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Conspiracy crusader doubts official 9/11 version

by Michele Landsberg

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Barrie Zwicker gazes calmly into the camera, hands clasped, voice clear and resonant, looking the quintessential Canadian progressive: a colourful knitted vest over an open-collared shirt, a neat little beard, a personality that radiates boyish, almost naive friendliness.

Not a shard of irony, not a sliver of petulant, up-to-date narcissism.

Perfect. You couldn't possibly be more agreeable or less threatening.

Then, of course, he ruins it all by asking questions. They are questions that 99 per cent of Canadian journalists have not dared or deigned to ask, and that most Canadians would prefer not to hear.

In these strange times, asking direct and probing questions about 9/11 will get you instant put-downs.

Zwicker grins as he mimics the upward eye-roll and patronizing hand-flap that go along with the phrase "conspiracy theorist."

As Vision TV's media critic for the past 15 years, and as a journalist with a long list of solid credentials (he's worked at *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*, taught at Ryerson University, and was awarded a Southam Fellowship at the University of Toronto), Zwicker should be safely out of the line of fire. It's a measure of his determination to challenge conventional wisdom that he has willingly kept his head up, instead of down, and tried to look facts right in the eye.

"You know, the people who just shrug off these questions with the 'conspiracy theorist' epithet should be asked what they stand for. Unquestioning acceptance of the official narrative? Sure, there are outlandish theories out there -- aliens, Atlantis -- but there have also been real and huge conspiracies," Zwicker told me in an interview in his home office.

I knew about some of those conspiracies. Last January, I wrote a column about American declassified documents that verify a long history of top-level conspiracies. The U.S. government, its military and its secret service have plotted to justify wars and impose their

control on other countries through intricate secret schemes of drug-running, gun smuggling and assassination. They even considered rigging fake terrorist attacks that would cost American lives in order to stir the public to war-ready outrage.

Immediately, I was deluged with hundreds upon hundreds of approving e-mails from American citizens. Some of them praised the TV work of Barrie Zwicker -- a *Globe and Mail* colleague of my youth.

I sat down, with a fair degree of skepticism, to watch Zwicker's video, *The Great Deception*, which challenges the U.S. government's account of what really happened on 9/11. Slowly, a frightening chill came over me. These were the very questions I had asked myself on 9/11 and for several weeks after. Failing to find easy answers, I had locked the subject away.

- Why did the United States Air Force fail to scramble interceptor jets -- in defiance of all long-standing rules and well-established practice -- for almost two hours after it was known that an unprecedented four planes had been hijacked?
- How could the world's most powerful military fail to react throughout a prolonged, horrifying attack on the financial and political capitals of the nation?
- How did the FBI know the exact identities of the hijackers within 24 hours of the attacks? If their files were so readily to hand, why hadn't they been apprehended earlier? After all, several conscientious FBI agents had raised the alarm about a number of known Al Qaeda sympathizers at U.S. flight schools, and had been ignored.
- Why did Donald Rumsfeld call for a war on Iraq (not Afghanistan) the morning after the Saudi hijackers had accomplished their attack?
- Why did the two squadrons of fighter jets at Andrews Air Force base, 19 kilometres from Washington, not zoom into action to defend the White House, one of their primary tasks?
- Why did George Bush sit for half an hour in a Florida classroom, listening to a girl talk about her pet goat, after his chief of staff told him about the second plane? For that matter, why did he pretend that he first learned of the attacks in that classroom, when he had actually been briefed as he left his hotel that morning?
- Why has there been no public investigation into the billions of dollars "earned" by insider trading of United and American Airlines stock before 9/11?

I went to interview Zwicker because I was fascinated by his courage in raising these unpopular questions and wanted to know what made him persist. I saw the answer for myself. At nearly 69, Zwicker has boundless energy, intellectual as well as physical. (This is an environmentalist who gave up cars in 1966 and who bicycles thousands of kilometres across country for fun).

He has a restless scientific curiosity, coupled with humanistic principles absorbed from his United Church minister father. At age 12, as a fledgling skeptic growing up in Swan River, Manitoba, Zwicker couldn't merely accept the common schoolboy belief that Coca-Cola contained acid powerful enough to dissolve a penny. Into five bottles of Coke he dropped a penny, a nail, a piece of leather, a strip of cloth and a cube of bread. Next morning, he found all intact.

In his teens, anguished at his loss of faith, he turned to his father. "Out there in his garden, near the sweet peas, he put his arm around my shoulder and said 'Barrie, follow the truth, wherever it leads you.'"

Zwicker and his wife Jean (they've been married 40 years and have a grown son and daughter) are avid gardeners and theatre fanatics with subscriptions to nearly every series in town.

His energy seems equalled only by his good humour and relentless pursuit of honest fact.

You can catch Zwicker's Eye Opener media critique on the current affairs show, 360 Vision, Thursdays at 8 p.m. on VisionTV. He has sold more than 1,000 of his Great Deception videos at near-cost. You can order one for \$38 (that includes shipping) by calling 416-651-5588.

And if you call him a conspiracy theorist, call me one, too, because I agree with Zwicker when he says, "I don't know exactly what happened, but something smells very fishy." Even more rank-smelling is the refusal of most Canadian journalists to ask embarrassingly uncool questions about one of the worst catastrophes of our time.

Michele Landsberg's column usually appears in the Star Saturday and Sunday. Her e-mail address is mlandsb@thestar.ca

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VISION TV ARCHIVES:

"The Great Deception" - What really happened on Sept. 11, 2001

from *VisionTV's Insight Mediafile*

hosted by Barrie Zwicker, Insight Media Analyst

http://www.visiontv.ca/Archive/Archives_fr.html

<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/doubt911vers.html>