



SUE COLE

WORLD UPSIDE-DOWN FROM PAGE 5

LARRY JORDAN

I thought it was horrible. I think we should find out who is directly responsible, go in and get rid of them. If it turns out to be Osama Bin Laden who did this, I think he should be tried in the World Court at the Hague for crimes against humanity. I am actually proud of George Bush. He is doing exactly what he should be doing --- first going after the money that finances the terrorists; and waiting instead of lobbing missiles in the desert until we find out who and where they are.

Bush is not going in to indiscriminately bomb innocent people, which we have done in the past. I saw a letter in the newspaper asking peace marchers how long they would let somebody punch their mother before doing something. I disagree that peace marchers are traitors --- they are just expressing their point of view. Boneheads maybe, but not traitors. They used to march against overseas wars because those people hadn't hurt us. Now we have been hurt.

SUSIE CONNOR

When I first heard about it I was very hostile. I felt a lot of prejudice against people in the Middle East and my first thought was to nuke them. But as time went on my stance has changed and I realize that it is a group of people who are causing the terrorism and that it has nothing to do with religion or the people of those countries. It has more to do with control. I feel the people who are responsible for the attacks on this country do need to be brought to justice. I also appreciate what President Bush is doing to bring aid to these countries because it is not the people of those countries but a few bad apples who are causing all the trouble.

BRUCE CONNOR

That day September 11 I was livid and I was amazed that could happen to us. I immediately started wondering how we could let this happen and who was to blame. That increased as I watched the media explain and showed pictures of how many died, who died and how they died. I dealt with tremendous sadness but was very encouraged when Bush addressed the nation and was overwhelmed with the nation's pride and how we all came together, neighbors, relatives --- nationwide. This is the start of a very long process to bring whoever is responsible to justice. We are part of an event in which America lost its innocence and we are going to have to make a lot of sacrifices. We are going to change our ways of interacting with the international community and I am going to be a very patient person because it is going to take time to bring those people to justice. We just have to trust our leaders that they will make wise decisions.

JOHN LONQUIST

What do I think about the September 11 attack? I think it's terrible, of course. I think it could have been a lot worse, and could get worse.

How could this happen? The tragedy of September 11 didn't happen because the U.S. government is too weak to monitor terrorist activity, it happened because we were asleep to the simple, hateful resolve of those enemies responsible.

Remember the news on September 10? There was Representative Gary Condit's missing aide Chandra Levy (who hasn't been found), bickering over the Star Wars program, and what to do about the budget surplus. It seems symptomatic of 1990s political coverage, less geared to being informative about issues needing clear, concise policies. Instead, network news provided gossipy, scandalous details about politicians, little practical data for guiding policies. It is enough to make politics seem silly. That is a far more dangerous apparition than any terrorist attack.

But now the country is largely behind George W. Bush. He is enjoying the highest approval rating of any President since they started asking. That's good; this is not the time for polarization. However, if the American public decides that this kind of attack can never happen again and doesn't take the proper measures of security, then our freedom which anchors our way of life is in jeopardy.

The September 11 attack provided the government the pretense to pursue a variety of pesky enemies of the U.S. I have no worries that our military might prevail, but then what? How many countries are we going to occupy? How many of the Middle Eastern governments will be extensions of Uncle Sam, and how much will this cost?

Then will South American drug dealers be classified as terrorists? Will this actually end?

KEVIN VIOLETTE

Now that the initial shock has worn off, my own life has returned to normal. The real effects we all might feel will come later, as the economy goes into a slump in the wake of Wall Street's panicky reaction.

What should we do? Address the root causes. This is a viper we have nurtured in our own breast. The American people, wanting to see only the good, have ignored the bad perpetrated in their name. By selling arms to repressive regimes and turning a blind eye to the injustices committed by our allies we have made enemies. Terrorism is wrong, but it is the weapon of the weak against the strong.

To see justice done is a natural and correct desire. But let it be done impartially. The U.S. should abandon its vigilante stance and pay its dues to the United Nations. International law is an urgent necessity. Fund the World Court and let it resolve international disputes. The days of the Old West are over. A world society needs a world court.

GRAVE NEW WORLD

Someone in the media recently called this a "Grave New World," which at this point a few days into a shooting war sounds disturbingly apt to me. Things are happening so quickly it seems necessary to note what day it is as more reports of anthrax contamination continue to be announced around the nation.

But it didn't all happen on 9/11. It's been going on for many years; it just didn't affect us Americans directly. Now it has, and, alas, things will truly never be quite the same and 9/11 will forever stand as a marker in time: "The day the Earth stood still."

The gas attendant down the street told me she was almost afraid to take a \$5 bill from a young "Middle Eastern-looking" man that morning.

This morning's e-mail contained an ad for a "Bio-chem protection kit" available for purchase on-line, and television now airs ads for American flags, stickers, posters, etc. I remember men walking door-to-door in predominantly African-American South Los Angeles, selling plaster busts of John F. Kennedy just a few days after he was assassinated. Commerce goes on.

I'm sure I was among the millions of agnostics, as well as our cocksure brethren atheists, who felt a curious sense of non-inclusion in the plethora of memorial services following the WTC attack, though our feelings were as heartfelt and sincere as anyone's. I didn't know what else to do so I played my didgeridu, hoping somehow that might help. Knowing that if a Deity was unable or unwilling to help us then, why would it help now?

Now between the newscasts I think of "The Handmaid's Tale," of Country Joe singing "Come on all you big strong men, Uncle Sam needs your help again....," even of Charles Manson who wanted his own "holy war." I resent that the National Geographic of the stunningly beautiful Afghani girl with those haunting green eyes has become a longshot of her sitting atop a legless camel, that the panicked city scene from Godzilla has become real, that the horror has come home.

...and I wonder: how can we ordinary civilians protect ourselves from a biological or chemical attack? What can we do? Trust our leaders (Bush? *shudder*), remain calm (right!), try not to breathe too much (someone suggested breathing only through a bong)...stockpile water and canned food, plastic sheeting and duct tape...coffee filters...a plan...a rifle?

Only a few positive aspects are clear:

1. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, two fundamentalist idiots, simultaneously showed their asses.
2. It was refreshing for two weeks to see politicians on television and actually not be able to tell whether they were Democrats or Republicans.
3. Harry Shearer reported that the Taliban were eager to interview Gary Condit about the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden.

A comment from my internet friend Nick Caffrey, a linguist and Ph.D candidate in Ireland:

Firstly may I add my voice to the many who have expressed our condolences to our brothers and sisters in America. I know that this fearful act has done great damage to the American psyche. However, the feeling of security that --- it is said here --- Americans have lost, was illusory. Maybe the outcome of all this may strengthen your great nation. Nothing, I repeat nothing, justified what happened at the World Trade Centre, and the perpetrators are nothing other than murderers. There is a feeling in this country that it really doesn't concern us in any meaningful way. I think this is unrealistic. Our future and that of England and America are inextricably intertwined. Whatever affects one --- to some extent --- affects all.

As I write, day three of military action is underway. The action is being fought without much media reporting, so all dispatches must be taken with a grain of salt. Ireland has offered assistance to the U.S., but I don't think we have anything of use to give.

*This side of the great lake there is a remarkable lack of humour about the events of 11 September. Possibly because some of our own were in the building at the time. Ann is studying a module of her Open University course on comparative religion and has some little understanding of Islam. There are many things about this religion/philosophy that scare the s**t out of me. Their belief system does not regard Christians kindly.*

Another geographically distant friend, John Corcoran, who has existed in a very big house in Virginia for the past 20 years, sees it like this:

I was at work September 11 when I was told that a plane had just crashed into the WTC in New York. I left work, returned to my cell, and turned on my wee TV (5" screen) just in time to see the 2nd jet plow into the 2nd tower. So I sat, glued to the TV --- in utter shock and horror --- for three days.

Now I worry what Bush is up to. I would prefer Clinton making the choices in a careful manner than Shrub just charging ahead. I doubt "they" will get Lauden --- hell, they can't find the guy who bombed the abortion clinics and is hiding among the mountains of North Carolina...how the hell will they find a Saudi in exile in the Mts. of Central Asia?

Why do "they" always insist on having "Wars"? "They" never win their obtuse wars: War On Poverty! War On Drugs! Now a War On Terrorism!!!

Terrorism may be quelled for now but it won't be eliminated until the Haves ensure that there are no Have Nots; until the USA stops supporting Israel without question.

Fuck, Shrub's a terrorist! He stole the office he now naps in! The whole affair causes me to ask, "Who'd the most to GAIN?"

My answer to these two friends is the same:

We don't really need foreign terrorists to destroy lives and structures: we are quite capable of breeding our own: Tim and Ted were white boys, probably even born again. I wonder if the War on Terrorism will include indigenous white supremacists?

The message here seems clear: "Respect me or I'll kill you." The most powerful nation on the planet has a moral responsibility to engage in humanitarianism on a worldwide basis. We export jobs, import cheap products, buy more, produce more, eliminate more...mindlessly, a juggernaut engine propelled by greed, which lays waste and feeds upon the very planet and its inhabitants. Yes, we give, dole out charity with one hand...but the other hand rapes flora and fauna without regard, dropping food and bombs simultaneously.

As my friend Ghinade, chief engineer in a then-Soviet fishing tender said, "I always look for joke too...but is difficult to find joke in bomb."

And how shall it be this time when Johnny comes marching home?

~JOHN PAUL BARRETT

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