

AN INTERVIEW WITH AMBER DISKIN

BARBARA TABACH

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REMEMBERING 1 OCTOBER

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV LIBRARIES

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVE

PREFACE

Amber Diskin is a wife and mother of two teenage sons. An avid music concert fan, being at the Route 91 music festival was a given. She attended with four other girlfriends. The evening of October 1, they were settled into their lawn chairs as Jason Aldean took the stage.

A concealed weapon carrier herself, Amber is familiar with the sound of gun fire. She talks about reacting to the sounds that punctured that night and of running across the venue, through food trucks area and to an exit near the medic tent and onto Giles Street.

She recalls attempts to call her family and that her first contact was with her youngest son's cell phone. She includes a description of how her experience affected him and how her healing process has progressed in the three months after. For her sons, understanding the tragedy also included coming to terms with the death of their coach, Officer Charles Hartfield.

Amber was among the throngs of people who headed toward Hooters. Separated from her companions, she latched onto a couple, kind strangers, in a truck, who offered to drive her to her Henderson home.

She is native of southern Nevada and talks about Las Vegas and law enforcement with great pride.

Amber is among the survivors who wrote thank you notes and distributed 1000 gift baskets to first responders, a gesture organized by a Colorado attendee.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV



Remembering 1 October

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Today we decided is January fifth—

We did, yes.

—2018 . This is Barbara Tabach, sitting in my office at UNLV Lied Libraries and I'm sitting with...You want to introduce yourself?

Amber Diskin. You want me to spell it, too?

Yes, please.

A-M-B-E-R. D-I-S-K-I-N.

Wonderful. Amber, how long is you lived in Las Vegas?

I was born in Boulder City and grew up in Henderson, so thirty—almost—four years, on the twenty-eighth.

You are a born and raised Las Vegan. That's really cool. What was it like to grow up in Las Vegas or Boulder City?

Well, Henderson. I love Henderson. I love the town. For me it was great. I remember when PEPCON blew up. I was four, I think. I don't know. I just think it was great.

Have you ever lived anywhere else?

No other state. I've lived in Las Vegas for a short period of time, North Las Vegas for a short period of time, and now I'm back in Henderson. When we moved—because my husband is from the Bay Area, I actually sold him his house and then eventually the relationship happened. I eventually moved in and it was in North Las Vegas. So fast forward five years and I randomly found a house in Henderson while showing a client. She didn't want to buy it, and so she was okay with me buying it. When we moved in I was just so happy to be back home. My husband was like, "Wow, I didn't real realize how much it meant to you to be back in Henderson." I know it was only like a twentysomething mile difference, but for some reason it was just great.

I live in Henderson. I love it, too. So I think that's great. You are in real estate.

Yes.

How long have you been doing that?

This will be fifteen years. I got my license when I was nineteen.

Wow. You knew exactly what you wanted to do at a very young age?

Sort of, yes. I started college, got my license, was going to continue and get a degree in something in finance because numbers is my thing. Then I started doing real estate, so I didn't finish college. But luckily, I didn't need that backup plan because it's worked out well for me, so I'm grateful for that.

Very cool. Talk about your love of country music since we're coming together to do the Remembering 1 October project. Tell me about how that is rooted in you, I guess.

Actually growing up, my mom loved country and I loved it as a child, but then as I got older and a bratty teenager, I kind of listened to different types of music and didn't like country anymore because it wasn't cool when I was a teenager. Actually, funny enough, what got me into it was Carrie Underwood winning American Idol, hearing her, and that's kind of what got me back into country music. Ever since then it's just been like that's kind of—my husband makes fun of me. He's like, "Does your car play anything else but country?" I'm like, "Nope."

Is he a country music lover?

No. He likes all types of music. He likes certain country music, not really the older country music, more of the newer. I like both actually. We just recently went to Reba and Brooks and Dunn and it was amazing and he loved it. He loves Reba, too.

Kind of going off the country music thing, I started going to concerts when I was young. They weren't country at the time. They were more like rap. But I love going to concerts. My

parents, their vice, I guess you can call it, was gambling, so I don't like gambling. I kind of hate it. So that was one thing where I'm like, I don't gamble; I don't go to the bar and get drunk; my vice is going to concerts and that's what I like doing. I've been to many and I continue to go even after the first. I even went on a cruise to see Carrie Underwood.

That's remarkable. That's good. That's one of the questions that we often ask people is, are you going to go to more concerts? You just said yes right away, you were going to continue that.

Oh, yes. I love real estate and doing what I do, which I'm grateful I get to do that for a career. There's times it's tough, but I love it. It's like that that; I'm not going to let anyone or anything ruin that; I'm not going to let it put me into a hole.

Good for you.

I'm stubborn.

Have you always gone to the Route 91 Festival?

I went every year except one year I didn't go because I was on a cruise. The girls I go with were there and unfortunately I didn't get to go that year. I don't know if this was their third or fourth year, so I've either been two or three times.

Who did you go with? You don't have to give me their names, but describe the group that you were with.

Oh, I don't mind. Actually, the girls I usually go with, my friends Michelle and Nicole. My friend Nicole, she's also a native. We've known each other since kindergarten. She's one of the go-to girls if we find a concert we want to go to. It's kind of the three of us that will group text, "Hey, you want to go to this concert?" Whatever. She unfortunately had to sell her wristband because she had a seizure and she knew it was going to put her down for the weekend. She

unfortunately couldn't go, so she had sold her wristband to someone else. My friend Ashley, she used to live here. She moved up north, but she already had the weekend planned to come down. Her parents are still here. So the weekend was planned to come down. So my friend Michelle and Ashley, kind of two separate friends, and then each of them had brought a friend, so there were five of us. I was sort of the lone wolf. Michelle had brought her friend Teri and then Ashley had brought her friend Anna. We all met up and put our little camping chairs together and hung out all weekend.

You said the *camping chairs*. What area did you usually sit in?

If you see the main stage, there's the main stage, there's the catwalk, and then after the catwalk there's like a row of bars. After that row of bars, there's kind of a blank concrete area and then they had like fake grass set out and that was the camping chair area. That's where people could put a towel down or put a camping chair or whatever. They had these areas designated. They also had VIP areas where they had seating, but we just bought the general admission, so we'd bring our chairs every day and set them out in that section. Then behind that section was another set of bleachers that, I think, were open to anybody. I don't think they had that last year. We always bring our little setup, our chairs.

Where did you park?

The first two days I Ubered there and back from my house because I knew I would be drinking and I didn't want to worry about driving when I shouldn't be or anything like that. The third day, on October first, I actually parked at Town Square and I took just a short Uber ride. It's just right there. Well, I took Lyft. It doesn't matter. Because I'm like, *it's Sunday night, I don't want to drink because, one, I don't want to be hung over the next day because that could potentially happen; I need to function on Monday and get back to work.* So I already had made up my mind

that Sunday I wasn't drinking at all.

When the noise started what was your first reaction to what you heard?

What's funny is before Jason Aldean came on, I wanted to go and look at these cowboy boots. I ended up buying them and I bought a sweater. So we got settled back into our seats before Jason came on. We were kind of up and down, standing and shaking our butts or whatever. At that time we happened to all be sitting in our camping chair. I was in the middle of my five friends. So I looked over to my right to Ashley, and I said, "That's weird; that sounds like gunshots." And she said, "No, it doesn't have the right vibration." We have guns that—I mean, I've only shot a handgun, but...And it started off slow, so it wasn't like an automatic rifle. It was kind of *pop, pop, pop*. So I thought, *oh, it's on the Strip, cops and bad guys, somebody is being stupid*, not thinking it was coming into where we were. Ashley says, "No. That sounds like fireworks." The girl in front of us kind of went down. We were just kind of like—

You mean like fell down?

Well, we don't know if she fell down or went down on our own because we were kind of like, *what is she doing?* Then when the whole volley started where it was more like the automatic rifle, I'm staring at Mandalay Bay and I tell Ashley, "I don't see any fireworks." At that point that's when Jason Aldean went offstage. When he went off we all went to the ground. For me it was like immediate fear because then I was like, *holy crap, something is happening here because why would the stage go black?* I vaguely remember saying, "What's happening? What's happening?" At that point it was 10:08. I called my husband. We were on the ground. I just remember thinking, *I want to be home with my boys.*

You have children?

Yes. *I don't want to be in this spot right now. I don't want to die right here.* So I tried to call him

and he was already asleep. He was going to be the one to wake up early and take the kids to school because he knew I'd be home late because usually I would take them. So he made a point to go to bed early. I got his voice mail. All I remember saying was, "Something is happening right now. I don't know what's happening." I don't remember what I said after that. The whole weekend we had really bad cell phone reception, so I didn't even know if the call was going to go through.

After that I remember telling my friends, "We have to get the F out of here." At that point I really didn't know what they were doing. We were all kind of on the ground and I guess somebody crawled across my friend, like under her. I don't remember any of that. Now, I wasn't drunk, either, because I had no alcohol that day at all.

Right. You had your wits about you.

Yes—well, I thought I did. Basically at that point I'm like, "We have to get out of here." I think we got up and started running when it had stopped because there were breaks in between. I remember at that point when we got up to start running, for me it was like—I don't know if I blocked stuff out or if it was just tunnel vision because in my mind it's very blank. I remember hearing Teri saying, "Amber," because I was behind them. And I remember saying, "Yes, I'm here; I'm here." From what my friend Michelle said, we had went down again and I don't remember that. It's really weird because I just remember seeing this one man. In my brain it's like he was wandering and I swear he said, "We need a medic over here." I just remember my eyes getting big and turning around and I kept going. I felt really bad, but I'm not a medic, so I just...All I could think about is, *I have to get out of here and I have to get home to my boys; I can't be here.* I remember being scared that I'm going to get shot in my back because I know I'm running away from where it's coming from, but I...

Where did you run towards?

I ran towards the back. There's Las Vegas Boulevard and I think it was Giles. There was no way I was going to run towards Las Vegas Boulevard because that's where we could hear it coming from, so I ran towards Giles. As we're running, then we get to this—they have food trucks set up. We squeeze through these food trucks. People kind of pushed the barricades that were kind of blocking these areas. At that point it was apparent that there were a lot of people around me because from the grass to the food truck, I just remember my two friends, this one random man, and looking back and seeing Ashley and Anna get up and start running, which I thought was behind me, but they actually went a different direction. That's all I remember from point A to point B. So we get through this food truck and there's kind of like trash everywhere, bottles, people crawling on the ground. I'm just kind of like, what—I'm telling people, because my friend Michelle is behind me, "Don't push; don't push; don't push," because I'm worried we're going to get pushed down. I see the medic tent.

What's significant about the medic tent is on Friday night I wore probably these flip-flops and I saw a friend of mine who is also a Realtor who bartends for events and she was bartending there. I went over and said hi. We gave each other a hug. She had these big chunky shoes on and she had accidentally stepped on my toe and my toenail broke a little, so my big toe was kind of bloody. This was early in the day. So we're sitting in our little camping chair and I tell my friend Ashley, "I should probably go try to find a Band-Aid or clean it off." We were joking, like, "I don't want to lose my toe because it's dirty." My feet were already black and I'm only there for a few hours. The next few nights I wore cowboy boots because I'm like, flip-flops are not a good choice.

That was on day one?

That was on day one. I found someone and I said, "Hey, is there a medic tent? I just need to get a Band-Aid." They directed me over to where it was at. When I went to the medic tent and got my Band-Aid, I saw that there was an entrance or exit there because I could see where you could scan your wristband.

When we were running and we got through the food truck, I saw the medic tent. For a second I thought, *let's hide in there*. And then I'm like, *no, that's a bad idea*. I somehow got in front of Michelle and Teri and I remember saying, "This way," because I knew, for one, there's the medic tent and there's an exit right there. Because the exits that you go in and out of are on Las Vegas Boulevard unless you're—I think there's an ADA lot in the back. I thought those entrances were for staff, on the back row. The point is, you don't really think about those entrances because they're kind of hidden and small where the big one is on Las Vegas Boulevard.

At that point I thought the noise got louder, so I kind of darted, but I think what had happened was it just started again. When it started again and I see the tent and I know the exit's there, I think when it started again is when I was like, *no, that's a dumb idea to hide in the medic tent; let's go through the exit*. I kind of just took off and I got through the thing. At this point there's hundreds of people coming out of this exit on to Giles. I see this girl who I'm pretty sure was shot in the face. She was all bloody and she's standing by an officer. I remembered thinking, *what the heck happened to her?* Then I see a line of officers go in with rifles and they kind of have their hands on each other's shoulders and they're marching in. I remember saying to myself, *this is real; this is really happening*.

I stopped and I turned back to see if Michelle and Teri are behind me. At that point everyone, like I said, is flooding out of the exit. I remember seeing their arms hooked together. Michelle had a bad knee, so Teri probably hooked arm to make sure she didn't fall behind or

anything. When there were so many people coming out, in my head I said, *there's no way I'm going to find them. I have to keep going. They're together.*

So I went towards Hooters and I saw a car full of people and I thought, *I'm going to jump in somebody's car.* That car passed, and so I just kind of followed the crowd. The shots were still going and we're kind of ducking behind cars and people were hiding behind walls. I kind of stopped and ducked by a car and I'm like, *okay, well, what do I do? Where do I go?*

The whole time I'm still trying to call my husband again because I'm like, if he sees I called twice, he's going to answer; he's going to know, because we text; we don't call. It just wouldn't go through.

So I see this guy get in his truck. At first I was going to keep going and then I was like, *screw it*, and I knocked on his window. It was a husband and wife—well, they're engaged, I found out later. But anyway, I saw them get in their truck and I'm like, "Can I go with you?" He looks at her and then he goes, "Okay, get in." I jump in his truck and then these two other drunk girls jumped in. He's trying to get out of the parking lot.

The parking lot at Hooters?

The parking lot at Hooters to get on to Tropicana. There's people everywhere. We finally get on Tropicana and we see emergency vehicles coming from every direction and people running up, banging on cars. It was something you see out of a movie. People were just banging on everyone's window trying to get in people's cars. He's like, "I'm full, I'm sorry." When he finally got past the light, we were able to get away from it all.

When I got into his truck, there's five people in this truck and we're all trying to make sure our friends are okay and everything. I called my son's phone and that was at 10:16.

How old is your son?

He just turned thirteen.

I knew he'd call. He's the youngest of the boys. I knew he would answer. I'm like, even if he's asleep, he'll probably wake up and answer. I tried to stay as calm as I was and I don't know how calm I kept myself. I call him Molasses because he moves slow. I'm like, "Cole, I need you to get Mark. I need you to hurry up and get Mark. I need to talk to him." He's like, "Is everything okay?" I said, "Yes, I just need to talk to him now. Hurry up."

Who is Mark?

Mark is my husband. So he knocks on the door and he wakes Mark up. He's like, "My mom needs to talk to you." He gives him the phone. I'm like, "Turn on the news. Find out what's going on. Something's going on. There's somebody shooting." He turns on the news and he's like, "There's nothing, nothing on here." Which, of course, there wouldn't be in eight minutes. I'm like, "I'm in some guy's truck and we're driving towards Henderson." He's like, "Okay." He's like, "So are you going to take an Uber home?" I'm like, "I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't know what's going on. I don't know what's happening." I think he was probably thinking, *she's drunk in some guy's drunk. What the hell is she doing?*

Sure. He's just been woken up by this call that's unexpected.

Exactly, yes. He's like, *what the heck is this woman doing?* He's probably rolling his eyes, thinking, *oh my God, my wife is in some random guy's truck drunk, great, this night is going to end well.* Little did he know I didn't drink all day.

Everyone was making calls and it's loud. I said, "When I figure out where we're going, I'll call you." He's like, "Okay. If you want, I'll pick you up. Just let me know." He didn't hear the voice mail until days later that I had left on his phone. So I text him because I'm like, clearly he doesn't get it. Something's happening. I remember saying, "I'm really scared. There's people

banging on the window. There's ambulance and fire trucks coming from every direction." He's like, "Okay, just tell me where you're at and I'll come pick you up." So the guy gives me his address and luckily they lived in Henderson, so that worked out for us.

When I got to the guy's house, they were very hospitable. We walk in. He hands us water. We all give each other a hug. These strangers we don't know; I never figured out who the two drunk girls were. I found out the fiancé of the guy who was driving is a Realtor who knows a friend of mine. I found that out like a month later. I only remembered their names and their address because I texted the address to my husband to pick me up. So I sent them a gift card and a thank you, like, "Hey, thanks for letting me jump in your truck."

So my husband...I said, "He said he'll be there in ten minutes or whatever." He's like, "Okay, I'm on my way." I called him when I got to the house.

When I got to his house, my friend Michelle had called me. She's like, "Are you okay? Where are you at?" I said, "I'm back in Henderson. I jumped in some guy's truck. Are you guys okay? Where are you at?" She's like, "We're at Hooters." Then she starts saying, "Why is everyone running? Everyone is running." Then the phone drops the call. I'm thinking, *oh my God, what's happening?* So I started to freak out that something was happening to her. I'm trying to call her back.

I call Mark; I'm like, "I can't get ahold of Michelle. I'm freaking out." And he's like, "I can't understand what you're saying. You need to calm down." I'm like, "She said everyone is running and she didn't know what's happening." Whatever. He said, "Okay, I'm almost there. Just try to calm down."

Then I was texting because Michelle had two phones; she had her work phone and her personal phone. I'm texting her. She finally texts me back, "I'm in a hotel room now. Teri and I

are in someone's room." He let, I think, ten or fifteen of them in the room. I said, "Okay."

At the same time, I'm pretty sure I was texting Ashley, "Are you guys okay? Where are you at?" She said, "Yes, Dad's coming to get us. We're at UNLV." They ran from the festival here, to UNLV. Ashley is my old neighbor's daughter. We still live out off Ann and Decatur. So the next morning her dad had texted me and said, "You guys did the right thing by getting out as quick as you could. Gee, I never made it to UNLV in twenty minutes." Because it would probably take a good thirty to forty from our old house to get to UNLV. He went and picked up Ashley and Anna. It took them, I think they said, about forty-five minutes from the time it started to get to UNLV because at the same time they were—I remember Ashley saying, "I'm hiding under a big rig right now." I'm like, "Oh my God. Does your dad know?" She's like, "Yes, he's on his way. We're heading to UNLV."

I think that's how it all went down. So much happened so fast. Back to when Mark picked me up from the house—his name is Corey, the driver of the truck I jumped in—he walked me out and Mark said, "I knew something bad happened when I saw your face." He gets woke up. He's like, *what's she talking about? What's she doing?* Once he saw my face, then he knew, and at that point it was on the news. "There is an active shooter on the Strip." So I got in the truck and I just lost it again. I'm like, "Michelle is at Hooters and Craig is picking up Ashley and Anna." I said, "Somebody was shooting in there. That's what the news is saying."

So we get home and turn it back on. At that point my phone is going crazy with anyone and everyone who knows. And I had text certain people. I text my friend Nicole who was supposed to go because I knew she was asleep in bed and I knew she'd wake up to the news. So I text her and said, "I'm in Henderson. I'm home. I'm safe." I text my friend Alexis who knew I was there all weekend. We talk almost every day. I'm like, again, *she's going to wake up to the*

news and know I was there. So I had text her. What's funny is she was actually awake and she looked at my text—this is going to make me sound like an alcoholic—but she thought to herself, *this drunk B is texting the wrong person.* Because I said, "I'm home; I'm safe." So she thought I was accidentally texting her thinking I was supposed to text somebody else saying I'm home safe because she didn't know what was going on. Then the next morning she was like, "Holy crap, that's why you were texting me." But we kind of laughed about the whole "I thought you were drunk texting me." I text my dad and I text my friend Doug who is kind of like my second dad because, again, I knew they'd wake up to the news, know I was there. So those were the four main people that they were in bed and I texted them. Nicole called me, I think, at like two a.m. because her ex-boyfriend went to her house knowing she goes every year. He couldn't get ahold of her because she's in bed. He woke her up, banging on the door woke her up. So then that's when she learned—I think it was at two a.m.—everything that happened. We had a conversation in the middle of the night.

I didn't go to sleep until I think three and I think they had said on the news twenty people were dead at that time. I woke up at five. So I only slept for two hours. When I woke up it was over fifty people.

How did you take care of yourself the next day?

The next day is like a fog to me because—I can't describe it—I was like a zombie all day. I was just in a daze. When I got home—Mark has two boys and I have two boys, so the four boys were all home that night; they were asleep. My ex-husband and his wife had called me at I think it was like eleven or something and they were like, "Is everyone okay?" And I said, "Yes, I'm good." She said, "Did Cole go with you?" And I said, "No, no, Cole was home." And she said, "Oh, okay." She's like, "Well, I'm glad you guys are okay. I have other friends I need to call, so I'll

talk to you later." We hung up.

When we got home Mark was like, "Are you okay to go inside? I think it's best if we don't wake up the boys." I said, "Yes, I'll kind of just go straight to the bed. Their doors are shut. They should be asleep." And they were. Anyway, the point of that is the next day it was like—because I said, "How are we going to get them to school? What are we going to do?" He said, "Don't worry about it. We'll all stay home tomorrow. Don't worry about it."

He called in, which at his job there were other people who were there. A lot of people called in that day. In the morning we get up and I sat on the couch and they came downstairs and I said, "I just want to tell you guys something did happen last night."

I guess one important thing I should go back to is after I hung up with Mark on Cole's phone, Cole had text me and said, "Is everything okay?" And I said, "Yes, I'm on my way home." And he said, "Did somebody scare you at the place?" Which I'm like, he probably heard it in my voice. I said, "Yes, but I'm okay and I'm coming home. I'll be home soon." And he said, "Okay, I love you. Good night." I may have told him get some sleep or whatever. I said, "I love you, too. Good night."

So the next day when I sat them down and I said, "Last night there was a guy who was shooting at the concert." I don't remember exactly how I described it. I obviously down played it. I didn't say, "I saw a girl who was all bloody." I didn't do any of that.

You tried to be as calm as possible rather than dramatic and emotional.

Yes. I'm like, once they go back to school Tuesday they're going to hear about it, and if we turn on the TV, they're going to see it, so it's better that they hear it from me, and knowing that I was there and everything. So I just sat them down and said, "Something did happen at the concert, but I'm here; I'm safe."

Allen and Cole played quite a few years for the Henderson Cowboys. A guy that I knew from school that is still friends with their dad, he was shot, but he survived. But he was with Charles Hartfield, who was the officer who was killed who was also their coach. I remember him, but I never—

He was a coach to your boys?

He was a coach to the boys when they played for the Cowboys. I don't think he was one of the main coaches. He was a parent-helper coach, like their dad because their dad would do that, too. They haven't played for a while, but they knew him. I found out that morning—either the night or that morning. Their dad had said, "Their coach was killed and Rod was shot, but Rod is okay. He's alive." So I didn't tell them about the coach. I let dad do that because dad had that connection. But I just told them, "Yes, I'm here and everything's fine."

The next day they went to school and Cole text me in the middle of the day, "Are you okay?" And I said, "Yes. Are you okay?" And he said, "Yes, I'm just checking on you." So then I knew kids are talking. Am I getting off track? I feel like I am.

The first day I was basically a zombie. The second day they come home from school and Cole—well, Monday I had talked to a lot of people, friends, a lot of text messages that I responded to, thank you, or the best I could. I just really kind of sat around and did a lot of nothing, did a lot of blank stare, like, *that really just happened*.

I can't imagine processing that. When did you know that you wanted to get other help?

On Tuesday after the boys came home from school, Cole says, "Can I ask you some questions?" And I said, "Yes." He was asking me different questions, like, "How did you know to get in that guy's truck? How did you know he wasn't a bad guy?" You teach your kids not to talk to strangers, right, and I'm going to hop in some random guy's truck? I said, "Him and his wife

were both there and I could tell that they were also trying to get out and I just felt safe. I just in my gut knew." And he was like, "Okay." I don't remember all else what he asked me. He said, "Well, this one kid said to me, 'Why weren't you at school yesterday? Did you get shot?'" And I told him, "No, but my mom was there." And this other kid said, "What would you have done if your mom didn't make it?" He told me, "That made me really sad." And I said, "Well, I am here and don't listen to them. Then I'm like, *oh, I should talk to the school counselor, make sure he's okay.* He's pretty mature for at the time twelve-year-old. He's kind of the most loving of the children. You know what I mean?

It sounds like he's very sensitive.

Yes, yes.

And inquisitive. That's a really smart feeling child.

Yes, yes. So Tuesday after all that conversation I was standing at the sink doing dishes and I don't think I was thinking about it, but I just had that conversation with Cole, so it probably was floating around in my brain. Mark walks over to me and he looks at me and he's like, "Are you okay?" because he was going to ask me something, but I was just starting to hyperventilate. He's like, "What's wrong?" I said, "I don't know. I don't know what's wrong. I don't feel good. I don't know. I don't know what's going on." I just started crying and I just started shaking and crying. Eventually I just kind of went to the ground and went into a fetal position, put my hands over my face, and I'm like, "I'm sorry." He's like, "No, it's okay." I'm like, "I don't know." I eventually remember saying, "I just wanted it to stop." I remember the whole time I was trying to get out, just thinking, *somebody kill him, whoever is doing this; just make it stop.* I wanted the noise to stop because I knew what the noise meant. I just was on the ground and Mark is like, "You can cry; you can scream; but you've got to breathe." I'm struggling with my breathing. He finally gets

me to the couch and it took a while for me to just stop crying and stop shaking.

I have a past client who worked in hospice. She was a grief counselor. So she put a thing on Facebook about, "If anyone needs to talk, no time limit, call me, free," kind of thing. She's retired. So I reached out to her. I did go and see her a few times. It just wasn't a good fit. Then I found outside counselor or stranger.

But you knew that you needed to seek some sort of professional help.

Yes, I knew right away. I've done counseling before, when I got divorced. When you have major life events, I'm very—

Those are different traumas that we do have in life, for sure.

Yes. I'm very pro-counseling. Like I said, I'm a talker and that's how I process it. So I knew right away. My thing was, is I'm very anti-meds; I didn't want to take anything. I did have a friend of mine who gave me some Xanax and he said, "If you need this, take it. Take a little bit because if you take the full thing, it's going to knock you out." I'm like, "Okay." I'm thinking to myself, *I'm never going to take this. I don't want medication.*

But on the first Sunday I woke up and I'm like, "Mark, I just want to cry." I cried all day. I just couldn't stop. My neighbor who is a good friend of ours, he's a doctor. He doesn't practice anymore. I said, "I have this. I can't stop crying." We were all supposed—well, we did go to our neighbors for football that night. I said, "I can't pull it together. If I take this, I'm scared because I don't want to get addicted." I did the whole thing. He said, "Just take a little bit. It will help you. You're not going to get addicted from taking it once." So I said, "Okay." I took a little bit and I was able to stop crying. I was able to go numb for a minute, which is what I needed because I just couldn't pull it together that day. For a while every Sunday was just always hard.

Did you join in on any of the group Facebooks or conversations?

Yes, I'm on a few different survivor groups. I try to be careful about what I read and stuff because sometimes it just—I feel bad that other people may be taking it harder, if that sounds right. I'm really careful about not wanting to get sucked into the whole conspiracy theories and all that stuff because none of that helps. No matter why or how or who did it or all that, it happened and nothing is going to change that. Throwing on a bunch of worry and doubt in the law enforcement, none of that is going to help. I think they were amazing at what they did. I remember thinking, *I am running for my life and these guys are running into danger*. It really makes you really super grateful for them. I had the fight or flight and I had no fight, so I just—I do remember thinking, *I don't have my gun on me. What would that have done?*

Tell me about guns. I think this is a really interesting aspect, the crowd that was there. The stereotype, the demographic, they would be pro-gun.

Yes, yes.

I haven't found that anybody wasn't so far. That's fine. Did your attitude towards gun get modified by this experience in any way?

Yes and no. My CCW expired. I need to get it back just because I carry it for safety because I've been—

You're a real estate agent.

Right. I've been in homes with squatters and I've been in uncomfortable situations, which is what led me to basically train to know how to handle a gun and carry a gun. So for me it's a safety thing. I've never really agreed with—why do people need to have an automatic weapon? When you go hunting, you hunt with a rifle. If you're a CCW holder, usually you're caring for protection of yourself or your family. I don't really think people—just in my opinion, I don't really think they need—why do you need an automatic rifle? A regular civilian, in my opinion,

you don't need that. Does our military need it? Yes. Do you really need an automatic rifle to protect your home? I have a friend who he's got his AK or whatever the heck it is right when you walk in the garage or into the house; it's right there. I'm like, *why do you need that?* It hasn't really changed. The way I look at it, this guy had money and if he wanted to buy these guns, he could have bought them illegally. They should outlaw heroin, too. Well, that's kind of my—so I guess the answer is, instead of saying yes and no, no, it didn't really change; I've always been like, you don't need those things. I'm not that educated on guns. When they kept saying bump stock, I didn't know what that was.

I think most of us didn't know what that was until that next day.

Exactly. I think there needs to not necessarily be—well, gun control in a way. Yes, I think they should track it. I recently found out they track if you are prescribed certain prescriptions, like Xanax, they track it. Okay, you can track me; that's fine, because I'm a law-abiding citizen. I don't know. I don't mind people tracking. Like I told you, a friend of mine that's in counter terrorism, they have cameras up at certain places and I think it's great. Most people would be like, oh, I don't want big brother watching me. Why? If you're not doing anything wrong, who cares?

It seems like a practical approach for sure. Amber, I totally understand. Do you think it's important that we know the motivation of the shooter?

Personally I think that we have a really huge mental health crisis in this country and I think that's what it boils down to because normal sane people don't do these things. The question is, do I think it's important we know the motivation? I think everyone wants to know why, but I've come to peace that we probably will never know why. I think it's important for most people because they want to heal. If they know why that helps them heal because I think as humans we all want

to have revenge. To be completely honest, I would love for the police to come out and say, "Yes, we broke in the door and we shot him." I would love that. That would make me feel good. But that's probably not what I'm going to hear. I honestly hate the fact that he took his own life. I kind of wish—I know that sounds really morbid and bad because I'm wishing somebody else would have the trauma of having to kill this person, but, then again, maybe it would give them satisfaction they stopped this horrible person from hurting more people. I would love to know why. I think even if we knew why, it's sad, but I don't think anything would change because we do have a mental health crisis in this country. Normal sane people don't do that stuff.

Right. I think we mentioned and I don't remember if we started talking about it before we started recording or not, but that you've gone on to go to other concerts and other group events.

Yes.

Some people would think that you might not want to do that.

Yes. And I know in the survivor groups there are a lot of people that are not ready for it.

When you've gone to additional events, do you enter with any other kind of awareness or thoughts, or you just act as if it's another concert, period?

I wish that I could go back prior to October first. On September thirtieth, I bought tickets to Luke Bryan in San Diego, which is an outdoor theater, which I've been to with my cousin. I bought those tickets September thirtieth. So October first, Michelle and I are kind of like, "Do we still go?" Not exactly after October first, but after we're like, "Do we go? Do we not go?" So her and I talked and we looked up—I said, "You know it's outdoors." She didn't know that at first. We looked up the venue, the surrounding area. I asked my cousin, "Hey, what's around it?" I remember it, but when I went it was at night. And it was years ago, so I didn't remember it that

well. She kind of gave me pointers of where to look it up. So I sent it to Michelle and Michelle said, "I'm okay going if you're okay." So we kind of made this agreement if we get there and we decide it's too much, we're just going to turn around and come home. Yes, it's a waste of money on the tickets and all that, but...I believe that was the first concert unless we went to—at the Orleans Arena they did a benefit concert that we went to. Teri couldn't go. She wasn't ready. We all tried to talk her into it and she's just like, "I'm sorry, I can't; I'm not ready." And we said, "That's fine; that's okay." Michelle, Anna—Anna lives sort of up north, kind of mid-Nevada. She came down and so it was just the three of us. Ashley was back home, up north.

So three out of the five of you from the original group.

Right, yes. So we went and we were definitely all anxious and looking around, very aware of your surroundings. Actually that was before Luke Bryan I remember because I needed to do that before going to Luke Bryan. I remember movement in a crowd, it bothers me, afterward. It's kind of self-talk, "The concert is over. Everyone is just leaving. Nothing is going on." seeing a swift moving crowd definitely bothers you. So I went to that. We went to Luke Bryan and, yes, we were both kind of on edge, looking around. Right where we sat, you could see some homes on the hill. Michelle kept, "Are you okay? Are you okay?" And I'm like, "Yes, I'm okay." but I was definitely on edge.

I went to see Terry Fator with Ashley's parents actually. That one, it was really hard to enjoy it because the whole time I just, for whatever reason, kept thinking, *there is the exit. What if someone came in this way or that way or from there? I could hide here.* The whole time you're kind of plotting your exit or where you're going to hide.

When we went to Reba and Brooks and Dunn, we sat right by an exit and that was the first concert that I wasn't anxious and obsessing the whole time. I don't know if it was because I

was sitting by an exit. That was really first concert and that was in the beginning of the December that I was able to enjoy it without being really overly anxious. So that was nice.

But after that I went to Dustin Lynch and I took Cole with me. Before we left, Cole said, "Mom, what do we do if something happens?" So I had a talk with him and made sure he was okay going, and he was. We ended up leaving early. I do find that now I try to leave early to avoid the crowd. I've never been a fan of crowds, anyway.

You depart the concert early.

Yes, I try to leave early. I know eventually I'll get back to where I'll be able to go and enjoy the whole time and not stress. It does suck that—it makes me actually very angry that I'm anxious. I tell my kids, "Every day when you wake up, you have a choice to make. You can choose to make it a good day or a bad day; it's your choice." After the first I feel like that choice—not always—is taken away from times because there are times I don't feel like I'm in control of my emotions.

There are days that I just feel like crying for no reason. there are days where something will irritate me or set me off and put me in a bad mood and I hate it because that's not who I am and I don't want to be that way. I want to get past it and I don't want to get stuck where in ten years I'm like, *well, since the concert*, and still be kind of stuck. It happened and move on.

It sounds like you're doing a pretty good job.

I'm trying. Again, I'm stubborn. I'm not going to let this thing ruin things for me or ruin my life.

My counselor, she's great. She taught me, what's so wrong with being extra alert? She's right.

There is nothing wrong with that. We're not in control of our lives. I'm a control freak and as much as I want to be in control of everything, I could walk out and be hit by a car and that's out of my control.

I thank you very much for sharing your story. This is really important. Is there anything

else you'd like to add to this oral history?

I don't know. Did we cover it all?

How about just the community of Vegas?

I'm glad you brought that up because growing up in Henderson, we're kind of the snobs of the valley.

You think so?

It's like when a lot of people think of Vegas, they think of the Strip and shiny lights. I like to joke with tourists and tell them, "You know why there's no 13th floor on the hotels?" They're like, "Why?" I'm like, "That's where all the locals live." Because everyone thinks we live in a hotel and it's like, no, we actually live in homes and we have yards and we have dogs. But people look at Vegas as just alcohol and vice. It is actually a community. So it was really nice. I had made me feel really good and also a lot of happy tears of how awesome.

I remember waking up—now, I had just got this tattoo. It was like a week or two before the concert. Actually, yes, it was within the week because I still had stuff on it because it was healing at the concert. I remember waking up thinking, *I've got to go give blood. I need to go give blood.* One of my friends, he's like, "I'll pick you up. Let's go." This is on Monday. I'm like, "I can't. I want to go, but I'm so drained, I can't move. I can't move my butt from this couch." I learned quickly that if you had a tattoo in the last year, you can't give blood, so then I kind of felt bad. *Ooh, I feel bad I can't give blood.* Just seeing everyone come together I know other friends who weren't there who have known people who were there putting together—a friend of mine, she put together food and sleeping bags and stuff for people who are temporarily displaced and doing stuff with that. I just thought, *it's awesome to see what everyone is doing and everyone coming together.*

I had the pleasure of helping pass out baskets. Another survive in Colorado, he put together a thousand baskets. He brought them down. He started it in November, putting it all together. On the survivor group, he said, "Hey, I'm putting together a thousand baskets and I'm asking for handwritten thank you cards." I said, "Hey, I'll write some out and send it to you." I mailed him a bunch. I said, "Hey, I got them in the mail. I hope they get to you in time." He said, "Yes, great, we're going to actually come down in December. Where do you live?" I said, "I live in Henderson. It's all connected." He said, "Oh, well, would you be interested in helping us pass out these baskets?" I'm like, "Absolutely. When are you coming?" it was December eighth. I had a state board meeting and stuff all day, so I was booked the whole day.

State board for?

For the Realtors because I'm on the local and the state board of directors.

Go ahead. I'm sorry.

That's okay. But I'm like, "Saturday I'm all yours." my friend Michelle and I, Saturday we went and we got to go to a few of the different firehouses, the main ones that responded and pass out the baskets and see the firehouse and talk to the guys. A lot of them are so young. It's like, wow, what a way to start your career, having to do that. It was people from—not even just the city, all over. But seeing how the city came together, it was really nice because it's like, we're not just sex and alcohol; we're more than that; we're community; we have a bunch of bleeding hearts that care. Being a native it kind of gave me that "I'm really proud to be from here" feeling.

I can understand that. And that's a wonderful tribute, these thousand baskets. These all went to the firemen?

They went to hospitals, police department and the fire department.

First responders.

All first responders, yes. I know they kept the media away from the firehouses and Metro, but they did go to the hospitals. There were some...That was on Friday, so I didn't go that day, but they did do on the news like a thing about it.

Good. Thank you so very much, Amber.

You're welcome.

I wish you the very best. May 2018 be a great year for all of us.

Yes, it will be.

Thank you.

You're welcome.

[End of recorded interview]