

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIANE MEIREIS

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SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES

This is Claytee White. It is November sixth, 2017. I am with Diane.

Diane, would you please pronounce and spell your full name for me?

It's Diane Meireis. It's D-I-A-N-E. Last name is M-E-I-R-E-I-S, S as in Sam.

I tried to spell that phonetically. How are you today?

I just went to the Boot Barn to get some boots, and so it's been rough.

Why?

I wanted something comfortable. Mine aren't comfortable. Mine are more dress boots and I just felt like I needed to...

Do you use those a lot when you're working with the dog, the therapy dog? Do you use the boots?

No, no. Just flat, tennis shoes, comfortable clothes.

Okay, I see. Tell me a little bit about where you're from and how you got to Las Vegas.

I was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota. We moved to Southern California; Orange, California, in 1949, it might have been, 1950 at the latest. I grew up there and started college there. I went to high school there, started college there, and then I ended up moving to Japan for four years and I worked for the Bank of America for a little bit and then I started working for the Navy. I was there doing the Pueblo incident. Some people may remember that and some may not. In fact, I took the call. I didn't know what to do. I was just a kid, like twenty years old. *What do I do?*

Tell me a little bit about it.

It was just interesting being over there. It's not one place I care to go back to because after four years, okay, that's enough. Then I came back to the States.

Remind me what the Pueblo incident was.

Oh, that was when one of our ships went in the region where they shouldn't have been, their CTs,

communication techs, and so they got picked up. Unreal kind of an incident when you think back now. Of course, we're going back towards North Korea and issues now again, so who knows?

So you went back to California after four years.

I went back to California. Let's see, I've got to think back. Actually, I started working at the Marine Corps base in Barstow. I lived in Barstow for a little bit; worked there.

Then I got married. We went to Germany because my son's father was in the Air Force and he was an F-4 pilot. My son was born over there. We came back. We lived in San Diego for a little bit. He was working on his master's. Then we went to Saudi Arabia. TWA was doing the hiring of pilots for Saudia Airlines and their purpose was to teach the Saudis how to fly basically is what it amounted to. So we lived in Saudi Arabia for three years.

One thing about Saudi Arabia, it either makes a marriage or it breaks one; ours didn't last. I didn't take my son. He stayed with my mom and I came home every three months because I wasn't sure what the conditions were going to be like and they weren't really that great for kids. In fact, most people when their kids got older, they went to Switzerland to school as opposed to stay there.

So we separated; we got divorced. Because I had worked for Lockheed in Saudi Arabia, in Jeddah, I started working for them in Ontario, California. I lived in Apple Valley. My mom would watch my son. I went back to college at Cal State San Bernardino. So it was a triangle from Apple Valley, drive to Ontario to work, then drive to San Bernardino. I'd get home, go to school, come home, get home like ten o'clock at night, fall asleep studying and get up at three and go to work. I swear I got my degree through osmosis.

Yes. A lot of us got degrees part-time in the evening.

Yes, raising kids. Then that's how I met my current husband. I was married once in between

there. My current husband...And then we ended up here when we were getting close to retirement. My son and daughter-in-law were having twins and so we came here.

Oh, that's wonderful.

My husband has two children from his previous marriage; one lives in Phoenix and one has recently moved here. We're not as close with them. We've been married twenty-six years.

Wonderful. I want to ask a very personal question. You don't have to answer. What is it about Saudi Arabia that you think either makes or breaks a marriage?

You're so restricted. You can't go out. It was tough.

So an American couple...

And if he's flying, so he's gone. He's in and out and in and out. You can't just take off and go shopping. I used to put on a tablecloth and fan belt and go driving down by the Red Sea because I couldn't stand the idea I couldn't drive. Plus, they won't put the woman in jail; they were going to put the man in jail, anyway. I would say we probably weren't doing real well before that. But some marriages it helped and some it didn't and ours is one it didn't.

When you say that you couldn't just go out and go shopping, I thought they had the marketplaces where you could go shopping.

You can go with your husband, with a male relative after a certain age, but you can't just take off in a cab and go, and you had to cover your head.

Okay, I understand.

To me getting out of the country was going to Pakistan and India. Boy, where else did I go? I went to several different places. Oh, Africa. That was getting out of the country. You'd run up to England to get strawberries or something; stuff like that. You think about going to the store and getting fresh fruit. We got on an airplane and run to England to pick up the fresh fruit and bring

it back because that was before... You could bring food on then. It was interesting, a long time ago now.

Yes, it is.

I came back in '78. That's when I lived there, from '75 to '78, and, like I said, I came home every couple of months. I think that was part of it, too; not having my son there was pretty rough for me. But I did feel it was a better place for him.

Let's talk about the event on October. Tell me what led up to it, how you decided to go to this event. What happened?

My seventy-second birthday was June 22nd and my son said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I want to go to a concert." He actually paid quite a lot for those tickets. It was like two thousand dollars for three tickets because it was so late by the time he did it.

Did you have to buy for all days?

Yes, all three days, all days, my son and daughter-in-law. It was my first Uber trip, too, because I took Uber. The first day I drove and then after that I did Uber. I go, "This is pretty nice; this is a lot easier."

So we would go in the afternoon on Friday and then the afternoon on Saturday and Sunday, all three days. We'd just go late in the afternoon. We weren't there when it opened. We went more for the main event, main singers. On Friday we met by chance some young kids from Southern California. I don't know them from Adam. Then we accidentally ran into them on Saturday and then we all planned to get together on Sunday, which we did. And we keep in touch because of that more than anything. It was good. It was really good. I was walking on air, it was such a neat thing, neat concert.

Everybody has said how wonderful the concert was.

It was. It was so much fun, really a lot of fun.

Tell me what happened after you discovered that it wasn't fireworks.

I remember looking at the stage when he first did his—only by watching some of the videos have I kind of put some things together—the pop, pop, pop. I know we weren't alone. People were like, "Well, is it the sound system? What's causing this?" Then you heard the rata-tat-tat, the pop-pop-pop, whatever you want to call it. I remember looking up at the Mandalay Bay and first thinking, *it's not fireworks, but it's gunfire*. About that time my son said, "Get down," and he got on top of my daughter-in-law and I. He got us down and stayed on top of us. He will say that he thought he was dead. He thought he was going to die. We were lucky because we're some of the few people that got out of there without getting hurt.

Where were you standing?

If this was the front stage and the Mandalay Bay was here, we were—the stage came out and there were people all along here. The VIP was over on this side. We were right about here. We weren't way up in the front, but we were on the side where most of the injuries were.

So you're talking about you are—

To the right of the stage.

You're to the right of the stage, but you're in the crowd.

We're in the crowd, yes.

How far from the stage are you?

Boy, I'm not good at distances. Well, it came out. We were not close to where it came out, where they could come out. We were back some ways and more over towards the side where the VIP was, but in the crowd.

So to the south.

Would that be to the south? I guess it would be, wouldn't it? Because here is the—yes, towards the Mandalay Bay. I remember hearing people say, "What is that? That's not fireworks." Then like I said we hit the ground.

What stays in my mind is looking up and for some reason I just realized it was coming from Mandalay Bay and I don't know why. I have no idea. I do shoot, but I haven't shot in a long time. And then it was like seeing people—and it reminds me of an ocean wave—it was like seeing people going down. Everybody was hitting the ground. I keep seeing it and it reminded me of the time and I thought, *that's like a wave coming in*. It's kind of strange.

But we were down and Greg said, "Stay down; stay down," and we did. Then the shooting stopped. There was a clear area—if we were right here, over here were a lot of booths.

Merchandise?

Merchandise, yes. Most people went towards the VIP. Some went towards the stage. We had a clear—it reminded me of like a funnel; we had an opening. He just grabbed Katrina's hand. She grabbed my hand. He said, "We are running." And people were saying, "No, get down." Katrina, I remember her going, "Fuck you, I'm moving." We ran in behind one of the merchandise stands, the places. I'm a runner and thank God I'm a runner. My daughter-in-law told me that Friday. I remember seeing—there was one person on the ground. I don't think she had been shot. I think she out of fear may have passed out. I remember as we were running hearing the pings because they were hitting around us and thinking the next one is going to be in my back. My son doesn't remember much of anything. My daughter-in-law and I remember a lot more. I remember seeing—her phone fell out of the back of her jean pocket and I went to reach for it and she wasn't letting go of my hand and I almost fell but kept going.

We got behind the booth there and this nice person, gentleman said, "Come on back

here." I remember thinking, *this is not going to protect us; this is thin; this is very thin; where are we going now?* In behind those booths was an area for the crew that was working a booth. So we went back there and there were people ducked down.

Behind what?

Like if this was the booth, you would go behind it, right behind it, but it was covered. There was also an opening, which is the way we got out, to the side. We were in there and I remember there was a table on the ground. There were people up against the side that would have been to the booth even though they had the booth in between them. So here is the front of the booth. They were like over here. I know I yelled and said, "Get that table up against there," because it was laying on the ground flat.

About that time, I think it was the same person, he said, "Come on with me." I hesitated. I know I hesitated. I was holding my daughter's hand because I wasn't sure which way we were going. I thought, *are we going back that way? And, I'm not going back that way.* But we weren't. He took us out. There were guys breaking down fences. But it was quiet. The people that went that way were quiet and organized, which is interesting, isn't it?

Yes.

I didn't realize what was—we didn't know what was going on on the other end. We had no idea what was going on on the other end. Before we left the ground the young couple next to us, a guy and three girls, they got up when we did. And the one girl, I can still remember she and I look at each other straight in the eye and yelling, "Run," and they went one way and we went the other. I think that's really what makes a big difference for us is the direction we went.

I remember we went over that street that's behind there and I can remember my son saying—there was an island—and he said, "Step up." I remember thinking, *I can see it.* Those

are the things that go through your head.

Was that Reno?

That was before Reno. We ended up on Reno. I want to go back and find it. There was a spot where like two fences came and one was brick and so it was really narrow. My daughter-in-law was like, "Don't let go of my hand." She didn't. But people weren't pushing and shoving; they were helping.

Do you think that those people who were so quietly taking down the fences and doing all of that, could they have been firefighters?

No, no, no. They were people that worked there. There may have been some first responders, but I don't think so. I think these were people that just worked there. But to your point, they could have been.

But you think maybe they worked in some of those merchandise booths?

I'm assuming because he knew how to get out of there. He knew how to get back out, so he must have. But he was very calm and he was down and he said [whispering], "Come on, go this way."

I don't know if other people in there did because we went out first and followed him. We made it through that spot. About that time my daughter-in-law says I was having—not an anxiety attack, but just hyperventilating. I remember saying, "Let me go; let go of me; you guys go." She was not going to let go. But I slowed down just for a second and she said, "You are running," and then I was fine. It's like I needed to catch my breath.

Then there were still shots being fired. Back behind this one building, boy, it sounded louder than it did on the grounds. It sounded so much louder. We ran over to Reno. There was a cop car and he told everybody to keep running. I know I remember seeing a girl on the ground. I think she had passed out. I don't know if she was shot. It seemed like whenever you saw

someone down, you kind of looked for life—I did—or looked for blood. *Are they hurt? Should I be helping them?* That type. I know that if my daughter-in-law hadn't had a hold of my hand, I would have stayed and helped because it's just—the volunteer work, you help people. But I know in the long run it's better that she didn't.

So what makes you sad when you think about it now?

That people died.

We went up some stairs in some apartments and there was some people behind us and they were staying there for the festival and they let us in and we stayed with them. We had the lights out. It's like ten thirty or whatever it was. So we never saw them because we kept everything dark. You could hear the sirens. Everybody was scared. Nobody knew what was really going on.

I texted my brother because he was staying with my husband. I said, "Please stay there, we're being shot at." He was like, "What?" My son was texting his partner, a gentleman that works for him. He said, "Go over to the boys." Because that was their big fear; they didn't want the boys to know. "Stay with the boys. I don't know when we're going to get home."

We stayed there until three o'clock in the morning. I remember it was cold. It was so cold. I think we all were. With that shock and whatever you go through, you want to pee a lot, which was kind of funny. It's like, "I've got to pee." But none of us were flushing the toilet. We were afraid to make any noise. The guys had taken the table and put it against the door.

My son has a friend who is a SWAT and he kept in touch with him. And he just said, "Stay there because it's all locked down. There's no point in coming out. Just stay there." About three o'clock in the morning, Greg goes, "Let's go. Mike's out in front." And he was.

The fun part about this—and I know none of this is fun—but it was so cool. Mike says,

"Somebody's got to ride in the front seat." And I went, "I'll ride in the front seat. I get to ride in the front seat of a cop car." My son and my daughter-in-law are going, "What?" "This is fun; I get to ride in the front seat of a cop car." I know it's not fun, but it was. It was like, *wow, and I'm not being picked up or anything*. I don't think I'll ever forget that though. That was fun.

So did you get to meet the people in the apartment?

I'll tell you what happened there. That was interesting. Mike took us to the airport and he dropped us off there. It's like three thirty in the morning. Then we called Ubers and picked us up. There aren't many people at the airport then, but you know they didn't know what was going on. Here is these people—we didn't even know what we looked like at that point; we found out when we looked in the mirror—getting out of this car, hugging this guy. We walked inside the terminal because we wanted to find a restroom, and people are looking at us like... You don't realize what you look like. You don't realize what's on your face. We went in the restroom and Katrina is looking in the mirror and I'm looking in the mirror. That's not us, is it?

How did you look to yourself?

Shocked, literally just shocked and not like yourself, just different, not like you just had a lot of fun, and you're dirty because we had been down on the ground.

Then I Uber-ed home and my brother stayed the night here, too. I turned on the news, which I know that you're not supposed to, and watched the news. He eventually went home and I just watched the news all night.

But while we were in their apartment, I texted my boss and said, "I don't think I'm going to make it to teach my class." I teach classes at LVAC. I teach a healthy back class. Then I texted some of the girls that come to class that I had their information because I didn't want them to show up; I might not be there. They knew I had gone to the concert, so then at least they knew I

was okay.

I watched all the news and I couldn't go outside Monday at all. I could go out in the back, but I couldn't go in the front. I kept saying, "You've got to go outside; you've got to go outside; you can do this." So I forced myself at about four o'clock to walk out front real slow. I said, "You're not going to run." I went out in the middle of the street. And I said, "Just kind of make a three sixty and then walk back in." Of course, the first thought is, *thank God I didn't get shot when I walked out there*. But it was like a step. It was a step.

I was teaching the next day, the Powerful Tools for Caregiver course at Cleveland, and the gentleman I teach it with, he had texted me because he knew I was there. He said, "You don't have to." And I said, "No, I do have to go teach it." Because these people are there for a reason. I had to put aside what I'm feeling. Cleveland Clinic did reach out and I met with one of the therapists for an hour before I went to class. They're more into long term, the long goodbye. It helped a little bit, but it really wasn't...She was good, but it was a different type therapy. I took a lot of psychology in college. I taught the class. I was hyper. Tuesday I was hyper. He came and got me. He said, "You're not going to drive." I'm glad he did because I don't think I could have driven.

Was that your son?

No, the gentleman I teach the class with, he came and got me. I was like, "No, no, no." He says, "No, you're not driving." I'm glad he did. I don't think I could have driven by the—it was bad enough going on the freeway and driving by the Mandalay.

I taught the class and I came home and I was fine, I think, because I've got to take care of my husband. Some of that sadness is that he can't comfort me. He can't know. I think he kind of knows something. He knows something happened here. I don't want to ask him because he

worries enough because I'm his care. I know I thought about that, too, *who is going to take care of him?* Because my son is here. My son is the one that's the executor of the estate and knows everything. *Who is going to take care of him?* Even though his daughter is here, it's not the same kind of relationship. My son and my husband are really close.

Okay, good.

Then someone said, "You shouldn't be watching the news," and they were right. I turned off the news.

What did watching the news do to you?

It told me what happened, but it just...You don't realize...You know you were there, but you don't know you were there. You just feel anxiety, anxious, stress, sad, depressed. And then after I turned the news off, it was a little bit better. I take children's liquid Benadryl for allergies sometimes at night, like a teaspoon, and I was taking that to sleep. There were only a few nights that I woke up and even since then I see the wave of people and I see us starting to run and I see her phone falling out, just different things.

But I needed to see my son and daughter-in-law. But they are kind of...I don't think they realize. I went to the gym on Wednesday because I'm trying to get my son there. I work out with a trainer, and I couldn't. We went over to Starbucks. It was just walking in anything, that first time of doing anything I did on a regular basis was so tough. But then I'd say, "Okay, that one's done; that one is done; check that one off."

Thursday I taught my healthy back class and I was hyper again. It was like, *zsh, zsh*, and close to tears. They were asking. I said a few things, but I didn't say much because I really didn't want to talk about it because I've got to teach them. I joked a lot, too. Something came up and I don't remember what they said, something about cardio, and I said, "Well, I could teach you the

active shooter's sprint if you want to learn it." They cracked up and they said, "You've got to put that on Facebook." And I said, "No, no, and don't take it out of this room." It just blurted out. It's like, no, nobody needs to hear that; like, *ha*.

But there's probably a role for humor.

There is, there is. Like the police car. I still remember that was so much fun to get in the front seat of that car. I remember my son and daughter-in-law got in the back and I remember him saying, "Boy, I didn't realize they didn't have much room back here." No, there needs to be some humor.

Was it a feeling of safety being in that police car in a way?

Oh, yes, yes, yes. I don't think at that point even still you realize what you're feeling and what you've gone through. You just want to go home. We had decided if nothing else we would walk if we had to. They live in Summerlin and, of course, I live up here. We were just like, "We're going to get somehow." Because they needed to get home to their boys and I needed to get here and make sure—I knew Craig was okay, but I just knew he wakes up in the morning and I better be here.

Walking out on the street when we came down the steps and out in the street, there was still a lot of cops and police and everything. It kind of hit, *it really was bad whatever happened*. But Mike was right there and we got in the car and we drove off and that was it. I know we were shaking. I know I was shaking.

Oh, yes. Tell me about the people in the apartment.

Oh, yes. As we left—they were so sweet—as we left, she gave me—I'm going to show you what she gave me real quick—they're from Orange County. She handed me this, City Roots in Boots: [Country Music Apparel and Accessories].

It's like a cup.

That's a cup. That's her business. We also told them—because the four of us, my husband and my daughter-in-law and my son, we own a condo up at Brian Head and we said, "If you guys want to go up, it's yours. Anytime you want to go, for free, you just go." She handed me this because we said, "How can we stay in touch?" Nobody still wanted to turn on lights. So I got in touch with her through this. She sent a necklace. I don't have it on right now because she said, "Don't wear it to the gym." I was at the gym this morning. I bought a couple of things off the website and I think my daughter-in-law has, too. I know that Greg and Katrina will probably go over to California and see them. I don't get many places because he gets confused.

Now, the young kids that were next to us, we didn't know how to get a hold of them. You just know people's first names; that's all. I remembered that Jonathan was twenty-seven, and he and I joked about my being seventy-two and him being twenty-seven. I kind of remember, maybe if I put that out on the Internet, seventy-two, twenty-seven, maybe he'll find it. He tracked down my son's business and that's how we ended up getting in touch. Now he and I keep in touch, and the kids—I call them the kids—Greg and Katrina keep in touch with him, too. We said, "If you want to come up and stay, any time you want to." He doesn't have much money, anyway. I don't think he's ready. He said, "I'm not quite ready to do that." But he knows he's got a place.

That's wonderful.

Then these people, the girl—there's two girls—I don't even know how many people were in that condo. I really don't know.

In the apartment.

In the apartment. Because it was so dark. But it was funny going out to their website and seeing

their faces. It's like, *oh, that's what they look like*. Really sweet, really sweet. We'll all be friends for life.

That's right.

You meet people in strange ways. The plus side to me—other than it was a great concert—the plus side was my husband's son and him have been estranged almost for the whole time we've been married. I had nothing to do with him and his mother getting divorced, but he's blamed it.

Of course.

We've tried, but you get to the point where...We send stuff to the grandkids and that's it. But he sent me the sweetest E-mail. He said that Trish, his sister, said you were at the concert. It was just really sweet. "I'm so sorry for the way I've been." And blah, blah, blah. And I told him, "Don't worry about it. It's in the past. It's now you need to spend some time with your dad." I keep both him and his sister caught up on how Craig's doing and what we're trying to do. In fact, Gary recommended, he said, "Can we have a weekly phone call?" And I said, "Sure." We didn't get to yesterday, but we did the Sunday before. I think it will probably be every other Sunday or something so he can talk to his father.

I think that's great.

It is. It is because I know it had—I don't know what emotions Craig totally feels anymore. He's got cognitive Parkinson's, which will remind you a lot more of dementia. But I know it means a lot that his son is coming back around. I had reached a point where I said, "I can't worry about it anymore; it's his son's problem." So that was a good thing, too, a little humor and it brought some people together that needed to come to together.

And you met some new people.

And we met some new people, yes. When I was at the Boot Barn today, I almost broke down and

just shaking. You're trying to get your credit card out and you're like...Just different things. Some days are good.

I met my son and daughter-in-law for breakfast on that first Thursday after—first Friday. I don't remember which day. They were very much...I don't even know how to say it. They were recovering with each other, so I felt very lost.

Kind of lonely? Because you weren't with somebody who had had that same experience.

I was alone. I never said anything to them. I just kind of let it go because they've got each other and that's good. That's good.

What kind of therapy have you gotten?

None yet. None yet.

I am going to send you a sheet. I should have had it here. I just don't have it with me. I'm going to e-mail a sheet to you. Will you give me your E-mail address?

I will do that. Last Friday they texted and said, "Hey, we're going to be in your area. You want to go to breakfast?" The other grandparents live on the same street and we're all good friends, and they couldn't go and I was glad because I really needed to talk to Greg and Katrina.

How have your conversations changed?

I had to thank her for never letting go of my hand and it gave me a chance to do that. That was good. She said, "Of course, I'm not going to let go of your hand." She said, "I'm just glad you're a runner because you needed to run." That was good. It was a good conversation. We kind of went through things and what we remembered. She and I pretty much remember the same. I am concerned that my son said, "I don't remember any of that."

Do you think he has blocked it out?

I think he's blocked it out.

Emotionally just to keep himself safe?

Yes. I love seeing that—they were a close couple, anyway. But they are really close now. I know that there's a couple of things that they shouldn't be doing that they're doing and I've recommended therapy. But Katrina is like, "No, we'll figure this out on our own. We've got each other." But that's not always enough, so we'll just wait and see.

I want you to share the list of resources with them.

I will.

I've got to make sure that I put it in this folder that I take every place.

That's okay. I never thought I'd still be shaky just going out.

You were referred to me by Dr. Benning, I believe. Is that correct?

I just called the phone number that—I found it through the Facebook and called the phone number. The first time I called, nobody answered. You answered when I called the other number. That's how. And you have such a sweet voice. I felt like, *gee, my mom. I know I'm a mom and a grandma, but she's got such a sweet voice.* You do; you have such a sweet voice.

Thank you.

Very soothing.

Good. I'm glad of that.

There are mornings that I'm fine, but it's almost like you don't know if you want to be fine. I know that really sounds funny.

Do you feel guilty for feeling fine?

I don't feel guilty for feeling—well, I do have—even though rationally I know this is ridiculous, I do have that guilt that we got out fine. I have that guilt that I didn't help somebody; but, yet, rationally I know not everybody can do that. You've got to go. You can't—like I said, if she

hadn't been holding my hand, I probably would have stopped, and who knows? Whatever would have happened then. That's just more my nature more than anything.

Yes, because you are a giver.

Yes, I guess so. I never thought about it, but, yes. I never really thought about it. But I get very impatient as a caregiver, but that's normal, too.

Oh, I think it is.

I like what I'm seeing within them. I miss the fact that I can't talk to my husband. On that Monday after, my brother wanted me to get tickets to one of the Cirque du Soleils. I swear I was going to throw up. I couldn't do it. I could not do it. I just kind of put him off. Then he wanted me to go do something and I said, "I can't leave the house." His comment was, "When you fall off the horse, you've got to get back on." I thought, *well, that's great; you're not much help.*

But what I found out is that he was in an active shooter situation at Fort Irwin. He never told anybody. We haven't talked about it since really. It was a long time ago. But he says, "Thank God the guy was a bad shot," is the way he put it. He's got a good sense of humor, too. He also was robbed at gunpoint. So he's been through a lot. Then also, all his life he's had different cancers. In fact, we're dealing with one right now. So he's a survivor. He's looking at it totally from a surviving perspective. I also think that we're close. He's really close to me and I think he also was thinking about, *I don't want to lose my sister*, and so he kind of pushed it away.

He took care of my mom until she passed away a couple of years ago and that's when they moved here. He's a bachelor, so he's out there just having fun now—not fun drinking or anything, but just enjoying life that he never got to do. He's real close to my husband, too. They've been close for a long time.

That's wonderful.

Sometimes I feel like I'm in a cocoon and I don't know if I want to get out of it.

Is it a good cocoon to be in?

I don't know. I don't think it is because I know you've got to get it out. There's the survivors' website off of Facebook. I talk a lot to people out there. Last night and the night before usually I'm on it at night after my husband goes to bed and you see that people are feeling a lot of the same things. Some went through a lot more drama than we did, a lot more drama, and some of them are having a really tough time. But a lot of them are saying they're going to therapy.

I started talking to this one girl back and forth, and she and her husband wanted to come back before they move the crosses. It wasn't just me; it was open. She said, "If we can put the money together, we're going to come back." So I just answered, "I am me," and I got them a room so that they could come back. I just used points that I had so that they could come back.

Oh, that's wonderful.

I may never meet her. She says, "We've got to meet." We may and we may not get a chance to. They're driving from San Diego Saturday morning and going back Sunday morning, so we might meet and we might not.

You are a giver.

I did go to the crosses one day, but I couldn't stay.

I can understand that. It's very powerful. There is so many of them. It's just so powerful.

And I felt some anger at people that I felt—I knew there were a lot of people there that were there because they lost someone, but there were the gawkers. I'm not a screamer, but I felt like just screaming out to some people and saying, "Leave us alone."

This is an unfair question. How did you feel yesterday when you saw the church shooting?

I didn't see it. I just heard it. I haven't seen it. I think once you've been through something and

you feel for people, you feel it a different way because you know what they're going to feel and what they're going to go through; the same with the New York thing. You just really feel for them. We were talking about it out on the survivor website that everybody was like, *oh, what those people are going to go through.*

What would you say to them today if you could?

Hold on to each other.

You're an amazing woman.

No, not really. Just hold on. Also, another plus is I feel stronger and able to deal—I say deal, but it's not a good word—with my husband because I know it is progressing and it's not going to change. I'm kind of like, *well, I've always said I can do anything; now I can really do anything.*

The visual...You know what? I am religious, but it disturbed me that I never thought about God when I was on that ground. I thought, *I can't believe this is happening to us, but it's an active shooter.* That's what went through my mind. Even when we were in that apartment, I kept thinking, *why am I not praying? I am religious.* But that wasn't there yet. I wasn't angry at God. Things happen for a reason. Everything happens for a reason and I know His hand is in it, but it wasn't there. That bothers me.

Do you think maybe there is a more spiritual way to look at it, not just religious but maybe spiritual?

Yes, that's very true.

It sounds like that's what you're saying. But you're saying that you know that God is all over it; God is in this. I don't think you have to worry about the religious so much.

That's true.

I think you're already there when it comes to the spirituality of all of this.

That's true. That's very true. I hadn't thought of it that way and, yes, that's very true. I find that now I'm just kind of trying to do things that are different, like going to the Boot Barn and buying a pair of boots. And it was tough. I didn't think it was going to be. But all the boots on the shelf was like, *aaah*. The girl that was helping me, it turns out that one of the girls that died was a friend of the manager or something. I think of those people that are going to have to deal with those injuries for the rest of their lives. I can't even image what that has to be like, I can't. I feel for them so much, but I can't imagine it. It's hard to imagine.

You asked what I felt like yesterday. When we met for breakfast, it was fun. Breakfast was fun. But I had a queasy stomach all day. Every once in a while I get a really queasy stomach. Like I said, just certain times I just shake trying to do things. You're like, *what am I shaking for?*

Who did you have breakfast with yesterday?

My son and daughter-in-law and the boys. What's happening now is they're tending now to get—because they live way on the other side of town—we're tending now to get together more than we were. We were all getting together maybe once a month, but now it's a little more often, and the or grandfather and my brother and my husband. My husband was having a really rough day with the breakfast and I wasn't even sure I could go, but that really helped. Saturday we had to go to a memorial.

Related to this?

No. The gentleman that I teach the class with, his wife passed away from Alzheimer's, and so we went to the memorial. I was fine, actually. I was fine. Noises haven't bothered me. Crowds? I haven't been in a crowd, so I don't know.

You're probably not ready for a crowd.

Yes, probably not. I'd like to go to a concert, but I really don't have anyone to go with, just to get

past it. I've got to get this over with. There's one more thing left. I've got to get this over. In fact, the gentleman, he told me he's going to travel and visit his family and everything for the next three weeks. He said, "When I get back if you still want to go, I'll go with you, but I'm just really not into country music." My husband... That would be work if that makes sense. When I take him it's work.

Oh, yes, yes.

I don't understand why I get so shaky.

Because this has been a traumatic experience. This is not supposed to happen to us.

No, it's not.

It's just not supposed to happen. We're supposed to be living in a civilized world and this is about as uncivilized as it gets.

I know a lot of people want to know why and everything. I don't really care why, and I'm one that reads all the books on predators and why are they doing the things they do. But for this, it doesn't make any difference to me. I don't care if it was terrorists. I don't care if he had others help him. I think it's weird that there's nothing. If they can't find him; that is strange. But I don't really care. It's not important.

They've already found out more about the person from yesterday.

Than they have from this one, yes. Yes, that's true. This guy—I think they're trying to figure this out. I saw on YouTube the interview with Lombardo. He's amazing. Oh my God, he's amazing. He said, "We don't know why. We don't have any idea."

Prior to this how do you feel that the country saw Las Vegas?

Tourists. I don't think anybody that's not from this area realized how close we are. It's a small town. Maybe that's a good thing, too; that it's not about money; it's not about gambling; it's not

about shows. There's real people that live there and people that care about each other. I see it on the website. It's like, "Yeah...boy, those people." I think we amazed the world. I really think we did. I think everybody was just amazed.

Last Thursday, well, a week or so before, some of the girls in my class said they wanted to go to breakfast and occasionally we go over to Sunrise Cafe, so I thought that's what it was and I said, "Yes, sure." Well, we ended up at one of the girl's houses and she fixed a beautiful breakfast. It didn't hit me how scared they were and how worried they were about me. It just never hit me.

We forget, don't we?

Yes, because you're dealing with your own thing. It isn't like I feel, *well, they weren't there*. It's not that at all. I did not realize how much they cared and that sounds—I've been teaching this class forever.

I love that.

I never realized it. It was a beautiful breakfast. I wrote them a letter and I gave it to the ones that were in class today. I feel so humble. I just didn't realize how scared they were.

Love is that amazing powerful force, isn't it?

It is. It really is. Then you know what I did? I went hatchet throwing.

Okay...Okay. Explain that to me.

I will. It's called a Hatchet Monkey and it's off Pecos and...I can't remember the cross street. The gentleman that teaches the class with me, he and his daughter went one time and what he did was—and he did this for me, too—he made a list—in fact, I will show it to you—of all the things that the disease has done. He laminated it and put it on the target. It's like a bow and arrow target. Then he and his daughter learned how to throw a hatchet and just tear that apart. Well, he said,

"You've got to go." So he took me. First he had me send him my list. Of course, my list was not just about the disease, it was now about something else, too. We put it on the target and I felt like I wanted to cry, but it also felt very good. So I did that Thursday, too.

What did you put on the list about October One?

I will get you the list real quick and you can see because I kept it. Though because it's also about my husband's disease, there was a lot of that, too. This is the one I chopped up.

Oh, you did tear it apart.

And this is the one that he gave me. The ones near the bottom—lost survivor guilt, loss of dreams and visions, taking my life back, taking my freedom back—which fits both—and no more sadness and fear—those were the ones that were related to the concert.

I think this is an amazing idea. I think there's more than one way for therapy.

Yes, there is. There is.

What did you learn about yourself through all of this?

What did I learn about myself? The first thing that comes to mind is that I am strong; that I can take care of what I have to take care of with my husband. That was kind of one of the first things that it did. It kind of also validated that I do like helping people; even though we kept going, it validated that. I know I do that through my class and through the volunteer course of the class, but it kind of validated that. I have not an extreme amount—it's there—that I wish I could have helped or, should we have gone back? But like I said, it's irrational to even think—rationally I know you've got to get out; there's twenty-two thousand people in here; you've got to go. And my son even said, "I sometimes wonder if we should have gone back." I said to him, "You did your job. You saved your wife and you saved me. You did your saving." I'm hoping that that kind of helps him out a little bit because...But, yes, I just feel stronger and I want to just go out

and do things more.

Have you told yourself what you told your son; that he did his job?

No, I haven't. Nah. But to your point, I guess my job was to make it because I do have to take care of my husband.

Yes, you did your job.

And be here for my brother. He is going for a biopsy Wednesday. My job is to be there for them, yes.

You did your job.

That's true. And the part that you feel, like, *why do I feel so bad when nothing happened compare to other people?* It's almost like you don't feel like you have the right to feel bad because people died and people were injured and people got hurt. Jonathan said that they were stuck in there for forty minutes—I can't even image—before they could get out.

And Jonathan is the couple—

The young man.

The young couple. What was it, four people?

There were four, three girls and then him. He said it was forty minutes before they could get out of there.

What did they do for forty minutes? Where were they?

I'm not quite sure where they were, but they were duck and cover, just staying down. When that shooting started and we hit that ground and then it was again and there was a pause, I did not realize until I watched the news how much he shot. I thought it was only a little bit. That didn't minimize it, but I never realized until...how much he shot.

A week ago Sunday—and Sundays don't make—a lot of people, it's traumatic on

Sundays. I'm not affected by that. It had nothing to do with it being a Sunday, but I was watching all the videos and stuff two weeks ago, about two weeks in one Sunday, and it was like I wasn't even there; I didn't feel anything—I felt bad, but I didn't feel the trauma of being there. Then I was writing something down and I wrote down the words *active shooter* and that did it; I just fell apart. But I thought that was kind of weird. I felt detached listening to it and watching it, but reality is it was an active shooter. That hit hard. That really hit hard.

How has this changed your attitude, pro or con, about guns?

I'm still pro. It wouldn't have made any difference in this one, anyway. I belong to the NRA. I shoot. I have, all my life, shot. I don't think it's about the guns, anyway. Look, they're using cars; they're using knives. I think it's about, yes, we need to have deeper...I can't think of the word now...background checks. But it still wouldn't have caught him. They never would have caught him.

Exactly, there was nothing in his background that would have caught him.

I just have that same adage of guns don't kill people; it's people. I do think we need deeper background checks and we need to watch that more carefully. But I think also we have trouble with everybody's got a different database, so this isn't all meeting together. Just like when the FBI started the serial killer database, and I can't even remember what they call it right now, they eventually started getting all the states to put their information in there. It's not all there, I don't think, yet. Like watching for terrorists, there needs to be more people watching for some of this. But saying that, you can only do so much.

I was shocked to hear that people are filing lawsuits against the Mandalay Bay, against the promoter of the concert. I'm like, that's not their fault; those people did nothing; you can't blame them for something they had no control over. I'm not a blamer, anyway.

I still have my bracelet on and I can't take it off.

Let me see it.

I'm actually afraid to take it off. This was the over twenty-one.

Oh, you have two bracelets.

Yes, this was just an over twenty-one that they did.

So one is a GA three-day.

Yes, general admission.

General admission, three day, and it's tied like a bow. It's purple and it's tied like a bow.

And the other one has flowers.

Yes, and it's just over twenty-one. It's kind of a joke. It's like, *I'm over twenty-one, thank you.*

And it's from the old slot machines with the bard and the cherries.

Yes, you're right, yes. I can't take it off. I'm actually afraid to take it off.

You will one day. And they're really beautiful.

Yes. I even got a tattoo. Actually, at seventy—it was on my bucket list—I got a tattoo.

Oh, it's beautiful.

He does really good work.

Look how it matches.

It even does and it wasn't meant to.

So how long have you had the feather?

A year. It will be a year this month, yes, November. To me a feather is stay strong, stay free, and when I look at that I'm stronger dealing with my husband.

Fantastic. So when is your birthday?

June 22nd.

But you just got it...?

I just got it a year ago in November. It took a little while to get it. So I'm kind of looking at something.

What is your next tattoo going to be?

I'm not sure yet. The gentleman that did this one, I've been sending him stuff. It's going to be on the shoulder because when I was running away—even though it was the right shoulder—I kept thinking, *I'm going to get hit in the right side*. I don't know why. I'm going to do it on my left because I've got to balance it out. I'm going to do it on my left because I kept thinking I was going to get shot in the back.

It was validation with my daughter-in-law when I said, "Were there bullets pinging? Were there pinging sounds?" She said, "Yes, they were hitting all around us." We were just lucky. We were very lucky. The young couple in front of us—my son and daughter-in-law had become friends with and they're actually going to move here—she is actually a trauma nurse and feels very guilty because she didn't stay. I can imagine what she's going through. She has applied at UMC. I guess she's coming up for an interview because she feels she needs to be here to help people.

I think that's so special.

So my son and daughter-in-law made new friends. I guess the girl got right in front of them got shot and died. I don't know. I think it's just some stuff you have to go through. I don't know if there's triggers. I guess the boots today at the Boot Barn was a trigger.

It's a cowboy festival.

Yes, yes.

The cowboy boots, that's one of the main symbols.

Yes. It didn't hit me, because I guess that was a trigger because I was just trying to pay for my boots.

I am going to call Barbara in my office and see if she can send the list of resources to you by e-mail right now. I would like that.

But there are mornings when I feel good now.

That's great.

You test it and go, "Okay, I feel good. Is that okay? Can I feel good?"

And you give yourself permission to feel good?

Yeah, I sort of do and I sort of feel like, no, you're supposed to feel like this longer. I haven't been to the Healing Garden yet. I do need to go.

Tell me what the Healing Garden is.

Where the memory, that garden that they put together.

Oh, downtown.

Yes. I haven't been yet.

I went the first night that it was open to the public and there was so many people that I couldn't get up to the fence area. You got to walk through the garden and see all the trees, but you couldn't get to the wall. There was just so many people putting things on the wall and reading everything on the wall. So I said, "I'll just go back another time."

Isn't this town so amazing?

Isn't it amazing?

I'll take my therapy dog. He's my therapy now. And I'll take him someday and go in a day, but I'm just not ready yet.

I want to thank you so much for sharing these kind of powerful memories with us.

You're welcome.

When I saw what happened on TV last night in Texas, I said, "This is why we are doing this." Because unfortunately this continues to happen, but maybe some of the things that we collect, some of the things that you say just might help somebody else somewhere else.

So you're taking a lot of research with a lot of different people and then seeing where some of the things that kind of everybody seems to be going the same direction as to what they're feeling and what they thought?

Yes. So we are interviewing people who were there, first responders; people who stood in bloodlines the next day; people who worked over at the LVCVA. We're just getting started, but this is our plan. We want to eventually interview some doctors. Just get a feel for everybody. People in Texas right now probably don't even know some of the things that we already know that we've learned from you and from a Lyft driver and from other people that we've talked to already.

I feel bad that I didn't go help after, the next couple of days or whatever. I really feel bad.

Please don't feel bad. I was at home the two days after. I had taken the days off because I was beginning to get a head cold and I didn't want to get a head cold. I was just going to nip it in the bud, which I did. But I just decided not to go out, spread my germs. I was just going to stay at home and pray, so that's what I did. I just try to do what I can.

Yes. I actually was going to take—in fact, I'm still going to—but one of the things on my six-month project list—I make these project lists, which was long before this happened—was to take the community emergency response team classes. I definitely will be doing it now. I was planning to, anyway. A lot of it was because that will help me better with my husband and then it will also help me with anything else. Hopefully there will never be an incident like this again and there probably won't be.

Yes. I want to learn more about trauma counseling and to understand how it works, how you get qualified to do that. I just want to learn about it.

Yes. I think it's tough counseling.

It is. It really is.

Very tough counseling.

But you do things with your dog.

Yes.

We now use dogs like this for midterm exams and final exams.

Oh, really? I didn't know that.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In the library at UNLV and other universities around the city, we use dogs to calm students down so they can do better.

I'll be darned. The gentleman that is kind of my mentor for the therapy dog thing, he and his wife went Monday to UMC. He is a retired medic. They took their dog. He said it was way too much for his wife, but he said he has seen a lot. He said it was tough. He said it was really tough, but he felt that they did some good for families and for victims. He said, "There's nothing like a dog." Although here I am with two that are barking up a storm.

So Diane, I really, really appreciate this. If you know anybody that you think is ready to share memories like this and that it might help them in some way, we would love to have those stories as well.

I wish my son would.

If he decides to.

Okay, I'll talk to him. Actually, he did. He said to me, "Well, if you think they need more people." This might help him open up, too.

We would love to just talk to him.

You have such a pretty name.

Oh, thank you so much.

That is so pretty. Good, because I said to him when I told him I was doing this, he said, "Oh, well, if they need more people."

Yes, we do. We're just starting and we plan to talk to people as long as they will talk to us.

Good. Because the fact that he thought for sure he was dead when he was on top of us, he needs to talk.

Yes, he does.

I will definitely do that. Thank you. I will take a picture and send it to him and say, "You need to call her."

Yes, please.

It's that feeling that I wasn't so bad as others; I don't need it—I don't need it as much, is more the words.

Maybe that's okay. But I just think that we probably all need to talk to someone. Barbara and I—the lady I just talked to on the phone—have already talked to a therapist just because we want to be healthy as we go through this.

What's really kind of sad out on the website is the people that are saying, "Nobody understands and they say that I need to get over it." I so feel for those people. And the way the rest of us are saying is, "Look, we're all here; we understand; talk to us."

Yes, yes.

But I just can't fathom someone not...I guess it's also their way of not accepting what happened.

And it's their way of just, men don't cry and just toughen up. We think it's okay to treat

each other that way.

Wives, there's one that's getting divorced. It's kind of fast. But he said, "I don't even want you around anymore." They're getting divorced. We all were like—

What do you mean?

Yes. And that's fast. This is only a month. So my thing is he must have wanted one, anyway. I hate to say that.

Well, no. That's what it sounds like.

And they've got a couple of kids and he's using this as an excuse. That poor girl.

Were both of them there?

I don't know. I'm not sure because she just said that—she didn't really say. She may have said, but I missed that. She was just saying, here's what I'm going through. I'm like, oh my God, I can't imagine.

That goes beyond.

Well, thank you. No, I appreciate it.

Thank you so much.

[End of recorded interview]