

+

' THE SUITCASE '

ON JUNE 9, 2009, A MR. RHEA CONTACTS A MR. ROBERT SMITH, THE CHIEF OF POLICE AT THE RENO VA MEDICAL CENTER TO TELL HIM THAT HE WISHES TO GIVE HIM A SUITCASE CONTAINING PERSONAL ITEMS APPARENTLY FROM A DECEASED MILITARY PERSON. MR. RHEA STATES THAT THEY HAD ACQUIRED 'THE SUITCASE' FROM A STORAGE SALE OF UNCLAIMED ITEMS AND UPON LEARNING OF ITS CONTENTS DECIDED TO RETURN THE SUITCASE TO THE MILITARY TO SEE IF THEY COULD LOCATE ITS OWNER INSTEAD OF THROWING IT AWAY.

WHEN UPON RECEIVING 'THE SUITCASE' AND REALIZING IT WAS FILLED WITH PASSIONATE LETTERS FROM A WAR BRIDE TO HER HUSBAND STATIONED IN EUROPE AS A SQUADRON COMMANDER OF AMERICAN B - 17 BOMBERS AS WELL AS THE LETTERS HE HAD SENT TO HER; AND THAT THERE WERE ALSO LETTERS FROM THE PARENTS TO THEIR SON; AND ALSO LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION AND INFORMATION REGARDING HIS LAST MISSION, FROM THE MILITARY; MR. SMITH SAID, QUOTE "HE WAS DETERMINED TO FIND SOME RELATIVE OF AN AIR FORCE MAJOR NAMED LAMONT D. HAAS AND TO GIVE THEM 'THE SUITCASE'.

THUS BEGAN FOR MR. SMITH, AN INTENSE AND COMMITTED SEARCH AND RESEARCH AND THE SENDING OF E-MAILS TO FIND A RELATIVE OF MAJOR HAAS.

ON OCTOBER SIXTH OF 2009, AFTER A FOUR MONTHS SEARCH, A POTENTIAL ACHIEVEMENT OF HIS DRIVING GOAL CAME TO MR. SMITH, WHEN HE RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM A YOUNG COLLEGE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, SHELBY HAAS, WHO HAPPENED TO SEE HIS SEARCH NOTICE. SHELBY IDENTIFIED HERSELF AS THE DAUGHTER OF AN ATTORNEY NAMED LEE L. HAAS, WHO WAS THE SON OF A DR. FRED HAAS, WHO SHE BELIEVED WAS THE BROTHER OF MAJOR LAMONT D. HAAS.

HAVING CONTEMPLATED THAT AT BEST, HOPEFULLY HE MIGHT LOCATE SOME DISTANT RELATIVE, MR. SMITH DIALED THE NUMBER HE WAS GIVEN BY SHELBY, WITH THE EXCITEMENT OF A POTENTIAL LOTTERY WINNER. YES, IT WAS THE BROTHER OF MAJOR HAAS ON THE PHONE, HIS SEARCH HAD PAID OFF.

WITH A GREAT SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AND SATISFACTION, MR. SMITH THEN RELATED TO DR. HAAS THE STORY OF 'THE SUITCASE' AND ITS CONTENTS OF OVER A HUNDRED LETTERS NEARLY SEVENTY YEARS OLD THAT HAD BEEN WRITTEN BETWEEN MAJOR HAAS AND HIS WIFE AFTER HE WAS SENT OVERSEAS AND THAT MR. SMITH, NOW THAT HE HAD

LOCATED A FAMILY SURVIOR, WOULD BE SHIPPING 'THE SUITCASE' THAT HAD BEEN LOST ALL THESE YEARS TO DR. HAAS.

FOR DR. HAAS TO HEAR ABOUT THESE LETTERS WRITTEN BY HIS BROTHER AND SISTER-IN-LAW, CAME AS A GREAT SHOCK SINCE HE HAD TOTALLY LOST CONTACT WITH HIS SISTER-IN-LAW, BETTY LOU, AND HER DAUGHTER LINDA LOU, FOR OVER SIXTY YEARS. THUS IT WAS WITH GREAT EXCITEMENT THAT PLANS WERE MADE FOR THE SEENDING AND RECEIVING OF "THE SUITCASE".

TO INSURE THAT "THE SUITCASE" WOULD REACH ITS DESTINATION, MR. SMITH, AND MRS. HAAS DAILY TRACKED ITS TRAVEL FROM RENO TO CLEARWATER, FLORIDA. ON THE SCHEDULED DAY OF ITS ARRIVAL, MRS. HAAS WAS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE SUITCASE. FINALLY A PARCEL DELIVERY TRUCK CAME DOWN THE STREET BUT IT NEVER STOPPED BUT WENT TO THE HOUSE NEXTDOOR. MRS. HAAS WAS CURIOUS AND WENT TO LOOK AT THE SEALED BOX THAT HAD BEEN JUST LEFT ON THE FRONT DOOR STEPS OF HER NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE. LOOKING AT THE LABEL, SURE ENOUGH, IT WAS ADDRESSED TO DR. FRED HAAS. IRONICALLY, THE LOST SUITCASE COULD HAVE BEEN LOST AGAIN HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR HER DILIGENCE.

THUS IT AS THAT WHEN I AND MY WIFE OPENED 'THE SUITCASE' IT WAS ALMOST WITH A REVERENTIAL AWE THAT WE LOOKED UPON THE LETTERS AND CONTEMPLATED THE STORY OF THEIR ORIGIN, THEIR PRESERVATION, THEIR CONTENT AND THEIR DISARRAY! CONSEQUENTLY WE DECIDED TO DEVOTE OUR UPCOMING WEEK OF VACATION AT A CONDO, TO ORGANIZE THEN READ AS APPROPRIATE, THE LETTERS. WHEN THAT TIME CAME WE FIRST ASSORTED THE LETTERS ACCORDING TO THE DATE OF THEIR POST MARK. THEN WE DIVIDED THE LETTERS ACCORDING TO THEIR RETURN ADRESS NOTING IF THEY WERE WRITTEN BY MAJOR HAAS, OR HIS WIFE, OR HIS PARENTS.

TO READ THE LETTERS, I TOOK THOSE THAT WERE WRITTEN BY MY BROTHER, LAMONT, AND MY WIFE, DOROTHY, TOOK THOSE WRITTEN BY BETTY LOU. THEN ACCORDING TO THE CLOSEST DATES BETWEEN THE TWO, WE WOULD READ ALLOUD TO EACH OTHER THE CONTENT OF THE LETTERS. THUS WE COULD BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN EACH OTHER AND THUS BE ABLE TO BETTER RELATE AND UNDERSTAND AND MORE FULLY COMPREHEND THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR LETTERS.

IT SOON BECAME VERY APPARENT THAT THESE TWO PEOPLE WERE DESPERATELY IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER AND DID THEIR VERY BEST TO SO COMMUNICATE THIS PASSION TO AND FOR EACH OTHER. SURELY THEIR COULD NOT BE WRITTEN, AT ANY TIME OR PLACE BY ANY ONE

ELSE, SUCH EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE FOR EACH OTHER. CONSEQUENTLY WE FELT IT WAS INAPPROPRIATE TO READ THOSE PORTIONS OF THE LETTERS THAT DEALT WITH INTIMATE EXPRESSIONS.

IN AN OVERVIEW OF THE LETTERS, THERE WERE TWO EXPRESSIONS THAT STOOD OUT BY THEIR BEING STATED AND BY IMPLICATION. THESE WERE; 1. A RECOGNITION OF A SOVEREIGN GOD CONTROLLING THEIR LIVES AND DESTINY: (THIS POINT ALSO CHARACTERIZED THOSE LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE PARENTS OF MAJOR HAAS AS HIS FATHER NEVER WROTE A LETTER TO HIS SON WITHOUT TELLING HIM TO BE SURE THAT EVERY DAY HE SHOULD READ PSALM 91). 2. A CONSIDERATION OF WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO ONE OF THEM SHOULD THE OTHER PERSON DIE. WITH REGARD TO REFERRING TO GOD, THEIR WERE MANY HOPEFUL EXPRESSIONS OF SCRIPTURE FROM THE BIBLE AS TO GOD'S PROTECTION OVER THEM. AS TO THE MATTER OF ONE OF THEM LOSING THE OTHER DUE TO DEATH; THERE WAS FOUND IN THE SUITCASE A SINGLE LOOSE PAGE WITHOUT AN ENVELOPE, OR DATE, OR HEADING OR TITLE, BUT WHICH BY ITS POETIC MESSAGE IDENTIFIES IT AS BEING WRITTEN BY MAJOR LAMONT HAAS.

“ SUPPOSE, DEAR WIFE, THIS DAY SHOULD BE
THE LAST ONE ON EARTH FOR , YOU OR ME
THAT ONE OF US, LIFE'S JOURNEY DONE,
WOULD NEVER SEE ANOTHER SUN
ARISE UPON THE SMILING EARTH
OR SEE ANOTHER SPRING DAY'S BIRTH,
SUPPOSING ALL OF THIS WE KNEW,
BUT NOT WHICH ONE “WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

WOULD NOT EACH MOMENT OF OUR STAY
BRING SOME NEW TOKEN ON ITS WAY
OF FOND REGARD, OF LOVE SUPREME
TO MAKE EACH FLYING MOMENT SEEM
A LITTLE SPACE OF HEAVEN ON EARTH,
A PRELUDE TO THE HEAVENLY BIRTH?
WOULD WE NOT EACH DO ALL WE MIGHT
TO MAKE THE OTHER'S TREAK LIGHT?

NOW, VERY SOON, FOR AUGHT WE KNOW,
THE CALL MAY COME FOR ONE TO GO;
THEN LET US LIVE EACH PASSING DAY
AS IF IT WERE OUR LAST TO STAY;
YOU DO FOR ME: I'LL DO FOR YOU;
AND SO WE'LL PASS LIFE'S JOURNEY THROUGH,
AND ALL THERE IS OF HEAVEN BELOW,
WE'LL GET EACH MOMENT AS WE GO.

"... SO WE'LL PASS LIFE'S JOURNEY THROUGH" THESE CLOSING LINES OF THE POEM THAT BEGAN WITH THE WORDS, "THIS DAY SHOULD BE THE LAST ONE ON EARTH FOR, YOU OR ME", AS WRITTEN BY MAJOR LAMONT HAAS TO HIS WIFE WHILE SERVING HIS COUNTRY OVERSEAS, POIGNANTLY EPITOMIZED HIS LIFE, LOVE AND DEATH.

SO IT WAS THAT 'THE SUIT CASE' WAS CLOSED AND PLACED ALONG WITH THE OTHER PERSONAL POSSESSIONS OF THE BROTHER OF MAJOR LAMONT HAAS, DR. FRED HAAS, PENDING THE SUGGESTION BY MR. SMITH THAT PORTIONS OF ITS CONTENTS BE SHARED WITH THE U.S. ARCHIVES, THE RENO MUSEUM AND VANGUARD MAGAZINE, A V.A. PUBLICATION. HOWEVER, THIS REMOVAL OF PORTIONS OF 'THE SUITCASE' NEVER HAPPENED BECAUSE, AS IT WOULD SURPRISINGLY TURN OUT, THERE WAS STILL ANOTHER PERSON TO WHOM 'THE SUITCASE' SHOULD BE GIVEN WITH ALL ITS CONTENTS PRESERVED AS THEY WERE STORED IN 'THE SUITCASE'.

THIS NEW AND UNEXPECTED AND NOT SOUGHT AFTER AS A MISSING PERSON, CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF MR. SMITH FROM A PERSON WHO HAD READ THE SAME SEARCH NOTICE THAT HAD CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF SHELBY HAAS ALMOST FIVE YEARS BEFORE. SO IT WAS THAT MR. SMITH RECEIVED A PHONE CALL ON JANUARY 16th OF 2014, FROM A ROBIN BEAMISH WHO IDENTIFIED HERSELF AS THE DAUGHTER OF LINDA LOU, AND THE GRAND- DAUGHTER OF MAJOR HAAS AND HIS WIFE BETTY LOU.

ROBIN THEN INITIALLY SHARED WITH MR. SMITH THAT BETTY LOU HAD DIED FROM LEUKEMIA IN 1987 WITH HER DAUGHTER LINDA LOU AT HER BEDSIDE. ALSO, SHE SHARED THAT HER MOTHER, LINDA LOU, TOLD HER THEIR WERE TWO MISSING SUITCASES, THE ONE FILLED WITH LETTERS AND THE OTHER FILLED WITH THE UNIFORMS OF MAJOR HAAS. (FORTUNATELY, IT WAS 'THE SUITCASE' FILLED WITH THE PERSONAL LETTERS THAT WAS FOUND).

ROBIN SAID THAT BEFORE THE LETTERS WERE LOST, HER MOTHER LINDA, AS A LITTLE GIRL, SPOKE OF HAVING HER MOTHER BETTY LOU, READ THE LETTERS FROM MAJOR HAAS ALOUD TO HER. SHE ALSO TOLD MR. SMITH THAT LINDA HAD MOVED TO NORTH CAROLINA, NEAR TO WHERE ROBIN AND HER HUSBAND MIKE LIVED.

UPON HIS LEARNING OF THE EXISTANCE OF LINDA LOU, THE ONLY CHILD OF MAJOR HAAS, AND HER WHEREABOUTS, MR. SMITH IMMEDIATELY GOT IN TOUCH WITH ME. CONSEQUENTALLY WE MADE TENTATIVE PLANS TO MEET IN EXACTLY ONE MONTH, FEBRUARY 16TH IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA; AT WHICH TIME MR. SMITH WOULD HOST OUR ALL COMING TOGETHER AS THE LIVING SURVIVORS OF MAJOR

LAMONT D. HAAS KILLED IN A BOMBING MISSION IN EUROPE ON
SEPTEMBER 1, 1944.

THUS AFTER SIXTY-NINE YEARS, FIVE MONTHS AND FIFTEEN DAYS
SINCE MY BROTHER'S DEATH AND THE DEATH OF HER FATHER, LINDA,
LOU, WHO I LOST CONTACT WITH OVER SIXTY FIVE YEARS AGO, AND I
WILL BE MEETING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME! AFTER SHARING
LONG TIME MISSED HUGS AND KISSES FOR HER AND FROM HER AND HER
CHILDREN, I WILL THEN GIVE HER - 'THE SUITCASE'.

AMAZED IN HOW GOD WORKS

FRED W. HAAS

P.S. WITHIN TWO HOURS OF COMPLETING THIS LETTER I BECAME AWARE
FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT TWO WEEKS EARLIER, LINDA LOU HAD CALLED
ME TO EXPRESS HER THRILL OF LEARNING ABOUT THE DISCOVERY OF
OUR EXISTENCE AND HER EXCITEMENT ABOUT OUR SOON FACE-TO-FACE
MEETING. I WAS THRILLED TO GET HER EXCITING MESSAGE AND
DEVASTATED TO CONTEMPLATE THE DISSAPOINTMENT SHE MUST HAVE
EXPERIENCED IN NOT HAVING RECEIVED A RETURN CALL FROM ME. I
CAN ONLY PRAY THAT LINDA LOU, ALONG WITH ME, SEE THIS AS STILL
ANOTHER, BUT THE LAST, BARRIER TO OUR FINALLY BEING REUNITED
AND HER RECEIVING 'THE SUITCASE'