

New York

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into my mind. The building Peyton worked in was attached to the WTC by a footbridge, the same footbridge we had walked through just weeks before.

After two hours on the tarmac and another half hour taxiing, my nerves were shot. I went to stay with a friend of my mom's in Chicago and finally spoke to Peyton about 2 p.m. He was fine. He had seen the towers burning on his way to the subway, and shortly after received a phone call from a colleague explaining what had happened and telling him not to go to work.

His life and the city were forever changed. The office building where he worked is now the tallest one standing at ground zero. In the weeks that followed, the company he works for, Lehman Brothers, temporarily relocated to hotel rooms in Times Square and purchased a new building at the north end of the square, which the investment bank will move into in 2002.

On Nov. 9, I went back for my first visit since Sept. 11. Peyton and I spent a wonderful weekend together and decided on (what should have been) my last day to go to ground zero. It was the two-month anniversary of the attack, and Veterans' Day, so there were many people at the site, including President Bush.

People can't get very close to the rubble of the buildings. There are police standing guard to make sure people don't get through the barricades, but the destruction is visible.

Walking around ground zero is intense. Flowers, candles, pictures, hats and T-shirts hang on the chain link fences set up to keep people away from the debris. A bike, undoubtedly belonging to a victim of the attacks, is still chained to a post, dusty from Sept. 11. Its spokes are stuffed with flowers.

When we got back to Peyton's apartment, I asked him how it felt to see ground zero.

"It felt like a part of the city was missing," he said. "Like my part of the city was missing."

Monday morning I woke up

ready to pack and catch a cab to LaGuardia Airport. Not half an hour after rolling out of bed, Peyton's roommate, another University alumnus, Stephen Tachouet, called and told us to watch the news: Another plane had crashed in New York. My stomach dropped, and I got all shaky. Not again, not terrorism, I prayed.

We watched the news for a bit. The crash had happened less than an hour before, and the news was mostly just anchors playing a guessing game. In an action frighteningly reminiscent of Sept. 11, the airports were shut down, although this time only for a few hours. My flight was canceled, so I stayed in New York another day and returned home Tuesday.

My travels to New York have been anything but uneventful. Just a couple weeks ago I received a letter from United Airlines, thanking me for my "patience, endurance and understanding" on Sept. 11. As if I could have felt anything else.

Erin Cooney is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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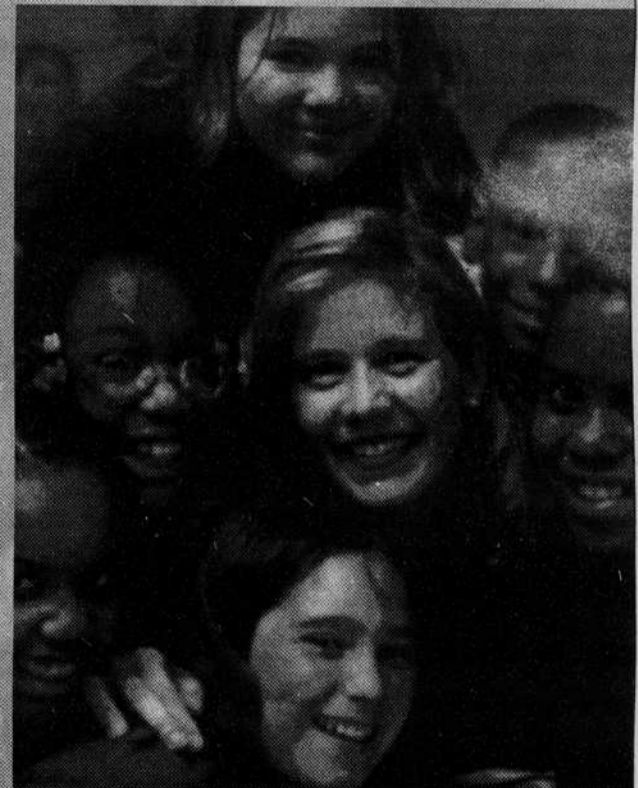
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