

GUEST OPINION

Even our community can't escape terrorism

San Bernardino, California. Fort Hood, Texas. New York, New York. Brussels, Belgium. The closest of these places lies more than 600 miles away, the most distant more than 5,000 miles.

Distance notwithstanding, with the attack at the airport in Brussels, in which former Tooele resident and LDS Seminary teacher Richard Norby was seriously hurt, terrorism now has come home. As this incident proves, no one, no family, and no community, is immune.

Some might say Elder Norby and his fellow missionaries were in the wrong place at the wrong time, but I doubt he would say there's ever a wrong place or a wrong time to serve, which is what he was doing. I've always known him to do what's right without counting the cost.

I was Elder Norby's student during my freshman and senior years of LDS Seminary, respectively. Although I have a disability, I was mainstreamed in school from day one, which made me a frequent target of some. Though that problem largely had abated by junior high school, I still wondered where I fit in.

Cerebral, but hardly a genius; not athletic at all; not all that popular, but with something of a way with words, it was hard, sometimes, for me to find my niche. As I suspect is true of many of his students, I sometimes repaired to Elder Norby's office seeking reassurance.

Not a few of our conversations centered around the seemingly-all-consuming angst that afflicted my teenage misfit self. Some of my classmates (though, thankfully, they comprised a distinct minority) spared no pains, in ways both subtle and overt, to let me know that I didn't fit in.



Ken Gourdin
GUEST COLUMNIST

While I don't recall the substance of those conversations, the gist, and Elder Norby's bottom-line advice, was, "Ken, the only thing that matters is who you are in God's eyes."

While I doubt he would want any of the credit, I did, indeed, leave his office reassured.

I eventually won over most of my classmates when, to a standing ovation at graduation, they presented me with a letter signed by most of the members of the class of 1988, along with a small scholarship taken from the senior class fund recognizing the impact the positive way I met my challenges had on them.

On a personal level, can anything be done about terrorism? Not much. Perhaps peace won't be achieved worldwide until the Prince of Peace, on whose errand Elder Norby and the other missionaries were serving, reigns.

Perhaps all we can do is take special care to look after those we love; take the time to let them know just how important they are to us; reach out to someone who might be lonely or in pain — whether that pain is physical or emotional; and take time to make a visit or a call, or to write a note.

If there is someone from whom we have become estranged, perhaps we ought to consider whether it might be time to mend that rift — no matter who might be at fault.

Don't wait; do it now. There may not be a tomorrow. Heal well, *mon frere*.

Ken K. Gourdin is a former Tooele resident and now lives in Pleasant Grove