

MY ESSAY ON BEING “ATTACKED”

Last night, among the pecan trees, I was sitting out in the early evening, wondering why I was allowing the mosquitoes to devour each and all of my vulnerable spots. But...it was just dense dark, and I was gazing up rapt by the most beautiful luminous quarter-moon I had noticed to see in this just-birthing autumn season. This night was 11 September 2021. The night was pearl black, and the moon was only a slice—an upright slice of shining honeydew. It was fresh, clean, and so intensely beautiful.

Having worked that morning, at the Postal Service, I had spent the afternoon doing various chores and had much avoided video of all the day's reminiscences and remembrances. In the previous days it had been astounding to once again see the pictures of that awe-struck day so many years before, yet so vivid on film as a searing memory. Survivors from the scene were still shaken, still disturbed.

Born in Texas I was, nevertheless, well-acquainted as a very young child, through the magic of television on the impressionable

minds of young children, with New York—Ding-Dong School, Winky-Dink, people pressed against the plate-glass of NBC Today to wave at Dave Garroway, or more-so at J. Fred Muggs, generally unwary inhabitants being pranked by Candid Camera, entertainment by Ed Sullivan, evening-clothed celebrities on glittering game shows. New York seemed the distant, somewhat unattainable, center of the United States—and all things. In those days, with the privilege of Texas and the ideal of New York, it was easy to view myself as a “citizen of the world”. Graduating from high school at the ferocious pinnacle of the Vietnam war I became more than conscious of NOT dying at a young age. At that time, it was a fraught age. As a young person, like so many others, I moved to New York City, which I had first visited on an adventure in 1969, to live in Manhattan for twenty years, seventeen of which in the home apartment on Twenty-first St. Living in Manhattan was, in miracle terms, the best time of my life, along with affording me travels in Europe and all over the United States. In the last years of the twentieth century, the United States seemed capable to live up to its' potential. America the beautiful.

Now, back in middle United States after twenty years living in the glorious Manhattan, and gazing now at the eternally beautiful moon, I saw the white-and-red flashing lights of a single airplane sailing silently across the moon's lower tip and on along the night sky. In previous years there was a time in history when one could look up into the broad Texas skies and see a dozen airplanes at any point in day or night crossing on their flightpaths—Chicago to Houston, Dallas to Buenos Aires, New York to Los Angeles, Denver to Miami, San Francisco to New Orleans, smaller intra-Texas flights. On the morning of that second day of infamy, I had, as then usual, been watching television to see Today unfold, here a clear perfectly beautiful September morning, and watched along with the news commenters themselves in growing disbelief and horror that the mysterious smoke was indeed a deliberately planned attack live on television screens in every home. My generation had never witnessed (outside a Hollywood film) such a thing. And then the towers began to fall.

Shock was beyond imagining—disbelief foremost. It required a momentary turning away from the livestream broadcasting, a walk

away into outdoors, It is strange what one can notice—small details inside huge events. All other flights had been immediately ordered grounded, except for elite Air Force. Looking up, where before there had been overabundant traffic of the United States going about its' business, there was now the eerie total emptiness of blue endless sky. No flashing lights, no sound—emptiness horizon to horizon. Eerie.

Twenty years dims the sensory perceptions; it is a long enough time to fog the edges of the memory. And much can happen in twenty years. After surviving horrific attack, and declarations of war, and the greed and rise of instant communications, of oil-mongering and self-propelled vehicles, the stealth of foreign intervention, and living through a year and three-quarters of Covid deaths and lockdown, along with barely surviving the insanity of one of our (thankfully now) former presidents and a giggle of evil politicians, to mention only a few, we have certainly witnessed a lot in only twenty years. The United States is a changed place—change being inevitable, good or bad—and in its' wake an irretrievably divided nation, Divided—will fall. There can be no doubt of outcome. We are mistrustful of outsiders;

and hate each other from inside the factions we have become. Divided
—will fall.

There can be enemies without; enemies within. As they say of
history: “Remember”. Lest we forget?

--J.F. Lowe