

ten years later

# A day of celebration turns somber

## Elon's campus shocked, reflective after terrorist attacks

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News Editor

Tuesday morning, Sept. 11, 2001, Kristin Simonetti was sound asleep. It was just a few days into her freshman year at Elon University and it was a big day for College Coffee. The marching band and football team were about to begin the celebrations in anticipation of the opening of Rhodes Stadium, where its first football game was to be held the following Saturday.

Simonetti woke with a start to a loud, incessant banging on her door. A "there's an emergency" kind of banging. A freshman from down the hall, whom she hardly even knew, burst into the room, turned on the TV and said, "You've got to watch this."

American Airlines Flight 11 had just crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center and a few minutes later, scared and in shock, Simonetti and her friends watched live as United Airlines Flight 175 was flown into the south tower at 9:03 a.m.

"For a while it was paralyzing," Simonetti said. "Then I looked at the clock and got dressed and ran for McEwen. Our professor came into the classroom and all of us were there and we had conversation partners, exchange students from Japan, but we didn't know what to say to each other, we didn't know what to do."

Simonetti, Class of 2005, currently works as the assistant director of University Relations for alumni communications. She said it took hours for people to finally get through the busy phone lines to contact their families and for the dust to settle and reality to sink in. Classes weren't officially canceled for the day, but many professors gave students the opportunity to go back to their dorms, she said.

"It was about noon when things started calming down and people started speculating about who did it and why," she said. "I remember just being really confused."

At College Coffee that morning, Dan Anderson, director of University Relations, was pulled aside and summoned to the president's office, where President Leo Lambert was assembling a crisis team. While other aspects of campus life continued as usual, everything stopped at University Relations, where staff members went into full news coverage mode.

"My sense is that everybody was kind of in shock and didn't know what to do," Anderson said. "There was no huge outcry, it was confusion and shock and curiosity. It was just starting to sink in

that this was not an accident, that this was an attack. Mostly, people didn't do anything but try to find out more information."

The inaugural football game at Rhodes Stadium was postponed because of the attacks, Anderson said, and was held the following weekend.

Cheryl Borden, director of International Admissions, was also a freshman at Elon in 2001 and said she first heard about the attacks when she saw the news coverage on TV in the laundry room of her dorm.

Borden rushed to contact her twin sister, also an Elon student, but she was in class at the time and could not get a hold of her. She finally tracked down a friend from high school and the two of them sat in front of the TV in shock for hours, she said.

"I remember the TV coverage when the second plane hit the twin towers and just watching in helplessness and horror as everything went crumbling down," Borden said. "My friend and I didn't really leave his dorm room. We had pizza delivered and while I can't remember if classes were canceled that afternoon, I know that if they were not, I definitely skipped my second class that day."

In the days following the attacks, University Relations worked to cover the numerous events on campus designed to foster discussion and support students, faculty and staff. It was important for parents to have access to current, accurate information about what was happening on campus and in the area, Anderson said.

Staff members in the admissions department continued on with their routine, but the attacks were present on everyone's minds and permeated discussions throughout the day, said Greg Zaiser, dean of admissions, and Art Fadde, associate dean of admissions and director of graduate admissions.

Both were shocked when they initially heard of the attacks, but staff members started working right away to find out how many students in the freshman class were from affected areas, Fadde said.

"That was almost immediate," Zaiser said. "The word went out, how many students were from affected areas? There were, as I recall, Elon families who certainly lost loved ones as a result. It's hard to believe, I know this is such a cliché, but it's hard to believe it's been 10 years."

Sept. 11 was Fadde's second day of work as one of Elon's newest staff members and he said he was astonished by the amount of support he saw on campus.

"I was witness to a lot of genuine, very authentic caring, in particular, of our first-year students, who were just on campus for a couple of days," he said. "Asking, 'Do you have the ability to check in?' and 'Are you OK?' I remember former Chaplain Emeritus Richard McBride having a very strong presence and he really kind of exhibited one of the core Elon values that still stands today, that we rally. Elon is a place that is special in that way, in the sense that they really genuinely care about the students, the people that we work with, and that goes all the way up."

The discussion fueled by the attacks did not quickly fade and made Simonetti and her peers ask questions about the invincibility of the United States they had never before thought to ask. Things like, "Are we really the best country in the world?" and "Do these people have a point?"

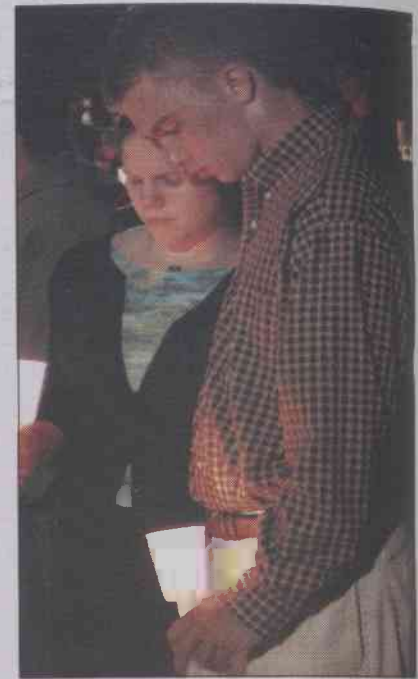
"One of my friends that lived near me in Jordan Center, his father was killed in the Pentagon," she said. "You heard bits and pieces of stories like that, it was surreal. When you're 18 and starting college and you feel like you're invincible and the world is your oyster, it's hard."

Stories about the attacks and their immense emotional aftermath still make it into the admissions essays of a few prospective students each year, Zaiser said.

It's not as common as it was in the years immediately following 2001, but the attacks' effects are still reflected,

especially for students from affected areas.

"I think for some of us, even at our age, I think we lost a little bit of our innocence," Fadde said. "Zaiser and I were both dads at the time and this is something our kids are going to have to grow up with."



COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS  
Memorial events were held on campus following Sept. 11 so students and faculty could mourn and reflect.



COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS  
Many faculty, staff and students were at a special College Coffee celebrating the opening of the new Rhodes Stadium when they heard the news of Sept. 11 attacks. For the most part, the day went on as normal on campus.

# New York natives, alumni remember Sept. 11

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Features Editor

Ten years ago, the United States and the world changed forever when terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania. Despite the passage of time, the memories are still fresh, particularly for New Yorkers.

"What I could remember of 9/11 was stun and sorrow," said Tyrice Johnson, a junior from Brooklyn, N.Y. "I was in the fifth grade in my morning class, looking forward to my birthday celebration the next day. Then, as my classmates were dismissed one by one, and I learned of the events that happened, excitement turned to shock, and then turned to sorrow."

The events of Sept. 11 affected the entire United States, but at the epicenters of grief were in New York City and D.C.

"I remember walking back from the bathroom as the faculty seemed to have gone into a frenzy," said Trishelle Byrd, a junior from Yonkers, N.Y. "My gym teacher was walking down the hall with his walkie-talkie close to his

face and ordered me, along with the other students in the hall, to hurry back to our classrooms. I started to see teachers lock and close their blinds to their doors and windows."

Some New Yorkers personally knew someone who died in the attack or knew someone whose family member, neighbor or close friend worked in or near the World Trade Center.

"My friend's mom worked in the twin towers and went to work that day," Byrd said. "Later that day, he was escorted down to the office. Very fortunately, my friend T.J. made his mom late getting to work. As she was about to walk in the front door to her building, she saw the first plane hit the tower."

Alex MacKintosh, a junior from Bronxville, N.Y., had a teacher's assistant in his class whose husband

was a firefighter and knew someone in the towers.

"I had a neighbor who worked on one of the top floors of the World Trade Center make it out alive, but he saw many of his co-workers die that day."

In addition to the loss of family, community members and friends on Sept. 11, these students and other New Yorkers were affected in other ways that changed their

day-to-day lives.

"When I got home from school, it was all that was on the TV for the rest of the night," said Amanda Long, a senior from Chappaqua, N.Y. "Those images are burned in my mind. My family was fine, but that was not the same for everyone in my community."

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aftermath of Sept. 11 was literally all around them.

"My school closed down for about two weeks due to the air quality," MacKintosh said.

For Johnson, Sept. 11 had lingering effects on his psyche.

"It instilled fear in me about planes," Johnson said. "I lived on the top floor of my building and I could remember going to the window every time I heard a plane going toward JFK International Airport."

Ten years later, the magnitude of Sept. 11 still prevails.

"I cannot believe it has been 10 years since the attacks and with each passing year, I still remember exactly where I was that day and what I heard on the radio in my classroom," MacKintosh said. "I will always remember that day more than any other, because of what happened and also because I had people that I knew lose their lives."

Despite everything, New Yorkers continue to remain proud and stand strong.

"The sentiment in New York is not one of defeat, however," said Long. "We are New Yorkers. We survive."