



The Ross Retort

by Lisa Ross

HIJACKING AMERICA

As of this morning, 6322 of our neighbors 3000 miles across the way, are missing and probably dead for the simple sin of showing up to work before 9:00AM.

And, it appears that at least three neighbors living ten miles down the road, took part in the senseless World Trade Center massacre.

Two of the hijackers lived quietly in Clairemont, at least one San Diegan is suspected of helping to finance their adventures and a horrified Lemon Grove Islamic leader unknowingly housed them for a while.

Chillingly, we now know that the tentacles of evil extend even into sunny bucolic San Diego. In fact, several commentators said this week that places like Southern California and Florida are perfect settings for incumbent terrorists because the people living in such places are easy going, used to transient life-styles and generally stay out of each other's business.

As someone who still hasn't gotten over that I survived the Cold War, I now must explain to my 18 year old daughter, part of a generation raised in a more secure world than any in history, that her world is now the most insecure, largely because bad people learned how to exploit a tolerant and permeable society.

The year I turned 18, Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated, the Prague Spring uprising was squelched, and the Democratic Convention in Chicago was enveloped in tear gas as a US President mired in Vietnam took the opportunity to bow out of the next election. My world had changed forever.

But, nothing in that experience compares to living with the unimaginable horror of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, and to the changes yet to come from the inevitable wounds to a national psyche used to security and peace within its own borders.

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Conversations in the course of conducting ordinary business this week in our community has been very different.

Simply setting up a bank account for my daughter led to some shared tears with a bank officer. A telephone conversation with a New York Times employee started out about business and ended up with inquiries and assurances about the health of our respective families.

America is at war, and our lives are going to change in ways that we cannot imagine today.

While most of the neighbors from my generation are sending their children off to college as I write, many others could be sending theirs off to war in the very near future.

Suddenly, real estate prices don't matter very much.

In spite of the dreadful acts of terror unleashed and threatened against us, I am confident that the values of freedom, opportunity and tolerance for diversity will prevail because that spirit starts within our communities, on our blocks and inside our households.