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AMANDA'S NEW YORK DIARY

Journalist Amanda Chater's exclusive diary from New York

Journalist Amanda Chater works just a mile away from what was the World Trade Center. The former John Ferneley High School student has been the Melton Times eyes and ears in Manhattan as the city struggles to come to terms with last Tuesday's attacks.

In an exclusive report from the Big Apple, Amanda (30) describes how New Yorkers are still living in fear. Here is her day-by-day account of the aftermath.

THURSDAY:

It still hasn't sunk in

"It seems everyone is exhausted. Emotions are taking it out of us and it still hasn't completely sunk in. "I haven't even set foot in the city today (I'm 10 minutes over the bridge) because I was too scared but received reports from friends." Apparently it was hard to breathe at times, since the wind blew north. It was harder and harder to breathe the further south you went and there's a fear of asbestos in the air. "I could smell burning from home, which is about four to five miles away from the World Trade Center." There were bomb scares all day. At least two office buildings were evacuated as well as Times Square and the Port Authority Bus Terminal. "I did use the subway and they are being patrolled by the police, who are watching exactly who gets on and gets off." To walk below 14th Street, you need to show ID (it's cordoned off) and many people were turned away. My office is on 9th Street so I can't go in until Monday. "That's about it. We are waiting to see if the Liberty Center collapses. I pray it doesn't. "I am glad I sequestered myself at home because I know that in the city I'll see hundreds of mourning people and people who still haven't heard from their loved ones. There is still a calm and a feeling of unity around here." I am hearing fewer fighter planes go overhead and even heard one jet plane flying over. "Very slowly, we are returning to some semblance of normal life but I don't think New York will ever be quite the same again."

FRIDAY:

I join friends for a candle-lit vigil

"Tonight I came into the city for the first time since Tuesday's attack. "I sat at the subway station in Queens and suddenly felt more of the impact as I was coming back into Manhattan. "I joined friends for a candle-lit vigil by the Armory. The Armory is where all the dead bodies are taken for identification. It's in Midtown. "All around this area the walls are papered with posters of missing loved ones. It's heartbreaking to read them. "So many said Mr X, last heard from at 8:47am from the 97th floor, father of three. It is horrible." Most of us are carrying candles and restaurants are giving them out as diners leave. "The streets are filled with people, the police and TV news teams and cameras. "The mood is sombre and the worst thing is seeing all the posters,

knowing almost certainly that each and every face that looked down from walls, railings and phone booths, had perished in the disaster. "Until Friday, no-one was allowed below 14th Street without an ID card. Still, no-one is allowed below Canal Street without one, and even then, I think you have to live there. "I needed my ID to get into my office building this morning. "Security is tight but I doubt anyone is complaining we are all scared of more attacks. "Police are everywhere. I kind of feel like we're already at war. They are patrolling and watching vigilantly."

SATURDAY:

Still clouds of smoke

"On Saturday I was again in the city and what amazed me was when I took a cab home, across the Queensboro Bridge. I looked back at the southern tip of Manhattan, which looks almost bare now that it has lost its largest and most magnificent landmark, and was amazed to see there were still clouds of smoke billowing out of the rubble. Smells now seem to have disappeared from the air, although I'm sure they're still abundant at the scene."

SUNDAY:

We're all exhausted

"I went to Union Square (at 14th Street), which is filled with posters (like those by the Armory), candles set in little altar-type areas and groups gathered together. A group of Buddhists were chanting and drawing fellow chanters and in other areas there were groups playing jazz, or soloists with guitars or other instruments. "That's about it. Emotions are raw and we're all exhausted. I've just found out the boyfriend of a friend died a guy I knew."

MONDAY:

No to retaliation

"I have found that most people seem to be against retaliation. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, everyone wanted to wreak revenge, but now it seems people are being a little more rational and realising that retaliation will not only cause innocent lives to be lost in Afghanistan, but could also lead to more death and destruction in the US and possibly other countries."

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