

Thoughts from past conflicts provide comfort for tragedy

Considering the tragic events of last week, I feel it would be impious to write this column on the usual subjects. Instead, I've tried to find some lines that either cast light on our present circumstance or help comfort my prayers.

Many have compared the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon with Pearl Harbor. Without doubt the comparison is apt, both as to the crushing damage of a surprise attack and the doubts about America's will to fight a sustained conflict. Here's what President Franklin D. Roosevelt said just after that attack, nearly 60 years ago:

"Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory. I believe I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again."

Almost certainly, the spawning grounds for these attacks are the desert sands of the Arab world, where religious fanaticism seems an evolutionary adaptation necessary for survival. The Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, caught a glimpse of it:

"Hardly are these words out,
When a vast image out of Spiritu Mundi
Troubles my sight; somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze, blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds."

I wouldn't be at all surprised if last week's attacks will go down in history as the first big engagement of what's likely to turn out to be World War III. This time, however, the enemy is not an imperialist or dictatorial nation state, but cultural battle pitting us against a widespread network of true believers who consider those who compassionately tolerate differences to be merely weak. Yeats, again, foresaw it:

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

A blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."

How, then, can we come to understand the terrible tragedy of the loss of so many wholly innocent people? In part by recalling with the English poet, Rupert Brooke, the sad details of the daily divinity of the lives of those we never knew and who we

There is no doubt that we have suffered a defeat in the deaths of thousands of innocent people and in our collective loss of innocent security.

have now lost:

"These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
Washed marvelously with sorrow, swift to mirth.
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended."

There is no doubt that we have suffered a defeat in the deaths of thousands of innocent people and in our collective loss of innocent security. And there is no doubt that what we now face will be long, difficult and perilous, calling for more wisdom and creativity than military might. Winston Churchill, the English Prime Minister during World War II, caught these shifting emotions in preface to the first volume of his monumental work, *The Second World War*:

In War: Resolution.
In Defeat: Defiance.
In Victory: Magnanimity.
In Peace: Good Will.

My wife, Kathy, and I planted spring bulbs over the weekend, an act of hope and confidence.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net



Tedd Schneider

Dear Sarah,

It's different now. Things have changed since the first day of school, when you were so excited about your second-grade teacher, Mrs. Irvin, being a familiar face from kindergarten. Different from that too-short trip over Labor Day weekend, our collective mood sunny as the daytime sky, as cool and carefree as the early September evening breeze.

Different for certain from the way it was before Sept. 11 - when all that was good seemed to crumble before our eyes, along with the towers of New York's World Trade Center. When our psyche, which we Americans believed was invulnerable to the political turmoil that rocked the rest of the world, lies buried in the rubble in New York, at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and in the crater near Pittsburgh where the fourth jetliner was crashed.

I believe you know things have changed, even though we haven't yet talked about the specifics in ways you would understand. How, after all, do you explain massive death and destruction to a child who believes the most mortal of wounds is the one suffered skinning her elbow as she learns to ride a bicycle sans training wheels? How do you tell someone you love that the tears streaming down the faces of these surviving moms and dads, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, friends and co-workers won't go away after a kiss and the magic words? ("Ichabod boomerang." Don't ask.)

But I see it in your face, when you wonder what your parents are whispering about at the dinner table, or as we rush to turn on the TV after tucking you in at night. I know, too, that your school had an assembly last week and your class is collecting money for the "needy." Funny, huh, how these people weren't needy - at least not in this way - just 10 days ago.

You know that we're counting American flags, dozens of them, flying in our neighborhood as we ride to school each morning. And you know it's not Memorial Day or Independence Day.

I guess I expected a slow of questions when I walked in the door last Tuesday or Wednesday night. Questions prompted by talk at recess or in the lunchroom. "Daddy, what's war?"

"Daddy, do we know any terrorists?" "Daddy, is our house safe?" That would get me off the hook. I'd have to respond, of course, but at least I wouldn't be forcing the issue on you. I'd be clarifying things, putting these unsettling ideas that someone else gave you into context. Making things better, rather than intruding

Dad urges his daughter to keep the faith

with cold, hard realities. That hasn't happened, though. Maybe everything's just too fragmented now. Maybe you need more time before you can make enough sense to put your thoughts into a coherent question. God knows, I feel that way and I've got a few (OK, three dozen) years on you.

So I can see the burden is going to fall to me, probably sooner, rather than later. I'll be the one who bursts your soap-bubble perceptions about the world around you. No, it wasn't an accident. Yes, there are terrible people who do terrible things. And good people who feel

Things have changed. But as long as human minds fed by human hearts make the call, tragedy can remain the exception, not the rule.

backed into a corner and respond by doing terrible things as well.

I'll tell you that individuals make decisions and carry out heinous acts, not religions or homelands. You need to learn that evil isn't something you detect in a person's skin color or accent.

I'll be the one who tells you that good things can come from tragedy, that our nation's spirit will grow as we pick ourselves up off the ground. I'll tell you that maybe now we have the will, the courage and the allies to wipe terrorism off the face of the earth.

I'll tell you these last two things even though I'm not sure I believe them myself. But I need, I ache, for you to put faith in them because when the next generation takes the reins, it will require a positive attitude to have any chance of success.

One thing I do believe, I'll say, is that we can't go back to the way things were before Sept. 11. Things have changed. But as long as human minds fed by human hearts make the call, tragedy can remain the exception rather than the rule.

All my love,
Dad

Tedd Schneider is the community editor of the Canton Observer and a 13-year Farmington Hills resident. He can be reached at (734) 459-2700 or by e-mail at tschneider@homecomm.net. Sarah is 7 and a second grader at Lanigan Elementary.

Stories and letters regarding the Sept. 11 tragedy can be found on page A3.

DRESSBARN

Fall's Here

Sizes 4 - 24

Campus Corners

Rochester Hills

325 South Livestock

(248) 656-8553



Extra Savings Coupon For You!

20% off
Any Single Item

DRESSBARN

Mens & Womens Sizes 4-24

For a store near you visit www.dressbarn.com or call 800-639-6064



America's Fan Company




Fall Sale

Starting at \$59.40

10 Days Only!




The most important part of any ceiling fan is the motor. Emerson knows Emerson is the largest manufacturer of fractional horsepower motors in the world. Emerson has been making the best ceiling fan motors for over 100 years, and are also to offer a lifetime warranty on its Premier Collection of ceiling fans.




Lighting Fixtures, Lamps, Ceiling Fans, Mirrors, Art Work,
Clocks for Every Decor

BROSE ELECTRICAL

37400 W. Seven Mile Road • Livonia, MI 48152 • (734) 464-2211
WWW.BROSEELECTRICAL.COM

Mon., Tues., Wed., Sat. 9:30-6:00
Thurs., Fri. 9:30-4:00



