

# Reflections on a Fallen Man

By Eva Bellon

Eight years ago at this moment I was unable to sleep. Like the rest of the country I was shell shocked by the events of the day that had unfolded in front of my eyes. I remember the moment, more vividly than almost any other in my high school career. I walked into Mrs. Hensel's 2nd period English Honors class and she was leaned against her desk, fear in her eyes, staring at the screen of the TV against the wall in the middle of the room. There were only a handful of people who had beat me to class from first period and I slide my bag into my seat and moved closer to my beloved teacher. Had the entire world gone mad? Was this some horrible joke? At this point only the top of the North tower was on fire. Words like terrorism were only carefully speculated at by the news anchors and my class and I sat there in silence as they argued about what was happening in monotone voices- they themselves to far in shock to form many other thoughts. "I want you to see this; this is going to change the rest of your lives. This is history and we have to see this." That is all that was said by my teacher. Moments later the plane hit the south tower. Some of us screamed, most of us cried, but we all continued to watch. The news anchors were now declaring the act one of terrorism and many of them had lost all composure. Panic had begun to creep into their voices and we sat there completely lost staring at the screen. Then it fell. It crumpled into itself and slide into the floor of the city. Safely in our 10th grade Florida classroom we watched and we knew that thousands had just died—mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, children, and friends. The bell rang. We stumbled out into the crowded hallways and met other students who had been watching in their classrooms. Tears streamed down half of the faces that I met. My friend Britney approached me in hysterics, cell phone in hand. "My dad left

on a plane for New York this morning" was all she could get out before collapsing in my arms. It was only a few seconds before we had to walk into class that she found out the plane wasn't his, but she still didn't know where he was. We walked into Calculus together and the TV wasn't on. I walked to it and pushed the button just to have my teacher tell me to please turn it off. I spoke back to her, "This is history, we have to see this." She felt it was only upsetting us more and we should try to do some Calculus instead. Soon after this, my principal, in an attempt to calm our frantic school (much of a community that attended school with us were originally from New York), he proclaimed that all televisions must be turned off and any cell phone use would result in confiscation. The rest of the day became a blur in my memory. I still feel the intense anger I felt at my teachers for censoring our information. Much of that day soon became censored, by the government and by the media. By the time I reached my house from the school bus, images I had seen earlier that day were already being pulled from clips. The most haunting and emotional images were when I watched the dozens and dozens of people who jumped to their death from the blazing inferno. I thought of my fear of burning to death and my fear of heights and weighed them against each other. I put myself in their shoes. I do not know which path I would have taken if escape were not an option. But these images that had affected me so much more than even the massive collapse of the towers—are now nowhere to be seen. Their falling was the perfect image of just how horrible that day was for America; it personifies the despair of all those that did not escape the horrible event. To me it was disrespectful to those falling individuals, for us not to see what they had to endure. We can never forget.