**“GOD SAVE OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN”-AS WE ALL KNOW THE OPENING WORDS OF OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM, AND WORDS WHICH ALL BUT A SMALL MINORITY OF US WILL HAVE SUNG SINCE BIRTH -WHICH WILL NOW HAVE TO BE SLIGHTLY AMENDED.**

**WHO WOULD HAVE BELIEVED AT THE BEGINNING OF 1952 THAT ONE WORD OF OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM WOULD NOT CHANGE FOR OVER 71 YEARS. AND LOOKING AT THE WORDS OF THE ANTHEM HOW TRUE THOSE WORDS HAVE PROVED TO HAVE BEEN. FOR HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II WAS INDEED GRACIOUS AS IS TESTIFIED BY ALL WHO EVER HAD THE HONOUR TO MEET HER AND THE MILLIONS WHO FOLLOWED HER EITHER THROUGH PRESS AND TV AND MORE RECENTLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEVER HAS THERE BEEN A MORE GRACIOUS LADY.**

**THE SECOND LINE-“LONG LIVE OUR NOBLE QUEEN” ALSO RINGS OUT WITH TRUTH FOR SHE LIVED FOR 96 WONDERFUL YEARS . LITTLE DID THE YOUNG SHY PRINCESS ELIZABETH KNOW BROADCASTING FROM CAPE TOWN IN 1947 WHEN SHE REFERRED TO HER FUTURE LIFE “BE IT LONG OR SHORT” HOW LONG IT WOULD TURN OUT TO BE…AND ONE OF THE OXFORD DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS OF THE WORD NOBLE IS “HAVING OR SHOWING FINE PERSONAL QUALITIES AND HIGH MORAL PRINCIPLES.” SUCH A DEFINITION IS CERTAINLY TRUE OF OUR LATE SOVEREIGN FOR SHE ADHERED TO THE HIGH STANDARD OF MORAL PRINCIPLES SHE SET HERSELF THROUGHOUT HER LONG LIFE.**

**THOSE PRINCIPLES WERE SET AROUND HER DUTY AND SERVICE TO HER PEOPLE AS HEAD OF STATE, HEAD OF NATION AND HEAD OF THE COMMONWEALTH. AND THE QUEEN STUCK RIGIDLY TO THOSE PRINCIPLES THROUGHOUT HER ENTIRE LIFE NEVER WAVERING IN HER LOVE FOR, AND SERVICE TO HER PEOPLE AND THE STABILITY SHE BROUGHT TO THE NATION.**

**“SEND HER VICTORIOUS, HAPPY AND GLORIOUS”- ALL WORDS SO VERY PERTINENT TO OUR GREAT QUEEN. HER HAPPINESS HAS BEEN EVIDENT IN SO MANY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS AND FILMS THAT WE HAVE ALL BEEN SEEING OVER RECENT DAYS. AND HAPPINESS WITH HER LARGE AND LOVING FAMILY AROUND HER ON ALL IMPORTANT STATE OCCASIONS AS WELL AS AT PRIVATE FAMILY TIMES. AND HOW HAPPY MUST THE QUEEN HAVE BEEN TO HAVE WITNESSED ONLY WEEKS AGO THE GLORIOUS OUTPOURING OF LOVE AND AFFECTION FOR HER ACROSS THE WORLD DURING THE PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS-A FEELING EXPRESSED IN THE LAST FEW DAYS BY MANY MILLIONS LINING THE STREETS OF BOTH EDINBURGH AND LONDON AND POURING IN FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE.**

**I WAS PARTICULARLY MOVED TO SEE THAT ALMOST EVERY NEWSPAPER IN EVERY COUNTRY ON THE PLANET DEVOTED ITS FRONT PAGE TO THE PASSING OF THE QUEEN-A GOOD NUMBER - REFERRING TO ”OUR QUEEN”. FOR THAT IS HOW SO MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH AS “OUR QUEEN” AND THUS WHY WE ALL FEEL HER PASSING SO DEEPLY WHICH HAS SURPRISED EVEN THE TOUGHEST. AND WHILST AND OF COURSE THE COMMONWEALTH COMPRISES APPROXIMATELY ONE THIRD OF THE WORLD’S POPULATION-IT IS OFTEN THE EMOTION FELT BY THOSE OF OTHER NATIONS THAT HAS BEEN MOST SURPRISING. WE HAVE HAD FRIENDS IN AMERICA AND IN EUROPE IN FLOODS OF TEARS FOR A LADY THEY NEVER MET OR EVEN SWORE ALLEGIANCE TO.**

**WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE MANY ARE CYNICAL ABOUT MANY ASPECTS OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE, INCLUDING FAMILY LIFE. THE QUEEN, OF COURSE, KNOWS ALL TOO WELL FROM HER OWN EXPERIENCE THE PROBLEMS THAT FAMILIES FACE TODAY. INDEED, SHE HAS HAD TO ENDURE HER OWN FAMILY LIFE BEING DISSECTED ENDLESSLY IN THE MEDIA. YET, DESPITE THESE CHALLENGES, SHE HAS PATIENTLY SUPPORTED HER FAMILY AND FOUND THAT, IN MUTUAL LOVE, HER FAMILY HAS SUPPORTED HER. HER EXAMPLE CONTINUES TO STRENGTHEN THE INSTITUTION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY IN EVERY AGE.**

**NONE OF US WILL EVER FORGET THE PHOTO OF HER SITTING ALONE, MASKED, IN THE CHAPEL AT ST GEORGE’S WINDSOR FOR THE FUNERAL OF PRINCE PHILIP. IT WAS A POIGNANT IMAGE OF THE INHERENT LONELINESS OF LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS THAT OF A WIFE GRIEVING THE DEATH OF HER BELOVED HUSBAND OF SEVENTY-THREE YEARS WITH WHOM SHE IS NOW REUINITED.**

**WHAT A REMARKABLE REIGN IT HAS BEEN FOR THE LONGEST REIGNING BRITISH MONARCH AND THE LONGEST REIGNING FEMALE MONARCH IN THE WORLD. HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN VISITED MORE THAN 120 COUNTRIES AND CARRIED OUT MORE THAN 21,000 ENGAGEMENTS.**

**SHE GAVE ROYAL ASSENT TO MORE THAN 4,000 ACTS OF PARLIAMENT AND OVER 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE ATTENDED HER GARDEN PARTIES. SHE HAD 15 PRIME MINISTERS, BEGINNING WITH WINSTON CHURCHILL AND HOSTED 112 STATE VISITS. AND MET ALL BUT ONE OF THE 14 US PRESIDENTS DURING HER REIGN .**

**SHE SENT OVER 300,000 CONGRATULATORY CARDS TO PEOPLE CELEBRATING THEIR 100TH BIRTHDAYS AND SAT FOR OVER 200 PARTRAITS-HER FIRST WHEN SHE WAS 7 YEARS OLD. SHE OWNED MORE THAN 30 CORGIS AND DORGIS AND OVER 35 COUNTRIES HAVE ISSUED COINAGE WITH THE IMAGE OF THE QUEEN.**

**AND TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE SHE WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY MONARCH TO HAVE PARACHUTED OUT OF A HELICOPTER ACCOMPANIED BY JAMES BOND. AND OF COURSE WE NOW KNOW THAT SHE KEPT MARMALADE SANDWICHES IN THAT FAMOUS BLACK HANDBAG.**

**IT IS THIS LAST HILARIOUS YET POIGNANT SKETCH DURING THE PLATINUM JUBILEE THAT SHOWED THE QUEEN’S WONDERFUL SENSE OF FUN AND OFTEN WICKED SENSE OF HUMOUR SOMETHING THAT I EXPERIENCED ON THE OCCASIONS THAT I HAD THE HONOUR TO MEET HER MAJESTY…A SENSE OF HUMOUR YET A SHARP MIND ALWAYS ALERT TO THE IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THE DAY.**

**IT HAS BEEN THE GREATEST HONOUR OF MY LIFE-AND I AM SURE OF MY PREDECESSORS DURING HER REIGN-SIR DAVID BOWES-LYON, SIR GEORGE BURNS, SIR SIMON BOWES-LYON AND THE COUNTESS OF VERULAM TO HAVE SERVED THE GREATEST SOVEREIGN THIS COUNTRY HAS EVER KNOWN.**

**AND THE LAST LINES OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM “LONG TO REIGN OVER US”-WELL HOW TRUE THAT LINE WAS TO BECOME AND INDEED WE THANK GOD FOR SAVING OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN AND ALLOWING US TO ENJOY HER AS AN INHERENT PART OF OUR LIVES FOR SO LONG.**

**YOUR MAJESTY-YOU WILL BE SORELY MISSED BY THE PEOPLE OF HERTFORDSHIRE, THIS NATION AND THE WORLD. MAY YOU REST IN ETERNAL PEACE.**