

TRAPPED IN TOGO

Casey McCoy quarantined in unsanitary conditions in West Africa since Dec. 23

By Scott Thoma
scott@thomabooks.com

Casey McCoy admits he has shed a lot of tears, mostly out of fright, as he fears for his safety in an unfamiliar country thousands of miles away.

McCoy, a 2007 Minneota High School graduate, flew to Lomé, Togo in West Africa to attend the wedding of his boss and best friend, Tyler Grinder, who was marrying a woman from there.

McCoy, who lives in Dell Rapids, SD, is employed with Global Life, Family Heritage Division based in Sioux Falls. Grinder is his director.

After attending the wedding, McCoy's life took a 360-degree turn for the worse. He tested positive for COVID and for the last 13 days (as of Wednesday, Jan. 5), the personable McCoy has been relegated to an unsanitary room infested with mold and bugs as he anxiously awaits his release.

"I am terrified by this whole ordeal," he said in a conversation with the Mascot.

To make matters worse, McCoy has no idea what is going on with his testing, had to miss Christmas and New Year's with his family, and then missed the 11th birthday of his daughter, Ellie, on Jan. 3.

"If there is one thing I could ask for, it's that everybody wish her a Happy Birthday," Casey



A masked Casey took a selfie inside his quarantined room.

Dubai on the 22nd and they required a 72-hour negative test, so we tested on Dec. 20," Casey said. "While waiting for that result, they changed the requirements to go to Dubai, so we changed our ticket back to the United States. But they needed a 24-hour negative test, so we took another test on Dec. 22."

The results of that test showed McCoy was positive at the time the Dec. 20 test results came in. On Dec. 23, McCoy learned the new result showed he was negative, so he and Lacie headed to the airport to come home.

"They said they ran a code on my test results which showed I was positive," he tried to explain, even though he is still unsure of the explanations he has been given. "The U.S. Embassy later identified that my passport number was wrong on this test, which led to the confusion on the results."

McCoy admittedly was not vaccinated at the time of his tests.

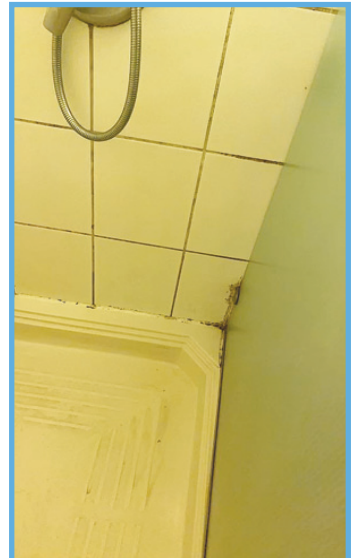
Casey was escorted by the military via ambulance with the emergency lights and sirens engaged to a hotel-like building where he would be quarantined.

"I was told I was going to get another test, not that I was going to be locked down here," he said.

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Photo above: Casey McCoy, left, and his best friend and boss Tyler Grinder pose for a picture following the wedding ceremony. Photo below left: From left to right, Casey's daughter Ellie, Casey, Casey's girlfriend, Lacie Packard, and the family dogs. Photo below right: Mold is prevalent in the bathroom of the place Casey is quarantined. Contributed photos



Emotions overflowing for McCoy's girlfriend, family

By Scott Thoma
scott@thomabooks.com

Nervous, anxious, worried and angry were the adjectives used by Casey McCoy's girlfriend, Lacie Packard, when asked how she feels over his

situation of being stuck in the West African country of Togo?

"And when the sun goes down, I'm scared," she added.

Packard traveled with McCoy to Lomé, Togo in West Africa to attend the wedding of McCoy's best friend and boss,

Tyler Grinder, on Dec. 17.

"Some people told us we were crazy to go," Packard said. "But we wanted to experience different parts of the world and we had a chance to go there. If not for Casey testing positive, I wouldn't have

regretted going there. Many of the people over there were nice and treated us very well."

After the wedding of Grinder and his bride, a native of Togo, McCoy and Packard booked a flight to Dubai for a little vacation. Before taking

the flight, McCoy tested positive and then tested negative two days later.

"So, we then decided to change plans and come back to the United States," Packard said. "But they basically made him test again and started all

over and requested a 10-day quarantine. Casey made me go back home because he didn't want me to take a chance of getting COVID over there and he thought it would be better for me just to get out of there."

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Donations still sought for annual Flurry of Fun

By Scott Thoma
scott@thomabooks.com

The Flurry of Fun, which is an annual fundraiser for the St. Edward Religious Education Program, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 5 at the American Legion in Minneota.

The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. The evening's festivities will include a dinner catered by Baune's Catering, silent and live auctions, and entertainment.

"The silent auction will be done through the Give Smart website, which is the same platform we used last year for bidding," said Nikki Traen, one of the coordinators of the event along with Chassidy DeRoode, Julie Pohlen, Laura Hennen and Colleen Ludwikowski.

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Frosty needles

The recent cold spell left frost on trees and bushes, including these pine needles from a local tree. Mascot photo by Brian Jeremiason

Winter Reading program is now underway here

By Scott Thoma
scott@thomabooks.com

With the mercury taking a nosedive and the wind howling outside your window, it's the perfect time to grab a cup of a hot beverage and curling up with a good book.

Although it's never a bad time to read a book, more books are read in the winter months because outdoor conditions are not always favorable for other activities.

The Minneota Public Library is joining the Plum Creek Library System in launching the annual Winter Reading Program in January.



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