

CONNECTION

Special Issue

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In Remembrance of September 11, 2001...

by John Edwards

By the time this Remembrance Issue of the Connection arrives in your mail box you will have heard about the terrorist attacks in NYC and DC and the plane that crashed outside of Pittsburgh. My heart still hurts at the suffering that our nation and the world have witnessed. I wanted to find a way to have us as Kinship members share, as a collective body, how these events have affected our lives. I hope that this Special Edition of the Connection touches you in some way.

This issue is dedicated to all those who lost loved ones, those who were injured, the civilians that perished, and to the brave firemen and police officers who lost their lives in their heroic efforts to save others.

I awake about 6:45 a.m. PST, as usual, to classical music on station KDFC here in the Bay Area. Everything seems quite normal. I do my usual morning stuff that we all do and then sit down to eat my bowl of Rice Crispix and Cinnamon Life cereal mixed together with hot chocolate made with rice milk—a usual breakfast for me. I don't have a TV so I decide to turn on the radio in my living room and listen to NPR. I like to know what's happening in the world. What is that? A plane crashed into the Pentagon or close by? I am unclear as to what is going on. Then some guy who lives near the Pentagon describes hearing a very large plane fly by his home. He states that the plane is very low and he is sure that it is NOT a small plane. Now a woman's voice is saying the World Trade Center towers are gone. Just gone. Okay, this calls for the Internet. As I coax my 166 MHz computer to connect to AOL with its

(continued—page 3)



Photo courtesy of David H. Hegarty

by Jacob Gnanakkan

It was a quarter to nine and I was listening to the news on the radio, as I customarily do, during my drive to work. An accident, I thought, as I heard about the plane crashing into the World Trade Center. Aghast with horror, I ran into my office to share the news with my co-workers. My boss came running over soon after to tell us that another plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. In disbelief I heard that the Pentagon had been attacked soon after that. My heart failed. My eyes welled with tears. I raised my hands towards the heavens. Suddenly, more attacks on America were imminent. I began to scramble through my resistant and unready brain!

Understanding this in America was so difficult. Yet, to me, who had lived part of my life in Sri Lanka, where terrorism was a part of every person's daily life, it was easier to comprehend this terror. It was (continued—page 3)

By Jerry McKay

At 8:55 a.m., Tuesday, September 11, I was 25 minutes into my first English-language class at the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. My supervisor interrupted our class to say that he had just heard something about a plane crashing into one of the World Trade Center towers in New York City. My beginners class, a group of French-Canadian auditors, sensed something was wrong; but I could tell they had not fully understood what my supervisor had told me.

We all moved to an adjacent room where there was a TV connected to cable and CNN. As we were watching the live feed from CNN, the second jet slammed into the second tower. While the TV was blaring away in English, everyone in the room, except myself, had switched from English to French. "Terrorist attack" was the reason being given for our spoken and unspoken questions of "who" and "why". At one point, I left the TV room to call my mother to tell her what was happening, and to turn on CNN. When I came back into the TV room, I was alone. I stood there puzzled as I looked at the TV screen. There seemed to be more smoke than there had been a moment ago, and it looked as if the south tower was gone! But that couldn't be! Then the caption started coming across the bottom of the screen, "...the south tower of the World Trade Center has collapsed." I was in a complete state of disbelief. As I sat there watching and listening, trying to make sense of what I was seeing, the second tower fell before my eyes. What I saw was numbingly unbelievable. Before my eyes, in a matter of seconds (continued—page 3)

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Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. (Kinship) is a nonprofit support organization which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbian, gay men, bisexual, and transgendered individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of homosexual and bisexual Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is an organization which supports the advancement of human rights for all people.

Founded in 1976, the organization was incorporated in 1981 and has a board of 15 officers and 10 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes well over a thousand people in 20 countries. Kinship operates solely on contributions from its members and friends.

SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn, or even mention, homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts, which are often used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up gay or lesbian has its roots in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says. Kinship supports the advancement of human rights for all people.

Support Kinship

Kinship, supported solely by contributions from its members and friends, depends on you. Help us reach out to more gay Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below.

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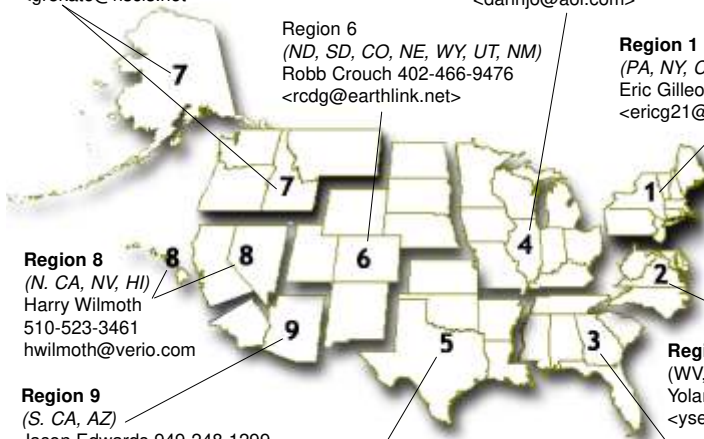
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(John Edwards—cont.)

dial-up modem, the radio announcer recaps what has happened. That can't be. It just can't be. Why must the media insist on being dramatic? What ever happened to reporting the news and not worrying about ratings?

Later, I realize that to accept that the buildings are gone is to accept that thousands of people have lost their lives, and that is just too much for my mind to cope with right now.

I make it to work only to start to cry with my co-workers around me. I think about Bob Bouchard who once had a view of the towers from his office not too far away. Did the buildings fall onto the office building in which he works? What about the staff at the National Association of Social Workers just two blocks in the other direction? It's overwhelming. This can't be happening.

Later that evening I sit immobilized and stunned in my co-worker's living room watching her TV. The pictures are mind numbing. It's simply all too much for me. I come home and try to sleep but awake frequently.

As the days pass I learn that my friends and family are all safe. I am relieved but still shocked and sad. I read and hear various comments about war, retaliation, peace, death, destruction, small miracles, and false hope; and it begins to sink in that the world has been changed forever...or is it just that America has been changed forever?

I think and pray, *"Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, Forgive our foolish ways, Reclothe us in our rightful mind, In purer lives Thy service find, In deeper reverence praise, In deeper reverence praise."*

John Greenleaf Whittier ❧

(Jacob Gnanakkan—cont.)

just a few months ago that the airport in Sri Lanka was bombed and several planes were destroyed.

After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the USA made an unacceptable mistake when all Japanese-Americans were arrested simply because they were Japanese. My family was also a victim of government prejudice in Sri Lanka. My home was attacked, deliberately looted, and burned simply because we spoke the same language that the terrorists spoke. It was God's implicit mercy that my family escaped near death.

As a Sri Lankan American I know that America has learned from its past. Today, after the attack on the World Trade Center, the government didn't begin to round up all the Arabs or Muslims, or people who look Arab, just because the terrorists were Arab or Muslim. There is a sudden unity of all faiths—Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and all other religions. Everyone is lighting candles together in Sunday services. Everyone is forming a union to fight terrorism. Countries that were separated for years by geographical lines, races, ethnicities, and languages are beginning to bond together under the leadership of America to fight a war against terrorism.

Most countries have been victims of terrorism. Peace and unity are most charming. Prophecy begins to dawn upon my mind as I scramble for the meaning of this all? Where are we in prophetic times? Is this one-world union against terrorists suddenly going to turn against Sabbath-keepers? Descendants? Have I forgotten that the end is nearer than it was five years ago? Oh, God, have mercy! ❧

(Jerry McKay—cont.)

those titanic superstructures were gone, along with thousands of people who worked in them. I had no idea what relationship my students had with New York City and those monolithic buildings, but they meant a great deal to me. Like hundreds of thousands of other people, I shared a history with that city and those skyscrapers. All of that history flooded back into my mind in a surreal series of emotion-laden flashbacks.

My first time in NYC was in June, 1982. I flew into JFK directly from Tokyo with Jugo, an English student and friend from our language school in Osaka. It was his first time in the United States and our first time in NYC. We visited the WTC and stood on the open-air observation deck, drinking in the breathtaking view.

I had returned to North America for two reasons: to visit my family and to



Photo courtesy of David H. Hegarty

go to Reading, PA, and meet Colin Cook. I was going to rediscover my heterosexuality and return to my work in Japan! On a very personal level, arriving in NYC was the beginning of my "coming out." It was also the beginning of numerous return visits to both the (continued—page 4)

❧ *"SDA Kinship, an international support group for Seventh-day Adventist GLBT persons and their supporters, joins with all persons of good-will in deploring the horrifying violence the United States suffered in the past week. We extend our deepest sympathy to all those who have lost loved ones or who are still waiting for word of the missing. May our world leaders use wisdom in seeking a response to these terrible acts. We are outraged by the comments of the Rev. Jerry Falwell and Rev. Pat Robertson, who blamed gays and lesbians for helping to cause this terrorism. Expressions of fanaticism and hate only serve to escalate violence and are totally inappropriate, especially at this time. Although the Rev. Falwell later agreed that his statements were insensitive, uncalled for at the time, and unnecessary, we hope that he further comes to agree that they are also simply untrue. We encourage all of our members to support as they can the recovery efforts in their communities and to join with other people of faith in praying for the nation, the world, and the victims of this atrocity, and for an end to violence of all kinds."*—Official Press Release by SDA Kinship International, Inc. ❧

In God we trust...



The New York Stock Exchange after the attack—Photo courtesy of David H. Hegarty

(Jerry McKay—cont.)

city and the twin towers.

One year later, I was standing on the top of the tower again with my sister who came to visit me while I was living in Reading (I did not go back to Japan! I had moved to Reading to “fix” my sexual orientation). Ironically, I was on the top of the south tower again, only a few weeks later, with a Kinship member I had met at Kampmeeting that same summer.

On yet another occasion, while not on the top, I was in the WTC with my mother. Several years later, while on a business trip, I met with a friend from my Quest days. At the time, he was working for Dean Witter on the 82nd floor. And finally, I was in the World Trade Center in 1999 with Robert while we were on our way back from Kampmeeting in Baltimore.

Those towers represented wonderful times with people who are dear to me. While this terrorist attack has broad political and economic implications, for me this tragedy speaks to the importance of our human relationships—relationships that are fragile and frequently taken for granted.

On a spiritual level, it has been an exhausting two weeks, but not overwhelming. My faith in God was not shaken, nor was I plagued by “why” questions. I am satisfied with the information I have in scripture about the “whys” of evil in this world, and I continue to believe that someday soon “the lamb will lie down with the lion.” I managed the challenges of this event by going about “things spiritual,” as I normally do. I took time to read my Bible and other inspirational sources. I took time to reflect and pray as usual.

I shared with trusted friends some of my more private spiritual thoughts and feelings, and I participated in a memorial service. The most notable was joining the 100,000 people who gathered on the lawn of Canada's capital for a simple but moving and cathartic reflection on the events of the week, and mourn with those who had lost loved ones. As life struggles to return to normal, I pray that the changes that have been forced upon us all will somehow serve to make our world a more charitable place. ☙

*Our God, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Presence come, thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Dominion,
the Power, and the Glory
Forever and ever—Amen.*