On Campus

Remembering September 11: A Campus View

By
Shawn Choy
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I carried my camera almost constantly during my time as photography editor of the Spectator, always ready to capture a slice of campus life. The morning of September 11, as I sat watching television images of thick black smoke billowing from the Twin Towers, I could think of only one place to go.

When I arrived at the Spectator newsroom, I found that most of my fellow editors were already there. Being journalists and documenting the campus angle of the story was our way of groping for purpose, and that sense of purpose helped us cope with our shock and sadness.

Throughout the day, I recorded images of other members of the University community finding their own sense of purpose. Faith-based groups congregated on College Walk to pray for the victims of the attack. Others students lined up to donate blood, overwhelming local blood banks. Still others gathered in smaller groups to try to comprehend the awful thing that had happened.

I ended the day — without my camera — at an impromptu candlelight vigil. As I sat on the Low Library steps amidst a gathering of students and faculty, I finally let the full emotion of the tragedy wash over me.

I will always remember September 11 as my worst day at Columbia, but I will also remember it as a day in which the University community pulled together to recognize the common humanity that united us as Columbians, as New Yorkers, and as Americans.

Shawn Choy ’03CC was photography editor of the Columbia Daily Spectator in 2001.

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