

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH OSTUNIO

CLAYTEE D. WHITE

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This is Claytee White. I am in the Oral History Research Center today and I am with Joseph who is going to pronounce and spell his full name.

Joseph Ostunio; J-O-S-E-P-H, O-S-T-U-N-I-O.

Would you pronounce the last name again for me?

Ostunio.

Ostunio, okay, good. Tell me just a tiny bit about your family, some of your earliest memories here in Las Vegas.

My mom is first-generation Nevadan. She was born here in Las Vegas to my grandparents who emigrated here from Italy. My dad was born in Syracuse. His parents are also Italian. I don't know much about their history. My parents met here. My dad used to work in the industry, casino industry; he was a bartender. Now he's a clergy.

I think that's a great switch. Bartenders counsel people all the time. It sounds good to me.

Some of my first memories here...I loved growing up here. I really liked growing up here. We lived in the northwest before it was developed like it is now; it was still horse property for the most part.

Were you out by the Gilcrease Ranch, anyplace out there?

No, not that far out north. We were on Craig Road, Craig and Cimarron; those were our major cross streets. We lived in a little gated community called Tucson Trails. I had a great childhood. I grew up with two kids next door that were my age, which is rare. You don't often find that. One of them I'm still really close with. I still talk to him all the time. But everyone has kind of moved for the most part. But I loved growing up here. California was a tough transition when we first moved.

Why?

It's just a culture shock. People do things differently there. Schooling was tough. Schooling was very tough. I went to private school, though, all through high school and elementary and junior high, both out here and there. When I got there I was not prepared for high school, I do remember that. But just this town was more a family-oriented town in the nineties and I just remember that.

You were born which year?

Eighty-nine.

So you were going to California in the nineties. When did you decide to become a teacher?

I wanted to be a college professor and I thought it would be good to get experience teaching young kids.

And you're not through. You're getting ready to do what?

Law school. I'm getting ready to go to law school next coming fall.

What are you thinking about doing in law school, what area?

Ideally I'd like to try for civil rights law, but I know it's not probably going to happen just because you've got to pay bills after college. That would be the ultimate dream, to be a civil rights lawyer. I'll probably end up doing corporate law because it makes a lot of money.

Yes. And take some pro bono cases.

I'd love to do that on the side. That would be awesome.

I think that's smart. Tell me about you and country music.

I was not a country music fan until...in college I worked as a security guard for a company called CSC and I did Stagecoach one year. I was not a country music fan at all, but I was going to work, so it didn't matter. I ended up really loving it. One of the most crazy memories I have of the last night, we got bin Laden that night, or the president announced, so that was really cool.

Tell me what Stagecoach is.

Stagecoach is a country music festival in Southern California. It's in Indio, California, which is near Palm Springs.

It's one of those big festivals?

It's probably the biggest country music festival on the West Coast or near the West Coast, yes. I can't think of one that's bigger, but I don't really...

Outdoor?

It's outside. It's on the polo grounds. It's the same place they hold Coachella.

Tell me how you got involved in the Route 91 Festival.

That's a good question. It was my first year going. The lineup was really good and it wasn't too expensive. It was very affordable.

Tell me what that means for this kind of a festival.

Usually you pay like three hundred dollars or more.

For the three days?

For a three-day festival, yes. But this lineup was a little bit smaller than, say, Stagecoach, and it wasn't as long throughout the day. But still, it was really good bang for your buck, Route 91. It was a really good lineup for what we paid.

Good. Who did you go with?

I went with a friend; her name is Kristin Babik.

How did you feel and what were you thinking when you discovered that that sound was not fireworks?

It's hard to say because, even as we were fleeing, you weren't really a hundred percent sure that it was gunfire itself. When you hear continuous rounds like that, you know it would be automatic

gunfire, coming from an automatic weapon, so it's not really something used in a mass shooting and you could tell it wasn't coming from inside the venue.

Why? How?

Because you could tell it was coming from the Strip. I could hear it. I was very vigilant the whole entire time. I was staring at the Mandalay Bay. I knew where the sound was coming from. I was really reluctant to believe that it was gunfire because it was so continuous.

You're the only one that we've talked to thus far who knew immediately that it wasn't coming from within the venue.

I knew even when we were running away it wasn't coming from inside the venue. I was really surprised that the police didn't pick up on that. Yes, I was really surprised by that. I knew the area it was coming from. I was looking in the right general direction of where the shooter was on the tower. But, yes, to me personally it was very obvious, but I was very vigilant the whole time.

Tell me why. Start with the first day. Tell me why you were vigilant at this festival.

Well, I wasn't vigilant at the festival. I was vigilant when I heard the noise because I suspected it was gunfire, but I wasn't completely sold that it was because it was so continuous.

It just seemed to be unreal that someone could fire that fast?

Here's what the thing is. When you have an automatic weapon, it's very hard to aim something to inflict—even Marines, when they have M-16s, I want to say—they have three- to five-second bursts because it is very difficult to hold a weapon and aim it because there's recoil. Whoever thought that somebody was going to break windows and tripod mount guns? So that was kind of interesting. And it's very hard to get your hands on an automatic weapon. You don't really hear of a lot of mass shootings with automatic weapons, if any at all. Those are like alarms that were going off in my head, like, *oh, this probably isn't real*, kind of a thing. But I was very vigilant the

whole time.

What did you do? Did you start running immediately?

No, we stayed until after Jason Aldean left the stage, who was the singer, the artist.

When he left the stage, what did you do?

When he left the stage, we dropped to the ground for a second and then it stopped; for the first time there was a pause. At that moment my friend Kristin got shot.

How did you help her?

I offered to carry her out. She was hyperventilating and she kept complaining that something was wrong or that she thought she had been hit, and I checked her body and I couldn't find anything. At some point—and her and I have different accounts of this, whether this happened inside the venue or outside the venue—at some point she started coughing up blood. I believe that's actually when I checked her body—yes, that's when I checked her body and I couldn't find anything. I knew when she was coughing up blood that she had obviously been shot because you either have cholera or...I forget that other...or you have a collapsed lung and that can only really be caused by a gunshot. Then I checked her body and then I couldn't find anything. I didn't tell her that she had been hit on purpose because I knew if I did I knew that we weren't going to get where we needed to go. We had been hanging out at a hotel, which was very close, within walking distance, a few days before. Based on where I knew the gunfire was coming from, because at this point I knew it was gunfire, I knew we would be safe at this hotel.

So which one?

We went to the Desert Rose. It's right behind Hooters.

How did you get to Desert Rose from the venue?

We walked. We hopped a fence to get out of the venue. The fence was on the right side of the

Nashville stage.

Facing the main stage, the fence is on your left.

Facing the main stage, yes, it's back left, audience left.

Okay, good. The Nashville stage was where the amateurs, sort of, were performing?

Yes.

And so you jumped the fence.

We jumped the fence. We had help. She had help. They pushed me over the fence first before I could even help her over, but she was pushed over right away.

Good. And then you ran.

We speed walked because she couldn't run.

Was that scary for her?

I think it was very scary for her. I had to kind of coach her the whole way there. She wouldn't let me care her and she was very reluctant to let me check her body for wounds at first. When we got to where we were going, she just finally broke down and was like, "I'm hurt, I'm hurt, I'm hurt." I'm like, "All right, well, we're going to check you again." And we did and we found it and it was in her upper back, right side.

How did you get her to the hospital?

Initially we put her in the back of a—not in the cab of a pickup truck, but in the backseat. It was a four-door truck. We put her in the back. You've got to realize this all went down in probably about ten minutes, maybe less. The Strip was already closed, as far as I—I remember we were stuck. Tropicana was closed.

Already?

Already. There was police there by the time we hopped the fence. I was impressed. The police

were literally there right after we had jumped the fence. We probably could have gone up Tropicana the opposite way towards UNLV, but there was an ambulance parked on the side of Tropicana going west and I jumped out and I asked them if they could take her and they took her.

Good. Which hospital?

I told them to take her to UMC.

Was there a reason for UMC?

Yes, it's the city hospital level one trauma center. There was also—I can't forget to mention—Dani Rosenthal, who is an off-duty...Sorry.

No. Please don't apologize.

Dani Rosenthal, who was an off-duty paramedic, helped us when we got to Desert Rose. She was in the ambulance the whole way.

So Dani was in the ambulance with you?

Yes.

And Dani is a woman?

Dani, yes.

What happened when you got to UMC? Were you one of the first?

Yes, we were one of the first. We got out really quick. We were lucky that ambulance was there. She wasn't bleeding out. Kristin was really lucky. Her wound wasn't bleeding out. In fact, Dani stopped us. We were going to kind of cauterize her wound, but she wasn't bleeding out, so there was no need to do that and she stopped us. But, yes, we were one of the first ones there. Once we got there, the hospital was basically barricaded. They put us in a waiting area outside, and I didn't last very long there because I was a mess and I knew we weren't going to get into the hospital that night even though I found out later that we could, but I tried to go back multiple

times and they would not let me into the emergency room.

But they took her into the emergency room.

Yes.

But everybody else had to stay outside.

Everybody else had to stay outside. The police officers didn't know this, but you could actually get into UMC to go to the rooms. You just couldn't go into the emergency room. But the hospital was completely surrounded by police all night. I went back multiple times to try and get in and I could not. I think I got in at like ten a.m.

When you say "surrounded by police," describe it to me.

There were literally police cars surrounding the entire hospital. At one point I saw riot gear on police as they were posted.

Did you try to imagine what the thinking was for them to have on riot gear over there on Charleston?

No. I know that in situations like this police have to show a presence because we knew people who were in the San Bernardino shooting. My dad actually worked in Lake Arrowhead. When that happened—what year was that? I remember I was talking to some experts about it and they talked about how right after that shooting there were SWAT officers hanging on—I don't know if you've ever seen them hanging onto the SWAT truck before. I've actually seen it here.

Oh, yes.

They go and they drive around the neighborhoods just to show a police presence in order to repel people from...I don't know if it's a copycat. I don't know the exact thinking about it. But, no, it didn't surprise me at all. That didn't surprise me and I didn't feel in danger at all at the hospital.

Okay, good. Take me back to Friday night. How did you go about getting the tickets? How

were ticketed purchased?

I bought two wristbands. I don't remember when I bought them. I think I bought them when the lineup came out and I saw the price. I'm like, *oh, that's easy.*

When you say the Desert Rose, did you actually stay there or just kind of hang out there?

No, we just had friends staying there.

What was Friday night like?

Friday night was fun. I'm trying to think. Eric Church. We left a little early and we went to the Las Vegas sign to take pictures for Kristin because she had never done that before. She lived here previously. She interned in the DA's Office. She's a third-year law student at the University of Florida. Thursday (sic) night was just fun. I don't remember all who played that night, but I know it was Eric Church's night and Eric Church was amazing. I think Brothers Osborne might have played there that night. Did Mandolin play the first night? Mandolin did play the first night. Mandolin was on the Nashville stage the first night and that's where we met our group of friends who were staying at Desert Rose.

Okay, good. You didn't know these friends before?

No.

Tell me where in the crowd you were. Did you stay in the same place every night?

Kind of generally we were in the same area, which was right by the right speaker in the back, near the bar. The bar was close to us. There's a long side bar. And then to the back of us, they had some luxury suites or boxes.

You were not on the Mandalay Bay side.

No, we were on the Mandalay Bay side. There's two sets of luxury boxes. There was one...I wouldn't say it was directly behind us. It was kind of curved. It was kind of near the bench—

there's two bench areas; there's one directly in the back and then there's one kind of on the side.

What was the atmosphere like Friday night?

Everyone had gotten off work. Everyone was a little tired. But we had a great time. It was a great weekend.

Then Saturday night, the same thing, you went early to hang out?

Saturday night, she wanted to get there early because I think Lanco was playing. I'm not a hundred percent sure. I don't remember the schedule very well. Who played that night? Sam Hunt, I want to say, played Saturday night. I had fun Saturday. I did have fun. I unexpectedly had fun. I'm not a big Sam Hunt fan and the lineup was pretty weak that day compared to Friday and Sunday. Friday and Sunday were amazing days. Saturday I had a great time, too, yes.

Dancing? Any dancing?

Not that I remember. We might have two-stepped a little bit. I don't remember. I think Kristin did. They had a silent two-step upstairs from one of the bars.

A silent two step, what is that?

You wear headphones and you...At some music festivals they're called silent discos.

Oh, that's unusual.

Yes. But they had like a silent country dance thing.

Do you do a lot of country dancing here?

I go two-step sometimes at Stoney's.

When you realized it was an automatic rifle...I want to know your ideas about guns prior, during and now.

My position on guns really hasn't changed. I don't think you should ever be able to outgun law enforcement. Maybe my position has changed a little bit. Here's the thing. I haven't really

thought this out yet. I've always been pretty pro-gun to a certain extent. You don't need to own a machine gun, and certain guns I don't think you should be able to own. You shouldn't be able to outgun law enforcement. I don't think owning an AR, whatever, an M-16 or an AR like he had, I don't think getting that would do anything. It's just a standard rifle.

Do I think the upgrades that he had on that gun should be illegal? Absolutely. I could not believe that you could put an illegal upgrade onto a gun and make it an automatic weapon, and I can't believe police officers aren't throwing a fit about it. I think there are limits to the Second Amendment now because I've thought about it more. I think I've thought about it more in detail now. When our founding fathers wrote the Constitution, it was basically a barrel and musket, but I don't think you can take away that right.

The mental health thing is huge. I don't think people with mental health issues should be able to buy guns. What are the limits to that? I don't know. That's a tough one.

Gun control can work. I think there's a lot of people that like to say that gun control doesn't work. It can work. It just will take time. Gun violence would probably get worse if we had gun control tomorrow, but eventually it would taper off. We don't have a lot of the black market or black market sales of guns like we did in the nineties; that's not as big of an issue as it used to be. So I go back and forth. I'm a poli-sci major and I'm very analytical. I went to UC San Diego. So I've thought about that a little bit. If we had gun control, would he have been able to...? Because he bought his guns. He bought them legally.

That's correct.

You think about that. I don't necessarily think that gun needs to be banned, though. It's a rifle. It's basically a standard rifle. If someone puts upgrades on it to make it a machine gun, that's a whole other issue. So, yes, that's all I got about it.

Good. How do you feel right now about attending other outdoor festivals?

I have been forcing myself to go to shows since after the first week. I went to a comedy show at the Colosseum on that Sunday.

On the next Sunday?

Yes. That was hard. I'm going to Stagecoach in spring. Near high buildings, it's going to be really hard. I've been staying away from EDM festivals; I was supposed to go to one downtown and I didn't go.

Tell me why.

Track music has like a beating sound to it, so there's that. I've been forcing myself to go. I went to several concerts. I went to the Night of Healing at Orleans, but those aren't outdoors. I have not been to an outdoor concert yet. I haven't thought about it.

But Stagecoach will be the first?

No. I go to shows all the time, so I can't say that.

Right. But outdoor?

I might go to something before.

Oh, I see.

Yes, I just don't know. I'm right to think, have I gone to an outdoor show? I've gone to a lot of indoor shows. Yes, near tall buildings, it will be hard. I'm going to really think if I'm going to go to Life is Beautiful this year. So that will be a decision that I have to make at some point. That lineup will probably come out in the next day or two. I haven't really thought about it. That's a good question.

What about Kris?

Kristin?

Kristin.

Kristin is really dealing with the emotional part pretty hard right now. I begged her to go to therapy the first week and she wouldn't do it. She really wanted to get somebody when she got home. I kept telling her, "Just do it now." I don't know if that's the reason why she's dealing with it so hard. She has lingering injuries. She got out of the hospital pretty fast here because she was healing well. Unfortunately that hasn't happened post-hospital. She just had to go in for surgery again last week or the week before. They had to re-inflate her lung and they had to put a titanium plate in her ribs because her ribs weren't healing. She's not doing too good.

I'm sorry to hear that.

It's okay. I think in the long run she'll be fine, but she's kind of lagging right now, her body is at least.

Have you had people come up to you in any capacity, any location that has suggested therapy of any kind?

To me?

To you and Kristin.

I'm pretty sure Kristin is in—she's told me she's in therapy in Florida right now. I have been in therapy since the first appointment I've gotten and I talked to somebody at the hospital and that really helped. I called—one of my best friends' dad is a licensed psychologist, Ph.D. in San Diego. He gave me some really good...He walked me through everything. That really helped, yes. Then I was going to someone. She was unlicensed, but she has her degree and she's getting her hours. I don't know what happened there. I'm still kind of confused. I just don't think she took good notes. I think that caught up with her. Maybe because I have a good memory. It was awkward. I'm going to see somebody finally licensed. I went to intake already. I think I'm

meeting with someone the sixth or eighth of January. That was as soon as they could get me in.

How are the holidays for you, getting ready for Christmas and New Year's and all of that?

How are you coping with all of that?

So I just took the LSAT. I took the LSAT in December. After about four weeks, I want to say, I was able to kind of—I don't know if it was four weeks. I'd have to really sit down and look at a calendar and think about it. I had to force myself to get back into study mode and that took a few weeks after the event. I want to say it might have taken two or three weeks. But after, when I got back into study mode, I've been able to really block a lot of this out and I haven't really been thinking of it. This is probably the most I've thought about it in a while just because. I haven't been going to therapy because I got busy doing LSAT tutoring. I missed an appointment with my therapist. Then when I went in, she basically said it was over. She was volunteering, though, so she has every right to do that.

Do you think it helps to talk about it?

I do think it helps to talk about it. I did a lot of news interviews afterwards because I knew it would be good. I've really been hard on myself and pushed myself to do things that I see a lot of people haven't done and I feel like it's catching up with them. But, at the same time, because I blocked a lot of this out for a few weeks or a month and a half or two months, I feel like I still need to go through some of the healing process and I feel like I kind of postponed it a little bit. But I'm in a lot healthier place than most people are, I feel like.

Do you have any guilt?

I'm not there yet. No, I haven't. I don't think I've processed a lot of this still. I think I put that on hold right away. I do feel a little bit guilty. I did want to go back and Dani kind of talked me out of it. Dani is like, "No, you have to go to the hospital with her."

I think that was a great idea, yes.

I just wish I could have gone back. But I don't feel guilty being alive, no.

Great. Do you think this changed the way the world sees Las Vegas, the way the country...?

I'm sure it does to a certain extent. I've talked with a lot of people about it and most of them say it isn't going to stop them from coming here, but they are going to be cautious. I just had some friends from San Diego here and they were just very cautious while they were here. I'm sure it does. I'm sure, absolutely.

Do you think that the way this city responded had anything to do with the way people feel?

I don't know because I didn't really watch the news very much during those weeks. I hope they covered those things that I saw. I don't think any of us expected that response. It was amazing.

Yes, it was. It was simply wonderful.

Yes, it was, especially being at the hospital for a week and seeing endless cars, lines of cars just dropping off stuff to donate. Even when I went to some of my interviews, people would just pull up in pickup trucks or SUVs and just drop water and food off to the reporters. I've never seen anything like it in my life here in Vegas. It was amazing.

Yes, I agree. Tell me about your reason for bringing action against the MGM.

I'd like answers. I think we all would. Can you pause that for a second?

[Pause in recording]

You were born here and you left and came back.

Yes.

What are your feelings about Las Vegas as a city; as a home; as a place to raise your kids one day, what do you think?

This city has changed a lot since I was a kid. It's not the family oriented town that I grew up in. I

don't know. I have mixed feelings.

Why did you move back?

Work. It was getting a little expensive to live in California.

That's true. What did this whole experience teach you about yourself?

That I could handle situations like that very well, very, very well. That was a huge surprise. I don't think I would change anything that I did. I think I acted...Almost every decision I made almost was perfect. That's very cool to think of that and to be aware of that.

That's great. Do you still talk to Kristin often?

Yes, I do. She's coming in January. She's got an interview in the DA's Office.

Oh, that's wonderful. Great. Even after what has happened, she would live here?

Oh, yes. Yes, she probably will. She really likes it here.

Great. Investigators are trying to, at one time, discover why. What are your thoughts about Paddock?

I don't have many thoughts about him. Motive would be reassuring I feel like to a lot of people. It even might be a little reassuring to me. I just know there's crazy people in the world and there are evil people in the world and sometimes there's really no explanation for it. It's life.

I have covered most of the questions that we've put down for attendees. Describe to me what was going on around you as you were leaving, running out, jumping the fence. What was happening around you?

People were basically running. There was screaming. After that initial stop, when we finally got up and started running, it started again, the noise, the gunfire, and it didn't stop. I don't remember it stopping. So it just went on and on and on.

And people were just screaming and running during the entire time?

Yes.

As you ran towards the Desert Rose, were there other people running with you, the same direction?

There were, not very many. I feel like most of the people went out the main entrances. I feel like we made a really good call by not doing that because they were facing Mandalay Bay and I knew that's where the gunfire was coming from.

Could you see any blasts from the gun? Is that why you knew where it was coming from?

No, you could not see that. I had an argument with a Secret Service agent about this and he contended that, "I've seen video; you can see the flash." You could not see the flash from the guns. He had flash suppressors on his guns, so there was no—yes, there was no seeing the guns. That's why I could not find where that noise was coming from because I looked for it for...I mean, I was not watching the music for the most part. I was watching the Mandalay Bay, looking for a flash, because that is your automatic instinct when you hear that sound whether it's a firework—I guess you don't see a flash when a car backfires, but a car doesn't backfire that many times.

You were surprised that police officers were there. Were they already there for security purposes, anyway?

No. These officers were pulling up as we had hopped the fence.

How can we explain that? How is that possible?

Well, the nine-one-one—I don't know. There were police officers there already at the venue, yes, but these officers that we saw, when we had hopped the fence, were pulling up.

Since that time, your dealings with police officers and all kinds of security people—

I used to be a security guard.

That's right. Are you impressed? Are you satisfied with the response? Tell me how you feel about that.

I am completely satisfied with the response. I do wish Metro was still briefing us every day—not every day, but it would be nice to have a briefing every once in a while. The problem is, is that we're not getting answers, and I don't really blame Metro for that. I won't get more into that than what I've already said, but, yes.

This is me just pontificating, but I think they came out with so much information so rapidly and had to change some of it that they just decided to step back.

That's understandable. But a press conference once a month wouldn't be a bad idea, either. I understand why he stopped doing it, especially in this town where conspiracy theories grow so fast and are so crazy to begin with. I get it. I understand. I'm not complaining or I'm not upset, like I said.

Tell me about the people that you have met since that time. You've had several dinners, one at the convention center in Henderson.

I didn't go to that. I just got plugged in with that group. Oh, oh, because that's how we met each other, yes. I have just gotten plugged in with that group. I went to a barbeque and I didn't really speak to anybody while I was there, and it wasn't because I was being shy or anything, I just felt like people were there with their friends and families who I feel like they went to the festival with and I really just didn't want to bother anybody and I didn't see anybody that I recognized online. So I would like to get more plugged in with that group and I haven't done that yet.

I am hosting an event; we are volunteering at the Magical Forest at Opportunity Village on Friday night. I'm hoping we get a decent turnout. I don't know. We'll see.

Among the group?

Yes.

What are you hosting? What are you planning?

We're just volunteering at the Magical Forest. Have you ever been?

No, I haven't. I know all about it, the decorations and all of that. Is that the Christmas decorations?

Yes. They need volunteers for the rides, the little rides they have, for like the food and stuff like that.

My church even volunteered at one point.

It's really cool and I really like what they do with intellectual disabilities.

Yes, me too. A lot of people that I've spoken to have talked about giving back.

Yes.

Tell me about that feeling. What is going on?

Like I said, I'm new to the group. I know that they have this pay-it-forward thing going, and I need to talk with somebody and get more information about it because I'd love to be a part of it.

One of the things I thought about when they were doing this was to do like the event that I'm planning, so there's that.

This is your way of paying it forward?

It is, but this is not part—their pay-it-forward program is very interesting. They have it all written out, all the information. It's really cool. I know very little about it. I've just seen pictures and some of the deeds they've been doing. But, yes, I always try to give back to the community. I lived in downtown at one point because I really wanted to part of the resurgence of downtown. Now I live in Henderson. I moved to the nice suburbs.

Tell me about living downtown.

I really enjoyed living downtown. It's been really cool to see the transformation. It's busy there now year round, I'd say.

Oh, yes. I love the restaurants down there.

Yes, the food is great and I'm a big food guy. It's just sad because a lot of these restaurants have been turning over. There was a great gumbo shop and I see you might be—oh, you didn't know that.

You're not talking about—

Zydeco.

No, I don't know about that one. I thought you were talking about Chow. It turned over.

Chow turned over? Well, that doesn't surprise me.

Well, because of the location, so they're using it now for their catering kitchen.

Oh, is she catering for Eat? My apartment is right above her first restaurant.

Oh, really? So you were above Eat.

I live right above it, yes. I live on the second floor of that building. Oh, great, now everyone knows where I live. No, it's fine. Yes, I knew she had opened Chow. I had never gone to eat, though. Was it good?

Oh, delicious. Oh, yes.

I should have gone to eat there. It was in a horrible place, though, and I never wanted to walk there.

But I like going to the little bookstore right beside it.

Yes, I know about that.

I know what you mean by the horrible place because of the old motel beside of it.

Yes. He's gated that up now; Tony has gated that up. You really can't access it when it's not Life

is Beautiful anymore. There's just a lot of homeless around there. There's a really cool bar—

Public Us?

I love Public Us, the coffee shop, ah. That's a little bit of California for me.

That's right down the street. I'm just hoping that little area really comes alive.

Well, Public Us isn't going anywhere; that place is packed all the time. Then that bar, Atomic Liquor is really cool, which is kind of in between the two.

Yes. And the new apartment building that's going up.

It's taking them forever to build that. Tony owns that.

Oh, I didn't know he owned that.

Yes. One of the reasons he left town was because he got frustrated with the downtown project and how long it was taking him to build that. He wants to build multiple apartment complexes I think on the vacant land where the motels are.

Oh, good.

Yes. I've thought about maybe—I Airbnb my place in downtown. I might move over units. It's been really cool to see the transformation of downtown.

I agree.

The food is so good. There's a po'boy shop called Zydeco right next to—what was that? It's called Seventh and Carson now, but there was—

Oh, yes, VegeNation.

It's right next to VegeNation. So the guy who owns it, he's from Southwest Louisiana. He now works at VegeNation; he's there supervising.

The one that was on the corner was called?

Zydeco.

So I went in there and it closed because I was going to go down—I had someone meet me there.

Best gumbo.

I didn't order the gumbo.

He makes the best gumbo. Well, it's closed.

But now it's open; it's Seventh and Carson?

No. What restaurant was that? Tommy's? No. It was Glutton. It was Glutton.

Glutton. That's right, yes.

Glutton closed the first of the year last year, right? Yes, it closed just randomly.

I know it closed.

It may have two years ago. Time flies.

It does.

But Zydeco became a Mediterranean shop.

So Glutton...

Glutton and then Zydeco was at the end of that building.

Oh, it's at the other end. I know where you're talking about.

Yes, by the barbershop.

I never tried that place.

Best bowl of gumbo I've ever had, even in Louisiana.

I'm so sorry I missed that because I went to Carson Kitchen, all of them in that area.

Oh, Carson Kitchen is great. There's a lot of good food down there. I haven't tried that Indian place down there yet, but I've been meaning to. I don't go down there very much anymore.

If you live in Henderson now, it makes it difficult.

And the food is really good in Henderson, too.

That's true. You've got lots of good places.

It's still hard, though, to find a bowl of gumbo in this town.

Especially that.

That kind of food, yes.

For gumbo, I eat it at Lola's .

I don't want shrimp in my gumbo every time, though. I like a chicken and sausage gumbo. I don't mind Lola's. It's a little too New Orleans' style for me. I like more of a brothy Southwestern Louisiana. I like food, if you can't figure that out.

Okay, great. These are all the questions I had.

Sorry.

No, no, no, this is great. These were the questions I had. Can you think of anything else that if you could help somebody in the next place, what would you tell them?

Honestly, one of the things I had to do with Kristin was to kind of coach her to keep her moving, to keep her...Because she was freaking out. She knew she was hurt. I didn't think she was hurt at first until she started coughing up blood. I just thought she was having a panic attack. I think for everyone there, I think being calm, having the presence of mind to be calm and to know how to react in a situation like that and what to do. I think if people remain calm, their instincts will naturally kick in. Hopefully they're the right instincts. I think staying calm is really the most important thing you can do and to just keep moving and to not stop. If you're going to go back, be very careful and know what can happen.

I appreciate that so much. Thank you.

You're very welcome.

[End of recorded interview]