The Story of 1-4-3

15 December 2007

Dear A.G.A. Correa & Son,

It was a very pleasant surprise to look at your unique and attractive catalog and discover the small picture of Minot's Light and the creation of 1.4.3. jewelry. Minot's light and the signal of 1-4-3 has long held a very special meaning to us, particularly from my wife Ellen's side of the family.

In the 1890's, Ellen's grandfather, Mr. Arthur Lyman, purchased a house for summer use located on a point of land in Cohasset that had a magnificent view of the ocean and looked out on a lighthouse built on Minot's Ledge. Minot's Ledge was a navigational hazard to the many sailing vessels that plied the coastal waters south of the entrance to Boston Harbor. The U.S. Lighthouse Service began a program of identifying lighthouses along the coast by giving them distinctive signal patterns, so they could be identified from afar for navigational purposes. The U.S. Lighthouse Service randomly designated a signal of 1-4-3 to the Minot's Ledge lighthouse in 1894. The Lighthouse Service never finished the task of giving different signal patterns to all the lighthouses as the Service was dissolved and responsibility for maintaining the lighthouses was taken over the by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Shortly after the lighthouse on Minot's ledge began its designated signal sequence of 1-4-3 spaced over 30 seconds, romantics in the area began calling it the "I love you" light. The single flash stood for I. After several seconds, four consecutive flashes stood for LOVE. After several seconds, three consecutive flashes stood for YOU. The signal sequence of 1-4-3 would be repeated throughout the working cycle of the lighthouse. Many a romantic couple would sit on the rocks or on beaches within sight of Minot's being inspired by its visual message. 1-4-3 soon became a fixture in the local culture around Hingham, Cohasset, Situate and Hull. 1-4-3 would often be jotted down as part of a closing statement added to many a note or letter sent to family or friends. Many a code for a lock, a house alarm, an ATM number, part of a number plate etc. includes 1-4-3 in it because it is a simple number to remember and has a happy meaning behind it. One of the songs from the musical comedy put on by the Hasty Pudding Club of Harvard College in 1916 is titled, "When the Lighthouse Sends the Message 1-4-3." Its romantic lyrics include these words: "That's the place I want to be with my girlie on my knee, turtle dovin' me, love-love-lov'in me, where you can see One-Four-Three: "I love you" says the lighthouse as he flashes over the sea." (Please see a copy of the sheet music below)

Ellen's parents, Henry (Bim) and Julia Simonds spent their summer months with the Lyman's in the Cohasset house and Ellen and her brothers and sisters grew up enjoying their summer activities in Cohasset with lots of swimming, tennis and sailing. There were two lighthouse keepers living on Minot's and Ellen, at age nine to twelve, would sail her Rookie out to the lighthouse, tie her boat alongside, climb up the iron ladder and deliver home made cookies to the lighthouse keepers. The employment of the lighthouse keepers on Minot's was terminated in 1946. Because of vast improvements in navigation equipment and electronics following World War II, the Coast Guard wanted to change every lighthouse to a uniform signal and do away with the old numbered flash sequences that had been established by the defunct U.S. Lighthouse Service. Mr. Simonds was aware of what the Coast Guard had in mind and decided he would do something about it to save 1-4-3. He devised a two prong attack that involved (1) getting to know, on a personal basis, the District Commander of the Coast Guard who was stationed in Boston and (2) make his 1-4-3 rescue mission known to his friend, Lev Saltonstall, who was, at that point, a Senator in Washington and seek his help at the top level. Bim Simonds

was a very affable fellow who made friends easily. It was a great pleasure for him to invite the District Commander of the Coast Guard to cocktails and dinner in Cohasset. Accordingly, he instructed his children to be on their very best behavior for the evening. Cocktails would be served as the sun was setting over the yardarm and Minot's would begin displaying its distinctive flash of 1-4-3. Sitting on the porch, gazing out over the water, getting more mellow as the cocktail session progressed, how could one not agree that the distinguished flash of Minot's was a fascination to behold and what a shame it would be to turn this light into an ordinary blink like all the others - that 1-4-3 was an integral part of the maritime history of the area and it would be so easy for the Coast Guard to preserve that heritage by just leaving it alone and not bothering to go to the expense of destroying its distinctive character.

In the meantime, Senator Saltonstall, would meet with the Commandant of the Coast Guard in Washington and make his case for a slight favor on the part of the Coast Guard on behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachussetts by requesting that the Coast Guard defer any work order to change the flash sequence of Minot's Light. The Commandant would convey this request to the District Commander who would be well aware of the situation because of his prior contact with Henry Simonds and 1-4-3 would be saved for the time being. There were two separate occasions when the District Commander was replaced by either retirement or promotion. In each case, the departing Commander would introduce Mr. Simonds to the new Commander and a long cocktail session and dinner in Cohasset would soon follow. Mr. Simonds was well aware that the matter

of protecting 1-4-3 could be quite fragile, especially after his friend, Senator Saltonstall, retired.

Many years later, others in Cohasset were working diligently with the Department of Interior on plans to put Minot's light in the National Register of Historic Places. This was done primarily on the basis of the unique 42 granite blocks that were keyed into position to serve as the base of the new granite lighthouse that was completed in September 1860 after the original lighthouse was twisted and destroyed by wave action in 1851. Also, included in their petition was reference to Minot's long history of guiding ships to the outer reaches of Boston Harbor and the notoriety of the signal that was emitted by the lighthouse. Minot's Light was accepted as an Historic Place in the 1980's, but few, if any, of those who worked on that project had any knowledge that the distinctive signal of Minot's light, which they had taken for granted, was only saved from being a standard, single flash by the determination and imaginative efforts of Mr. Henry G. Simonds starting back in the late 1940's.

Sincerely,

William Stout