

CAMPUS NEWS/FEATURES

NBC reporter among those sharing Sept. 11 experiences in memoir book

LaTasha Miles
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Rehema Ellis' vacation was just ending Sept. 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center was attacked in New York City. She had planned to simply enjoy the city that day — a luxury due to her fast-paced job as a reporter for NBC News.

Those plans were abruptly interrupted when a page instructed her to turn on the television. Devastation was happening in her own backyard, and she was immediately back on the job.

Ellis expected to only be covering a story regarding a plane colliding into a Trade Center tower. Throughout the course of that day and the week, however, she and the rest of the world would learn that this incident was a vicious act of terrorism involving large aircraft carriers and hundreds of innocent people.

This day, which changed the lives of many, changed Ellis' perspective on life. Her profile is one of 24 in the book, "Women Journalists at Ground Zero," which is on shelves in O'Kelly Library.

Ellis decided that she must report to Ground Zero immediately. She felt obligated to get to the site and inform others. Upon her arrival, she saw thousands of people flooding the streets.

"Everyone was in a state of confusion with this look of 'What do we do and where do we go?' There was just a blank look of disbelief on their faces," she said.

Trying to deal with the catastrophe was difficult, but Ellis also had to perform her job — with limited communication tools.

Cell phones were not functioning, and pay phones were either out of service or had long lines of people waiting to place calls. Ellis was also limited in the technological assistance that NBC studios could provide.



Photo courtesy of MCT Wire Service

The Twin Towers fell during the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

"We were not in communication with anyone at the bureau. No producers, no directors, no executive producers — nobody," Ellis said. The material was developed quickly, and it was extremely difficult to convey messages. Live stand-ins caused Ellis to appear disorganized. In several instances, she would be reporting one thing, but the viewers would be seeing something else. Nothing was recognizable, the landscape had changed drastically, and the content of her reports was disturbing.

Ellis never wanted to give up. Even though she could barely breathe, she wanted to go farther into the core of Ground Zero. She had been told "No" by officials, but tenacity continued to fuel her. She strived to get the coverage she felt was necessary for the world to know what was going on in Lower Manhattan.

"When they told us we couldn't go one way, we just found another way in," she recalled. Her primary

mission was to get the untold stories. She said this went far beyond those trying to get their 15 seconds of fame. This was a chance for them to cry out with hope and reach out to loved ones. The coverage was a collection of inspirational moments.

Ellis and other journalists braved the elements in a very unselfish manner to tell the story. Afterwards, she and other journalists bypassed opportunities to speak with counselors, opt-in instead to gather support from family and close friends.

On September 11, 2001, Rehema Ellis had not planned to learn any significant lessons; she was looking forward to a day of leisure. Instead, it became a day of horrifying events that took her down a road she had never been in her life. That day taught her to never take anything for granted.

"I've always cherished my family. I didn't think I could've loved them anymore, but I do," she said.

BACK in the DAY

Shadonna Boyd
STAFF REPORTER

50 YEARS AGO THIS DAY:

The 1957 yearbook opens to a black-and-white picture of Whitaker gym, which was surrounded only by grass at that time.

The university alma mater song is printed on the next page, which reads, "As we go forth from Old T.C., a song of love we sing to you thee and praises to the memory of days at Teachers College." The song boasts the former name of Winston-Salem State University — Teachers College. The alma mater song continues with, "And stand for christianity as you have taught us Teachers College." The word "Christianity" is no longer a part of the university's alma mater. The alma mater song was changed to end with, "As we go forth we praise thy name, oh Winston-Salem Teachers College."

F.L. Atkins was president of the university. Enrollment was a third of the size it is today (2008); seniors make up the largest class. The red rose was their class flower. The class motto was: "We resolve to meet the future fired with the flame of the present and with steel of the past."

Source: The 1957 Ram Yearbook, WSSU

35 YEARS AGO THIS DAY:

Richard Lloyd Short, a 17-year-old boy who admitted shooting his mother in the back when he was 16, was denied a new trial. Short gained a post-conviction hearing in Forsyth Superior Court because a damaging statement and a confession were taken without counsel, and his father's house was illegally searched. Short was also apparently coerced into pleading guilty to second-degree murder. His lawyer did not represent him effectively, and Short was charged under an improper warrant. Short testified that he came home from school, left the house, and came home to find deputies at his house. He asked about his mother's condition, volunteered that he shot her, and then he was read his rights.

Source: Winston-Salem Journal, 1973

25 YEARS AGO THIS DAY:

Indiana University basketball coach, Bob Knight, said he was "deeply sorry" for hurling a chair across the court during Saturday's day game with Purdue. Ejected from the game with three technical fouls after the incident, Knight said criticism of his actions was justified. Knight said that frustration over the Big Ten Conference officials caused his outburst.

"I had the most disappointing session I've ever had with a person in athletics when I had a sessions in Chicago with the Big Ten supervisor of officials. His attitude, his approach to it, just left me almost thinking that it is an absolutely hopeless situation that we have I've never been more disgusted with something... I think sometimes you get in situations where you obviously, probably let some frustrations go out, and maybe you shouldn't have, probably I shouldn't have, but I did," he said.

Source: Winston-Salem Journal 1983

10 YEARS AGO THIS DAY:

Preteens sat with their heads bowed as they studied their lessons closely. "Can anyone tell me how to butter a dinner roll?" Dorothy Hanrahan, the etiquette consultant asked. Tuition was \$125 for the Ritz Kids Etiquette Program, a five-session crash course in courtesy, held on select Sundays at the Ritz-Carlton in St. Louis. This class gave lessons on how to introduce yourself, maintain eye contact, smile as you say hello, and speak clearly. Hanrahan put together her own etiquette program. She expanded her mission just that year before. According to etiquette expert Letitia Baldrige of Washington, D.C., "Today's kids don't have a clue about how to handle utensils or even ask politely for something to be passed across the table, and it's no wonder. They're used to eating microwave meals in front of the television or going out for dinner at a fast-food restaurant where sandwiches are wrapped in paper and served on a plastic tray."

Source: Winston-Salem Journal, 1988

Archival information for "Back in the Day" is compiled in cooperation with the WSSU Archives and microfilm files in O'Kelly Library.



BOBBY KNIGHT

Correction: The sculpture in last week's story "Sculptures leave their mark" was misidentified. The sculpture pictured is "Southern Sunrise" by Melvin Edwards.

Couples share trials and joys of juggling school and family

Shauntel Lowe
BLACK COLLEGE WIRE

Joshua Felder and Kirby Mullins

Joshua Felder, 23, thought that once his long-distance girlfriend, Kirby Mullins, 20, got to Hampton University their relationship would have a chance to develop even more. But once she arrived, the relationship ended.

He said Mullins wanted to experience college and they broke up until her sophomore year. Since then, they have been best friends and are now engaged. Felder, who graduated from Hampton last spring, is now working for NASA as a technical writer while Mullins finishes her final two years of school.

"I keep telling her all the time that I want to hurry up and have kids and get them out of the house already," he said.

Felder said one of the keys to the success of their relationship is that they give each other space and consider each other when making decisions. He said he stopped drinking and eating red meat in order to be healthy and live longer to be with Mullins. He said he views getting married young as an advantage over those who get married in their 30s or 40s.

"A lot of times when people get married older, they end up splitting up because the woman and man are set in their ways. We are both young. We're not going to be set in our individual ways. We can grow up together," he said. He



Photo courtesy of MCT Wire Service

Joshua Felder and Kirby Mullins are currently engaged.

said many older men tell him tales of what they were doing when they were 23, like dating "x-amount" of women.

"Now they have this amount of ex-wives and kids they have to pay child support for," he said.

Felder said it's important to get married for the right reason. "The worst thing in the world is for you to be engaged to please the person you're with and you end up miserable. Make sure it's something you want to do."

Nicole and Dameon Douglass

Six months into a new relationship at age 20, Nicole Douglass found out she was pregnant. Her reaction: walk down the aisle. Douglass was an electrical engineering student at San Diego State University at the time, but quickly added the titles wife and mother once she married her then-boyfriend Dameon Douglass, now 23, and gave birth

to a son, Dameon Jr. Now, two years later, Douglass, 22, struggles to juggle her duties as wife and mother on top of being a full-time student and interning 15 hours every week at an engineering company. Her secret: no sleep and a good daycare.

"I can't study until [Dameon Jr.'s] asleep because he'll tear up my books," she said. Douglass' husband serves in the United States Navy, leaving her to care for her son alone while Dameon Sr. is deployed. Even when her husband is home, Douglass said the couple doesn't get to spend much time together.

"I don't have a lot of time for him. He understands... My husband always thinks that school isn't really that hard to do. I work and go to school," she said.

Even with her struggles, Douglass said she sees nothing wrong with getting married young and was "very happy" when her husband proposed. "Pretty much everyone in my family got married at that age, had kids at that age. It's not a big deal," she said.

Douglass said she partied enough during her first few years of college that she doesn't feel the need to do so now, nor does she have the time. Now her son motivates her to persevere. "Sometimes I feel like I want to quit. [Having a son] makes me keep going."

Jennifer Davis and Leon Chisolm
In the 2002 movie "Brown

Sugar," rapper/actress Queen Latifah's character advises her best friend to date a lifelong friend because she says he's the "best of both worlds" of friendship and dating. Hampton University graduate students Jennifer Davis and Leon Chisolm have brought that storyline to life, transforming a deep friendship into an engagement. Both Davis and Chisolm are in the final year of Hampton's five-year MBA program. They got engaged in August and plan to marry in June 2008.

Davis, 22, said she had never dated someone she was friends with first prior to Chisolm, 23, for fear of what the trials of dating would do to a friendship. But with Chisolm, it appears she had nothing to worry about.

"Even though we had our ups and downs, our friendship never went away. It just evolved into a relationship," she said.

Chisolm said though the couples' road to engagement was spotted with stressful times, falling outs and periods when they didn't even speak to each other, it all worked to strengthen their relationship and prepare them for the difficulties of marriage.

He calls Davis his "dream woman in every aspect, in every way." "She helps me be a better person. Without her I would kind of be lost," he said. "I've always intended on marrying her."

Davis said they were brought together by God and that is what

kept them through the hard times, such as being apart. Davis is from Waverly Hall, Ga. and Chisolm is from Killeen, Texas. "When I'm not with him, I feel like a part of me is missing," she said.

Davis and Chisolm said maturity and commitment helped their relationship develop to the point of engagement, even at what some might consider to be a young age.

"I wanted to have children before a certain age so I knew marriage had to come before that," Davis said.

She added that the challenge of planning a wedding set in Georgia while in school at Hampton has increased her patience and given her an appreciation for the time she has with friends, knowing soon she won't have as much time.

Chisolm said he has scaled back some of his friendships with other women out of respect for Davis and to head off any drama.

"I've had to cut down on female friends, get rid of some female friends that were too closely associated in the past. It brings a lot of tension when you have people assuming things that are incorrect. Not having to worry about other people saying things, bringing doubts makes it easier for your relationship to grow," he said.

Both said they don't feel like they're missing out on anything by getting married at this age and look forward to building their careers and lives together.