

911 ©

By Connie J. Schlosberg

I remember September 11, 2001 clearly. My daughter Isabella had just turned one year old. I was getting us ready to leave for Peterson Air Force Base where I worked and where Isabella attended day care. I caught a bit of the news. Someone stated that an airplane had crashed into the World Trade Center. I thought how anyone can be so stupid as to fly too low and hit a building. I proceeded onward as if nothing unusual had happened. The base was having an inspection so the military had what they called procedural exercises that week. I dropped Isabella off at the child development center and went in to work.

The morning went like lightening speed as the phone calls came in for the exercises. By that time another plane had hit the World Trade Center. My boss, a burly Lurch-like Lieutenant Colonel, was in the back of our parachute building style of an office. He was facilitating a meeting. Now, everyone is listening to the horror on the radio. My friend, Tom, would go to the back of the office and tell our boss what's going on and he seemed nonchalant about the whole thing - as if this didn't mean anything. The exercise was still playing and I called over to someone manning the unit control center to find out if anything changed. As we were talking about the exercise, I heard yelling in the background. His panicked voice shouts to me: "We're going to Delta!" Real world or Exercise? Real world! I yelled over to Tom. "We're at real world Delta." Delta is the highest of the

threats. If you're at Delta, you're in eminent danger. I called our Commander's secretary to find out what we're supposed to do. She tells me to hang up and not call back and that we would receive further instruction. My heart's racing and all I can think about is Isabella. We're supposed to shelter in place at this point but I run to my car and speed over to the day care center. No one seemed to be acting any different.

I called my husband on the cell phone; no service at first but after several tries, I finally reached him. His voice trailed off a bit. I think we lost connection.

Isabella was in the room with a big smile on her face and peaches stained on her red-checkered dress. I grabbed some diapers just in case we were going to be stuck on the base for a while. I don't know why but instead of trying to go home I went back to the parachute building. It's located near the flight line. I parked on the dirt because no one is allowed to park near buildings during Delta. I carried Isabella inside. The fumes from the runway were nauseating. Rumors abound about President Bush flying in to Peterson

Air Force Base and then being driven to Cheyenne Mountain to hide out for a while. My friend Amber who was a Captain at that time came over to me frantic. Her husband, also a Captain, was in D.C. for business. She couldn't reach him.

Everyone is gathered in the lobby and growing impatient. The Lieutenant Colonel was still not budging from his meeting. I believe Tom cursed him out. I

can see his wrinkled hound dog face pointing his finger at the guy. I waited for the punches but they never came. Isabella teetered around the office. She still wasn't walking on her own. She grabbed every piece of furniture with every movement. I think we finally got the call to go home. I started to drive off the base. What a line. I don't think there was a road without a car on it. It felt like eternity driving home. Normally, between the airport and the military runways, you can hear the planes roaring in this town, but you couldn't hear anything but silence.