Some were in grade school. Others were at work. But they all saw the course of history change in one day 10 years ago.

While some attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center, damaged the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field killed 3,000 people shook America’s sense of security on Sept. 11, 2001. The events of that day still echo in the lives of UNCP students, many of whom make up what is commonly known as the “9/11 Generation.”

Initial ignorance
Some students were elementary schoolers when the Twin Towers fell, and therefore had little comprehension of how serious the attacks were.

Freshman Mary Beasley said she was a third grader in September 2001. At first, she was confused by the event.

“I was at school when it actually happened, but when I got home I saw it on the news, and my dad explained it to me,” she said.

Melvin McDermott, also a freshman, said the attacks form a moral line in his mind.

“Work got delayed”
Senior Johnny White was a 20-year-old when the attacks happened. He said he found out about them while at work on a farm near Ash, N.C.

“My boss called me. We went in the office, turned on the TV, and watched it. Needless to say, work got delayed,” he said.

McDermott is an AmeriCorps member at the Day of Remembrance, a Day of Service and events like it get students away from the comfort and familiarity of college life and face-to-face with the “things that need to get done” in society.

“I was easy…to be on campus and that’s all you do,” he said.

A decade removed
Different students had different reflections about the tragedy that became the defining national moment of their generation.

McDermott credited the attacks with opening his eyes to the greater world outside of his own small community.

“That’s when I realized that there’s much more going on,” he said.

The AmeriCorps representative said the attacks produced a mix of reactions across America.

“I think there was a greater understanding of different cultures, but there are also others who don’t know about other cultures, so their first reaction is fear,” he said.

Talbert said that the attacks revealed a dark underbelly of American society.

“It’s a lot of what we don’t want to acknowledge about ourselves on the surface. The U.S. is culturally worse off than it has been since 9/11,” he said.

Beasley said she became more aware of our own complacency.

“I know I’m afraid of flying now. I don’t think we’re safe. But I think we’re more prepared for it now at America learned an important lesson. From it.

“We’ve become more defensive. Airports have more security, and we don’t want to acknowledge about ourselves on the surface. The U.S. is culturally worse off than it has been since 9/11,” he said.

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