

AN INTERVIEW WITH COREY NYMAN

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This is Claytee White. It is May fourth, 2018. I'm in the office of the Oral History Research Center with Corey.

Corey, could you please pronounce and spell your full name?

Yes. It's Corey, C-O-R-E-Y, Nyman, N-Y-M-A-N.

Thank you. Tell me a little about your childhood; where you grew up and what that was like, and what your family was like.

I was born in Chicago, Illinois. It's a great city, a great place to have a hometown. I lived there until I was age seven. My brother was born when I was four, younger brother. My father was in the restaurant business, well, that was after working for Playboy. My father was senior vice president of clubs worldwide for Playboy. He's an interesting individual.

Yes, he would have to be. Is he still in Chicago?

No. He and my mother moved here about a year and a half ago.

Do they like it?

They love it. They absolutely love it here.

Good, I'm glad to hear that.

It's an adjustment. They've been talking about moving here for years and we finally got them out.

My brother lives here as well.

Good, the whole family is here.

Yes, ma'am.

Just two boys?

That's it. The world couldn't handle more.

I believe that.

Yes, we were a handful. I lived in Chicago until I was seven and then we moved to New Jersey.

My father is from New Jersey and my mother is from Brooklyn, so moved back. It was a good opportunity for work for my father. I lived in one city from seven to nine and then we moved to where I grew up, which was Livingston, New Jersey, about twenty minutes from Manhattan. I lived there until I was eighteen. Always traveling, always working, very vibrant family life.

What kind of work up until that time?

Twelve years old I started cooking with my dad and doing menu development. We did Cafe SFA, Saks Fifth Avenue's first cafe. I did that during summers. I played lacrosse, played sports, played football, played everything.

In high school I pretty much worked for a family friend. They had a films company, not media, but more of plastics. They had plastics. They had home health. I did filing. I basically worked for the same five companies in one office throughout high school whether it was on breaks, whether it was on vacations, so by the time I was getting ready to do other things, it was great.

My parents moved to Arizona when I was graduating high school. My brother and I are four years apart, so it's a good transition.

You're planning for college events...

Exactly, right. Plus he didn't have to live up to me in high school or anything. It was a very smart strategy. I knew I was going to go west to college. I decided not to apply anywhere back east except one school. I got recruited academically and athletically by the University of Denver, so very proud alum of that university. There's more there.

I had an opportunity to cook and I was working, and so my father said, "We're sending you to Vegas." Vegas was never on my radar. Growing up in New Jersey, it just wasn't what it is now. I came to work for Wolfgang Puck and I was cooking at Spago at eighteen years old. I

lived off Valley View and Twain in a very interesting area especially back then. I literally did that before I went to college, by myself. I knew no one out here.

What was that like for an eighteen-year-old?

It was amazing. The transition got a lot better. When I was seventeen, eighteen, right before I graduated, I won an award. There's a group, a very interesting group, called the American Academy of Achievement. The American Academy of Achievement is an honor that's bestowed upon leaders in this world, adult leaders and also student leaders. That year it could have been, I think, Steve Wynn and it was Wayne Huizenga and it was a general and then it was...past winners with Barbra Streisand, Tom Selleck. Rosa Parks was there. It was a very amazing group. Our honor students was to be at this weekend with these adult leaders. It could have been Student of the Year or it could have been a violin prodigy; it could have been an All-American football player; whatever it was. My weekend there was four days. I immersed in everything. I had dialect with Quincy Jones, Robin Williams. I heard George Bush, Sr., speak right in front of me, Martha Stewart. Just these great experiences. You met students around the country.

I happened to meet one of the Students of the Year for Nevada. She was going to Stanford. We hit it off. I said, "Hey, I'm coming to Vegas for the summer." She said, "Great, here's my number." She became a very, very dear friend. It was fantastic. She was my only friend. Then I was cooking, so I knew all the people from work. We didn't have fake IDs back then. It didn't matter. I was the youngest in the group anyway. I was always out and I was social, but I was never stupid. I was very well behaved when I was eighteen, so that was funny.

I went to college. I went to university. Played lacrosse in college. Business degree, hospitality management degree. Always worked on every break. I lived in L.A. three times. I lived in Phoenix. I lived in Boston, Connecticut, Virginia, Denver. I was everywhere.

Did anything ever frighten you at that age? It sounds just like you were just everywhere doing everything with no fear.

I think that I definitely had fear in middle school and high school. Growing up I was definitely an overweight kid, but my outlet was athletics. I definitely know I was paralyzed by fear athletically when I was in eighth grade and then once when I was a sophomore. I just couldn't deal, whatever it was, but I got through that. That was never anything there.

Then I had the opportunity to come back here. I was going to work for Wolfgang again.

This is after college?

This is after college. I came back two days after college. I graduated on a Saturday.

This is which year?

This is 1999. I graduated June on a Saturday, and I was literally here in Vegas two days later for a five-day job interview, for a working interview, so I did a stage.

You had to do another interview?

Yes, ma'am. I was at Spago and at Lupo over at Mandalay Bay. They basically said, "Hey, we're going to give you the job. Go out and find an apartment." I'm like, "Great. I'm taking a vacation with family." Fine, fine, fine, we're going to do that.

I got the apartment. My brother graduated high school, so it's a great celebration. My parents took us to Europe, amazing, very kind parents. It was great. Took a cruise. Did that. Went to Italy, to Milan. We parked our car, brand-new Latsia, seventeen kilometers on it. Came back to the car a couple of hours later and discovered it was broken into. They stole almost all of our stuff.

Now, where was this?

Milan.

After Chicago, New York, New Jersey, you get robbed in...

Yes. I know. I've had cars broken into before when I was an adult in Chicago. I definitely saw and faced reverse racism, racism, sexism, everything. I'm Jewish, too, so I've had that. I had that in playing sports in different towns.

People looking at you, what would they think you are?

I've gotten it all. But for me, I see the world. I could care less.

And I see the world when I look at you.

I appreciate that. Thank you. I've been in situations...I remember when we were freshmen, sophomores in high school. I went to a pretty lily white town, lily white, Chinese, Asian. A friend of mine is an Armenian and he's dark as night. I literally watched this group of Italian Americans just go to town verbally. I never understood it and I didn't understand why. Growing up my mother said, "You're friends are the United Nations." That we are and that's how it was. I was told; I want to learn the world. I went to my friend's house who is Korean growing up. His grandmother came over from Korea. She still buried the kimchi in the ground in the back in winter. For me, I actually want to know the world. It sounds...

No. That's wonderful.

So, yes, we were robbed in Italy. My parents said, "Hey, we'll buy you and your brother all new stuff." We were supposed to go for another three weeks. I said, "Nope. I'm good. I want to come home." That obviously changed a lot of dynamics.

I got back and told my boss, "Hey, I'm back early. I can do it." It's like, "Well, we have a problem. The restaurant is delayed, so we'd like to pay you sixty percent of your salary as a manager and the other forty percent you have to make up as a server and a bartender." I politely told them to bleep off.

Really?

Oh, yes, ma'am. If you say you're going to do one thing...They reneged on their contract basically and I was twenty-two. I already rented an apartment, so rather than going back to Denver, I stayed here. A family friend who I had worked for in L.A. once was opening a restaurant at the Venetian. I went to open a restaurant at the Venetian.

You had other options.

Yes, ma'am. Oh, yes, I had tons of options. I could have stayed in Denver, I just thought it would have been too easy. Then I did that here. I was not prepared to go back here at that point, way too much money, too much money, too much alcohol, too much gambling, too many vices. I left. I said, "I am never coming back to this city, ever." I swore I'd never come back.

You left and went where?

Then I went back to Chicago; I did that for two and a half years. I went through 9/11 there. That was very interesting. That was very, very interesting.

Why was 9/11 interesting in Chicago?

That Tuesday I was off and I was going to get my car serviced. I was working six days a week. I was getting my car serviced. I had a CD player in my car. I wasn't listening to the news. About thirty minutes away from downtown going to the suburbs, I get to the dealership and everyone is watching televisions. When I got back to my apartment, I was on the thirty-second story of a fifty-five-story building looking at downtown Chicago. We're like, *okay, are we next?* That was a heavy day. It was a very heavy day. The crazy thing about that is I went to the place I felt most familiar; I went to the sports bar; I went to the neighborhood bar that I go to, and instead of sports, everybody is watching the news. We were at least together.

I did that and then transferred to Portland, Oregon, and lived there.

Any special reason for going to Portland?

No. I believed that I could be doing something more. I was running a restaurant; it was breakfast, lunch, dinner. It was American food. I was still with the same company at that time, so I got transferred to a northern Italian restaurant, brand-new. I open restaurants; that's what I was very good at. I got to work with a very fun gentleman, a Greek chef. We're born seven days apart. We just really hit it off. Portland, I went out and fell in love with the city. It's amazing, provincial, respectful. It's just a great city. I walked to work. It was just great.

Yes, I love the downtown. They still have department stores downtown like they're supposed to be.

Exactly. I lived in the park blocks. One block up, I could go to PSU, and one block down I could go a couple of blocks to work, so it was great. I did that, a great living opportunity. I didn't do the job very well, but whatever.

I got recruited to go back east, go back to D.C., so I did D.C., very intriguing. I had visited, but I had never lived there. Learning the business of politics is a whole other story. But I did it and it was fun. I immersed very quickly. I was put in a charity group that I met these amazing, amazing people. They were great, many hats and suits, so everyone wears a different hat. Someone owned a polo farm and someone else was in bank development and someone else was doing charity. It was great. I did that for about a year-plus.

I got a phone call from Vegas. I hung up on them.

No. Is this Wolfgang Puck?

No, this is Caesars Palace. Caesars called me and I said no, and then I got a phone call from Bobby Flay. Bobby said, "I want you to come back and run my Vegas restaurant. I need someone who knows the city." I said, "All right, I'll fly out." I flew out for a random, crazy

interview. It was in Oakland and Napa, Sonoma at the time. I took a trip. I was doing it with my chef. We were doing a *couvert* at a sparkling house. I did that and I'm like, "I need to get to Vegas." I came here for sixteen hours, eighteen hours, and went back to D.C. I put in my resignation on the spot. I gave the shortest resignation of my entire life; I gave a nine-day notice. I came back out here twice before I moved out here to do training. I came out and was the opening general manager of Mesa Grill, and that was in August-September of '04. I've been here ever since.

My brother followed me out. I lived at Caesars for three months in Room 777.

Really?

Yes. They actually gave it to me. I didn't ask for it. It was this cruel, odd joke. It's like, you've got to be...

Did you gamble at that time when you came back?

No.

You decided not to?

It was a great healing catharsis moment at that point because I couldn't gamble at Caesars at the time. You weren't allowed to gamble. I was living in the casino, so I'm working and living there. Even if I wanted to go have a drink, I had to go across the street to the Bellagio. And because I was hearing the bells and hearing the whistles and seeing the action—it was never about the money. It's never about the money.

The excitement.

Exactly. It's about the energy, about the rush. I was like, *I'm done*. So I stopped. I had not played in years. I played on a table two weeks ago. It was the first time I've played on a table in five years. But for me it was always the value of money. What does a hundred dollars mean? Is a

hundred dollars part of a car payment? Is a hundred dollars a new pair of shoes? Is a hundred dollars a trip? Versus a hand of blackjack. I learned very quickly. Plus I was too busy. I had too many other things going on.

That was 2004.

Yes, ma'am.

And you've been at Caesars ever since?

No. I did that for a year and a half. I got recruited away by the Light Group, former Nightlife Company, and worked in a restaurant for them at the Mirage. I did that and went to the end of running a restaurant; I was done. My father said, "Great, now it's time to come work for me." I started working for him full time—I had worked for him on vacations—in October of 2006 and I've been with him doing work ever since.

Now, when did your parents move here?

November of '16.

In 2006, did you have to move to work for your father?

No. I built a home and I built a home office and I started working. We travel so much for work. Just give me an airport and a cell phone.

Okay, good. Tell me more about your father's business.

A hospitality consulting firm, world boutique style, anything food and beverage. I do a lot of the operational based consulting. I do a lot of training. I do a lot of public speaking. My father does back house and systems. He is a certified executive chef. He has a nutrition degree from NYU. He has an earned MBA from Johnson & Wales, an honorary doctorate from Johnson & Wales. My brother works with us, too, as PR and marketing. It's really operational based. We work for the Venetian to Konrad Waldorf to Independence to arenas, Seattle Space Needle, Disney. We

do a lot for them. It's a fun ride.

That's wonderful.

Thank you.

Tell me how you got involved in country music.

It's not. If anything it was Colorado. Going to school in Colorado, it was always there and I had some friends that were really into it. I didn't know a lot of friends that were really country, but we'd go to some country bars. They were line dancing. It was like, *all right*. Then you hear Garth Brooks and things that are fun. I have a lot of friends here who have a lot of varied tastes. We started going to different country events whether it's the ACMs or then Route 91 started. I have a lot of friends who work in corporate sides and one of them is corporate with Red Bull. Red Bull is very good friends, very supportive. Our group every year had gone to Route 91 and we were always in a suite. We were always in the pop-up suites they have inside in different configurations. It was always a great chance for all of us to be together. It's fun. Some of my friends are more into country than I am. I do like some country. Last year I didn't go on Friday because it was Yom Kippur and also I was at the Imagine Dragons concert, but I went Saturday and Sunday.

Describe that suite to me.

Sure. The suites are basically corrugated metal boxes. They're pop-ups, so they do compress. You have a ground floor where they did faux grass, stairs. You had a metal patio. Then there was an inside, which is windows. There was some stadium-style seating. There was bar seating, a refrigerator, not a bar, but like water and Red Bull; things like that. Out the back there was a corrugated metal stairway that went to a second floor viewing area, probably room for twelve, sixteen people. Then there was a third roof deck, which is open-air, another viewing deck.

How big is this structure?

It was probably fifteen to eighteen feet wide by probably about eighteen, twenty feet deep, and then you had the whole patio.

Twice the size of this room.

I would say this is about the footprint of the suite.

And it had three levels.

Three levels. The middle one was the smallest, but on the first level it had an outdoor patio, so you had all this couches and chairs and the bar and then there was stairs down to the faux grass area. All the faux grass areas were connected because these were suites three through eight. We were the opposite; if the stage were south, we were east. Suites one and two were west along with VIP over there. They had different configurations over the years. It was definitely good viewing. If you had the grass area and then there's a walking area, it's where the ADA section was, to give you perspective on that.

Where were you when you heard what people thought were fireworks?

I was standing next to my brother on the corrugated metal patio of the suite. We thought we heard fireworks with like bang snaps. I looked to my left. We were in suite five. Suite four is on our right. Suite six is over here. Suite six was MGM corporate. I looked and I saw this woman tumble backwards. It was, *okay, that's unusual*. Because she didn't know what happened and her friend is like, "What's going on?" I saw a woman who was probably about four feet away from me. The door is back here behind me. I was over here in front of two of the windows and the railing is over there. There's a woman over there and she is suddenly, "That burns; that burns. What is that?" Thank goodness, she was wearing cowboy boots. She must have gotten some shrapnel. She was okay, but she didn't know what was going on. Then obviously all hell broke

loose.

The crazy thing is that I continued telling people I knew exactly what was going on when it started. Because at that point, the fireworks or whatever it was. And then the lights went off and then they went up, which is crazy because the lights are on, on the stage, and then you see Jason Aldean run off. Then everything kind of starts going a little haywire.

Who turned the lights up?

We don't know, but it was on stage.

It was just the lights on the stage went up?

Yes. All the TVs, everything was on, and then everything went dark, and then suddenly everything went bright, which is the craziest thing, which made no sense.

I was standing next to my brother. Then the doors behind me on the suite—this is where it gets a little fuzzy for me, then it comes back—but apparently I was standing in the door frame getting people inside. We had people everywhere; we were almost thirty deep in our group. Apparently I was in the door frame getting people inside. Then at one point I got everyone inside and someone, I don't know who it is, this woman—I will never be able to see her face, ever—she closed the door and locked the door.

Can you get out the back?

This is the front door and there was a back door, too. Yes, the back door is still open. But no one had any idea what was going on. I'm on the door frame and she closes and locks it and I'm hearing banging on the door, so that was a whole other...Then someone jumps through the window. So she jumps through the window, which is a whole other level. Then I hear the banging and suddenly I don't know where she went. I forced it open, threw it open, and was greeted by the most horrific scene ever, where you had bodies. You had bodies everywhere. You

had lights on. You had people crawling by.

One of our friends was on the railing. He was drunk. Out of thirty people in our group, he was the only one who didn't do something positive, and that's a whole other story. So he was wasted. We finally got him. My friend who is Red Bull, he's six-five, two-forty, big guy, he's on the metal looking up at me. I've never seen fear that much in someone's face. We got him inside. We got everyone inside, got the door. Mind you, he's stopping, going, and obviously we're watching things happening in front of us. We just saw bodies and humps.

Punks?

Humps of just people, just people. We get everyone inside. We realize very quickly. So Ian is on the door. Ryan is on the door. I'm in between the door and the fridge. There's a woman over here. I can't remember their names anymore. She's in the front area behind the corrugated metal. She dove through the window. There's a security guard next to me who is scared as hell. We don't know where she came from. There's two gentlemen, a gay couple who are hyperventilating. Then the woman back here, that was her friend. Literally we're trying to calm people down. So the woman is here, the other gentleman is here, and then his partner is here, so I know I was over here. I literally put my hand on top of them and got them to breathe and calm down. That's when Ian and I kind of started hatching a plan of like, *okay, we're going to figure this out*. Everything was extremely crystal clear, by the way.

Also when I opened the door, I, A, didn't ever think I'd get hit by a bullet, like ever. I knew we were in an active shooter situation. Everything was extremely slowed down. It was clear as day. I've never been more clear in my entire life, ever, ever.

And calm.

Without a doubt.

Why do you think that happened?

I don't know. I just think that I was aware of what was going on. I mean, no one knew what was going on, but I was aware as I could be and I knew that there were probably other people who needed the support and needed someone to help them, and so that's how the rest of the night went.

Ian and I are kind of hatching a plan and trying to figure out. We've got seven people in the suite. We're like, "All right, listen. Once these bullets stop"—because we're like, "Okay, we're not moving." It's corrugated metal, but we didn't know where anyone was. We didn't know the grounds. It sounded like there were two shooters, again. I mean, I had a pretty good idea; when I opened the door, it was like, okay, it's either coming from Luxor, Mandalay, or it's coming from the post on that Ferris wheel that never got built. So I was like, okay, these are the three vantage points.

Then while we were also seeing (sic), there was a blinking light. He was on [floor] thirty-two. There's a blinking light strobe on eighteen or twenty. Oh, yes.

Where was that?

No idea. We still don't know. We don't know if someone was filming. We don't know what's going on. But I can tell you every one of my friends has seen that strobe light and no one has been able to explain it to me. That's a fact. That is a fact. I will never forget that.

Got the door closed, so we're hatching a plan. It was like, "Listen, when this shooting stops, we've got to move. We have to move." We're trying to calm everyone, and Ian and I are the only two calm ones. We've got three women, three other guys. We're like, "Listen, this goes—" I've lost my brother at this point. I don't know where he is. We've lost all our friends. We have seven people in the suite.

And you were thirty deep when this starts.

Yes. When it started, everyone...We got separated; we got pushed. My brother got pushed out the suite out the back.

Out the back.

Yes, out the back. We said, "Listen, when this shooting stops, we're going out the back." Because we knew where we were going to go. There's the back door and there's the emergency gate.

We're getting out there. So, fine, we make a plan. We grab everyone. Still, you have all hell breaking loose because finally people are like, okay, the shooting is stopped; we've got to go.

That's when we start seeing people carrying bodies and you don't know if they're alive, you don't know if they're dead, you don't know what's going on. It was hot. It was sweaty. People are drunk. We're all drinking, but everything was super clear.

We are going out the back, which is where Hacienda turns into Reno and all that. There's cars everywhere, just cars everywhere. Taxis are refusing to take people. It was just nuts. We literally get there and we see people just scatter. Ian and I are like, "No, we've got to go to the right." Our goal is we've got to go to the McDonalds; we've got to get down to Mandalay, by that area, because, mind you, we had no idea it was a shooter.

Where are you? You are saying Hacienda. You're getting ready to go towards the

Mandalay?

No, no. Here's the village, so Hacienda is turning to Reno. We're back here. We were back here.

That's when everything...Cars everywhere. People are just booking it that way. Obviously we kind of knew the tanks are over here. We're like, *all right, we know we've got to get down this way. We've got to get this way so we can get to that McDonalds and get out of here.*

Where did all the cars come from?

Everywhere. There were just people everywhere. Jason Aldean was the headliner, so you had—

These are celebrity cars?

No, no. It was just people leaving because it was that time. There were cabs everywhere. There were Ubers. Then there's parking lots over here. Then you had just people freaking out.

There are parking lots back there.

Yes. This dirt was a parking lot. This is a parking lot. The workers, I think, were over here as well because there's different things going on.

We got out of here. We're like, *all right, we've got to get south; we've got to get south.*

We found my brother. I'm screaming at him. Over the phone we found him. He was with two of our friends. We got to the corner over here where it's like—not Arby's—it's like a little road.

We're literally behind a cop car. We saw trucks going everywhere. Metro was like, "Get out of here; go south; just go." It's like, "Go east; go south; get out of here." People are just milling about. No one has any idea.

We come down this way; we're going down this road and we see an NHP officer. He's like, "Go the other direction. Get out of here. But do not go south; do not go this way; go, go east and north." He's like, "Get out of here."

That's when we found—so it's my friends; my brother, my buddy Ian, our friend Mason and Mason's wife. Then we found this girl, early twenties, just completely in shock, a daze, no idea, Tabatha. She was like, "I don't have my friends. I don't have my wallet. I don't have my phone. I don't have nothing. I need to call my mom." She was just losing it. Fortunately we had a woman in our group. It's like, "Listen, give her your phone. Please have her call her mom." She did it. I took her arm and I said, "Listen, do not let go of me. No matter what you do, do not let go of me no matter what happens."

Then we started going through this dirt back by Quail Air and all that stuff. No one has any idea what's going on. We're calling...At one point I talked to my dad and talked to a dear friend of mine. My dad...I said, "Listen, don't believe anything that's said on the radio. Monitor all social media. Watch the news and tell me what you find out. Just know that we're safe and we're currently together."

Then another friend, she texted me. She's like, "What's going on?" We're like, "Listen..." *Boom, boom, boom, boom.* "Check us on Facebook *safe*, tell us *alive*, and please keep monitoring things."

If the shooting started at 10:07, it took us until 1:15 in the morning to get over here to that Rebel gas station.

And the Rebel station is on the corner of Tropicana?

Trop and Koval. We were going in and out. We finally found Tabatha another phone. She called her mom. She found a friend of hers when we were walking through. Then we get to the corner and we find our friend Ryan, the drunk one, who is literally just still stumbling, out of reality. So his dear friend—it's a whole other story, whatever—but she called me and was like, "What's going on? Are you safe? What's going on?" I'm like, "Listen, I've got Ryan. He's here. Come pick him up. I'll give you his phone. He's here on the gas station. Just come find him." I don't know where she went. I don't remember. I don't care.

People could drive into the area by that time, by 1:15?

Yes, because Trop was still open at the time. And there are cars everywhere. Then Koval was packed. There was stuff; they were just people. Everyone was like zombies.

The good thing was that my brother's girlfriend didn't come with us. He got ahold of her. She was one of the last cars to get through the airport interchange. She was able to get us and

pick us up at the Rebel gas station, which was wild in itself. We're trying to call and figure things out.

Mind you, one friend saved four people. He was at the small apartments over here. I had other friends that got into the airport into one of the private hangars. Then other friends who got to Thomas and Mack. Everyone scattered in their own way. Just the fact that we were able to get out at 1:15 roughly and then that's when everything kept going.

From about 10:15...11:15, 12:15...so three hours...

Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. The shooting started at 10:06, 10:07, 10:08, whatever it was. And it was only eight minutes long; whatever it was. Sorry, I don't mean to laugh. That's the only way I can process this.

Exactly, yes.

Yes, we had no idea. No one knew if there were more shooters. No one knew what was going on. We didn't know at the time that he shot at the gas tanks. We didn't know that they're not flammable. But we didn't know those things.

What was your father telling you?

He wasn't because I was really the one talking. I just said, "If something's going to come up, let me know." It was better for me to, "Listen, this is what's going on. Go with me. If something comes up, call me. But if not, this is the story."

I've told the story. I did seek help. I do speak to someone regularly. I have been telling the story more because a few people haven't known me who I've met recently and they're like, "Does it hurt?" I'm like, "No, it actually helps to talk about it." If I don't want to talk about it, I won't. It was crazy.

What did you learn about yourself that night? Anything different?

It's the same thing I think I always knew is that I will always find a way to help people, one way or another. I took action without thinking. I think a lot of people—you get to that fight or flight moment and some people just don't know what to do and some people are paralyzed. As I said earlier, I didn't ever consider the fact that I could get hit. It wasn't a thought that ever entered my brain because I was like, there are other people—the thing that really sticks with me is the fact that someone locked the door. Someone closed the door and locked the door. I'm like, how could you do that to another human being? Then I remember hearing the banging on the door. That's where it really hit home. Then when I threw the door open. Okay, there's two people out here; I don't know where anyone else went. Like, he's messed up. He's my friend. I'll never be able to get that image of his fear, just his pure *I am going to die*. As I said, roughly thirty people, every single one of us except for one person did something to help someone else.

And the other person was really too out of it.

Exactly. He's a drunk and he's an asshole. Sorry, excuse my language. But he is. But everyone else—I can say this, I do not consider myself any bit of a hero at all, I never will. But I can proudly say that there are people alive because of what I did and that lets me sleep at night without a doubt.

That's great. We've heard people say things about Las Vegas prior to this and now after this. Has your opinion of this city changed at all?

I always had to defend our city and it really bothered me. I'm not a native. I have a lot of friends who are. People are like, why Vegas? Why this? I'm like, well, first of all, it's extremely easy in every sense of the word. Whether it's money or whether it's lifestyle or whether it's weather, it's very easy. I used to have a love-hate relationship with the city and I very much now have a love-love relationship with the city because my brother followed me here. My parents were

always visiting. I had every conference come to town. I had lifestyle whether it's being in the mountains in the Red Rocks, whether it's going to concerts, whether it's going to Chinatown.

I'll never forget this. I was traveling in New York. I was doing work. A gentleman who I no longer talk to who I've known since I was eighteen said to me, "Okay, so which quarry are we getting tonight?" I was like, "Excuse me?" "Are we getting Vegas quarry or real quarry?" I have never forgotten that because I was like, you know what? It's been a pleasure knowing you. Because I know how good this city has been. I don't think enough people ever realized how good we are. It's one of the greatest small towns ever.

I was at a cocktail reception yesterday at the Cromwell and I'm walking out at five thirty in the afternoon and a dear friend of mine walks in. She's like, "Hey, Corey." "Hi, Sabrina." Like nothing because that's just what it was. That's what it is. I don't think America knew who we were. You joke. It's like, yes, there are no children here; they're all midgets. Everyone lives in hotels.

I've never heard that one.

You've never heard that one?

Not that one about the children, but living in hotels, yes.

I know. I'm working on my comedy routine. There was always something. There was always some stigma to who we were. People forget. Listen, you still have dry cleaners. You still have doctors. You still have lawyers. You have professional people. The more and more that I got engrained—when I finally hit ten years in this city, I was like, okay, now I love it. But I don't think the country knew who we were and I don't think they knew who our soul was and I don't think anyone really understood what a tight-knit community Vegas is in every sense of the word.

I can definitely tell you—and I took this shirt off and I'm putting it back on when I

leave—I'm putting on my Golden Knight's shirt. What they have done for our city will never be forgotten. The sheer connection that that franchise has given to our identity, purely our identity, I really believe—forget being a hockey town because we're definitely a hockey town now—and I'm sure you could definitely attest to this—I believe that the soul of a community, if it's not a grocery store in a small community, is a sports team. I truly believe. I call it—and this is before October first—I went to a preseason game with my brother, and it's what I always knew. We walked into a bar and everyone was wearing the same color. Everyone was there for the same reason. I really believe that whether it's the Vegas Strong logo or the image or the idea of what Vegas is—that is obviously going to continue to change—but I was proud to say I was from Vegas or lived in Vegas. I'd wear a Vegas hat. It's not a tourist thing. It's not. I have many Knights hats and different things. But my favorite Knights hat is black brim, white top, and it says *Vegas* in black bold letters. I've taken many trips since and I travel and usually take a Vegas Golden Knights hat with me and I have been stopped countless times saying, "Hey, you're from Vegas; hey, what's this?" It's much more of a prideful thing that I don't think the rest of the country knew about us. I am damn proud to live here. I love this city. I understand why people get their—it's like, hey, just don't fly out on a Sunday morning and we're good. But I really do love it here.

Good. That's the way I've felt for a long time. On your arm, what is this one?

I actually went to the first responders' concert. That was different. It got a little too political for me.

Because you had all the political people from all national?

No. I was taken by a friend. I think when Big & Rich performed—and they're not my favorite country band, but they're very right leaning and they are very pro-gun. Then Sean Hannity came

out and got really mouthy, including he was like, "If I would have seen that SOB, I would have taken..." I'm like, *no, you wouldn't have and you weren't there*. I've had a lot of interactions and stuff like that where people say, "If I was..." I'm like, "No, you don't know; you don't know what you would have done." Or I'll just walk away.

I know who was there. I know my friends. We were there and I know how I feel about them. I saw my friends who weren't there, how they've acted positively. It's affected me. I probably had a hundred, a hundred and fifty friends who I knew, acquaintances, who were there. I had a client, him and his wife, they were there. They were saving people. I had another one who is a bartender. Just different...And other people who weren't there. I had an extra ticket for a friend who was visiting and he didn't come with me. He was at Mandalay for a conference. Everyone has reacted differently. I have my own feeling on guns and people.

Tell me if that has changed at all.

No.

Either pro or con.

No. I don't believe in people hiding behind our laws. I never understood assault rifles anyway. I like guns. I like rifles more than I like handguns, but it's for sport. I have friends who hunt. For me, I don't need a gun in my life. Would I want one? Sure. Why not? But I don't understand the need for something that is literally meant to target people. I don't understand how something like a bump stock can be created.

I don't even want to get into the ins and outs of this monster and what he did and all that because there's no answer. Someone was asking me about that the other day and I don't go there. I know there's so many conspiracy theories and I've heard tons of them.

I've stayed away from those. I haven't heard most of them. I'm kind of surprised when

someone does tell me one of them. I say, "Wow, you believe that?" So, yes.

The fact that it sounded like there were two shooters, I can tell you that and I've heard that from many people, but it could have been the echoes. I don't know nor do I care. The thing that I will never forget, all of us walking away, all of us saw that strobe light.

That's the part that surprises me and no one else has told us.

That's what bothers me. My brother saw it. My buddy Ian saw it. It was probably between floor fifteen and twenty, closer to the center, and it was behind the stage, so it wouldn't have been filming, but someone was filming that. Someone was filming it, mark my words. If you have a light strobe light like that, someone was filming something.

Where was it?

If he was on thirty-two on the send, it was probably between fifteen and twenty, closer in the middle. That's clear as day.

That part is scary.

I was clear as day, I can promise you that.

Someplace out there, there's some footage.

Yes, ma'am, without a doubt. We've had many conversations with different people. I obviously talked to a therapist, very much appreciated. Everyone is affected differently. My brother puts on Life is Beautiful.

So he has been on our campus.

Oh, yes. Obviously this person had rented a room at the Ogden, so Craig was really affected by that for a while. He still is, differently than I am. Mind you, he lost me, so he's got that going on.

The shooting in Texas didn't get to me. The shooting in Parkland did. I have three connections to that high school.

Did you reach out to anyone?

Without a doubt.

Tell me about that.

I played lacrosse. I played for Team Israel for a little bit. I coached the master's team, so it's forty, forty-five, and fifty-plus, three different teams. I got to know some of these guys in the summer of 2014. They're going to be playing in Israel this summer. I've talked to them about different things, so I've got to know some of the guys. One of the gentlemen who is on the team, his daughter Meadow was killed. He was doing different things. His friends were putting a lot of back and forth on touches and did a nice tribute T-shirt. Another guy on our team, his daughter's boyfriend was killed. Then a fraternity brother of mine, his cousin's daughter was killed, and so I reached out to him immediately. He gave me one of the best responses. I'm over thoughts and prayers and that bullshit. He's like, "Listen, if anyone would understand, you would and I really appreciate you making the effort." Even the guys in Israel in lacrosse know what I've gone through. I haven't vocalized it very much, but they know it was there. I don't advertise that I was there. If someone asks me, sure, I'll tell you. I've actually brought it up a few times because people are like, "What?" I'm like, "Yes, I was there. Thanks."

But, no, it's conversation. I think once you go through any of it to—I was a senior in Colorado at DU when Columbine happened, so I've been around some of this before. There's no rhyme or reason. I don't know whose plan it is. I don't know what plan it is. I don't know what's going on. But apparently I'm supposed to be in all these places. It's heavy at times. It's tough at times. I found that I liked being able to support some of my friends and talk about it and go through it. But, yes, it's different elements.

Are your friends talking about it?

We did. We do from time to time. We do a lot of gatherings together. Red Bull, because they hosted us, corporate took us out for a day and really had us—"Hey, no, don't pay for anything; we've got you." They did the same thing right after the holidays. A big group of us got together on Easter. There's different connections. One of my friends, we had lost each other for a while and he saved the four people, him and I were doing lunch for a while and we still do lunch. There's certain bonds that are just there. But it's something.

I have a friend of mine who is a graphic design artist. She helped plant and do the Healing Garden, which is great. She's going to hopefully work on a tattoo for me, a design. I don't ever want to forget it. I obviously, like anyone else, want to get past it, but, at the same time, I don't ever want to forget what has gone on. I don't remember whose quote it was that history tends to repeat itself.

All I do is get more and more angry when I hear certain elements of our government try and defend... This is not the right time. It's always the right time. It's always the right time to actually fix something. I'm just sick of hope and prayers. I'm just so sick of that because if you were staring down the barrel of a gun or if you didn't know you were going to be alive tomorrow, it's a little different. Thoughts and prayers, I can't stand it. I just can't stand it.

What do you want someone to say to you when they find out that you were there, knowing that people need to say something?

Sure, sure. A friend of mine—we're not going to be friends anymore, which is fine—I saw her at the beginning of March. She had been through a lot and she was one of the people who had called me. I said to her, "What do you need?" That was kind of a turning point for her. She's like, "You know what? I just need a friend." I think that her being able to say something definitive rather than saying, okay, fine, anything like that, being able to say something definitive to

someone is the biggest thing. If someone says, "Hey, were you there? If you need to talk about it..." Someone volunteering themselves rather than saying, "I'm so sorry." You don't know and you never will know.

Right. We have no idea. We have no idea.

Correct. For me, listen, I relive it every day. I pick and choose my moments of when it comes in and other times it just pops in. They released the body cam photos and that was on two TVs at the gym this morning. May first, the seventh month anniversary.

The world needs to remember.

Right. But I will tell you I go to a lot of Knights games and I have partial season tickets. My favorite—I know it—when they do Vegas, here, the game. I need that. I need to know that—at that moment I'm standing up, I'm taking my hat off and I'm clapping. Thank you. If anyone has done something, that's just thank you, and that I think goes to our city. I find so much more pride in our city now and that's where I want it; that's where I want the energy to go.

Wonderful.

Thank you.

I thank you so much.

My pleasure.

We interviewed the coroner yesterday. He painted such a vivid picture of the venue. He didn't arrive until about one o'clock in the morning. About the time that you're getting picked up at the gas station, the coroner and his team is now at the location. He talked about how it was windy and that those red cups, those Solo cups that you had been drinking out of, how the wind was just carrying them around in waves. He said it was just the most surreal scene that he had ever seen. It has affected him in ways that he thinks

about it, but always in ways that he's in love with the city now in a way he's never been. It sounds like you when you talk about this city.

I appreciate that. So many people that I know have come from somewhere else and so many of us are that much more proud now. Whether it's with a Vegas Strong T-shirt, whether it's with a Golden Knights hat, it's just different in a good way now. If you were born here or if you're a Rebel, you wore that; you owned it without a doubt. But so many of us come from somewhere else and we're such a young city. We're such a vibrant city, different than other vibrant cities, and I'll take it. There's two things I've said to people about this city. Number one, it's the last great city in this country where a busboy can get better treated than a CEO. It's such a young city that you have the ability to make your mark. You have the ability to be a first generation, someone who did something here. I see it every day.

The opportunities are limitless.

Without a doubt.

The last thing is, do you think we are going to allow this to last? The way we're feeling, the possibilities that we see, are we going to allow it to last?

Obviously I wasn't here when it was a rail stop. I wasn't here when it was only a military base. I wasn't here when the Flamingo was built. I was not here when the Mirage was built. I was here when dot-com happened and I was here when the millennium was. I think we're at a very interesting juncture in this city's history because we have a good shot at being a three-million-person city in the next five years. I think that '18, '19, '20, because of T-Mobile, because of (MGM) Arena, because of the Raiders stadium, I think that Vegas is as hot as it's ever been and Vegas is as significant as it's ever been in popular lexicon and also economically. I know that when I drive and I see a Knights sticker or Vegas Strong sticker or something, I think that will

last. I think that when October first comes again, because they are doing another concert—

Really?

Yes, ma'am. It's not going to be there, but they're doing another concert. It's going to be something. I went to the ACMs. I went to them at MGM. That was different. It was hard. It was not easy, but I'm glad I did it. I think that Las Vegans think differently now. I truly believe that. I think it's for the better because we're a city. Unfortunately because of tragedy, but it has brought us together.

Wonderful.

Thank you.

Thank you so much.

My pleasure.

I am so glad that we got together.

I very much appreciate it. Sorry it took so long.

It's not a problem. We're doing this for a two-year period and we are just going to allow it to go at its own pace.

Excellent. I appreciate that.

We are learning a lot.

I can only imagine, exactly.

Thank you so much.

Thank you so much. I appreciate the time. This was great. What a pleasure. I will pass your information to a few people.

Please do.

[End of recorded interview]