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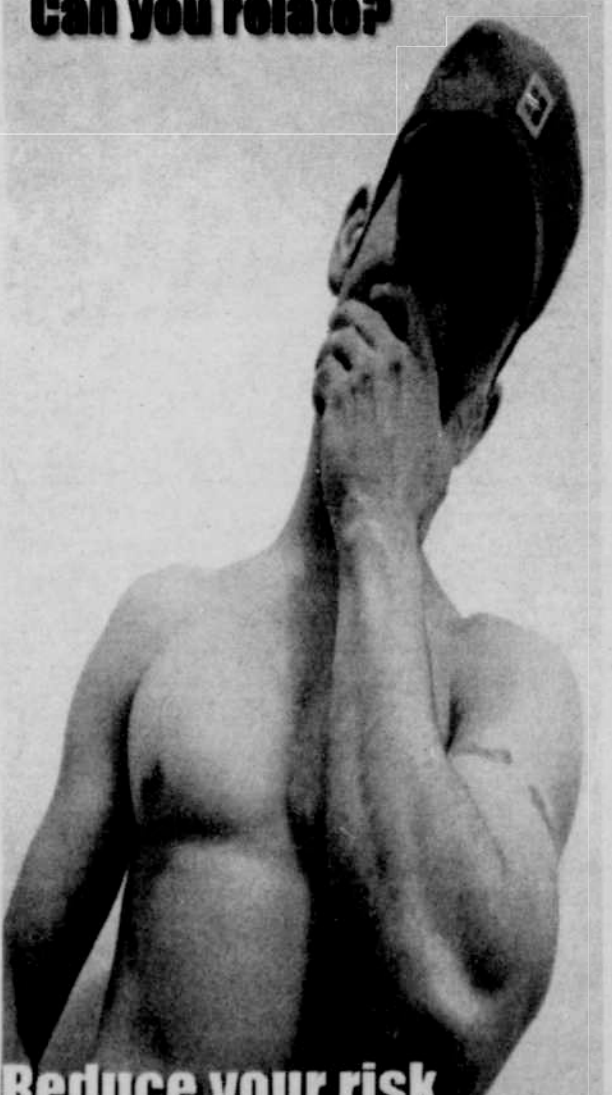
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A time for reflection

There is no better time to rethink
your life than right now

BY KRISTAN ASPEN

I am very heartened by recent stories I've heard of ordinary Americans standing in line at the grocery store, or waiting for a subway train, showing spontaneous kindness and caring for each other. The stories I'm hearing don't quite match up with George Dubya's flag-waving, "for us or against us," "wanted dead or alive" mentality.

Instead of calling for revenge, many of our fellow citizens are expressing a desire to focus on what's important to them. Universally, there seems to be more awareness of who we are, why we are here and how large our circle of caring really is.

This is certainly a natural human response to the tragedies of Sept. 11, even if our personal connection to anyone killed is quite distant. When our lives are disrupted so much that we cannot continue to "act normally," we each have the opportunity to make changes. I can illustrate with a very personal example.

I was painting my house Oct. 6 on a 16-foot ladder, aided, I thought, by a 6-foot scaffolding platform. Through a series of errors in judgment and lack of attention, by hurrying to reach a little higher and finish before the rain came, I found myself on the upper end of the ladder as it was sliding down the house toward the driveway 12 feet below.

During the next 10 minutes I managed to regain my breath (lost on impact), hold my nose to stop bleeding, crawl inside, stand to dial 911, lie down on the floor to support my broken elbow and wait for the ambulance to arrive, while the operator kept me on the phone. In the trauma center at Legacy Emanuel Hospital between X-rays and CT scans, doctors reset my upper front teeth to their normal position and pinned my elbow back together. I awoke surrounded by my partner, Janna, and my parents, Chuck and Rita, who were all grateful I was alive.

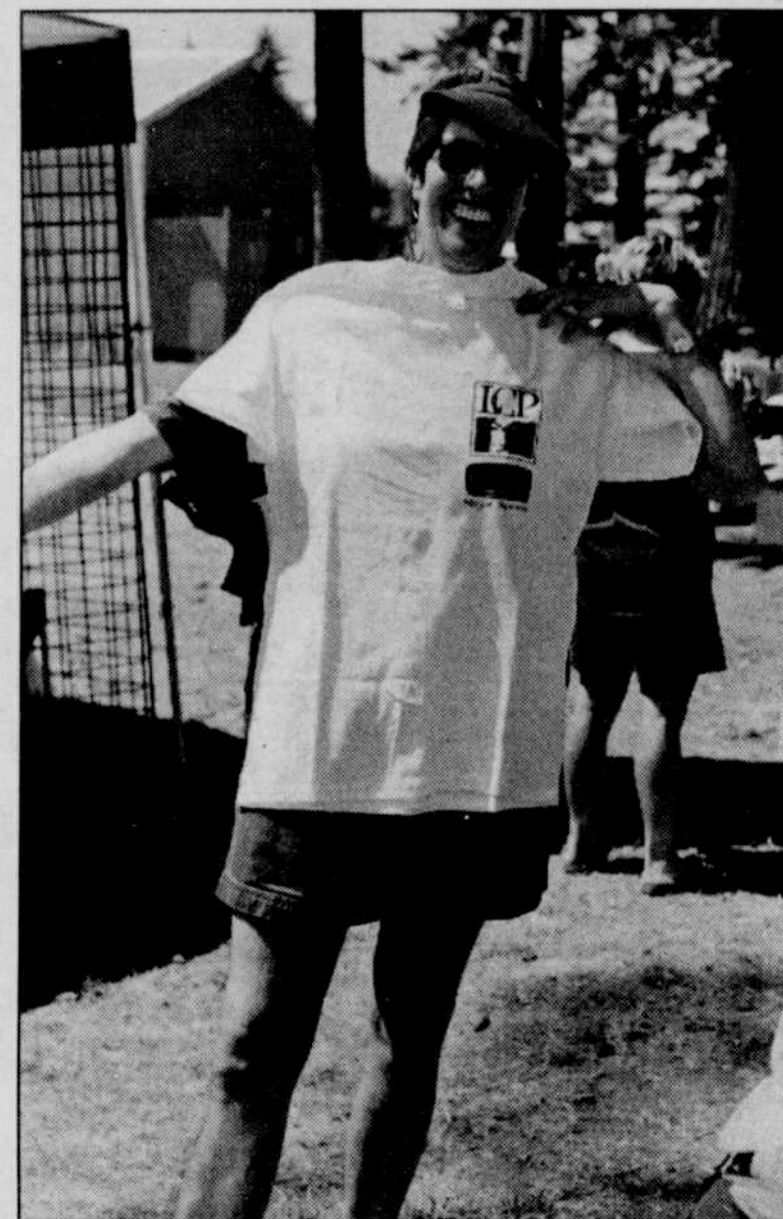
I am grateful, too. It could have turned out differently.

Knowing that, I am choosing to see this accident as an opportunity to make changes in my life, to deepen my consciousness of the purpose of my being here in this time and place. I'm not sure yet what I'll discover, but I plan on slowing down and listening enough to find out what's important to me and how I can use my talents best.

We all have been traumatized by recent events. Many of us are scared, feel alone or are worried about keeping food on our tables and a roof over our heads.

Some of us already are missing the basic necessities of life. I recently have received calls for help from homeless lesbians, newly out lesbians and older women who have lost long-term partners to illness. As times get tougher, I know we will receive more calls like these.

I invite you to join me in self-examination as part of your healing process this fall. If you choose to do so, I hope you will look at the role the lesbian community has played in your life. If lesbians have been good to you, helped make your life easier in some way, spoken out



Kristan Aspen shows off nifty T-shirt given to new members

about violence against women, stood up for equal treatment of all sexual minorities or taken steps to encourage understanding that has supported you, please consider investing in the Lesbian Community Project.

LCP is still doing all these things, and with your membership, your volunteer time or your monthly donation it can do more. Between now and June 30, 2002, every contribution will be matched by a grant from the Ralph L. Smith Foundation. If you have suggestions or questions about our membership drive or any of our programs, including classes, support groups, Conversations Projects or forums, please call our office.

Join us Nov. 1 for a special concert with Lucie Blue Tremblay and Bobbi Carmitchell. This will be an extraordinary evening of love, laughter and healing for up to 250 people.

Don't miss out on this chance to connect with lesbians who have been to New York City this month and can share the messages of hope they have heard. Advance tickets are \$12 at Touchstone Coffee House, It's My Pleasure and In Other Words, where you also can find the latest LCP newsletter. (See ad in this issue of *Just Out*.)

I hope that you will join me in taking time to heal and that if you look at your life and find lesbians to be important to you, you'll become an active LCP member. Membership is open to all on a sliding scale.

Times have changed, and so has LCP. We hope you'll check us out and find a community you want to nurture with your support. Together we can build community and organize for justice well into the 21st century. 

KRISTAN ASPEN is program director of the Lesbian Community Project. For more information call 503-294-7435 or send e-mail to lcp@webpride.net.