Tuesday, September 10
6:00 pm New students stream into the lecture hall of the Graduate School of Journalism and are handed a gray piece of paper that reads across the top, "Journalism is an Act of Memory: An Evening of Words about September 11, 2001."

Some sit, some stand. Each waits for the words to begin. They read New York Times editorials on war, proofread class assignments, and exchange opinions with classmates. Finally, a professor approaches the podium.

"Thanks for being so punctual," says Samuel Freedman, professor of journalism and acting associate dean. "This is the beginning of a semester of Tuesday night lectures. But it is unlikely there will be another event like this one."

He—like so many on the eve of this anniversary—describes where he was and what he did that morning. He had taken his children to school; he had gone to vote, and he had come to work. And then he heard the news.

"The afternoon of that morning, we all had to do what we had to do. And as journalists, we had to go into action," he says. Freedman's dark eyes stare out at the man's words, "when the call was greatest, the response was even greater," says the professor. With that, he introduces two actors who will read from professor Anne Nelson's acclaimed play, The Guys, about a journalist who helps a fire captain write the elegies of his men lost in the World Trade Center tragedy. The girl with the book looks up. Everyone sits forward.

6:23 pm — "New York, my beautiful, grieving, wounded city."

The actress delivers the first line of the play and the crowd is caught. A camera flashes. "Where were you on September 11? It is the question of the year."

Heads nod in understanding at the words. "Eight men. I lost eight men so I had every right to ask."

The fire captain says he needs a writer. Another camera flashes.

7:03 pm — The actress asks the audience, "Are you okay? That's what we kept asking each other that day, that week."

And the question still lingers on the eve of this anniversary.

A table under a tent offers counseling, support and a schedule of the day's commemorative events. Most glance at it as if the information will register when they are more awake.

Like beachers in a gym, the steps of Low Library become seats for the crowd, and a tray of first names are offered. One woman in an ILOVENY T-shirt leans in closer.

"Are you okay?"

1:09 pm — The bagpiper plays: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

The crowd leaves St. Paul's, walking into a now-fierce wind. Trees blow back and forth.

2:00 pm — Children from the Children's Theatre Company sing and recite quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr., at Alma Mater's feet. Fifty yards in front of them, names of all the dead are read and will continue until candles are lit tonight in a vigil at this same spot.

9:17 am — Low Plaza becomes a September morning again. The wind is stronger now and tosses yellow leaves across College Walk, past chained bicycles and quiet students.

11:54 am — A chill enters the air. A lone bagpipe invites observers to the Interfaith Commemoration Service at St. Paul's Chapel. A helicopter flies over Low Plaza where a plane is parked. A plane is offered. One woman in an ILOVENY T-shirt leans in closer.

"Are you okay?"

Is your family okay?" The crowd stands still, big, close.

7:00 am — Bells ring again. The officer puts his hat over his heart. The fireman, too, reads names.

12:08 pm — Chaplain Davis invites the gathering to reflect as many students from many faiths will speak throughout the service. A Bahai softly sings, "God grant that the light of unity may enve-

lope the whole earth."

12:15 pm — A Sikh, a Catholic and a Buddhist speak. Poets and singers rise from the back doors and their a cappella voices flood the chapel: "By the waters of Babylon we laid down and wept." Their words blend into the next prayer, "O God, our refuge and an ever present strength in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear."

12:27 pm — Stories from a Rabbi and an Episcopalian reaffirm the call to life. And everyone is asked: "When the call was greatest, the response was even greater," says the professor. With that, he introduces two actors who will read from professor Anne Nelson's acclaimed play, The Guys, about a journalist who helps a fire captain write the elegies of his men lost in the World Trade Center tragedy. The girl with the book looks up. Everyone sits forward.

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11:59 am — Under Pro Ecclesia Dix, dozens of Columbians enter the Chapel.

Noon — Silence, again. It is standing room only in this stained glass chapel. Four candles are lit.

Health Sciences professor John F. Tuman breaks the quiet with his bagpipe to begin the service. A Muslim student calls the crowd to worship. A young woman wearing a diamond pin of the Twin Towers on her dress hands out pro-

grams and directs people to the bal-

sudial.

Bells ring. Along College Walk, a huge slab of paper called the Arts Miles Mural Project cov-

ers the grass where artists paint and draw. Symbols of coun-

tries—Iran, Mexico, Israel, Zim-

babwe, Australia—are painted across drawings of doves. Small crowds gather everywhere here—as they have at the Health Sciences Campus, the School of Social Work, Teachers College and throughout Columbia—to remember. To reflect.

4:35 pm — A tree is planted on Lehman Lawn at Barnard. Rooted in spite of the September chill, a symbol of remembrance, of life. In years to come, it will offer shade.

It—like this commemorative day—will offer memories not eas-

ily lost. It will be a beacon future generations turn to when asked the question: ‘Are you okay?’"