

RAMP AGENT TO THE RESCUE

Airline employee reunites a boy and his favorite toy, Buzz Lightyear

BY SYDNEY PAGE

Special to The Washington Post
From the back seat of a rental car, a concerned 2-year-old boy repeatedly asked his parents the same question: "Where's Buzz?"

Ashley Davis frantically sifted through the family's luggage in search of her son Hagen's beloved Buzz Lightyear action figure. It was nowhere to be found. Hagen was distraught.

"To Hagen, it was the end of the world," Davis, 31, said. "He wanted his Buzz. He is super-attached."

It was Jan. 30, and the family of three had just traveled from Sacramento to Dallas, after booking a last-minute flight to attend a funeral.

"My husband's uncle passed away very suddenly. It was all very fast," said Davis, who was seven months pregnant at the time.

She calmly explained to her son that Buzz was on a "special mission" and would return to him shortly. In other words, she was planning to purchase a replacement toy at a nearby Target store.

Little did Davis know, though, that Buzz was, in fact, on a special mission, and would soon be back.

Last flight of the night

Jason William Hamm, a Southwest Airlines ramp agent at the Clinton National Airport in Little Rock, Arkansas, spearheaded an elaborate effort to return Buzz to his rightful owner.

He commenced the reunion mission after Beth Buchanan, an operations agent at Southwest Airlines, discovered the toy in the aircraft, which had



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— Jason William Hamm, 47, who has worked at Southwest Airlines for 10 years

landed in Little Rock after departing from Dallas.

"It was the last flight of the night, and we always have to go through and make sure people don't leave anything," Buchanan, 56, said. "They always do."

While sweeping through the cabin, she spotted the action figure and noticed the name "Hagen" inscribed on the bottom of Buzz's boot in permanent marker — a nod to "Toy Story," since Andy writes his own name on the sole of his toys' shoes. Rather than tossing the stranded doll in the airline's lost-and-found bin, she decided to look through the passenger list.
 "I was thinking about how

this little boy is missing his little buddy," Buchanan said.

Hamm, 47, got involved in the search when he saw the toy sitting on his colleague's desk. After cross-referencing the passenger list with the name on the boot, they confirmed Buzz belonged to a 2-year-old boy from Elk Grove, California.

"Once we realized there was somebody connected to this toy, I thought, I got to get it back to him somehow," said Hamm.

Once they tracked down Hagen's information, Hamm sent an email to the family to let them know he located Buzz and wanted to return him, asking for the best address to ship the toy to.

While waiting for a response, Hamm, who has worked at Southwest Airlines for 10 years, got creative. He enjoys aviation photography and decided if he was going to convince this little boy that Buzz was truly on a mission, he would need photo evidence.

He took the action figure to the tarmac to snap some pictures in various locations. He positioned Buzz in front of an airplane, an engine and, obviously, a cockpit.

And he didn't stop there. "I thought it would be kind of cool to add a little letter to make it look like Buzz was on a mission," Hamm said. "I thought it would be a cute keepsake."

In a space ranger-esque font, Hamm hand-wrote a letter to Hagen, complete with a Buzz Lightyear logo.

"To Commander Hagen," the letter reads. "I am very excited to return to you upon completing my mission. I was able to explore the airport and



Photos by Jason William Hamm via The Washington Post
Jason William Hamm, a Southwest Airlines ramp agent, took photos of Buzz Lightyear on the tarmac and around the plane in an effort to chronicle the action figure's adventure for Hagen Davis.

spaceport in Little Rock, Arkansas while I was away, and I have included photos of my adventure. My journey has taught me a lot but I am so thankful to return to my buddy."

He signed the note: "To infinity and beyond! Your buddy, Buzz Lightyear."

'I had no idea who he was'

Once Hamm heard back from the Davis family — who said they were stunned to receive the initial email that Buzz had been located — he put together a special package for Hagen.

Hamm printed out the photos he took, bubble-wrapped Buzz, and tucked in the handwritten letter. Then he decorated the exterior of the cardboard box with a drawing of Buzz Lightyear, stars and planets, as well as classic "Toy Story" sayings, like "Not today, Zurg!" and, of course, "To infinity and beyond!"

"I wanted it to be a beautiful experience when he opened it up," Hamm said. "I just thought he would love it. I had no idea who he was, but I knew

somebody was missing Buzz, and was probably really sad."

Plus, "it was such a boring box. Why not make it cool looking?" he added. "I was smiling the whole time I was drawing. I had a blast"

For Hamm, his own parenting experiences propelled him to "go the extra mile," he said.

"I have an autistic son, and he gets attached to toys. If he loses a toy, I know how hard it is for him," said Hamm, who has two children, ages 15 and 12.

"It's the dad in me, I guess you could say," he added.

Hamm sent the package at his own expense and tracked the parcel until it finally arrived on Hagen's doorstep at the end of February.

Upon opening the package, Davis was speechless, she said. While she was relieved that Buzz was back, she did not anticipate he would return in a decorated box, complete with a handwritten note and printed photos.

"I cried when I opened it," she said. "You could see all the love he put into it"

Once the tears subsided, Davis smiled, she said, thinking of all the people who got a kick out of the Buzz-themed package.

"I wonder how many people chuckled when they saw the box with Buzz on it, as it made its way to infinity and beyond, from Arkansas all the way to California," she said.

Hagen was thrilled, too. His excitement was caught on camera, and the couple sent a video of his reaction to Hamm.

"Thank you, Jason," Hagen said, clinging eagerly to his newly returned toy.

Seeing the boy's smile, Hamm said, made it all worth it.

"When they sent the video, that made me tear up. How can you not love that?" he said.

Davis said she plans to keep the box, the card and photos in a special place for Hagen, so he can always remember the kindness a stranger showed him.

"For Jason to go above and beyond for someone he did not know, and to take that much time and effort, it's just incredible," she said.

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The non-confidential portion of the application file is available for inspection and may be inspected in the Corporation's regional office during regular business hours. Photocopies of information in the non-confidential portion of the application file will be made available upon request. Published pursuant to Section 303.7(b) of the Rules and Regulations of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.</p> <p>Jim Branson Senior Vice President Director of Retail Banking</p>	<p>1001 Legal Notices & Public Notices</p> <p>Legal Notice</p> <p>NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS MARSHA ANN HANSEN has been appointed Personal Representative of the ESTATE OF DOROTHY JULIA WILLIAMS, Decedent, by the Circuit Court, State of Oregon, Deschutes County, under Case Number 21PB01213. 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