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John Atkinson *Stereophile* May 2000

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Bark o' the Banshee

by Pat Robinson



I Pray

We waited patiently on October 24th for the arrival of Leah, Ry, and Jake. The van pulled in and the dogs announced them. We were all so glad to see each other. We hugged and kissed, passing kids back and forth, the dogs covered them all with sniffs and licks. The visit began with joy and relief. It would end much sooner than anticipated.

On November 4th, Leah's husband died suddenly, alone in a motel in Buena Vista, California, ending the abusive marriage that had begun almost 7 years earlier. For his survivors, life would never be the same again. On the following Wednesday, I joined my daughter and grandsons in the van and we headed south. I did not want her traveling alone in grief.

At about 11pm we parked on Broadway in downtown Manhattan to see the destruction at Ground Zero. Sometimes it's easier to see much larger pain and suffering while dealing with one's own. I had never seen such sad faces, such despair, such a great sense of loss and, such huge destruction. One of the police officers on guard at 23rd St. suggested that all Americans should see this cavern of death still shrouded in fire, smoke, and the ever present smell. I agree.

We stood outside of St. Paul's and watched rescuers go in and out. We saw people from around the world look in horror at the result of the terror inflicted upon our people. We looked at the small portion of a wall of empty windowless concrete as it leaned in a frozen angle. We signed the sheets hung on the fence. We left in silence.

I wrote this piece from a computer in Mississippi as arrangements were made. I answered the phone and gave information to those who wanted or needed to know. I only wanted peace and closure. I prayed for both as I watched news of the plane crash in Queens. Fear welled up in me as I stared at the plane ticket that would take me home to the mountains of New Hampshire.

The phone rang and it was my partner asking me to find some other way back, knowing full well that time and the situation would not allow for that. She told me about suspicious envelopes found at Planned Parenthood offices and cautioned me to be careful. I have always believed that when your number is up, it's over. I hope and pray mine is a long way from that.

The images on the television showed the Northern Alliance as it succeeded in liberating the poor victims of a regime that kept it's populace under a heavy hand levied in religious zeal.

The women that lived under Taliban rule shed veils and smiled into the cameras. I wondered how long they had stayed indoors, hidden like something to be ashamed of. The men shaved each other and with each stroke of the razor, smiled wider.

I watched an interesting debate on C-Span/Washington Journal between Rep. (R-Texas) Dick Arme and the viewers calling in. This politician is the same man who used very disparaging remarks toward a fellow gay Congressman from Massachusetts. I find myself agreeing with a good deal of what he had to say in his comments about the security of our airports, election reform, and his hope that our forces in Afghanistan will get bin Laden alive, bring him to trial, and incarcerate him for life. To kill bin Laden would make him a martyr to his followers just as the 19 terrorists that died killing 5000 in the WTC are considered to be.

Following the close of that interview was a press conference with Reps., Gephardt (D-Missouri) and Rangel (D-New York) regarding the stalemate between the unified Senate along with the House Democrats, versus the House Republicans which are led by Majority leader Rep. Dick Arme. According to Mr. Gephardt, Mr. Arme and his small group of co-horts are the lost "fourth leg of a stool that will not stand" and that their agenda is to continue to dig the heels of the special interests in while America waits for a good and true bill to keep us safe in our airports.

Hey Dick, whose side are you on here? In your interview, you admitted that your wife wants security and you would listen to her. Maybe your constituents should consider her for Representative in the next election. Listen to her and the rest of the women in this country on this point Mr. Arme. We want safety, peace, and security for all our people no matter what side of the aisle, road, tracks, or country any of us lives on.

I pray I get home safely so my readers will see a column and not an obituary.

I pray that my daughter along with thousands around the world move beyond grieving and get back to living.

I pray that war will be over before Ramadon, Kwanza, Hanukkah, and Christmas.

I pray that next month I can go back to an ordinary column with very ordinary complaints in a world still here.

Peace and love to all, always.

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