

September 3, 2007

SOME REFLECTIONS ON 9/11 SIX YEARS LATER

It has been six years since a group of madmen carried out a series of unprovoked attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon killing more than 3,000 innocent people.

I can still see a group of frightened U.S. senators standing on the steps of the Capitol that afternoon singing "God Bless America." They didn't look so all-fired powerful that day. Six years later it is business as usual in Washington. Today the songbirds are more concerned about fattening up on pork projects with our tax dollars and using our troops in Iraq as political capital than they are about what God thinks of them or America.

But the rest of us shouldn't point fingers. For several weeks after 9/11, our churches were packed to the rafters as we prayed earnestly for God to protect us from further attacks. When nothing happened, we decided God was still on our side so it would be safe once again to sleep late on Sunday mornings.

It didn't take long for us to resume trashing our country either. Self-styled comedian Bill Maher solemnly referred to the terrorists as "heroes." Ted "Looney Tunes" Turner told the National Press Club, "Our president (said) 'You're either with us or you're against us, and I had a problem with that, because I really hadn't made my mind up yet.'" Perhaps if the terrorists had chosen to take out CNN instead of the World Trade Center, along with a few dozen of his ranches and a herd or two of prized buffalo, it might have helped Looney Tunes make up what little mind he has left.

What is it about our country that makes us so contemptuous of it? Do we hate our president so much that we want to see the United States fail? Yes, our leader is inarticulate and uninspiring, but the over-the-top criticisms by publicity-hungry actors and a former president whose administration may have been the worst in history only serve to inspire the very people we fear will strike again. Terrorists don't know that this is how a democracy works. They see it as signs of weakness and internal strife. Maybe it is going to take another bombing for us to understand the importance of keeping our debates civil. Besides, if we don't like the way government works in this country, we have a ballot box.

Of course, liberal journalists and liberal universities and the Free State of San Francisco are once again busy with efforts to run ROTC programs out of our schools. I wonder if the self-important editorialists and out-of-touch-with-reality professors and wet-behind-the-ears students will be the ones to defend us in case of another attack? Somehow, I rather doubt it.

We are the most naïve people on earth. We refuse to accept that we are dealing with a group of irrational people that hate us and all we stand for. They are not going away, no matter how deeply we stick our heads in the sand. And forget about talking them out of their hatred. Negotiating with terrorists is like preaching to a fence post. It may make you feel better, but at the end of the day you will have accomplished nothing. Maybe the war in Iraq isn't the answer, but one day we are going to have to confront the terrorists and those nations that support terrorism. They are going to leave us no choice. I pray that when that time comes there will be another Greatest Generation available to handle the job.

It has been six years since that terrible day when terrorists turned our world upside down. I think often about the victims of 9/11. I grieve for the lives lost, the futures unfulfilled, the families destroyed and the apathy that envelops us like a fog. I think about the terrorists and Ted Turner and Bill Maher. I think about the people who consider 9/11 an aberration and believe that making war on terrorism is nothing more than a political ploy.

Did we learn anything from the terrorist attacks? Not that I can tell.