In Love With Death
Years of grieving and war. But recall, too, the hour of human decency.

By JIM DWYER Published: September 8, 2011

Outside, the desert sky had been darkened by a sandstorm. In the tent, an Army officer pulled up a chair. It was early in the invasion of Iraq, late March 2003. With the war postponed on account of weather, there was time to talk. As I remember, the officer was a lieutenant, wary of reporters, but squirming with curiosity.

“Sir,” he said. “I wonder if I could ask you something about New York.”

He had heard that people were speaking against the war at big gatherings in the city.

“How could that be?” the lieutenant asked. “After all they went through? New Yorkers?”

In the middle of a desert, half a world away from anyone who might argue, I gave the first answer that came to mind: “I think they don’t see that Iraq had anything to do with 9/11.”

Today, no one in a desert tent, or anywhere, would wonder about protests against the Iraq war.

That is the way of things with anniversaries.

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Climb the ladder of years, and the view from a decade up is startling. On the near ground, you can see the rubble and loss of war in a place where we had no quarrels that could not have been managed otherwise. In the distance, you can take in the earliest response to 9/11, by men and women who helped one another that morning, who used their last calls to speak of gratitude and love.
With a single glance across time, you behold the profane and the sacred in all their contrapuntal power.

Mounted on the horrors of 9/11, the war in Iraq multiplied them; dead innocent Iraqis succeeded dead innocent Americans at a ratio thought to be more than 30 to one. Yet the only unambiguously useful responses to the day — as we know now, after 10 years, tens of thousands of lives and trillions of dollars — were made in those early minutes, in deeds not visible to the outside world.

And so, to review:

In Stairway A of the south tower, a stranger tore a strip from his shirt to stanch the bleeding of Keating Crown, who had been wounded by the second plane and was hobbling down 78 flights on a broken leg. A few floors below, Nat Alcamo, a Marine-turned-banker, saw high-heeled shoes that had been had kicked into corners of the stairway landings.

And much later, when Theresa Leone got home to the Bronx that night, she found an empty plastic cup in her bag that had been handed to her hours earlier, filled with water, by some unknown, unremembered face on the Bowery who saw her trudging north and knew she was thirsty.

If humankind had an army, that bloody cloth on Keating Crown’s head could have flown as its flag, and that stranger on the Bowery would have been its quartermaster.

Between 14,000 and 17,000 people in the towers, old and young, fat and fit, able-bodied and not, marshaled themselves into evacuations that were undirected, unrehearsed and orderly. A firm hand on an elbow, giving strength to wobbly legs. A soothing voice that said chemotherapy was hard but these are just stairs and you can do it. The double-file line of strangers that folded into a single line to make way for someone who had to get down first.

They saved a day that could have been defined only by hate from the sky, instead of by the communal decency that resisted panic and reigned in the name of civilization.

On the way, they were met by swarms of firefighters, medics, cops, then an armada of ferries and workboats that had formed instantly to shuttle people away from the foot of Manhattan. Convoys of volunteers charged the other way to cut steel and make sandwiches and hold out their arms at hospitals, ready to give blood.

Still.

The losses were, as Rudolph Giuliani said prophetically, more than anyone could bear.

That morning, Anne Mulderry sat in the backyard of her home near Albany to wait for news about two of her eight children who worked in Lower Manhattan. Before long, she heard herself howling to the heavens.

Her son Stephen — scrappy college basketball player, family peacemaker — was, when last heard from, in a conference room on the 88th floor of the south tower with a dozen other people, all of them sharing a single phone to make their essential calls.

Much later, struggling to find consolation, Anne Mulderry saw that the choices she faced also confronted the larger world. “How to resist falling in love with death was the question,” she said. “Depression and despair is one way of falling in love with death. Violence and aggression is..."
There was every reason to chase down the 9/11 organizers before they could take more innocent lives. Osama bin Laden killed civilians before, promised to do it again, and did. Immediately, the hunt began for him and his deputies, with help from much of the world. Al Qaeda was a palpable danger. No soldiers in Afghanistan would have asked, in those days, about the doubts of New Yorkers.

By 2003, the Bush administration was ready to go into Iraq. Half the country believed, on the strength of hints and verbal feints, that Iraqis had a hand in 9/11. There was no creditable proof, but the emotional logic was impeccable: Saddam Hussein and his country had to pay. Whatever about Congressional resolutions and stories of aluminum tubes that would turn into mushroom clouds, if you took away the collapsing towers, the brave firefighters climbing to their doom, the posters of the missing legions, there surely would have been no invasion of Iraq. At a news conference just before the war, President George W. Bush mentioned “9/11” eight times.

Once American troops were in Iraq, you might hear echoes of the date anywhere. In a desert tent: How could New Yorkers protest after what was done to them?

Or in Najaf, on April 2, 2003. A boy about 7 years old boldly walked up, kissed me and said: “America. Good.” Then he pointed to the sky and his mouth. They had been without water for four days. No stranger on the Bowery was filling cups for passers-by.

Yet another day, this time in a jeep with three soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division of the United States Army, the very people you would be glad to have as companions in the stairway of a burning tower. There was chat about a black Labrador dog named Winchester at home, of four boys and their teams, and then, abruptly, silence. Everyone looked out the window as we rolled past a crossroad. The bodies of 15 or 20 men were stacked on the shoulder. They were fully clothed except for their feet, which were bare, pink and naked under the desert sun.

In the corner of what staircase landing, in what tower, were the shoes that belonged with the soles of these dead?

Many months later, President Bush would say that inspectors had found no weapons of mass destruction. And no, he said, there was no evidence implicating Saddam Hussein in 9/11. The war was about freedom.

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In much the same way that Anne Mulderry would name the peril of falling in love with death, William Butler Yeats wrote of an earlier, bloody era in “Meditations in Time of Civil War.”

We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart’s grown brutal from the fare;
More Substance in our enmities
Than in our love

At vast cost in human capital, we carved 9/11 into the history of loss in other places, the eminities of a decade rising from the horrors of the day. But the majesty of that day does not belong to the chronicles of war. It
lives in truths the size of atoms, nearly invisible and — one hopes — indestructible.

That morning, Raffaele Cava, age 80, was working on the 90th floor of the north tower. After the plane hit, no one could open the exits, so he went to another office and sat with Dianne DeFontes and Tirsa Moya. The hall floors were melting. Suddenly, two men in the stairwell pried open the door, walked in and ordered everyone to go. They were Frank De Martini and Pablo Ortiz, Port Authority employees who worked one flight down, and who took it on themselves to climb up and down 14 floors, getting scores of people out. They never left.

Tirsa Moya walked Raffaele Cava down all 90 floors.

You could ask no more of human beings.
In Love and Death is the second studio album by American rock band the Used. It was released on September 28, 2004 and was later certified platinum in the United States, indicating over 1,000,000 copies shipped. It is their most commercially successful album to date. The title and music reference a number of tragic events that surrounded vocalist Bert McCracken during the album's production, notably the death of his pregnant girlfriend. In Love and Death is the final studio album to feature drummer...

In Russia, Boris Grushenko is in love with his pseudo-intellectual cousin Sonja, who loves him since he too is a pseudo-intellectual, but she is not in love with him. Instead she is in love with his brother Ivan. But as Ivan doesn't seem to return her affections, she is determined to marry someone - anyone - except Boris. If that person isn't the perfect husband, then she has to find a suitable lover in addition. Boris' pursuit of Sonja has to take a back seat in his life when he, a pacifist and coward, is forced to join the Russian Army to battle Napoleon's forces which have just invaded Austria. In Love With Death · Hypnos. Heretic Commando / Rise of the New Antikrist. ℗ 2012-04-25. Auto-generated by YouTube. Show more. Install the free Online Radio Box application for your smartphone and listen to your favorite radio stations online - wherever you are!