

LIFE

Saga resonates with readers

I RECENTLY wrote about an old suitcase that I befriended, have been traveling with and calling E.W.B. for the past few years (these are the initials inscribed by the handle).

I didn't expect any need for a follow-up. The article was my expression of gratitude for life and opportunities for growth. But within 48 hours of the article's publication in *The Free Lance-Star*, I received a slew of messages.

Each writer was sure—with a fair degree of certainty—of recognizing the



COMMENT >>

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bag as belonging to a grandmother who had the initials E.W.B.

They shared stories of

beautiful and loving women who went through life spreading joy and hope to those around them.

One told me of a teacher, historian and poet.

Another told me of a traveler who ventured to China to meet her husband, also an American, both working on rebuilding the country after World War II.

They told me of a woman who became a spelunker at the age of 60, of a daughter who traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and of a devoted wife who was widowed at an early age with

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three children, but who never took off her wedding ring and never dated again.

What I have been reminded of through this little article is just how incredible the stories are of everyone around us, and how much love there is to uncover if we make the minimal efforts to make these discoveries.

I have been reminded that if we pull on little strings of yarn we will sometimes discover balls the size of planets of all sorts of vibrant colors. If we peek into holes, we will sometimes discover ancient labyrinths of lost civilizations. If we rub off the dust and polish old hunks of metal, we will sometimes discover treasures of brilliant solid gold.

I have been reminded to always be a seeker, and that every human being has a story to share.

The truth is that whoever E.W.B. might have been, the story of E.W.B. the suitcase allowed people to reflect on their lives and those of their relatives, and about how rich our experiences can be in this brief span of life we are given.

One woman wasn't 100 percent certain it was her grandmother's suitcase, but told me her story—the story of a woman who had a long, selfless life filled with love and beauty. Her final chapter, before she passed away a few years ago at 95, was marked by a very sad and severe case of Alzheimer's disease. The granddaughter ended her letter this way:

"Your article helped my family remember THAT grandma, the one before the Alzheimer's set in. Thank you."

E.W.B., thank you again.