

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN ROUND

CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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REMEMBERING 1 OCTOBER

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV LIBRARIES

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES

**This is Claytee White. It is October 25th, 2017. I am here with Donald—no, I'm not. I am here with—**

Stephen Round.

**—Stephen Round.**

I go by Steve.

**Steve, would you please spell your full name?**

Stephen Andrew Round; S-T-E-P-H-E-N, Andrew, and then Round, R-O-U-N-D.

**Wonderful. And I'm going to call you Steve?**

Yes, ma'am. That's great.

**My name is Claytee. We're here in the Oral History Research Center today. So Steve, just tell me a little about how you got to Las Vegas.**

I came here about four years ago basically just looking to relocate from Florida. I liked the weather out here and the pan roast and crab legs any time you liked. I have a few health things and when I lived here before, I liked the VA facilities that they had out here. So I decided to come back out here and establish a residence. I work overseas quite a bit, so getting in and out of the country and back into Las Vegas, you can come in any time; there's always a flight to Vegas versus when you leave in Florida, it was always hard to get a flight. You might have to spend the night somewhere in Atlanta or something like that. So for all intents and purposes, it seemed like basing out of Las Vegas was a good idea, although I am gone quite a bit.

**Wonderful. Where did you grow up, what part of the country?**

I grew up in Austin, Texas. I was born in Dallas, raised in Austin, a little suburb called Manchaca; I grew up there. I joined the army when I was seventeen; twenty years in the army. Since then I've been everything. I've done mostly federal contracting, consulting work; that sort

of thing.

**Career military. I have one brother who was career military.**

I was unique in that I had kids and I had to pay child support. I've always maintained my electrical proficiency. So when I came to Las Vegas back in 2000 for a little stint, one of the things that drew me here was my father had told me, "If you ever want to get commercial experience, you have to do it in New York or Las Vegas," as far as getting electrical experience in that area. So when I came here back in, oh, I think it was '99, I worked on the Resort at Summerlin, I happened to work on this building here periodically, helping close it out, and a few other electrical projects for a company called Helix Electric here in Las Vegas.

**Did you join a union?**

No, Helix is an open shop. We had fun with all the projects that we had that did have a union presence, but I think the leadership of Helix preferred to keep an open shop and I think they still are to this day. They're one of the largest open shop contractors or whatever for the state. I didn't worry about that. I didn't get into the politics. I just ran conduit and pulled wire and all that kind of stuff.

**Tell me about October first.**

October first. I had just dinner over across town. I had just gotten back a few days before from working both hurricanes. I was in the Hurricane Harvey, helping out down there. And then my sister lives in Florida and it looked like they were going to get a direct hit. So my sister and my niece, my best friend from the army that I've known thirty years, he was in kind of bad shape down in Florida. He lives in the same five-mile area. They were already starting to tighten up on supplies and this sort of thing. So I literally left Houston, drove through all the flooded areas of East Texas, and stopped and hit every Wal-Mart. I bought up propane and canned goods and all

that and I delivered that to my sister and my best friend and his family. Then the storm shifted at the last minute, so they didn't get the direct hit that they thought, but they have enough propane to cook cheeseburgers, I guess, for the rest of the year and next year. Then I drove back.

I had had some storage facility in Port Orange, and I went ahead and pulled all my stuff out of storage and was driving across. I stopped back in Houston. Then my Yukon, the engine seized up, so I had to rent a U-Haul and drive it with all my stuff all the way back here to Nevada. On the way back I could only go about fifty miles an hour through all the hills and I was just getting really frustrated, and I said, "You know what? When I get back I'm going to treat myself. I'm going to stay in a nice hotel and I'm going to rent a Corvette and I'm just going to eat some crab legs for breakfast, lunch and dinner, or pan roast breakfast, lunch and dinner." That's what I was about three or four days into when October first happened.

**You were three or four days into the celebrating?**

Into my little vacation, staycation, we like to call it.

**And where did you go for the staycation?**

I went to the Aria. I have a host out there that gave me a really nice room on the twenty-ninth floor in a tower suite. Like I said, I was just a few days back. I had just gotten back from dinner, not at the Aria, but across town, and I wanted to go get a Guinness at the Ri Rá, the Irish pub at Mandalay Place. So I had gone there and just ordered a beer and a couple of nice girls that had just got here from Australia had sat down next to me and they got to talking for a few minutes and found out I was from Las Vegas and they asked if I'd give them a tour of the Strip. I finished my beer real fast and said, "I sure can."

So we walked out of Mandalay Place area, the Ri Rá, which is between Mandalay Bay and Luxor, and I took them out the front entrance of Luxor so they could see the sphinx part. I

was explaining to them, "This is like a knockoff of what's going on over in Egypt." I had actually been to Egypt several times and I had been in Egypt about seven weeks previous to all the hurricanes and stuff. I was talking about that and we were walking down the Strip and we were right in front of the pinnacle at the entrance to Luxor. We obviously could hear the music from the Route 91 concert and they asked what they was. And I said, "I think they do concerts, carnivals it looks like." I saw some carnivals at the end. We started walking north on Vegas Boulevard.

Right when I'm talking, explaining some of the various things—I think I was right in the middle of explaining about Excalibur and how it's been here forever and all that—I heard the first noise, and that's all it sounded like, was noises. Then you heard it again and the music stopped. Everybody started screaming and you could hear it. Then when he opened up, I think it was probably the third sustained rate of fire, I knew he was high by the sound pattern and I kind of figured he was behind us, but I didn't know where. I scanned, I looked, and I just told them to run, go. When he let out the next burst, it was even louder. I mean, it sounded like, I mean, he was firing from five different directions just because of the echoes. I'm familiar with acoustics and all that. I thought maybe he was on top of the building at Luxor, not the pyramid part but the additional hotels where they've added where they have that shelving. But I glanced over my shoulder. I never saw a muzzle flash or anything like that. I knew from the sound that I was on what we consider the good side because you can hear the crack. It makes a whole different sound when it's coming at you. I've been in those situations and it's a whole different signature. Everybody was running down the Strip. I think I set the land speed record for getting back to the Aria because we were already at the corner there of Reno and Vegas Boulevard. It sounded like all the way down to Aria where I made the turn that the entire Strip was being lit up. I mean, it

sounded like what I consider a coordinated attack or multiple shooters; that kind of thing.

I ran into the Aria, got up to my room, because my phone was charging; I had dropped it off before I went to the pub. I came back downstairs. When I came back downstairs, everybody in the Aria was running. You could see chips still on tables and dealers covering their banks with their covers, hiding under the things. I went to the security guy. I'm like, "What's going on?" He said, "We've got an active shooter either in the parking lot or over by the poker room; somebody just reported." I just told him about what happened at Luxor and I was thinking, *okay, it makes sense; if it's a coordinated attack, they're moving this way and we're in trouble*. I wasn't crazy nervous because I know that the casinos all have their compliment of armed security for prevention of robberies or their own response team. I know Metro is pretty represented down here and all that. It was just odd that this was happening here.

I never heard any shots inside the Aria. I never heard anything like that. Then I went back to the security guy and he was listening to his earpiece and he said they were getting reports of an IED over at the Luxor and that somebody said somebody got blown up playing blackjack at the Luxor. And this was when five, ten minutes of the event happening that these kind of things were already surfacing. This wasn't an hour later or after social media and every knucklehead started trying to be part of the story. This was in real time, so I took it seriously and I thought this was a planned, coordinated attack. There was a lot of people over there; I didn't realize how many. I knew he was firing from an elevated position just from the way the sound was shooting. I knew immediately when I heard on the news that there were two down that that number was going to go way up.

They locked us down until about three twenty in the morning and then we were able to walk out of the Aria up to Park Street and that's as far up southbound Vegas Boulevard as you

could go; they had it completely cordoned off. From my room on the twenty-ninth floor you could see ambulances and the lighted vehicles of all different agencies—the school district, Henderson, North Las Vegas, of course Metro and federal. It looked like the entire Strip going that direction and then what you could see without the obstructions going to the east were nothing but lights.

So I went back to the room, watched some TV, tried to catch up. I had two TVs going, CNN on one and local news on the other, and they were talking about giving the blood and this and that. I fell asleep and I woke up about four hours later. I'll pause, I'm sorry.

**Let's stop right there. And thank you for that. I had no idea that you were right there on the Strip during all of this. You said that he sounded like he was high. What did you mean?**

That he was from a high position. If somebody is shooting on the ground—in Iraq, four years I'm in Iraq, when you're being shot at from multiple directions, if you're on the bad end of that it makes a very different sound. You hear the whooshing of the bullets. You hear the ricochets. It almost makes like a pop sound. It's hard to describe. But when you're to the left, right, over or under, then it makes the crack, which is what everybody hears. So you know that the way the cracking sound was, is that it's not like your head's on a swivel type of thing, but you're kind of used to, okay, crack; the initial crack is what you hear. The initial crack seemed like he was to the high rear. You would have never thought—I mean, I thought for sure he was firing from a rooftop. I had no idea that he had broken a window out. But so many... You've got the Tropicana, two towers; you've got Excalibur; you've got the Luxor; you've got obvious Mandalay Bay and Delano, so it could have been coming from anywhere.

But my instincts and training has always said that if you're caught in what's called a near side ambush, meaning you're in a kill zone, you have to get out of there, something that I tried to

share with a lot of the survivors that came through the memorial later on that felt guilty. They had the survivor's guilt. They had to crawl over people and they couldn't help somebody because they were under fire. I explained to them that you could have had the 82nd Airborne in that kill zone with all the training and the real tough guys and all knowing how to respond to that; they would have done the same thing. You have to get out of the kill zone. You don't stop and render aid. Maybe you can drag some people out. And I said, "And everything that you guys did, the people that were able to drag people out of the line of fire, the people who were able to get those who had already been mortally wounded, getting those out of the line of fire, those are all things that military units would do. But when you're trained, you're trained to get out of there." If it's a far side ambush, then you can take cover and maybe figure out how to maneuver on the element. But in this case everybody was in a kill zone and these are civilians, these were kids. Even though I hear a lot of them were first responders and various law enforcement agencies and stuff, it didn't matter. They could have been the most highly trained military member, SEAL team or whatever. They would have had to get out of there, and they would have gone back and gotten their fallen people and they would have done those sorts of things. But you cannot stay in a kill zone or, otherwise, everybody is killed. These guys instinctually did that and now they feel bad about it. It's really regrettable because even if they had the training they would have learned that this is how you do it.

**To get out.**

Yes. You had two bad choices, either be killed trying to help somebody because you were being shot at, too, or get out and save yourself and the person next to you. You have to live with that, but you didn't have a good choice. You didn't have something that you're not going to have to deal with from now on.



**Looking back on it now, so we're at the twenty-fifth, looking back to the first, do you still think it was only one shooter?**

I don't. I don't. I think the current story that's out there, I think a lot of people, they don't understand how all this works. For instance, if the federal government or local Metro, if they know that it was two other people or one other person, maybe they got out the stairwell and this guy that's being blamed for it right now, as it stands today, was just a fall guy—he was just a guy that had a suite like I did ironically and we had the same first name. It kind of brought it home for me.

**That's right. Spelled the same way.**

Yes. Maybe somebody was tracking me or something. But regardless, without getting into the tin hat and the grassy knoll type of things, if law enforcement has video of this guy bringing all these weapons up and this guy doing this and purchasing all these high capacity magazines and all the other things that were all in his room, three weeks into it they would have already—they would have had that out within a couple of hours. Those camera systems in these casinos, I'm very familiar with them and they could spin back anything. If you win a jackpot at a casino, these guys are able to look at the time you came in to see if you did anything to mess with the machine, and they do all that while you're waiting to be paid out just to make sure that it's a legitimate jackpot; that's one of the protocols at a lot of them. I think if they're on to who the one or two people were—it may have been more; who knows?—and they're looking at a lot of camera footage and seeing that maybe they ran up or down the stairwell and then came out the elevator on another floor and they've got eyes on them and they're using facial recognition or any of the other tricks to develop subjects and maybe they've got links to something else, they're not going to put that out just so that the locals and everybody can feel good about themselves and

know this and that. That's the unique angle in law enforcement. They cannot show their hand because if this is part of a bigger situation or something, they need to get to the bottom of it. There's kind of like a good cover-up and a bad cover-up and there's a lot of times that the cover story has to hold because we can't reveal means and methods on how we're able to catch these guys. Are they going to go out and say, oh, yeah, we let everybody believe that this guy was the shooter so that we could catch the real guys and their network who are planning follow-on attacks? If that was the case, we'll never know it. At the same time, if they totally blew this and this guy was still a fall guy and they have no idea who really did the shooting, well, with the FBI and the federal government, with the Patriot Act and all the different spying on us and all this, they're going to have a hard time continuing to do that and justifying it because they're supposed to be able to do those things to keep us safe from these sorts of events.

If Metro didn't contain the building and people got out stairwells or these sorts of things, then there's a huge liability. As of today everybody I've talked to and every interview I've looked at since I've been able to check things out, I don't buy the story of what happened on the thirty-second floor with the security guard and the maintenance guy. I think the first radio report said that we have a security guard down at the elevator, but the guy's on *Ellen* talking about he was down the hallway and there was this mysterious woman he told to get back into her room that nobody's heard from. And the maintenance guy on the four or five interviews I've seen him do, he's had the same exact line after line after line. I've never seen somebody do four interviews...Not even your best professionals keep the same story exactly word for word. And so maybe they were told that drilling sound was our citizens being shot because you didn't have the ability or the skill set to understand that that sound that you were hearing was a high cycle grade weapon being fired at innocent civilians while you were messing with a door in a stairwell

adjacent to the same room. If it comes out that this guy was shooting while a Mandalay Bay employee in the security department was right outside the door and nothing was called in—because, remember, Metro formed an element with Mandalay Bay's armed security—if this security guy, instead of calling maintenance to fix a door on the same floor ten feet away from the entrance to the shooter's nest, if he had called it in, "I've got a shooter on thirty-two," they wouldn't have been clearing twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one. Remember they had Mandalay Bay armed security with them, so they had radios. They never got a call saying, shots fired on thirty-two. It wasn't until they arrived on thirty-two that they said we've got a down security guard here. Maybe he was at the end of the hallway when he opened up and took one in the leg. I don't see how two hundred rounds in a narrow hallway only hit him once in the leg if he was further toward the shooter's door as he claimed on *Ellen*. I think those are the kinds of discrepancies that need to be answered for.

I think from a liability standpoint, if he had gotten up there and said, "Hey, shots fired," and Metro immediately got on the thirty-second floor and they know that the guy is shooting, their procedures for dealing with an active shooter are completely different than a barricaded subject. They gained entry to the thirty-second floor and the shooting had already stopped. The guys probably already got away. Nobody had any eyes on the door to the stairwell or anything like that. When they gained entry when SWAT arrived, the guy was already dead. Had he been dead for some time? Those pictures look a little crazy with the fresh shell casings and blood that had been supposedly pooling just recently.

So there's a lot of unanswered questions and I just hope that it's not a "we want to cover the liability of the largest employer in the state of Nevada and we don't want to have a liability on the police department." And I hope that there's a greater good that, hey, they're onto this, and I

believe they are. There's way too many cameras. If they see, for instance, on the thirtieth floor ten people got out of the elevator all day and six went down this hallway and four went down the other, then they can look at that tape and see, well, right after the shooting ended, eight people came down total, so who are these other two? Then they can follow them all through the casino, develop subjects. I believe if my gut is feeling right that it maybe something along those lines and they've just got to keep the...And that's why they've stopped the...

**Do you think they told too much from the beginning?**

I think to the sheriff's credit, he was trying to calm everybody down, as he said. One of the things that was remarkable was—I don't follow the local politics very well because I'm gone a lot, but I know that from watching other events like this he seemed to really want to get information out there. The way he really backed off of it later on tells me that there is obviously a lot more to it. There is obviously some things that they're looking at probably more like the federal level. Unfortunately, they can't tell us about those things. If there is another group of people that did this, they want them to believe that they got away with it and we bought their story hook, line and sinker, and there could be a hundred federal agents watching everything that they do and their friends do and they stop the next Las Vegas from happening or something. That could be one scenario. I don't think he backed off and stopped answering questions and holding so many press conferences because he was trying to save face or anything. That's not who I believe he is. I think he's pretty straightforward and he's been, from what I can tell, everything I've seen, frustrated by it because if there is something else going on, he wants to tell us, but he knows he can't and that puts him in that uncomfortable position that he's not familiar with.

**Tell me about the lockdown at the Aria, how it was done, how they could enforce that.**

They basically had the coated guys that are unarmed at the doors, the guys and girls. They just

said, "We're under lockdown; you can't leave." So there's a lot of people sitting at slot machines and hanging out and stuff. Then you saw the guys with guns and their Metro armed guard cards and their bulletproof vests on the outside. They almost made like an outer perimeter out of the armed security. The inner perimeter, the doors and stuff were manned by the people you see in security every day, the people in jackets that deal with the drunks and those sorts of things.

**We're talking about the Aria, which is a pretty big hotel.**

Pretty big, yes.

**How many security people are you thinking that you saw?**

At the doorways there were five, six of them on the inside, and all their supervisors are armed and their supervisors are on the outside. I saw the supervisor come and check each doorway. And I got to talking with one of the ladies that worked there. Next thing you know, you had maintenance people handing out bottled water. The pizza guys were handing out free pizzas. Normally they're handing it out at eight dollars a slice or whatever it is. They were pretty good on that.

**Other people just went back to their rooms?**

The people that had rooms. Yes, the people that had rooms. I had a suite, so I let some people that were here from Austria come up to my rooms. I had a couch and a big one-bedroom suite and everything. So I told them they could come up there and watch TV, just don't touch the mini bar. They hung out up there.

**What did you do for food in your suite?**

Oh, I had leftovers and I had just had a buffet, so I was good to go as far as food. I think I ended up stopping at the one—they had one of the places to eat right next to the elevators to the tower suites that was still serving coffee and paninis and all that, but I think all the other employees,

they couldn't get in. The Strip was locked down; nobody could come or go. But the pizza place was closed. The bars were closed.

But ironically, while all this was happening during the lockdown, you still had people playing slots. All the table games I saw were closed down, but you had people playing slots. You would see several groups of—looked like a mom and a daughter or something—somebody with a "today is my birthday" ribbon or something. They were all really upset. There were a lot of upset people and if I saw them, I just said, "Hey, everything's going to be okay. They've got an armed perimeter around here and you're going to be okay. Just try to relax. Something bad happened outside, but it's not going to happen here." I tried to let them know that as we walked around. But everything just kind of stopped.

**What allowed your training to kick in like that? Not only were you nice, but you're using all this training, this military training, and you're keeping people calm. How does that happen?**

Raising two teenage daughters, I think, I learned to develop patience. It's ironic. In 2015, I had a stroke and there was one time that I was a lot more...

**Intense?**

I think intense would be the best word. I was going to say something different. But, yeah, fire-breathing and more of a door-kicker type of personality. But always, even as I rose through the ranks in the army, I wasn't the one when I made sergeant that let it go to my head or something. I've always wanted to discuss things and try to fully understand things, very different from the way that I was raised.

I think when you see young people that are scared and everybody was scared, you go from being—it's not that you're not scared yourself, but you've already kind of assessed the

situation. Believe me, if there was some guy in the Aria shooting or something, I had a little something for him if he came back because I have a conceal carry and I would have totally handled it. But I don't think civilians that are put in that situation...They don't know what to do. And so just a simple...And I wasn't the only one. There were older ladies walking around comforting people. Most of them were foreign tourists and some people went up to their rooms and grabbed their luggage from what I could tell and they were just trying to get out. I heard people saying they're never coming back and all this. I sat down and visited with them for a little bit and I told them what I knew at the time; it's a tragedy, but it's still a safe place. I go to war zones. I spent four years in Iraq. I was in Liberia after the Ebola breakdown where they were trying to shoot us every day. It's a safe country. It's a safe place to enjoy yourselves.

Unfortunately, we don't know what's happened, but I can tell you that they'll respond to it and everything is going to be okay and for right now we've just got to support each other and get through this. I don't think that's taught. I don't think this is something—the military doesn't do crisis management classes. They may do it now, but back when I was in, you didn't do touchy feely stuff. You didn't do "let's all get a hug" or any of this stuff. I think when stuff like this happens, I think people just kind of fall into a position; you don't know what your role is going to be, but I wasn't one of the ones that I was just going to pack my bags and go home and never come back down to the Strip again. I wanted to help in some way if I could.

**You are a person who lived in Las Vegas at one time, you left, and now you came back and this is kind of your permanent home?**

Yes.

**Tell me what your attitude about Las Vegas was before October one.**

On a personal note, I think I was frustrated to see the way that a lot of the large casinos were

starting to charge for parking. I had originally heard that for Nevada residents they were waving it and then, no, we're going to go ahead.

**One year.**

Yes. Some of them still do; they still give you a day or whatever. But I used to walk through the casinos and I tell you I couldn't walk through—not to name things—but just some of the larger ones without seeing a couple of hand pays going on. If somebody hit a jackpot over twelve hundred dollars, you'd see somebody over here getting a hand pay with a supervisor. Then you'd walk through and there would be somebody over here at the high limit getting one.

**What is a hand pay?**

Where they have to come pay you by hand. It means you hit a jackpot over twelve ninety-nine or eleven ninety-nine, I think. But you would always see a hand pay going on. Since I've been back, I haven't seen a hand pay at any casino and it's really noticeable because with all those people playing all those machines, you should be doing it. And from my own gambling experiences, I used to take three, four, five hundred dollars and I could play slots all night or whatever, but now it's like the machines are definitely tighter. You're charging for parking. I remember you used to not be able to sit in front of a slot machine more than five minutes and some nice girl is offering to get you something to drink. Now you can blow three hundred dollars in front of a slot machine for two hours and not even see a cocktail waitress. And so I've noticed the shift in the dealers. It seems that as one giant company gobbles up another casino, then the whole thing changes. I remember back in the day where I could go to New York New York and put five hundred dollars on a blackjack table and I've got a host at my table, I've got a pit boss asking if I'm staying here—"Let me get you a host"—they're covering my room—"Here's some buffet tickets." Now you can blow five thousand at a table and maybe they call you and maybe they don't. It almost



reminds me of what they said in that movie *Casino* where there used to be a day they knew what you drank, they knew what you played, and now a guy shows up with a million dollars and some kid is asking them for their Social Security number. And so I think the corporate mentality of Vegas from being a fun destination to we're losing our shirt because of Indian casinos, Macau and it drops off and all this, well, it kind of alienates those of us who live here and want to play, and it's not just the Strip casinos. The outlying casinos that I used to play at all the time, it's the same thing. I don't see hand pays anymore. The machines are tight. You have a chairman level card when you leave and you come back after being overseas and they tell you to start over and you're a nobody. There's so many things, the customer service angle, the this angle that are frustrating. That's what I knew before.

**What about beyond the Strip, how did you feel about the city as a community, as a great place to live? What about that? Prior.**

When I lived here before, it was booming. The Aladdin was coming out of red iron; it ended up being Planet Hollywood. The Venetian was just getting ready to open and there was a big construction boom; we're coming at the end of it and that's what brought me over. It just seemed like everybody here was hard-working. You'd work hard, go cash your check, maybe play some slots, grab a buffet and go to work hard again. We were working seven days a week and that just seemed like a norm. It seemed like everybody was hard-working. The casinos took care of you. If you cashed your check, they took care of you. If you did this, they took care of you.

Now that I've come back I've noticed that just the change in the neighborhoods. I've gone to—where I'm at in North Las Vegas, I walk into Wal-Mart and it's like I've walked into a Third World country again and I'm talking from being in Third World countries, I know the difference. I don't hear English; I hear Spanish everywhere. There's so many things. I see huge signs

advertising; like they're proud that they accept food stamps and EBT as though that's something to advertise and people that need help that these things are advertised. It just seems like it's just a slap in the head, like, what happened? Why am I noticing these things? Normally I keep an eye on things and that kind of stuff, but it seems like the neighborhoods where I used to live in are rundown. There's fifteen cars, old model cars parked and people hanging out in the streets. Then you hear the crime and the this and the that. I drive by schools that are letting out and it's like mobs of kids that just...I don't follow it. It seems like I'm in another place. It's way different than it was before. Not to get into the politics of whether we're a sanctuary place or a this or a that, it's definitely different and I think a lot of people that have lived here their whole lives have noticed that as well that we've had a pretty huge influx of people who kind of change the dynamics of the community. That's not to say that they're not hard-working and all that. And I'm all for people that work hard; I don't care where they're from. What kind of impact that has on the larger community is to be determined. But it's definitely different from the way they treat you at the casinos and the way the community was before to now, prior to October one, way different, way different, at least from my standpoint, from what I observe.

**Tell me how you came up with what you decided to do, this prayer book.**

About twelve o'clock the day after—remember we were up all night—but at about twelve o'clock I had made my way—they had opened up that park and you could walk all the way to Reno and they had the police units blocking it off. You still couldn't drive up or down, but you could walk up the sidewalk and then the furthest you could walk up was to Reno Street.

**Geographically for somebody looking at this, Park Street is where in relation to—**

So if you come out of the Aria and you're walking towards the Strip, to the left is Harmon, or the north. And then to the right walking back towards Mandalay Bay, if you will, you get up to

where the Diablo nightclub is or the turn into T-Mobile heading south on the Strip; that's Park Street; that's as far as you could go and you had Metro in full riot gear—or tactical gear, not riot gear—right there guarding that with long rifles. Once they lifted that I was able to walk past Tropicana heading south on Las Vegas Boulevard at the corner of where the Excalibur is and then to the Luxor; that's where they had it taped off, which would be the drive between Luxor and Excalibur. They had the tape up and everything. I had a nice little bouquet of flowers in my room in the Aria and I just took it down there. I didn't know what to do. I had never gone to one of these or something. That's as far as you could get. I went over to the median and I just put it right there.

Then I looked up where the windows were broken. I looked at where I knew I was at. I looked over at the site and I just kind of kept doing this. I watched the coroner vehicles leaving and the coroner command vehicles leaving. I've got pictures of the impounded vehicle leaving with the evidence tape all over it. I think how I felt right then is the way I feel even to this day. It's just been a fog. It's just been a malaise.

I decided...I don't know if *decided* is the right word. I didn't know what to do because I think I was like everybody else. You're stunned. I talked to a few of the people. The store was closed. You couldn't get anything to drink or anything. So I just kind of stood there. The next thing you know, a couple of people brought some candles. A couple of people brought some bouquets. I think I little bear was brought or whatever. It wasn't my intent to, well, I'm going to go start a memorial and I'm going to man it and I'm going to become famous or anything like that. Far from it. I just walked out there, put the thing down, stared. Then I would go back and then I would go back to the thing and I would go back. It got bigger and bigger.

Then I noticed our homeless friends started showing up and it looked like they wanted to

pick through and see if they could help themselves. People were leaving little liquor bottles and stuff like that even with the police right there; that was what was odd. That was mainly about the third day into it that that was happening.

**This location where you put the bouquet down was where?**

It was on the median, which is the crosswalk of Reno and Las Vegas Boulevard, right across from the AM/PM. A very narrow little area, probably about, I don't know, maybe a ten by twenty, twenty-five foot area. The next thing you know, I just kind of like...I was there all the time. People started showing up and you saw the strangeness of people.

**What was the strangest thing that you saw?**

There was three girls that came out that night, Monday night, from California. They had their cell phones and they were posing while they were putting up a little thing of hearts with little candles. You just kind of observed them. You didn't bother anybody. They could do whatever they wanted. It wasn't like I was in charge of anything. I just observed. That was when it kind of set the tone for future days that people with these what I call crack phones, these smart phones that they cannot get off of, and these social media platforms where I think this new level of narcissism has gone completely haywire to where you're at a memorial and it's all about, *oh, look at me, everybody; look at me; I care and I'm this and I'm that*. Ironically that's when I coined the phrase to a girl that showed up to help me on Wednesday, I was like, "You know it's just a matter of time before the T-shirts and the arm bands of Vegas Strong or something like that is going to be come out." And I was right on that; that the people showing up and doing selfies in front of candles or even later on at the crosses memorial to this day until they took it down, the officer that fell had a wreath in the form of a Metro badge and people were posing next to it like they were posing next to the Eiffel Tower. It was almost like it was a photo op. I've got mixed

feelings on that.

The Ramirez family who lost their daughter, Melissa, twenty-six years old, their entire family came to the site on I think it was Tuesday or Wednesday. I think it was the aunt or something that told us that they were coming down, so we kind of had it all prepared and made sure everything was good. People were bringing stuff all the time and it kind of exploded over those two days.

### **Bringing what kind of stuff?**

Everything from flowers, candles, stuffed animals, notes, cards, little painted rocks; you name it. One of the members that asked about this little book—they had a little prayer—like this big, and that's where I kind of got that idea from. He didn't speak very good English. He was basically asking could people sign it. I said, "Yeah, no problem." While I'm talking to him—and this is a father of or a relative of—I'm not positive it was the father; the translation was a little off—but a member of her family there to pay respects as close to where they fell as possible. Two people, girls, go walking across the median. "Hey, can you guys move so we can get a picture of where he was shooting from?" I just basically turned around and I said, "This isn't a photo op; it's a memorial. Why don't you just keep moving?" They told me I didn't have to be rude. But...whatever.

We had people in wheelchairs, local vagrants showing up. People were lighting candles. The Billy Graham ministers were there, a lot of people. They would stop right in the middle of the media and start calling everybody, cussing at them, saying that I'm a victim and I need money and all this. I basically had to whisper in their ear, "If you shut up right now, I'll give you two dollars, but it's when you get across the street. This isn't the place to do this."

Remember, I had no authority. I'm not a law enforcement official. I'm not an agency guy,

nothing. I moved them across the street, told the Metro guys about it, and no problem. But in between those isolated instances of idiocracy, a Japanese lady came down the Strip with her suitcase, a full big-size suitcase, and she had her phone. At this point the crosses had already gone up. Most of the people were coming to light a candle, bring something, but then they were always asking, "Where are the crosses; where are the crosses?" So we found out they were at the sign, so we'd give them directions, "Go up the thing to the sign." This lady I thought was no different. She's coming up and she's pointing at her phone, saying something in Japanese. She showed me her phone and on her translation program it said, "Where do I give blood?"

So you have that and then you have the other side of it and you would just be left shaking your head. You would deal with a bum and then go back to grab a water, shake your head, and you turn around and there's a twentysomething-year-old girl named Allison with an arm cast looking thing or a sling that says Vegas Strong. I wasn't one of the people who stayed at the memorial that went up and talked to people, offered hugs. I'm not the huggy guy. We had people that were into all that; that were more in the comforting zone, girls that came from all over that eventually helped.

But she's standing there crying by herself and I didn't know what to do. So I went up and I was like, "Are you okay? Were you...?" And she goes, "Yes, I got shot. I just got discharged. My boyfriend dumped me or something and he's at the other memorial." I was going, "Oh, boy." And I said, "Please tell me that you're not here by yourself." Right when I said that her mom was behind her and her brother had come in from Taiwan. The airlines really did a number, I found out, about how to get them back. Anyway, she was okay. I talked for just a little bit. I asked if I could give her something. One of the Metro sergeants had given me a patch that was worn by one of the guys that responded that night and he had a coin. He said, "Can you make sure that

one of the victims gets this if they come by?" So I gave her the Metro patch the officer gave me and the coin and she put it on her—pinned it on her little arm band, her wrist thing.

Then here comes the media clowns. She didn't want to talk to anybody. So I was like, "Well, let's walk across the street." So I kind of got these guys out of her face. We walked across the street. Bob, one of the Billy Graham crisis guys, specialty crisis guys, not just a pastor, was right across the street, and I introduced them and all that and walked away and let them do their thing. That was kind of what we kept doing. We would help if they asked and then walk away because you never knew when you turned around who was there.

Mainly in the middle of the night is when most of the survivors and victims would come in. Again, usually when I'd go get a water, I'd turn around for a second and I'd see a middle-aged gentleman and a lady friend it looked like, a wife, I don't know, didn't care. They're going around looking at everything shaking their head. I had asked them, "Would you like to write something in the book? I'm going to make sure that the families get a copy of this or it's preserved. I'm personally going to do that." He wrote in the thing that I read on the news channel. He was a PA. He worked at Sunrise Hospital and he worked the medical tent that night and he was upset that he couldn't save them all.

**Is there anyone there that you remember well or was really special?**

Yes, it's the only one that I marked, right there, the top one. I wrote down the annotation "PA Sunrise Hospital" and I made a little star so I could find it. He just said, "Your loved ones did not die in vain. They were surrounded by friends; some they knew, some they didn't. Heaven has fifty-seven angels and one sheep dog to protect them." Words to that effect. I read a lot of the entries each day and you would just go, *wow*. In fact, I think I had it like that so it could be found.

**Is there any particular entry in here that you would like to read aloud or anyone that—**

That was the most important one. I didn't have to read it; I knew it.

**You knew it by heart.**

Yes. I wrote the last entry on the very back page. There's writings in there from Korea. There's writings in French, Hebrew. I told them, "You can write in whatever language you want, no problem."

**I'm almost at the end and I see October eleventh. How long were you out there at the memorial?**

Until the thirteenth, I believe.

**So this is your entry that you wrote.**

I just wrote something simple. I'm not a poet or anything.

**"Thoughts and prayers for victims and those struggling in hospitals, the survivors who made it out while helping the fallen. You will all not be forgotten. God bless you all."**

Correct.

**This is amazing. This is an amazing tribute and thank you so much for finding Special Collections and bringing it here so we can preserve it.**

Well, thanks to—what is it?—Blake Apgar of the Journal was the one that told me about you guys, and I wanted to make sure that they didn't end up behind a piece of glass in a museum.

Since I bought it, I was like, I think I have ownership if I'm not mistaken because I maintained it, so I can choose who can...I made sure and ran it by the lawyer and he's like, "Yes, it's yours. You basically had an autograph book." I'm like, "It wasn't autograph book." But he was just trying to give me the...When Blake told me about this, I thought this was the place it needed to be.

**What now? Since the thirteenth what have you been doing?**



Well, I tried to catch up on some sleep and some work. I'm about five or six proposals down right now, but I have until the twenty-first of November on the new ones.

I would go down to the crosses during the day. I go down to the crosses about three or four times a day. In the early days there were people I ran off. I called Metro and they were cited for selling shirts. Then the next day another guy was selling shirts and it turned out he had multiple felony warrants. We saw that they were using spotters to alert them when Metro was pulling in so they could box up and blend in with the crowd, but I knew that tactic, so I just walked the perimeter and I literally would walk in a circle around the crosses. Then some idiot would, "Would you like to buy a shirt to support the families?" I'm going, "You know you're not supposed to be selling stuff down here, right? Even if it wasn't a memorial, it's clearly posted in two places." "Oh, you don't want to support the families?" I was like, okay, he doesn't know who I am or what I'm doing. So I just went down to the end of the memorial and called three-one-one and was on hold forever. I wish they would fix that, another subject. But the Metro guy came down and, sure enough, these guys weren't licensed, and so they confiscated all their shirts and cited them. I have video of them reloading and the plate number of the guy that did it and then he shows up, so they were all cited. The next day they got a little bit slicker. They had a guy holding them in his arm looking both ways really nervous and he kept going back to his car to reload. So I went down to his car, got his plate number, description, took pictures, and then called three-one-one. Then I knew the line into the queue was pretty long. And he was parked at the end strategically so he could just get out. So I went all the way to the end and I'm watching him. I'm waiting for Metro to show up. Metro, I see their lights, he sees them, and the guy starts walking fast toward his car. I said, "Blue Malibu, Nevada plates, B six three..." Whatever. He pulls out and he's waiting on them. As soon as he pulled out, he traffic stopped him and he had multiple

warrants and they confiscated all the shirts. Two of the young ladies that had bought shirts, walked over there, took their shirts off, gave them to the officers, and the officers gave them their twenty dollars back. But, yes, that was expected on the first few days.

But then I created a Facebook page and kind of got the word out that if you're going to pull this stuff...I'd put their pictures up. I'd put the video up. Then we'll just basically check. We had our crew that we had developed at the other memorial that kind of transferred over. I told them, "I can't stay here full time like I did before." But I would come check on it three, four times a day.

Here a few days ago, I started noticing—those girls had to leave, so I started checking on it a little bit more and staying later in the night. Then one of the transit officers, a private company, he keeps an eye on it. Metro doesn't have the manpower to do it, but I think that's something going forward that cities could learn from and we could talk about later. I started hanging around and I see a lady who doesn't fit anybody I'm worried about, like the drunks that are showing up and kind of getting close and maybe they're going to steal something, but kind of watching them. At the same time, you don't know if it's a family member or something, so you watch. You watch kind of surreptitiously. This lady is going around and she's taking the first shirts that are folded up under all the flowers and she's pulling them out and she's redoing them. I thought she was just like a lot of people who come down and just straighten up. Hey, thanks for the help. This is all ours; this is the community's; it's not mine; it's not yours; it's everybody's. She finally holds one up and goes, "Oh, look, a two X." And she literally rolled it up and put it under her arm. Then I noticed that on her hand she had a couple of hand bands that she didn't have before, these wristbands that say Vegas Strong of all different types of shapes and designs. She goes through this whole litany about she's been a volunteer and she's helped out and her

husband works trauma. She was obviously full of it. But I walked around with her and I thought, *well, maybe*—I'm almost stunned that she actually did this. So we started walking back towards the end and I got back to where she had grabbed the shirt and I said, "You know you can't take the shirt." She goes, "Oh, I can't?" "No." She was like, "What if I just took it because I wanted something to remember these people by?" I was like, "Well, I'm not going to stop you, but what I am going to do is I'm going to call Metro. They're going to come down here and you're going to get charged with something equivalent to grave robbery or something. It's just not the right thing to do." She put it back. And I was like, "That goes for the wristbands, too."

While I was talking to her—that's the reason I kept talking to her—I had my camera on my phone and I got her picture. I'm up to seven hundred people I've met on Facebook in the week that I set up a Facebook page. It spread everywhere—hey, keep an eye out on this woman—people that work during the day—if she comes back.

I took that T-shirt that was at that spot and I buried it over in another spot just in case she came back. I took the one that was like an extra small and put it in that location. We're having to do stuff like that. Like I said, we're just volunteers, if you will. We're just citizens walking up and down the street, but these are the types of things. What happens if that's a family member that comes to pay their respects? There's only six of the fifty-eight that are from the Vegas area, Henderson, Vegas, and they come down there. We make sure that those things are tight. The Officer Hartsfield whose mom died yesterday; that was tragic. A lot of police patches and stuff and coins. I know to the number exactly what's there and we keep having to do measures to keep people from taking that kind of stuff because you have people trying to collect things. This isn't Kohl's or shopping time or something.

**Are you sending that to one of the museums?**

All the stuff—my understanding from talking to—and how we did the last one—that everything is boxed up and taken to the Clark County Museum. They're not even throwing away flowers. They box it all up. I thought they'd pull up a truck—at our old one we had all the dead flowers to one side. We had survivors and family members aligned to pick what went to the museum and then we took everything else to the crosses. And we coordinated that on our own. They showed up and they boxed up every bouquet of flowers even the ones that were obviously long gone. I've heard different things that they can possibly do to preserve it, pulverize it and put it in a three-by-three matted frame and give to everybody. Whatever they want to do.

**What has this experience taught you about yourself?**

For me it's brought up past issues. I lost eleven friends in the four years I was in Iraq, some of them I knew really well. As I explained to some of the survivors that if the guy blew up—I was in the three vehicle and they blew up the two vehicle and guys that I was playing poker with the night before, all dead. We got out of ours and took positions and they were shooting at us from two elevated positions. You could do nothing. They were killed instantly. But you don't forget the smells. You don't forget the this. To this day if I see a certain type of SUV drive down the street, I can be cracking jokes or something and I'll just be quiet. It never goes away; you just learn how to manage it. We still go to Arlington and put some flowers out and stuff like that. But we do remember them and we do know that, as I explained to people who were in this thing, if they had blown up the three vehicle and I went out, then those four guys would be telling you the same thing. They'd be feeling guilty. Why wasn't it them? Why was it our car? It's a strange thing, isn't it, that you see this kind of thing happen and you see how everybody responds to it.

For me personally it brought back a lot of old feelings of loss and the survivor's guilt of why was he shooting all these young people? We had a bunch of old people on the other side like

myself. Why didn't he shoot at us? In a sick way you wish that he was shooting in our direction and not at that crowd of young girls. That was the first thing that popped in my head; I wish he would have shot in our direction so those people could have gotten out. You wish that you could go back in time fifteen minutes before this happened and drop kick whoever did it right out the window and that would be the headline, we were at a concert and some guy jumped out of the thirty-second floor and nobody knew why and they kept it quiet or whatever. I don't know.

You go through so many different things and you hear so many different people's theories; they would come down every night with the latest. I heard everything from—you name it—from helicopters to—the only thing I didn't hear was O.J. was on top of the Jack in the Box, but everything else I heard. Just learning how to deal with people again, how to be patient.

Like I said, since the stroke I've kind of unofficially just...When I went to Houston, I showed up. Y'all need help? I'm a qualified medic. Go on this boat crew. Boom, we're going out and handing out cases of water. People asking when Amazon is going to deliver their cat food. The same stuff in any disaster area that you go to, you see the best of people and the worst of people and that's across culture, across race, across everything. It's just the human condition. So you've seen so many different parts of the world and this is no different.

I just wish we didn't have to go through tragedies like this to regain our humanity. I think we're conditioned with the media and the cell phones especially to divide us and hate us. I can tell you that at that memorial and since then and during this event, nobody cared about any of that stuff. Nobody gave two—I don't care. You could have had Hillary shirts. You could have had Trump guys doing this or the other way around. Nobody cares about any of that stuff. But, yet, it goes away, doesn't it? And then they're right back to let's get everybody riled up. So between not watching the news anymore—I haven't watched the news except to find out about

what's going on here, reading about it—all the controversy with the NFL and the flag and all this, I just don't watch it anymore. I just haven't processed this. I processed the eleven friends that died. It took a while.

**What kind of trauma care did you receive in order to process that?**

None. A couple of things at the VA through counseling. I think for some people—I learned from counseling back in the day, one counselor told me that they have people that have been through really, really hard trauma and they can handle it just fine, and then you get people that get a hangnail and they need therapy and Prozac and everything else. Since I went through a lot of traumatic times as a kid, I learned at an early age not to block it out but how to process it. Before going to counseling, when I was thirty-eight, for the first time, I learned in the things that happened to me to process it on my own, but I always thought other people had it worse than me because I saw it firsthand. Things were happening to me, but something happened worse to somebody else. That doesn't change what happened to you. I never did process that myself until then.

Well, in cases like this it's similar. You see people come down and they just start bawling. "I was at the Stratosphere and I went to this thing three years ago and I just feel so bad." It's like they are having some form of survivor's guilt. Then you see people who crawled over the fallen and rescued people who come down there and they're stoic and they're this and they're that.

I had one individual the first day, a thing of roses, Iraq, like I've got, a different kind. He put the flowers down and he backed off. Then he walked around and he moved them again and he backed off. You don't bother them. Finally he was standing off by himself. He was just shaken. And he had the wrist band. I was like, "Hey, where were you at in Iraq?" He said, "I was

at Diamondback." And I said, "I was at Rustamiyah, right down the street from you." So we talked about that. I turned around and I said, "Were you over there—those for somebody?" He said he had met a girl at Treasure Island that weekend and they come down every year for this thing. He had met some new girl and he either used his friend's or his brother's wristband to get her into Sunday night and she was killed. He didn't know her family. He didn't know anything. He had just met her and he talked her into—she wanted to go to this thing and he got her in and she didn't make it. I didn't catch her name, though. I wasn't a name catcher, a name collector or anything. I just gave him his space.

He said the same thing that rung true with me. All the friends we lost in Iraq and stuff; it sucked, you processed it. You're not like robots. We're all human. But this, there's a process. These are girls. I know we're all supposed to be equal and all that. But as a man when you have daughters or as a man—I'd like to think I'm not an emasculated man—but as a male member of society we're supposed to have a certain sense of duty to protect the weak and that type of thing. Not that women are weak or anything, but I think it's just your natural side kicks in. You see this and it just goes against everything that you stand for, everything that you've done your whole life. My daughters could have been at that concert.

So that's where we're to this day kind of stuck and now we're fixing crosses in the middle of the night and we're doing that kind of thing.

**Do you think, pro or con, attitudes about guns will change now?**

I think as long as everybody is hyperbolic about whatever the issue is and, whatever it is, we can't have an honest discussion about it...The Second Amendment was created to protect us against a tyrannical government back in the days when we were firing flintlocks. This is the thing that we've discussed before when you have your—obviously a lot of my military friends

and stuff, very pro. They want to own fifteen Uzis or whatever and that's their right as an American, God bless me and all this. But in the spirit of the Second Amendment, it was very important to the states for the First Amendment for freedom of assembly, freedom of press; the Second Amendment, they didn't want to restrict in case the government got out of hand again and turned into another British type of thing. This was before the AR-15s and the bump stocks and the nine hundred rounds a minute. You don't need to fire nine hundred rounds a minute to go deer hunting. Then if you want to go with the "to protect us from the government," well, last time I checked the government's got the M1A2 tank and the Apache helicopter. Your bump-stocked AR-15 isn't going to do a damn thing to stop that if the government decides they're going to go totally tyrannical.

So I think if people can get off the hyperbolic thing—guns don't kill people; people kill people. And there's probably, just like with any time that we've had, good legislation that really helps. We've had some stupid things in the past twenty years, but there are some things that work and it takes both sides. I don't care how far left you are or how far right you are, people of goodwill and good intentions can have the discussion. You don't need to take the guns and making it harder for civilians and law-abiding citizens to go buy a handgun to protect themselves. It shouldn't be infringed upon. But you know what? I don't know why the ability to buy all these things and the ability to so easily modify them is made like that because we do have people that are like this and they can inflict a lot of damage, a high side threat to an open venue like that. It takes something like this. This could have been a lot worse. There could have been several hundred people killed and this could happen every day at any football game, every Sunday, every Saturday. What about the high school games or something?

**So what are we going to do about security?**



Well, I can tell you somebody that does this for a living, the president could have gotten out of his car at that Route 91 one thing. And because those windows did not open, they would have had some counter sniper teams and as soon as he broke the glass or whatever happened, they would have been able to engage. And that's for a little limited exposure. If he was going to do a speech or something in front of a high building, they would have locked the building down. So this changes the whole metric on how high-side stuff is viewed.

Again, the knee jerk reactions; everybody thinks, oh, well, if we just made it harder to buy guns, this wouldn't have happened. The largest mass murder was arson. The largest this and that...Go back when they had hatchets and stuff, Wounded Knee and everything like that. So when people are motivated to hurt...

I think the bigger debate—it isn't the guns; it isn't the bullets; it's the loss of civility; people are not looked at. That guy was shooting at people that he didn't know their stories. I've seen their stories every night for three weeks. This guy didn't know any of it. Whoever did it didn't know or didn't care about any of it. Just this constant division, constant dehumanizing of people. You see after these tragedies that everybody is human—left, right, center, gay, straight, black, white, all these things that people say we're all at each other's throats. I've never had these issues with anybody. But, yet, I turn on the news and, boy, you would think that we're just going around shooting anybody randomly and these people are always crooks and these people are...If we learned anything in this community, if we saw how the media just came and did their stuff and then they sure got the hell out of here, didn't they, before all the answers were gotten and they're right back to how many scoops of ice cream the president has or did Obama do this bad back in the day. It's the same noise.

**How do you think the world's attitude...I don't know exactly how to say this. Do you think**

**the world's attitude about Las Vegas has been altered?**

I think ironically several of the visitors came from the UK. They have that couple of flights daily on Virgin and the other one. A lot of them from Manchester came and they were telling me the same thing about after Manchester they had the wall with all the teddy bears and stuff and people were stealing stuff. They called it nicking. They ended up having to put the police down there because people were grabbing teddy bears and doing this, whatever, like souvenirs. And look at them; they're gun control crazy over there.

I think as far as attitude it's definitely not helped. You already heard the grumblings of paying for parking and four dollars for a coke. People come here and they kind of feel like they get gouged. Why is it my hotel room is—I've been staying in hotels while I'm waiting to get my own place. My hotel is thirty-nine ninety-five all week; but, boy, Friday night it jumps to a hundred and forty dollars. Did something change in the room? Did I get new magic sheets? Did I get room service with steak and lobster? So why is it every Friday and Saturday they jack the rates up of everything? Why do they not really have a good locals' program? I think that's what's going to carry Vegas through the storm. If they don't reach out to locals—because there's a lot of us like me that we go down and hit the tables every now and then. If I go down to play a couple of thousand dollars, I can afford parking, I just don't want to pay for parking. I can afford a fifty-dollar pillow; that doesn't mean I want to buy one. If they don't see that, if they don't really reach out to the locals and really start bringing some locals back into the mix, I think the place could be in trouble.

I know from talking to a lot of the survivors, this whole Vegas Strong thing, it rubs both ways. Some people think it's a naked use of a Boston Strong, Houston Strong. I joked about it two days into it that it's just a matter of time before it becomes this bumper sticker, jinglistic,

dismissive...whatever. I understand both sides of it. I understand some people it brings them together. But I can tell you without exceptions there's people that walk around, *oh, look at me; I've got my Vegas strong shirt on; I've got my pink ribbon for breast cancer awareness; I've got my domestic violence ribbon; I care more than you do.* I'm thinking, *I've been down here three weeks doing this every day, I don't need a ribbon; I don't need a hash tag; I don't need a Twitter feed; I don't need a Facebook; I don't need an Instagram; I just do it.* I think when we had more people that just do it and support...I know there's some businesses—Chick-fil-A over on Sahara and 15. I met the owner there. It's nowhere on their website. It's nowhere mentioned in the news. They were bringing sandwiches to UMC and all the hospitals, a hundred and fifty, two hundred sandwiches, and they've been doing it ever since. They don't say anything about it. Jimmy John's, same thing. The Evil Pie guys have been coordinating, bringing pizzas and stuff to all the hospitals to feed families and stuff. You don't hear about any of this kind of stuff. But I tell you, I've heard nine different iterations of how the president made a certain phone call or what he likes on his dessert. To be fair, when Obama was president, did he do this wrong? It's just so much noise; and, yet, you would think that they would get stories out like this. Hey, there are people that are helping.

**And they have gotten some of those out.**

Some have, yes.

**Yes, some news outlets have.**

There are people like me that don't want to talk to the news. I'm not here to...

**And I appreciate you talking to us because this shows us a side for this project that we never thought about, so I appreciate this so very much.**

My pleasure.

**Anything else that you want to add to this?**

Well, I think you mentioned earlier before we started about, what can communities learn from this if they have a tragedy?

**Yes.**

I would think that if they set up memorials, then the city, county, whoever has jurisdiction for where these particular memorials are set up that they develop a list of volunteers, people that maybe have already been background checked; that sort of thing, and they rotate a roster, similar to what Red Cross does or something, and have people who are just there. If the local law enforcement, if there happens to be what I consider high-sensitive items, coins and money—we had people throwing twenty-five-dollar poker chips, legitimate chips into the cups, and we had to collect them every day because the bums would try to steal the chips. Or they would put a couple of dollars in an empty candle thing and we'd have to collect that every day and keep track of it. But if they could have kind of like part of their crisis response team—instead of the press conferences with everybody who could care less standing by them in a form of unison—get off the camera and go down and help. Get off the camera. What do you do when the cameras aren't rolling? It was very enlightening to be standing on that memorial and see the people I saw on TV—the sheriff, the undersheriff, Senator Heller and those two women, either state, congresswomen or whatever.

**Dina Titus.**

They were all walking together and they walked past the two Metro officers that were across the street from us. Sheriff Joe and the uniformed officers—the sheriff was in a suit. The uniformed officer was in his green tactical outfit. And apparently they had just left the site of the shooting. The sheriff and the uniformed officer went over to the officers and shook their hand. The other

clowns kept going. The senator, the two congress people who are always, "We just support everybody; we love everybody." Say thank you to the officers who have been there twenty hours. But there was no camera, see. So that just really shows me what they're all about. But, yet, the sheriff had the mind; there was no cameras, but he went and said hello to his officers, patted them on the back, "How are you doing?" He patted them on the back. He doesn't know them from Adam. They're just rank-and-file officers.

But communities need to be aware that if this happens again they need to have some sort of presence at the memorials, not to bother anybody, not to whatever. They eventually get it. The Billy Graham Ministries and the churches and stuff, they send people. But you always have your clowns that show up, guys with free hugs available and trying to get themselves on Facebook or something. It brings out the most bizarre people and it also brings out people who really care. If they could just have a presence at the sites, a security officer or whatever, because right now, we did all this on our own.

**Yes, I think that's important.**

If we didn't, then what would have happened? There would have been a bunch of bums that would've got a little drunker over the last few weeks because they would have stolen the liquor. A few more of the drug dealers would have gotten some money that was intended to go to victims and went in their back pocket to feed their habits. That part is what bothers me the whole time. That's why I stayed. I didn't want to leave because I saw that.

**When was the last time you were there?**

I closed it down. I opened it and I was there all the way through until they picked it up and we moved it to the other location.

**So you moved to where the sign is where the crosses are?**

Yes. We had the survivors pick what went to the museum straightaway and then we made three trips with volunteers and moved the stuff to the memorial at the crosses. I called the county and was concerned because I would have to put on a neon shirt and keep people from getting hit by cars. Metro didn't have anybody that could get there. We had a signal arranged; if I tapped the top of my head, they would come over if I needed any help. They watched me every day and they knew we had it under control. I never had to call them over there, only the one individual that we had to have escorted off with a two-dollar bribe. But we had families and survivors there. It wasn't the time to get into a contest. It was time to diffuse it immediately.

**Yes, yes. Have you been down to see the memorial wall?**

I haven't. I have been on my computer catching up on work stuff, going to the memorial. The last couple of days I've been there until five a.m. working on the crosses, fixing them. Finally some people brought me some nails and I took all my tools and went around with a hammer and nails and just very carefully where they had sandbagged the crosses that are broken at the bottom, some of the crosses have split, with zip ties and nails I have repaired most all the bases. I still have four more to repair tonight. But I do that in the middle of the night because not everybody is down there and I don't want to disrespect. Even while I was working on this stuff, if I see people drifting up, I back off and go stand at the fence. I don't bother them because you never know. You have friends, family, relatives. People [ask], "Are you the guy that built the crosses?" Somebody sent me that today. "I thought the guy who built the crosses was from Illinois." I was like, "He is. I'm just the guy that tries to help keep them fixed." "Well, can we interview you for Fox 5?" "No." I'm getting bothered by them all day today and it's just...I'm glad I had this because they're camped out up there now. So I'll sneak in there and do what I've got to do when they're gone.

**Good. I just appreciate so much that you came in to talk to us.**

My pleasure.

**This is wonderful. We will protect that with all the care in the world.**

I appreciate it. I think it's in good hands and hopefully people can learn from this. But a little bit more organization and not having to be some kind of an organic thing that people like me just happen to decide to...

**Yes. And thank God that you were here and available to do this. But I think that there is something about you. You've just been to Texas and to Florida and now you've come back here.**

Yes. I just wanted a little time off. I've been looking at real estate to get my own place. I have a roommate situation right now. I looked at Park Towers. I looked at the Martin and all this. I had my Realtor, we just looked at the Park Towers.

**Where are the Park Towers?**

Over on Hughes Center.

**Downtown?**

No, Hughes Center right over here where Bahama Breeze, Flamingo.

**Oh, yes, yes.**

So I'm looking at that. Then all this happened. I haven't even called the Realtor back. I sent her a message saying, "Everything is on hold." I sent my work guys, "You guys are going to have to pick up the slack. Everything is on hold. This is more important."

Somebody made a comment on one of the Twitter things I saw saying that I must have some kind of weird kind of PTSD or something and that's why I've done what I've done. That's ridiculous.

**Well, we all need to have that weird kind of PTSD then.**

I guess. If that's what it is, then, okay, I've got PTSD. If you can LGBTQRST, then I'll have PTSDRGG88 or whatever acronym you want to make it. I think of that one thing, "For evil to flourish, good men need to do nothing." I don't think we have enough good people, and I think it takes bad stuff like this for the good people to come out of the woodwork because we've been taught now to be quiet and not say anything. Ooh, you don't want to offend anybody, and all this. I'm the opposite of that. Like with those girls that were being rude, telling me I was rude; that doesn't bother; I have a lot thicker skin than that. If we could just get back to a basic sense of decency and all that I think we'll be in a lot better shape. God, I hope we don't have to go through something like this again to bring that out. That's all I got.

**Well, thank you so very much.**

My pleasure.

**[End of recorded interview]**