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Sept. 11 birthday becomes worst day ever

Sept. 11... My birth date since 1955. In the year 2001, it became one of the darkest days of gut-wrenching horror, confusion, and insecurity that I have ever felt.

As it happens, my first day at my new employer was September 10. I came to work on the 11th already feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the job change and feeling lonely that on my birthday I was separated from my friends and all that I had been familiar with for so long.

The morning of Tuesday the 11th, I was busily working in my office, trying very hard to learn all that was necessary to function in my new position in

my new workplace. I received a call from a friend who asked me if I had seen or heard about what was happening in New York City. She was in tears as she told me about the attacks with the airplanes and the horror of what was occurring. I tried very hard to process what she was saying, but could not really comprehend it. It was just too wrong sounding and too fantastic to believe. I went to the news on my computer and saw the images, which set my heart in the bottom of my stomach. This was not supposed to happen in the United States, and certainly not on my birthday, which is supposed to be a day of celebration.

As you might imagine, the celebration of my birthday became a minor and joyless part of the day as my family and I gathered in the evening. As "9-11" became part of the jargon used to describe the horrifying event, I was saddened to realize that the day I had joyfully celebrated as a child and quietly celebrated as an adult had become a date as infamous as December 7 and the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In the following days and weeks, I saw the feelings of anger, grief, fear, and insecurity turn into resolve. A resolve that we, the people of the United States, were not going to be beaten by a madman and his lunatic following. We were not going to be brought to our knees by fear and despair. We were going to battle the evil forces that threatened our security and peace.

More than that, we were no longer just Democrats or Republicans, black or white, rich

or poor, Jew, Christian, or other religious or ethnic distinction: WE WERE AMERICANS. Americans who could and would look past our differences and come together for the very reason our country exists: "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and opposition to anyone or anything that would harm that life, that liberty, or that pursuit of happiness. Patriotism arose that hasn't been seen in this country since World War II.

We were shaken out of our lethargy and focused on something greater than our differences. In this past year, the fervor has cooled and people are perhaps tired of hearing about Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the war on terrorism. As a people we are impatient, and we like to see quick results. As President Bush said, this war is an invisible war, and winning it will take time.

However, one thing will not change; any American who lived through the horror of September 11 will not forget how we looked past our differences and acted as compassionate human beings. The heroism and American spirit we witnessed was inspiring, and showed the world that contrary to some perceptions, Americans are still a strong people. I want to believe that we are all changed as a result of this crisis.

This is not to ignore the issues and problems that have come out of this awful event. Human nature being what it is, there are those that have taken advantage of the situation. It is an imperfect world, and we have to deal with it. Having said that, there is no other place on earth that I would rather live than in the United States of America, wars and all, and I am proud to be a citizen.

One last thing: I mentioned earlier how sad I was to realize that my birthday was now synonymous with a tragedy. However, I choose to think of the day proudly. Not because it is my birthday (besides, I am at the age where I wish they would slow down a bit), but because it is the day that Americans woke up, looked beyond themselves, and came together for a greater purpose. There is hope for us. God bless America.

Randy A. LeCompte
Farmington Hills

Newcomers invited to picnic by club

The Newcomers and Neighbors Club of Farmington/Farmington Hills (formerly the Welcome Wagon of Farmington and Farmington Hills) will host a picnic 3-7 p.m. Saturday.

Sept. 14 at Heritage Park in Farmington Hills. Bring your picnic baskets and join the fun. The Newcomers and Neighbors Club is a community social organization designed to

help new and established residents of the area meet and make new friends.

The club meets monthly with social and informative programs, and has many activities.

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