

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEFANI EVANS

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This is Claytee White and Barbara Tabach. We are interviewing Stefani Evans. It is October first, 2017, and we're in the Oral History Research Center at UNLV.

Stefani, how are you today?

I think it's November 21st.

What did I say?

October first.

Yes, you're right. Thank you so much for that correction.

You're welcome.

That's the most difficult thing I do for the entire interview. Could you please pronounce and spell your name?

It's Stefani Evans, S-T-E-F-A-N-I; Evans, E-V-A-N-S.

Stefani, to just get started, talk just a little bit about how you got to Las Vegas. You can do your abbreviated version of that telling us the year that you arrived here.

My husband and I arrived here in 1980. We came here because he was finishing his fellowship in pediatric cardiology at Los Angeles Children's Hospital and Las Vegas was not quite large enough to support a full-time pediatric cardiologist at the time, but was expected to grow large enough to support one. Of course, that did pan out; we moved here. It did fully support him, so we moved here. We stayed and I got a job teaching. I was three months pregnant. So I taught until January twelfth, and on the morning of January 13th, I delivered a baby and that was that.

What are your feelings about this city? I want to know your feelings about it prior to October one and after October one, if there has been a change at all.

My feelings about the city I don't think really changed. I think what I saw on October first—well, it was October second that I saw it. It didn't surprise me what I saw; it delighted me, but it didn't

surprise me.

So fill that out. What do you mean? What did not surprise you?

I went to give blood on the morning of October second because I had heard about the shooting the night before. I got in line at seven o'clock because that's when United Blood Services opened. When I got there at seven o'clock, the line was way down the block. It turns out that they had opened at four in the morning; that they just opened and that people were there. They opened their doors in response to the shooting and that people came and they just started taking donations at four in the morning. People came and then they had a backlog starting then. So by seven o'clock in the morning when they would have normally opened, the line was out the door and down the block.

By the time I could sign in it was nine fifteen. They called your name by the time you signed in. By six o'clock in the evening, they were calling the names of people who had signed in at seven o'clock in the morning. So I had no idea when my name would have been called.

Getting back to that original question...

Right. So I was there all day. People were there all day. They were there in their pajamas because they expected to be there at an hour at the most. So nobody had sunscreen; nobody had hats; nobody had umbrellas. They were out in the sunshine all day long. People showed up with big tubes of sunscreen that they walked down the line and squirted handfuls of sunscreen so people could cover their faces and their necks and their heads. People passed out umbrellas. People passed out hats. People passed out blankets because it was cold in the morning. People passed out bottles of water. I've never seen so many bottles of water in my life. People passed out food, snacks. Restaurants passed out snacks. There was the weirdest variety of food I had ever seen. There were chicken fingers and hot dogs and pizza and sandwiches and health bars.

People made food and brought it from home. People went to restaurants and bought food on their own and brought it. Moms made lunches and brought it. Restaurants pulled up and parked in the parking lot. There was a pizza van there, I think. There was an AT&T truck. I think it was AT&T. It was pink and it had just come back from Houston because it had been there during the hurricane and it was a power source, so they were charging telephones. It was the most amazing display of giving. People were doing what they could.

There were two women that were in front of me in line that had been there all day with me that were from Cleveland, Ohio. They were staying at New York New York and because the whole Strip was blocked off, they had to walk all the way north to the next block to catch a cab before they could even get to the facility to give blood.

BARBARA: *Did they say why?*

They just had to. That's why we were all there, we just kind of had to; we were just drawn there.

Tell me how you feel about this city, back to the original question.

I love my city. I love the people in it.

Describe where United Blood Services is located. I want a description of the building, where you were waiting. Those people from Cleveland, Ohio had to go there; I have no idea where it is.

They didn't, either. They just asked the taxi driver to take them. United Blood Services is on Charleston, on West Charleston. There's four of them, I think, around the city, and that one is on West Charleston. It's across from Hush Puppy. I don't know what the cross street is.

It's near Decatur or—I think it's beyond Rainbow.

Yes, it's west of Rainbow. The cross street is a small cross street.

Is it a standalone building?

Yes, free-standing building and it's got its own parking lot, which was packed.

Describe the parking lot and the building and where the line was.

When I got there the parking lot was pretty full, but I found a spot. The doorway of the building is on the west side of the building. The front of the building along Charleston is just totally blank. So on the west side of the building is the doorway. The line went out the door, totally along that west wall stretching east back to the corner, and I was on the corner; that's where the line stopped. Then there's a driveway into the parking lot and then there's more sidewalk, but the line didn't go back that far.

Not yet.

Not yet. Later in the day the line bent inside the parking lot where that corner was, where I was. It went inside the parking lot, made like a horseshoe inside the parking lot all the way in, all the way back out to Charleston. Then it continued going east. Then there was a cul-de-sac. It went all the way inside the cul-de-sac, made another horseshoe all the way around the inside of that cul-de-sac, came back out to Charleston, continued going east. Then it crossed the street. Then it continued going east for another block. It was just unbelievable.

At the second cul-de-sac that was a real cul-de-sac, not the—no, it was at the first cul-de-sac, the cul-de-sac that went into the parking lot; the UNLV nursing students had set up a water station there. They were in their red uniforms. They had taken an exam that morning and they said that after their exam the professor had told them that they were going to come out to United Blood Services and pass out water. Boy, I'm trying to remember everybody that was out there. There were so many people that were walking up and down the lines just helping people, so it's hard to separate the people that were in line to give blood and the people that were helping people give blood. A lot of the people that were helping people were actually also waiting to give

blood themselves.

Helping people do what?

Just helping people by picking up trash and collecting trash and distributing things. I walked up and down collecting trash and used bottles. It was something to do while I was waiting.

How did you keep the orderliness to the line?

People were patient. The line was orderly, period. Nobody was impatient.

So you could leave the line and go pick up stuff and then easily get back in line?

Oh, after you signed in, you weren't in line anymore. That line was just people waiting to sign in. After that you were kind of on your own.

So what did you do?

Once you signed in—

And you signed in at nine something.

Nine fifteen. After that you're kind of on your own.

And what happens?

You wait for them to call your name to give blood.

How do they call you?

They call you in order of how you signed in.

No, I mean, how did they contact you?

They call your name, so you can't venture too far.

They just announce it out loud to the parking lot.

Right. But they'll tell you when they're calling the names, like, right now we're calling the names for six fifteen, say. But remember, I left at six and they were just then calling the names of the people who had signed in at seven in the morning.

Right. So you left at six p.m.

Correct.

I think I have a feel for what's going on.

Right. So between nine fifteen in the morning and six p.m. we were all on our own, and that's when we were picking up trash or passing out water, whatever.

Tell me some of the things that you heard as you were in line that day, some of the stories people told about what they had witnessed.

Nobody that was there that I knew of had actually been at the concert. There was a young woman in line in front of me when we were waiting to sign in—this was at about eight fifteen, maybe—who had gotten a call and said, "Oh, I have to go to work." Some of us said, "Oh, where do you work?" And she said, "Oh, I'm..." I think she was an MA student in psychology. They had a clinic that they were staffing and she had to go be part of that clinic for people who had been at the concert.

She was going to do some trauma counseling?

Yes. She didn't say where it was. So they were pulling in their students. It was sort of an all-hands-on-deck kind of thing.

You told us about the people from Cleveland. Who else did you talk to that day and what did they tell you about their experiences?

I talked to so many people, but I can't remember specifics. A lot of it was chitchat. There was a young woman whose kids went to the Hebrew Academy, Nathan Adelson.

Oh, Sheldon, the Adelson Campus.

Yes. Actually, her daughter was dropped off to be with her. Somebody came and dropped her daughter off at United Blood Services. It was her daughter and her friend, actually. There were a

couple of kids dropped off to be with their moms or that mom. That was in the afternoon.

And people stayed.

Oh, people stayed. They just really wanted to give blood. People didn't leave. Nobody was dismayed by how long it took. That was kind of good news. The blood supply was so low because of the three hurricanes. There had been Harvey and...H,I...Irma and then Maria.

What happened to J?

There was Juan and there was Kira—there was another one, Katia, I think, or something like that. It was in the Caribbean. And then Maria. There were the three really big hurricanes and then this, and the blood supply was just really low. Blood only keeps for, I think, five days, they said.

I couldn't believe that. I thought they took it apart and there would be some solid part. I don't know what I thought.

I was on a panel after this and there was a person who complained that United Blood Services should do better. It took all I could do not to just curse her out, but I didn't. So what would you say that if United Blood Services needed to make some improvements, what would those be?

Wow. I can't imagine. Maybe more chairs, more staff, but I think that's money. I can't imagine. They got there at four in the morning. I don't know what else they could have done. So Crystal, the supervisor—and I'm on a first-name basis with her for a reason—

We'll ask you that later.

Okay, but she...I just can't say enough about them. They were unruffled. They handled such a volume of people without a break, without...I don't know. I don't know what else they could have done except have more chairs and more staff.

This was probably a once-in-a-year, once-in-a-five-year rush to give blood.

I'd be shocked if they'd ever experienced anything like that and I don't know how long they've been in existence.

Living in a city where October one has happened, what are your feelings, pro or con, about guns and has it changed?

My feelings about guns have not changed.

Could you tell me?

I think that gun ownership is not a right; it should be a privilege and it should be regulated. I do not think that someone should be able to carry an arsenal into a hotel.

How are you going to stop me from carrying my ten extra bags into a hotel?

Well, first of all, I don't think you should be able to purchase twenty or thirty guns and be able to turn them into automatic weapons.

So when I said that to a person I interviewed the other day, when I asked that same question, he said, "I've been back and forth over this the entire time." He said, "So I got a call from one of my friends." Because he had posted his thoughts on Facebook, on this private Facebook that some of the survivors have. He got communications from a rancher friend of his in Texas and the friend said, "I have wild boars attacking my cattle." He said, "I have to have a high-powered rifle. I have to have high-powered rifles to protect my cattle." He said, "The more boars that I can shoot, they'll stay away. During that little period of time, the boars will stay away." He said, "So I have to have automatic weapons."

What would you say?

Does he need to shoot wild boars from the thirty-second floor of Mandalay Bay?

But he needs guns.

He doesn't need twenty or thirty of them and he doesn't need them in Las Vegas at the Mandalay

Bay. There's always going to be exceptions. I don't think that it would be right to take away his ability to make a living. There are always going to be exceptions.

One of the things that a lot of people struggled with is that we don't know why. We don't know why this man did it. Does that matter to you, and why? How do you feel about that?

I didn't lose anybody in that shooting. It doesn't matter to me, but I'm not sure my opinion matters because I didn't lose anybody. I think if I lost someone or if I was injured in that shooting, I think my opinion might be different. But as of now I don't really care what his motive was. I don't care about him. The only thing I care about him is that he did something evil and he hurt a lot of people and he caused a lot of trauma. He changed the way people see our city. He changed the way people view outdoor concerts. He changed the way people view public gatherings. He changed the way people feel in crowds.

How do you feel about outdoor concerts at this point?

I don't know. I don't know that I've changed my opinion of them. I suppose I won't know until I try to go to one.

Can you imagine yourself walking into a big event the next time, how it might change your attitude, your feeling of entering that place?

If I go to a big event that's next to a high-rise hotel, I might think twice, yes. But, again, I don't know until I do it. Then again, I might go and I might look up and I might feel like flipping off the thirty-second floor and keep on going. I don't know. I just don't know.

Outline how you learned about it and what was happening at the time you learned about it and those initial feelings.

I was getting ready to go to bed and I just thought before I went to bed that I'd check Twitter for local news; that's what I usually do, just to see what was happening locally. I saw Las Vegas was

trending on Twitter and that's not normal.

When you say Las Vegas was trending, put that in English.

What that means is that nationally that was one of the top ten things that people were Tweeting about, sending Tweets about, which is unusual. So I clicked on the hashtag, hashtag Las Vegas, and that's how I learned about it. So I found out as much about it as I could to that point, and I thought, *okay, I'm going to give blood in the morning.*

Did you turn the TV on or what did you do?

I turned the TV on and I kept looking at Twitter. Then they said that the best thing you could do is go give blood. I looked up the address for United Blood Services and found out they opened at seven. Caveat, under normal circumstances. Figured I'd go over in the morning and then go to work after that. The first part of the sentence worked out okay; I got there at seven. I never made it to work.

What happened to you that you never gave blood?

Well, I never gave blood, either.

After waiting all day.

At about five o'clock—I can't remember exactly what time this happened. They have a sidewalk outside that leads to the parking lot and it's like most sidewalks at most public facilities that is handicap accessible and it's a ramp that leads down to the parking lot, but where it breaks from the regular sidewalk there's no demarcation. So there's a curb—there's a regular sidewalk and then there's another section of the sidewalk past that that breaks and goes down at an angle for the ramp. Well, I was sitting back beyond it and all I could see was a wide sidewalk. I was going to go past that—and I can't even remember why I was going to go out to the parking lot, but out in the parking lot is where all this stuff was; that's where all the activity was. I was going to go

out there for some reason because the people I was sitting with back here—

Sitting where, outside or inside?

We were all outside. You couldn't sit inside because it was too crowded inside. The fire codes were—

You're sitting on what?

We were sitting on folding chairs and makeshift whatever, rocks; things like that, just waiting to get called, me and the ladies from Cleveland and the lady from the Adelson School who had her daughters with her and the friend and all these other people.

I walked out towards the parking lot and I tripped and I fell because I expected the sidewalk to be there and all of a sudden it wasn't; there was air, and I went down. My body weight landed on the curb that should have been sidewalk, but wasn't. So that corner of the curb, my shin landed right on that. It broke the skin and it started bleeding and blah, blah, blah. It hurt. It really hurt. But mostly, I was just really embarrassed. I looked around and, of course, everybody saw it and it was just very embarrassing.

Somebody went and got ice. And the Cleveland lady said, "Oh, you've got to put your leg up." She put my foot up in her lap, and somebody went and got ice, and so I sat there with my foot up in her lap and ice on my leg. Then we sat there and we were watching all these other people fall down that thing. Of course, we didn't notice it before. But after I fell down, we're watching all these other people trip over it. Nobody fell head over heels like I did, but we're watching all these people trip over themselves on that curb. After a while, and I think it might have been the lady with the daughters said, "Maybe you should go inside and show them your leg and tell them what happened so that maybe when they have some time they can do something about that because I bet you that people fall all over that thing all the time, but they're on their

way to their car and they just don't say anything." That made sense and I thought, *that's probably true.*

So I went inside and I thought, *oh, this is such a bad time*, but when you've got blood on your leg is the best time to make a statement like that. So I showed them my leg. Well, that was such a dumb thing to do because it triggered an accident report. They put me in a chair that they could have used for a blood donor, and they only had like eight chairs. This is at six o'clock.

In the evening.

In the evening. There I am using a chair that could be used for a blood donor, showing them my booboo on my leg. She's cleaning my booboo and taking my accident report. Then she said, "And now I have bad news. I can't take your blood because you have an open wound and it could have gotten bacteria in your blood." So I put my tail between my legs and I left.

But on my way out, I saw Senator Heller giving blood. I felt like walking over to him and saying, "Is this a good time to talk about gun control?" But I didn't. I was very well behaved and I just walked out. But I didn't thank him for giving blood, either, so there we are.

You have been in this city since 1980. Have you ever had reason to think about security as you and your husband and your friends go to restaurants and casinos and all kinds of places in this city? Have you ever had reason to think about security or lack thereof?

Not really. The only time I ever thought about it was if I was out late at night by myself, like shopping. Holiday shopping, I would valet park and I was always glad that we had that; but, otherwise, no, not really. That wasn't related to Las Vegas. That was just related to shopping.

Social media, going back to that, that's how you learned about the event. Did you follow the event, then, on social media afterwards? Did you use it while you were standing at the blood bank, for example?

No. That's really weird. I didn't, no.

Because you do Tweet a lot.

I do. That's a really good question, but I didn't and I wonder why.

Community.

Yes, the community I was with was more real and it was more immediate.

How did you keep up on the development of the story after you went back home?

News and social media, yes. I followed the hashtag Vegas Strong and I followed the hashtag Las Vegas Shooting.

What did that reveal? What kind of people were participating in those?

It was mostly people who were sending good wishes to Las Vegas. It was people in the community talking about what was going on in the community for the community. People talking about memorials that were going on, like at downtown, like at the Las Vegas sign. I noticed that a lot of the casinos started using the hashtag Vegas Strong, started using their signage to support the community, to support the first responders.

When I did an interview with YESCO, I showed them a photograph that I took of the MGM when I was stopped in traffic because the Strip was closed. I showed them the photograph I took at the MGM Grand, how they were using one of the YESCO signs for supporting the first responders and using the hashtag Vegas Strong. They liked that their sign was being used that way, to talk locally.

So now we are—what is it, seven weeks out?

Yes, seven.

Tell me what kind of thoughts you've had, feelings off and on over the seven weeks, and talk also about the feelings you had when you were in New York this past weekend.

After nine-one-one, a week after nine-one-one, exactly a week, I flew to Albany and I saw a monument to firefighters. It had been there for a long time. It was right on the mall at the government building in Albany. It had been there a long time. I couldn't really see the monument; it was covered in T-shirts from firefighters from all over the world. I remembered thinking even then, *this must be a thing for firefighters*. I didn't know what the tradition was, but I just assumed that it was something firefighters did for each other and I just thought it was a really cool thing that they did. Then I rented a car and I went down to the Hudson Valley and I was driving across the Mid-Hudson Bridge and I saw the biggest American flag I had ever seen in my life hanging from the Mid-Hudson Bridge and it was just hanging vertically down. It almost took my breath away. It was just—

Bigger than Terrible Herbst.

It was bigger than Terrible Herbst. And I felt part of that community—it was so weird—even though I had nothing to do with it, but it was New York being this big, big, huge community. Everyone that I met knew somebody who was touched by that awful tragedy.

This time, when we were in New York I wanted to say, we kind of get it; we hurt, too; and thank you for thinking of us, because we got so many well wishes from New York right after that. I wanted to wear a Vegas T-shirt in the airport. The pilot on the plane said something. He said, "To those of you from Las Vegas, we have your backs." It mattered. Our Uber driver said, "We're so sorry."

Did you attend any memorials? Did you go to the one at the sign or any of that?

No, because I was gone. When I got back everything was gone. I was at my mom's.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

Any other additional comments? Any other thoughts, feelings that you've experienced over this period that you want to share?

Did you ever give blood at all?

Not yet, no. No. But it's on my list for after Thanksgiving.

Okay, good. A trooper that you should give it.

Yes. Are you going back to the same location?

Oh, yes. Oh, and I do want to say...just props to United Blood Services. Three or four days later, Crystal called me to see how my leg was doing, like she didn't have enough on her mind. She called me to see how my leg was doing and when I was going to come in. She said, "Please don't come in yet; we're still inundated."

So you guys want to come in with me?

No, I can't give blood.

I can't give blood, either. My veins are too small.

Oh, weenies, both of you.

It has nothing to do with being a weenie, just small veins.

Thank you so much.

Anyway, Crystal at United Blood Services on West Charleston is something else and I can't say enough about her and her staff. So that's what I'd like to close with.

Thank you, Stefani.

Thank you.

[End of recorded interview]