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A time to mourn

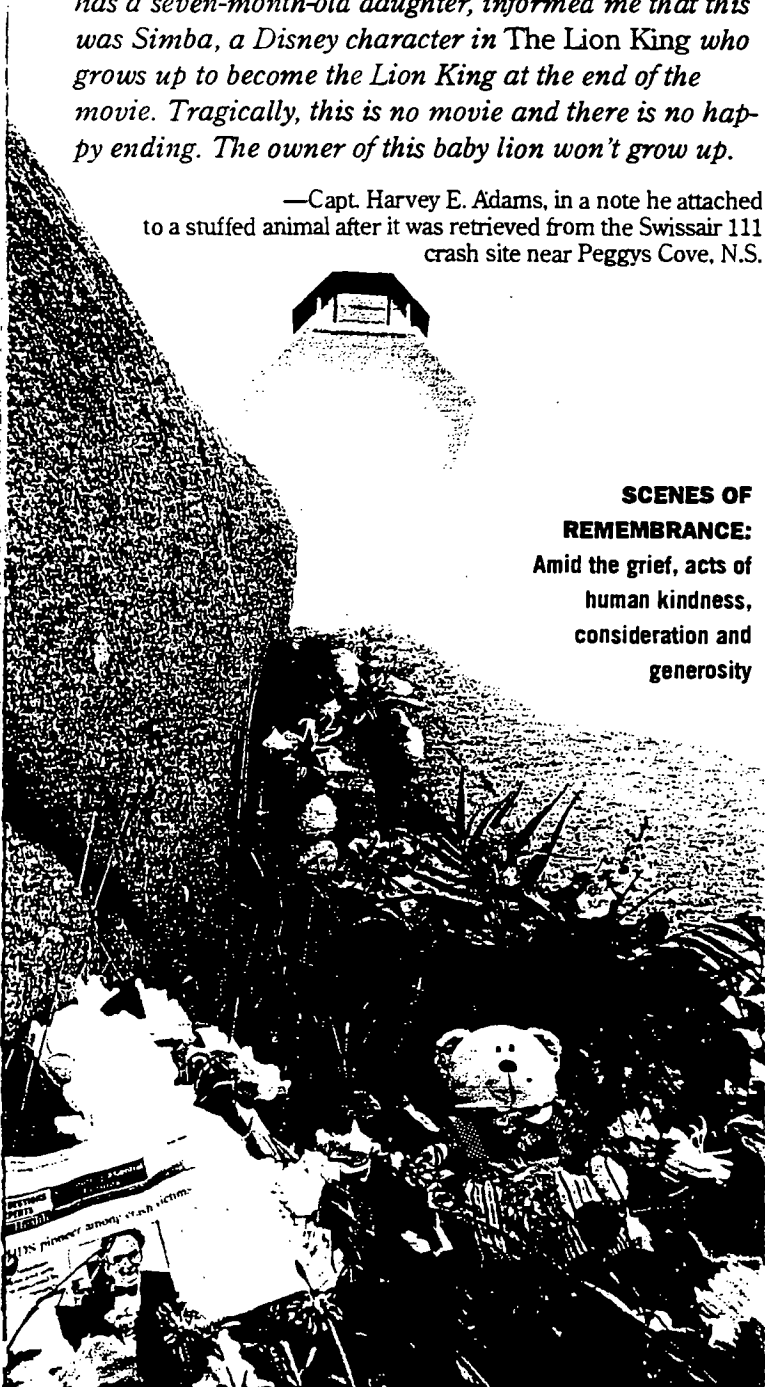
BY BRIAN BERGMAN

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Dear Sir: This little stuffed toy whose label identified it as a Lion King was retrieved Friday, Sept. 4. It was carefully washed with the hope that it may provide some family member with solace as a tangible connection with the child to whom it belonged. My son, who has a seven-month-old daughter, informed me that this was Simba, a Disney character in The Lion King who grows up to become the Lion King at the end of the movie. Tragically, this is no movie and there is no happy ending. The owner of this baby lion won't grow up.

—Capt. Harvey E. Adams, in a note he attached to a stuffed animal after it was retrieved from the Swissair 111 crash site near Peggys Cove, N.S.

SCENES OF REMEMBRANCE:
Amid the grief, acts of human kindness, consideration and generosity



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SNEIJMAGLEANS

The kindness of a coast guard captain who wants to provide some small measure of comfort to strangers who may live a world away. The consideration of a chief medical examiner who takes time out from the grisly task of identifying and cataloguing body parts to meet with grieving relatives and who later chokes back tears as he recounts the experience. The generosity of a woman who has just lost her father and stepmother, and who addresses a public memorial service not to vent her grief, but to express her heartfelt gratitude for how Nova Scotians—and all Canadians—responded in a time of crisis.

These were among the points of light that pierced the pervading gloom in the aftermath of the Sept. 2 crash of Swissair Flight 111, which killed all 229 people onboard. In a week when investigators sought answers to the big questions—had the plane crashed as a result of human error, mechanical failure or a combination of the two?—many others touched by the tragedy appeared to be acting on an instinctive human need to connect. "It was like it happened to your own family or next-door neighbor," says Lloyd O'Neill, a Roman Catholic priest from Halifax who was among dozens of clergy and psychologists who counselled victims' relatives from as far afield as Switzerland and Saudi Arabia. "All of a sudden, we were brothers and sisters in need."

The fatal incident that brought these strangers together began when a routine flight between New York City and Geneva went abruptly awry less than an hour after takeoff on Sept. 2. At 10:14 p.m. Atlantic time, Capt. Urs Zimmermann told the air traffic control tower in Moncton, N.B., that there was smoke in the cockpit of his Boeing MD-11 aircraft. Just 16 minutes later, the plane smashed into the sea, 14 km off of Peggys Cove.

For the hundreds of transportation safety and police investigators assembled in Halifax last week, the central puzzle remained the same. What had gone so wrong, so quickly, to make an experienced crew working for an airline with a commendable reputation for safety standards lose control of their aircraft? Any comprehensive answer to that question will be impossible until the information on Swissair Flight 111's cockpit voice recorder, recovered by divers at week's end, is analyzed. In the meantime, evidence began to trickle out that provided some clues as to what may have sealed the fate of the aircraft's passengers and crew.

Some of the most revealing information came from the full transcript released last week of the conversations that took place between the pilots and air traffic controllers during the flight's final moments. It suggests that, despite the initial reports of smoke at 10:14, Zimmermann and his crew felt they had the situation under control. After declaring "Pan, pan, pan" (a dis-

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