

## *The Black Suitcase Mystery*

The real life mystery of the letters in the suitcase took four years to solve. The sleuthing began in 1991, the first year of the 50th anniversary of World War II, as part of an assignment given to fifth graders by Downs who was then a school librarian in Missouri. The purpose of the assignment was not only to learn about World War II and the importance of family history, but to also teach research techniques to the young student by using primary sources, in this case the 200 letters in the Downs family black suitcase. What the students discovered and recovered over the four years of their research was a poignant story of love against the backdrop of a faraway war, in particular the experiences of B-24 Liberator bomber crews.

The project, which started out as a simple school library assignment, eventually garnered national attention and resulted in history exhibitions and programs for veterans. President Clinton even mentioned the group's work in a 1994 Memorial Day speech. One of the students involved in the project wrote "none of us could have predicted the astounding course this project would follow."

Discover what this "astounding course" was by joining fellow history buffs--family and military and world--for the opportunity to learn the details of the fascinating mystery of the Black Suitcase letters. . While this program will appeal to a myriad of history lovers, it is certain to appeal to mystery fans as well. The event is free and open to the public and copies of the book, *The Black Suitcase Mystery*, will be available for purchase from Ms. Downs upon conclusion of the discussion.

### **Author Gail Downs**

and the "Black Suitcase Mystery"



**Tues., April 19th, 1:00 PM**

**BROMLEY ROOM**