Dunborough Line. Their claim to fame, and the reason I was to meet them was because they had won 1st prize in the Wallacetown Optimist Club lighting contest. Now I left the office with camera, notepad and directions to the house and headed off to my first "assignment". I quickly found that the directions were unnecessary as their home was quite unmistakable. There were lights everywhere. The house, trees, birdhouse, garden gate, everything was lit up. Bright yes, tacky no. It all seemed to fit. I was greeted by Mr. Greve and welcomed into the most charming, cozy house I have seen. I digress though. You see, there was supposed to be a story about these lights, something that tied back to World War II. I still didn't know what to expect so I made myself comfortable and prepared to take notes.

Joan Greve was a nurse during the war in England. The Battle of Britain as she called it, left England in a state of virtual darkness for close to six years. Black Hell is what it was called. She told me horror sto-



Mrs. Greve on the left when she was a nurse in England during World War II. Mrs. Greve is now enjoying life in Canada.

ries of seeing tiny babies in traction, school houses being bombed with children in them. Tales of walking down the street with her issued helmet waiting for bombs to drop so they could go to help the injured. There were memories of once strong men walking into hospitals with body parts of their friends and comrades tucked safely under their arms. Her own home was bombed during this war, as were many others. When asked how she was able to cope with the horror going on around, she quoted Winston Churchill "We shall Never Surrender". These words are what

kept her and everyone else going. The fight for freedom and life is what kept them going. Now her husband is informing me about all these undecorated heroes, the nurses, firefighters, and the doctors, the people who battled the aftermath of the ongoing bombings. These were the people who risked their own lives to save others. They then told me about the doodlebugs, bomber planes that would fly overhead and when you heard their engines cut out, you knew that a bomb was being released. As horrifying as it was, it was hypnotic to watch and listen for the engine to cut out and

to feel the earthquake-like aftermath of the bomb hitting its target.

We stopped for a bit of tea and cookies and Mr. Greve started to talk to me some more about after the war. How sometimes Canadians take things for granted. Not many of us are aware of the first Canadian casualty of the war. 10 year old Margaret Hayworth from Hamilton Ontario was killed when the Athena, the boat she was traveling on was attacked. Her funeral was a nationwide event with Premiers, Representatives of the Prime Minister and many other

National Dignitaries present. All of this attention, and a Memorial was never erected in her memory. So he wants us to stop and think once in a while what would have happened to Canada had the war gone differently. Maybe Remembrance Day is not enough. We need to think that not everyone from the war is dead and that these people remember more than just on November 11th.

So we go back to the lights, the whole point of this story I once thought. What exactly do these lights represent. Mr. Greve started setting up his lights in August of last year. When they finally lit their property for the first time this Christmas season, Mrs. Greve stopped for a moment and reflected back, back to England when the war was finally over. The lights she said, reminded her of Lester Square, where there were lights everywhere for the first time. "Black Hell" was over and the people, thousands of them, converged on the square and celebrated all night. She remembers sleeping on the stairs that night having missed the train home. Quite a change from just days before.

So, this was the story of the lights, one couple's memories of a horrible time and the joy they found in freedom. So here I sit, a little wiser, and contemplative, and I thank the Greves for the wonderful gift they gave me, a complete stranger... the gift of the past that I never could imagine on my own, and I hope that perhaps you the reader have found something deeper than a bunch of lights in this, my first assignment.

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