

AN INTERVIEW WITH MYNDA SMITH, CHRIS DAVIS AND DEBBIE DAVIS

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MAY 24, 2018

REMEMBERING 1 OCTOBER

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV LIBRARIES

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVE

This is Claytee White and Barbara Tabach. It is May 24th, 2018. We're going to go around the room and get pronunciations and spellings.

Mynda Smith; M-Y-N-D-A, S-M-I-T-H.

Chris Davis; C-H-R-I-S, D-A-V-I-S.

Debbie Davis; D-E-B-B-I-E, D-A-V-I-S.

Thank you. I don't know in which order we want to do this, but we may start anyplace you like. I just want to know a little about your early life; where you were born, what the family formation was like, where you went to school; those kinds of things.

DD: I'll start. I am the oldest of four children. I was born in Ogden, Utah. My name is Debbie Davis. I am the only daughter; I have three smaller brothers. Ogden, Utah was a small town. It was near Salt Lake City, Utah. My mom and dad were both in the banking business and they both worked from the time I was a very young child. I mostly helped raise my younger brothers and was responsible for them until I married.

I got married and had children at a very early age. All of my relatives were very surprised I did that because I had been so responsible for raising my brothers and they thought that I would choose to be free. But I have always liked children and loved my own four children. I had a son and two daughters, and then when I married my husband, he had a son, which gave me two sons and two daughters, which made our life very interesting and fun. We were always a very active family. We snow skied and water skied and did a lot of fun things together, camping, and just had a nice family and always enjoyed each other. The kids always were close in age, so they didn't really need other friends; they always had each other to play with.

Wonderful. Chris.

CD: Hi, I'm Chris. I also grew up in Ogden, Utah. Debbie and I actually met on the ski slope.

Although I was super attracted to her right away, I'm not sure it was the other way around for a while. But I was a better skier, so...That's not true either.

I had a brother and two sisters growing up. My dad was a railroad man; he was an engineer on Union Pacific Railroad. I got to ride the train free, which was really fun, and I got to go visit my grandparents who lived in Evanston, Wisconsin, free, go by the train and go see my grandpa and grandma. My grandpa was the fisherman who taught me to be a fisherman. I have a lot of great memories with my Grandpa White.

As Deb said, we were a very active family growing up with our kids. We loved Lake Powell. We had a boat at Lake Powell. We would go there as often as we could. We loved it. The kids loved to water ski and be in the water with us. Really the boat became a way to keep our family together. We would go on the weekends and they wanted to go with us, so that was nice.

Great.

Yes. My son is still in Salt Lake City. We have a bunch of grandkids. They don't seem to be able to mix it up. Mynda has three girls. Cody has three boys.

MS: Wait. No.

CD: Mynda has three girls. Cody has three girls.

MS: He has two girls.

CD: Cody has two girls.

MS: And Neysa has three boys.

CD: And Neysa has three boys. Wow. Thank you.

MS: That's okay. We'll keep you on track.

CD: Mynda has three girls, Cody has two girls, and Neysa has three boys, so none of them could mix it up.

When the tragedy hit October first, Debbie and I were retired and gone; we had bought a motor home and we were in (CITY), Wisconsin at the time. When we call the time, we jumped on a plane and came down here and haven't left since.

Tell me about your business for these years, what kind of business were you in?

CD: First off, I was the food distributor for fifteen years for Sysco Foods. Then we moved to Las Vegas and I became an insurance salesman for two years and hated that with all my heart. I got into the food broker business and I was the vice president of a company called Acosta here in Las Vegas. What a food broker does is we represent certain food companies, so I did that for my next fifteen years. I've always been in the food business one way or the other, except for two years.

Before we get to you...You owned a flower shop or you were a florist?

DD: I was a florist for approximately nine years, and before that I was a food broker, so we both have food service background. I was a food broker for sixteen years. When I was a florist that was a really interesting job, long, long hours in owning the shop. Holidays were never my friend.

CD: Or mine.

MS: Amen.

DD: One of his jobs took him to Seattle, and when we moved to Seattle in 2002, which was an interesting year for us, I retired and I haven't worked since then. We lived there for two years and then we moved to Las Vegas. He was in the food service industry in Seattle and then here as well.

MS: Mynda Smith. I was the youngest of four. We definitely enjoyed the activities we did, and without those we never would have been as close as we were because I was the oddball, what I would say is the ugly duckling of the family. The three were more similar in what they were like;

they were a little more wild spirit. I was a very studious student and unwilling to break the rules, so I felt was on the outside of all that. But when we skied, either snow or water, it brought us together. My mom's mom, my Grandma Gal, worked at Snowbird, so we skied free and skied our entire lives growing up any time we wanted. We were twenty minutes from the mountain. We all are very good skiers because of that. It's a fun thing to have.

After high school I lived in Italy for a year where I home schooled a family who was playing professional basketball in Italy. Then I came back and met my husband and we moved to Vegas two months later. We started Fabulous Freddy's here in town. This has now been twenty years. We've lived here twenty-one years. Fabulous Freddy's has now been open twenty.

We've had three girls here. One is at the University of Utah in Utah. One will be going to University of Utah in just a few months. Then we have our youngest who will be starting high school.

Wow. It runs in the family. You don't look old enough.

MS: We do start young.

Yes, yes. Fabulous Freddy's, the car wash?

MS: Yes.

No.

MS: Yes. My husband is Freddy.

DD: I must say he is fabulous.

Oh, yes. I've been there several times.

DD: He is one of the nicest men I've ever met in my life. He's a fabulous man in every way.

MS: We've had a busy, busy twenty years, but a lot of success and a lot of hard work.

Yes. I heard you talking about a new business adventure. Would you like to talk about that

before we start October 1?

MS: Which new business venture?

CD: Are we talking about the foundation?

The foundation. You want to tell us about the foundation first?

MS: When I said we all have a new job...When October 1 happened we were all thrust into different roles of life. They are now helping to raise all three grandsons.

DD: We're no longer retired. We came out of retirement.

How old are the grandsons?

DD: Twenty-four, eighteen and fifteen. The twenty-four-year-old just lives about three minutes away, and then the eighteen-year-old and the fifteen-year-old, we share custody with their father. Our daughter and her husband, their father, were divorced, and so we agreed to keep things as they had been and we share the custody, and so we have the boys half time, the two boys. The eighteen-year-old is going to Dixie University in St. George, Utah in the fall, graduating tomorrow. Then the fifteen-year-old will be a sophomore. That's our new role. We're not parents and we're not grandparents, but we are grand parents, or at least we're trying to be.

Wonderful.

MS: In that same sense, because of all that, because of Neysa's passing, because it was a national event, there is a lot of business side to it. Their life has really revolved around the logistics of what we just have to do to move forward and to make things happen. It's a full-time job. It's really been—I don't want to say surprising to how much work there is, but maybe that is it.

But then we all decided that we wanted to start a foundation because we have grandkids—I have nephews; they have grandkids—that are going to college. I have a daughter that's also going to college. They said, "We don't want to leave any of these families that have

young children, have their children not have opportunity because their parent is gone. Like Neysa is the breadwinner. For us, if we could find a way to bring more money in for college that will never be a stress." So we've all decided to start a foundation called 58 Loved and Never Forgotten and it will have funds for the children left behind to further their education. That's been a huge task.

CD: Enormous.

MS: On top of that we're trying to find the fifty-eight families, to bring us together to one spot. That's been a really difficult thing. We're helping with the anniversary. We're having a dinner for all fifty-eight that we're trying to get a local hotel to help us with. There's been a lot, so that's our full-time job.

Oh, sounds like it.

DD: The children of the fifty-eight; that is a foundation and that is for children of all the fifty-eight, so that includes the people in Canada and all the states in the United States. But then we also, as you're probably aware, we've started an endowment at UNLV, which is only for children that choose to go to UNLV, and that is for the mentor program, which I believe they call the peer program at the library.

The peer coaching.

MS: Peer coaching, yes.

DD: We're very proud of that as well.

MS: That's Neysa's, in her name.

DD: That's Neysa's mentor endowment.

MS: What's it called, though?

DD: The Neysa Davis Tonks Mentor Endowment Fund.

BARBARA: *Do you know how many children are...?*

CD: We do. There's about thirty-five who are under the age of twenty-one of the fifty-eight.

DD: There were only six families in Las Vegas and one in Reno, so a total of seven families were affected from Nevada. The majority are from California and there are a few from Canada and then there's just a few just spurts throughout the United States, but mostly California.

CD: We've met with the city. We've met the Commissioner Sisolak. We've met with probably the right people who are trying to help us fund that foundation for the fifty-eight because there are a lot of people who are interested in helping. How can you not help children and how can you not help clearly their education?

When we first started out doing this, we thought, *what's our cause? What do we want people to remember Neysa by?* That's how we came up with that because she was that way.

That's wonderful. Chris, you started earlier to talk about the day, October first. Would you like to start that? Please join in and just talk about that day with us.

CD: I'll probably let her start because—

MS: It kind of started with me.

CD: It started with you, yes.

Just tell us about the whole day.

MS: I had been in Denver that weekend with my daughter celebrating her twenty-first birthday. The ironic part in all of this—not ironic, but just the crazy part of it is time just doesn't make sense to us. Time doesn't make sense that I came home from Denver that night and that this happened that same night. He's had similar things where his mind can't wrap around the time of things.

That night my phone rang about ten-forty at night and it was my fourteen-year-old

nephew. He was pretty calm, but he was saying, "Aunt M, my mom's been killed; my mom's been killed." I'm asleep, so you get awoken to that and it just makes zero sense. I came to a little more and I said, "Okay, what happened?" And he's like, "She was shot, she was shot." "Okay," I said, "I'm on my way."

Freddy wakes up. We get dressed. I actually think before I got dressed I called you guys. Greysen, my nephew, had tried to call them and they hadn't answered, which I find as one of the tender mercies that we had in all of this because they came to very fast. That probably in most of what happened—there are a few—but one of the worst things was that moment, calling them.

And so I hung up from there and I went to their house. Between my house and here is five minutes. Neysa's ex-husband lives between us. It wasn't very far to get there. The three boys were already there. We spent the next two hours, maybe an hour and a half, just not having a clue. Some of the people at his house were on the news. We didn't have the TV on, but they were, I think, on their phones. In the beginning I was like, *oh my gosh, there's two people dead in this shooting and one is Neysa*. I couldn't even believe that one out of two was going to be her. Then somebody came in and said, "It's twenty now." And I'm like, *twenty?*

So I called a captain of the police that we know and I said, "Help me. We need help figuring out what to do." I said, "There's twenty people dead and Neysa's one." And he goes, "Mynda, that number is going to double any second now."

The information was coming so fast. I would call them and I would say, okay, get ready, here's another hard blow.

Neysa was with her friend at the concert who was getting information to us, but then it just stopped because he was taken to the hospital. Between him being with Neysa on the ground until the very end, until he really got out of the hospital, we really didn't have more than one

phone call, and it wasn't to any of us, so we were just getting information someone else was saying.

At some point my brother, who was in Utah and just watching every second of the news, said, "They just said that at the police headquarters they are taking people that are in need. You can go down there." We decided, both me and Freddy, Neysa's ex-husband, and the three boys, we would go down.

As we walked in, you got searched twice. You just were entering a zone that it just...

Where were you?

MS: Where was I...?

Where is the police station that you went to?

MS: It's off Martin Luther King, I think, right? Is that the one down there, is Martin Luther King?

CD: The big one, yes.

DD: Was it the police station?

MS: It's the police headquarters, yes; that's what they refer to it as, by Costco down there, I think it is.

Right, the Metro station.

MS: We walk in and it was just a big empty room. We sat down and I just said to the boys, "This is going to be the hardest thing we're going to do," because I knew what was going to happen, and it did. Slowly but surely these small groups that were there would just start to scream, and you knew that they had found out that their loved one had died. At one point I just said to the boys, "Cover your ears; just put your hands over your ears." Because it was just these screams and screams. It was very hard.

We sat in that room for about...We probably got there around one-thirty or so. They called a list of names, because nobody was getting checked into hospitals, so we weren't getting any names. All of us in that room, more than likely 95 percent of us, probably had a loved one that had passed, because if anyone was able to communicate, they were calling.

They released a list of about fifty names, and we're all just on pins and needles waiting for our name to be called. Out of a room that just kept filling with people as the night went on, not one of us could connect to those names. It was so disheartening because we knew Neysa had passed, but you just still needed to find her.

At that point we decided—it was about four-thirty in the morning—that the boys needed to go home. Glade took the boys home and Neysa's friend had shown up. He checked himself out of the hospital.

DD: Glade is her ex-husband.

MS: Yes, Glade Thompson is Neysa's ex-husband.

The friend had checked himself out of which hospital?

MS: I don't even know what hospital he was in.

CD: I don't know where he went.

But he had been wounded?

MS: He had. He has nineteen pieces of shrapnel down the side of his body where he laid on top of her, protecting her.

DD: He didn't know she was already gone. He just didn't want her trampled or more wounded.

MS: It goes from the top of his armpit all the way down, which just meant that he was like this over her. He showed up in scrubs and blood on his face, not a lot, but enough that it was real. Then he talked to us about the night very briefly because we knew the boys were very sensitive

to emotions. At the end he said, "Does anyone have any questions?" And my fourteen-year-old nephew said, "Where was she shot?" And that's when he told us that she had been shot in the head.

I say to people that was our moment of falling apart. Every one of us just started screaming. I look at it as an outsider what people saw of us and they probably thought we had just found out she had died. But for some reason that was just like a really real moment of death and the reality of it.

So they left and I stayed. I said to my husband, "The next reading of names, I just want to see." It was about five-thirty and the next reading came. We all sat there and they read another fifty names on top of maybe the fifty, and not one of us again moved. It just broke your heart to watch all of us just not...

I went to go say goodbye and I walked up to the man who had been in charge, and a man came from behind me and he said, "Excuse me." He said, "You said—" And I don't remember the name, so I'm just going to make it up. "You said John Smith." And he said, "Oh, I'm sorry. Well, let me look. Oh, it's not John Smith. It's Jeffrey Smith." And the man looked at his family of like ten and he said, "We found them." And there was one person in that room that found...And we don't know the condition. We don't know what happened because I don't even remember his name. But as we walked out—we finally decided that we were leaving—I said to them, "I need you to know that my sister is gone and we know that. We're just trying to find her. But we have already decided that we have to find light here." I just said to my nephews, "There's so much darkness here that we have to find light because that's how we have to move forward." So I said to this family, "You need to know that your light right now is our light and that's how I'm going to move forward from this point on is your light." Since then we have continued to just

find light, to continue in Neysa's saying—do you want to say what Neysa's saying is?

DD: Our family saying is that darkness cannot exist with light and Neysa's light will shine forever, and that's what we always say. I'm sorry.

No, please, don't be sorry.

Don't be sorry.

DD: That's what we say all the time, Neysa's light will shine forever.

MS: I went home from there. We had our two daughters at home and a foreign exchange student, which we could go on for many hours on the mess that that brought and was before, but we won't. We had our daughter in Utah. We had chosen not to call them until that point. We got home and we woke them up one by one. My middle one is my most emotional, but she was the one that didn't...We're waking them out of bed. Just like me, I didn't cry until a while later because it was call Mom and Dad and do this and you just are in this mode. I got them all; told them all, and I said, "I've got to go now because I've got to go to school and I've got to tell the school that these boys aren't coming today."

I went to leave and my seventeen-year-old was in her car, talking to my twenty-one-year old that was in Utah, just sobbing. It broke my heart to leave them. I just wanted to sit and hold them. But I said, "You have to go to school because I have to go find Neysa."

I went to school and then from there I went to the airport and I got them at eight-thirty that morning. They were...You can tell them.

Would you like to tell your side of it until eight-thirty that morning?

CD: We were vacationing, retirement. We had a bunch of friends up in Wisconsin, so we decided to go up there and spend some time with them. We were actually at one of our friend's home when we got the call. The phone rang in the motor home and it was one-thirty our time up

there. We just thought, *ugh, it's solicitation or something; that can't be anything*. Then the phone rang again, and I said, "Nope, something is wrong." I got there and it was Greysen, but I had missed it somehow. Then right after that Mynda called us.

I guess I can just tell you we didn't believe it. We didn't believe it. They hadn't found Neysa yet. We knew that Marco was with her. We knew that. We didn't believe it.

DD: You say that you weren't yelling, but you were crying and I couldn't understand you. I'm the one that answered the phone. I heard you say *shot* and I heard you say *killed* and then I heard you say *Neysa*, but I couldn't tell what you were saying. I couldn't understand.

MS: None of us knew she was at a concert, so none of this would have been put together easily that she was somewhere.

DD: No. Then I said, "What?" And you said it again. And I said, "I don't know what you're saying." Then you handed the phone to Freddy and he told me. I remember screaming and saying, "It's not true," and, "That's not funny," and, "It's not a funny joke." I think I said that all night long. Did I?

CD: You said it a lot, yes.

DD: Because we're kind of a smart aleck family; we're the family that's always telling jokes and playing tricks on each other and stuff. I just thought, *of all the things you could say, this isn't funny*. I just kept thinking how she would do funny things, and I just thought, *this isn't funny and it's not real*. That was really the biggest thing is that it wasn't real and it was a bad dream and I'm going to wake up any minute.

CD: Once we kind of got composed a little bit, our friends came down from their house, from their motor home, and we told them. They got on the phone. I said, "I've got to go home. I need to get out of here." They got Delta and Delta was so super good. They had two seats left. This

was, what, at five in the morning by then? Four in the morning?

DD: It was probably two-fifteen, two-thirty.

MS: When you were starting the process of planning to fly.

DD: Yes. Patty called and got... Yes.

CD: Delta had two seats left on the seven a.m. flight. We just took off, left our motor home there, left our clothes, left everything. We just jumped on the plane. We were in so much shock, it was just even difficult to get...I'm not good in the TSA line.

MS: He almost got arrested, put it this way.

CD: Yes. I had no patience. I had no...But we got through, luckily. We got through. Delta on the way...It's got to be the longest three or four hours I've ever, ever spent. It was horrible. But they had called ahead and talked to Mynda and said, "Look, we've got your parents and we're going to put you in a secure different area than everybody. We're going to get your parents off the plane and take them a different way."

MS: A big golf cart. Not just walking. They took them down—in a golf cart, right?

DD: No, in a car.

CD: In an actual car, yes. They said to us, "We'll have four or five people on the ground. We'll take you to every hospital you need to go to." We had to say, "We don't need to go to a hospital. We just need to find my other daughter." But they had coordinated and they asked everybody to stay on the plane while we got off.

DD: We kept getting typed notes from the captain. I don't know how they do that, but they were typed. Then the flight attendant would bring us the note and we would read it and then we had to give it back to the flight attendant because we were not allowed to keep the note. Then she would tell him our response. It was like, "We'll find the hospital and we'll take you there. We'll make

arrangements." Then that we responded, "No, we don't need that." Then offered up other things and just continued offers.

Then once we got all of that arranged and then figured out, then the flight attendant brought me a bracelet and she said, "The other flight attendants and I would like to give you this bracelet. You have our hearts. Anything you want, anything we can give you, anything you want to eat..." And we couldn't eat. They gave us water, but we had bought water at one of the stands once we got in the airport and we said we were fine. They just kept trying everything they could do. "Do you need blankets?" Whatever. They were so kind.

Then the captain escorted us down the stairs where they take luggage that there's no room for, and then put us in the car, and then took us to her. We didn't have any luggage at all. They escorted her and us to her car. I mean, I felt like the queen of England.

MS: We kept saying, "We're okay. We're good from here." But he said, "No, we'll walk you."

DD: "We're fine." No, they wouldn't. And then the guy that she had been on the phone with said, "I have called every hospital in this city trying to find her." And he had the wrong name.

MS: Yes, it was kind of cute, though. They just kept calling me. "What can we do? How can we help?" I said, "I'm good. I'm just looking for..." Brandon was his name. He said, "I've got some connections to the hospitals. Let me try to call." I said, "Okay." He called me back and he said, "I am so sorry. There is no Neysa Davis anywhere." I said, "Well, that's not her name. Her name is Neysa Tonks." We kind of chuckled. Then he called me back. He just could not have been more kind.

When they came up to me, they didn't—they just had us in the bottom area where people are checking into their flights. Man, I just think of that moment where we were just—that scene just because I think—I don't know if I screamed or not, but I just know that I was sobbing and

her legs gave out. It was just really hard to meet up there. Then we decided it was time to go find her.

DD: He was telling this story the other day to somebody and he said, "It took us three days to find her." And it didn't. It took us one day. But in his mind it was three days. But we found her that night about ten-thirty.

How did you find her?

MS: It's a pretty long story because it was twenty-four hours before we found her. Our oldest, Kaden, had called Neysa's phone and someone had answered it and said they had her phone, right after the shooting. He wanted to go down to the Strip and find it, and we said, "You're not going." We had this phone we needed to find. "Well, they said it was at Green Valley Hospital." That's what he heard. There's no Green Valley Hospital here. I said to them and I got them, "Let's go to Valley Hospital and let's just see."

We drove to Valley Hospital. We explained our whole story. We knew. Nothing, we got nothing, and that's okay.

Then my husband said, "They just announced on the news that the convention center is going to be having a center. You can go find information of anything." So we said, "Okay."

We got there at ten. We walked in and there was like one person walking in. And they said, "We are so sorry, this isn't open until one." We're like, "Well, what are we going to do?" So we said, "Well, we'll just stay."

A couple of people approached us. The coroner approached us. We said, "We know she's passed. We just need to find her." He said, "You're going to be my priority."

A hard thing that happened for us, maybe just for me, but we hadn't told anybody really. I had seen my neighbor on the street, or maybe Freddy called her, I don't know. But she must have

seen somebody. I'm not answering texts. I didn't realize you checked in. I didn't realize all these things that are happening on social media for people to know they were safe. People were messaging and I couldn't even look at my phone. But all the sudden I looked down and I saw that it said, "I hope it's not your girls. I am so sorry." Or something. It was on Facebook. I pull Facebook up and someone has tagged me, saying, "I hope it's not your children." I am like, "Oh my gosh, you guys, it's out. We've got to do something." We didn't want to say anything until we found her. We sat there and wrote our—

DD: Message.

—announcement, yes. That was so hard and it was just so final. It was just making it be out there.

We sat there and they asked for a description over and over of what she looked like. She's not hard to find. She's five feet, a hundred pounds. She's got a tattoo. She has implants. When you're talking descriptions, we're not talking a whole lot of people can match her. They just kept asking us and asking us.

We got there at ten. We weren't hungry. They had tables with Costco chips and cookies from Wal-Mart. None of it even looked like anything we wanted. They had some fruit, but none of us really...Then it was like all the sudden—we sat there and we were watching families coming in and we were hugging people. I don't know. It's like we blinked and I looked up and that entire—and this is like a huge moment for me because that entire room—

DD: This is Vegas. This is what we did.

—was full of food. I literally say that that's the one moment I realized it wasn't just our journey. Even though we saw these people crying and we saw, "Oh, she died next to me," still it was just our journey. But in that room they had us in is a garage and for as far as you could see there were

cars. Maybe you saw it on the news, but it never ended. I sat there and I walked over with my husband and I said, "I want to just stand here and thank ever car." I walked up to these chafing dishes and lifted them up and it was the most beautiful ground chicken I've ever seen. And we're really healthy. I don't know about this one, but her and I are. And salads in fridges. I grabbed salads and I grabbed some chicken and I sat down. It was maybe two by then. We were like, "This is exactly what we need." Just fuel.

DD: It was amazing. People pulled up and their cars were full of food, and then a truck would pull up and it was from Jason's Deli, and then another truck would pull up and it was from another nice restaurant, and then cars would pull up full of water. It never ended. It was just Las Vegas.

MS: Supporting us. Loving us. It was the first time we all felt like this wasn't just our journey. It was way bigger than what we knew and realized what was happening because we're still just in this room looking for Neysa. That was a huge moment for us to know, A, we were loved; B, we had support; and C, that the three marathons we just ran, we can now finally fuel our bodies. Literally the only way I can explain how I felt was that it was a three-marathon moment until two o'clock. Our bodies were just so...We were moving, but, yet, we weren't physically moving.

We decided at three, I guess, after talking with the FBI and everybody, that we needed to go home. We hadn't seen the boys yet. We came here. We got the boys. I went home and changed out of the sweats that I had been wearing all day because I woke up, threw my hair in a ponytail, had sweats on. I was lucky I put a bra on.

DD: I need to tell you a funny story because this has been a little bit sad for us. When we got off the plane and this guy was taking us to find Mynda, he goes, "Now, I haven't met her, so tell me what she looks like." I said, "Well, our daughter that we lost was beautiful and our other

daughter is just as beautiful and she'll be dressed really nice and she's blond and she's just always exceptionally gorgeous." So I said, "Oh, there she is." And the woman turned around and it wasn't her. And I said, "No, that's not her." Then all of a sudden, he goes, "There she is." I look down and here she is and she looks like trash.

MS: Homeless. I had sweats on that the crotch is to the knees, something you should not wear outside.

DD: They were like Hammer pants. I looked at her and I went, "Oh, well, I stand corrected. That is our daughter. She doesn't usually look like that." He started laughing and I did, too. I was grateful.

MS: It was after my first marathon, so imagine.

DD: I was grateful to laugh for a second. It was just for a moment, but it did feel good.

MS: Yes. We came here. I just put a little small cotton dress on and came back.

My husband, Freddy, while we were at the convention, we didn't know what he was doing. He had gone down to the shooting venue, to the concert venue, and had tried to get in because we didn't know where Neysa was. We didn't know where she had been left. We didn't know. He tried to use his Freddy skills and get in there and then was turned away. He went to the coroner's office where they were barricaded by police that said, "You're not getting in here." He said there was many, many people there.

We had all been gathered here and it was about nine o'clock. Freddy just said, "I am done waiting. I am done." He goes, "I'm going back to the coroner's office." I said, "Well, I'm going with you." We had a lot of people here, and so they said, "Okay, you guys go, but don't you dare go inside without us." I said, "Okay." Because we just thought we were going to get turned away.

We got down and, sure enough, both entrances barricaded by police. We picked this side.

I said, "Hi, I just need to talk to the coroner." He goes, "I'm sorry, we've been advised to tell people like you, you can't get in and you need to go to the convention center." I said, "I've been there all day. I've talked to the coroner." The problem was is he got so caught up he just forgot about us. I said, "And we're not getting help." He said, "Well, I am sorry, there's nothing I can do."

Then the only way to explain it is I became the nine-eleven girl with my picture, standing there. I said, "Please." It actually was on my phone, but I was holding my phone. I said, "Please, this is Neysa." I explain again for the fiftieth time what she looked like. I said, "They have to know where she is by now." We had heard that she had been on a list somewhere, and to this day I don't even know if that was correct information. But I said, "She's on a list. She's somewhere. We've just got to find her." He said, "I can't."

Well, finally the one kid said, "Let me go talk to the coroner." I said, "Okay." So he goes in and he comes out. He says, "I'm sorry, she said no. She said that you have to go to the main..." What's the main coroner's name?

John Fudenberg.

MS: Yes. "He's at the convention center and you need to go." I said, "We've already been there and we've already talked to him. Please."

Then all of a sudden here came a woman out from the building and she said, "I'm the assistant coroner. I am sorry, but you have to go to the convention center." Then I said again, "Please, I've been there. This is my sister. Somebody's got to know where she is." I said it again. "This is what she looks like." She sat there for a second and then all the sudden she said, "I have one Jane Doe and it might be her." She said, "Give me a second."

I called them and I said, "You better get in your car and get down here." We waited. They

got there within ten or fifteen minutes. It's not that far. They walked in and my dad said, "Mynda, be prepared." And I said, "Dad..." I already knew she had been shot in the head. I said, "Nothing can be worse than the image that I have." I said, "So I'm ready."

We originally thought when we went to the convention center it would be a morgue there. We were kind of told that they were taking bodies there, so we had been prepared to see bodies there. Now it's our second time we're going, *okay, we're going to see her body and clear this up. It's going to be rough.* They brought my oldest nephew; he wanted to go.

Do you want to say when we walked in?

CD: Yes. That was probably one of the very hardest things for me. I get off the plane. I said to Mynda, "Where is our girl? Where is she?" "We don't know." "What do you mean, we don't know? She's got to be somewhere, right?" For me it's almost a hope that maybe she's still okay, maybe, maybe. That's where I felt like it was a week that we didn't find her because it was so many times turned away and so many times. That's when we were at the house and Freddy said, "I'm going to go down." I said, "I can't go down there anymore. We've been there all day. We've been turned around a thousand times. I'm not going to go do that." That's when Mynda and Freddy went down.

These guys pulled off the miracle and got us in there. The assistant coroner, she was so good with us. I didn't know what to expect. You see the CSI where they pull them out. It's like, oh, crap. I just told these guys and our grandson Kaden, her first son, I said, "Kaden, this is going to be rough, dude. This is going to be a tough time. I don't know if I could handle it. I don't know if any of us can handle it."

The way they did it was really super good and really super professional. I'll think of her name. It starts with an M and I can't remember.

Was it John's assistant, Nicole? Nicole is his assistant, but she was at the assistance center, I think.

DD: I thought it was an A.

MS: I don't think it was an N.

DD: I thought it was Amanda or Andrea.

MS: I don't think it was Nicole, but she was the assistant.

DD: She is blond.

MS: He doesn't have more than one?

She's like a right-hand person, but she was at the family assistance center. I don't know who the assistant would have been.

Coroner.

MS: She was amazing.

We can find that.

MS: Yes. She is amazing.

CD: I've got her number, so I can give that to you as well. She just sat us down and said, first of all, "I'm not sure; I'm not even sure we have the right person." Instead of pulling her out of somewhere, she had photos. She did the first photo. Neysa looked really good.

DD: She said, "I'm going to show you her tattoo first."

CD: Yes. We all said—you said no to that one.

MS: I said, "No." She turned it over and I said, "That's not her tattoo."

DD: And Kaden and I both knew it was.

MS: They both said, "Yes," but none of us breathed because I'm saying, "No." And, I don't know, it wasn't enough.

You couldn't identify the tattoo?

CD: We could. She couldn't.

MS: Just because I'm not good at what it looks like. Obviously it was it. But I just said, "No," and then we all just kind of froze. Then she said, "Okay, I'm going to turn the next one over." She said, "I've cleaned her up and I've wrapped her head in a white towel."

CD: It was her. It was her, yes.

DD: And she looked like an angel. Her face was fine. She looked like an angel.

MS: To say that it was one of the most beautiful experiences, to go from such a dark darkness and feeling that this heavy evil was going to come, and then have it be so beautiful that we found her and she was beautiful. We didn't scream. We kind of softly cried, but it wasn't...I'm actually kind of surprised how we were because it's not what all we expected it to be.

CD: No.

DD: No.

MS: Then she had three pictures; the second one I think was just a different profile. Then we sat there and she said, "Okay, someone is going to need to sign for her." You can probably already tell, but I'm kind of like a red personality, so I tried to not—okay, Mom and Dad are here; they should sign. I'm not going to say anything. Then they didn't say anything. Then the lady looked at my husband and said, "Well, you can just sign for her." And those words could have been like daggers in my body. I went, "No, no, no, I want to sign for her. I want to claim her." It wasn't that they didn't want to, it's just they couldn't. Because that was honorable for me to just like sign my name.

We sat there and I said, "Can we look at the pictures?" Because she had taken them. I said, "Can we look at the pictures again?" I felt bad about doing it because I just felt like we

shouldn't do that. Then once we got them out, we all just kept passing them. It was just having her again. It was so nice.

We laughed and I said to my husband, "Did I run to the police officers or did I just run in my head?" He goes, "No, you ran." I just ran to them and told them how thankful I was that they gave us a chance because without them, she couldn't have given us a chance.

DD: Yes, they went and got her.

MS: Yes. We'll never know who they were and we wouldn't want to get them in trouble because they did break the rule. She kind of bent the rule, I think, or broke it. In the end we were so grateful. That was about ten o'clock that night at that point.

It had been twenty-four hours.

DD: Yes.

CD: One week.

One week for you.

MS: One week in twenty-four hours.

You already spoke a little about this, but you were talking about the outpouring of love from this city. What were your impressions about Las Vegas prior to this and how did those impressions change?

CD: That's a very good question because I worked here. I think for us there's two different Las Vegases; there's our residential area and Red Rock and Mount Charleston and then there's the Strip. I think we all try to stay off the Strip.

DD: Except I still love the Strip. We don't really gamble. We're not heavy gamblers. Once in a while we'll put a little money in a machine, but we're not big gamblers. But I still love the lights and I love the Bellagio waters and all the beauty of the Strip. I enjoy that here and there.

Yes, me too.

DD: The shows. It's wonderful.

CD: The city has been wonderful to us. For example, the Golden Knights retired number fifty-eight because of the fifty-eight victims. The night that they were going to retire number fifty-eight, they called us and asked if our family would represent the fifty-eight. Deb and I and the three boys and their dad, we all got to go and get up on the ice. We were there when they unveiled the big sign that had the fifty-eight names on it and the number fifty-eight, when they retired that.

The point is everybody has been great. Mayor Goodman has just been super awesome with us. We got a flag from Senator Cortez, Catherine Masto. They flew a flag over Washington, D.C. on October second in Neysa's name, in honor. Out of the blue we received a flag. She had actually put a little handwritten note in there and said, "If I can ever help with anything, call me," and her number. I just called her and I said, "I don't need anything. I just wanted to thank you. It's super great that you did that." We didn't know.

MS: Can I go backwards a little bit, too? We were here; we were all in the house. And Dad said, "Come in, come in, come look at the TV." It was the very opening night of the Golden Knights. We had no idea that that was happening that they were honoring the fifty-eight. We caught it late; we didn't even catch it in the beginning, which broke our hearts that we didn't know about it because we would have bought tickets to be there or we just would have prepared for it differently. But that started off—my mom and I are not huge sports fan. Well, that moment we became true sports fans. We all got tickets to the night that they won their fifty-eighth game, and it was their ninety-first game, which is Route 91, the same game.

Oh, my goodness. I didn't even know.

I didn't realize that. Oh, wow.

MS: The ninety-first game and it was their fifty-eighth win. For all of us to be there, it meant so much more to us than everybody around us. It really has brought the boys something to get up and look forward to. I made a rant on Facebook because I was so frustrated by a post someone had forwarded about someone criticizing people for watching the royal wedding and not crying with Texas. I said, "You know what? Take me, for instance, I can't even listen to the radio because I can't take that in right now. My heart, my mind can't absorb it. So don't judge me because right now I'm loving the Knights and that's what's moving me forward. So stop making judgment on people."

We had another friend of mine who owns a jewelry store here and she posted that she was making these bracelets. Mine is all rubbed off, but they say *Vegas Strong* that she posted out and said all the proceeds would go to the victims' fund. Then we called her and said, "Will you put *NT* on it?" My dad's is a little more...thicker than mine. We found such beauty that was surrounding us. One of those first nights when I got on Facebook—because I actually got fueled a little bit at night when none of us were sleeping—I got fueled off of just reading people's messages and that's when someone had posted the line for giving blood. I just sobbed and I just thought, *oh my gosh, this is so beautiful what our city is doing*. Then I just posted a story that the Vegas Knights posted the other day about their team and their journey and how a friend of one of the players had stayed in the venue and helped people as they were running out—he stayed and helped—and then how they all went and gave blood. All of these little things that we don't know that we've missed that's for us, and us is the fifty-eight. We made shirts that say *Vegas Strong* on the back, but it says *Vegas Proud* on the front, because we are. We're so grateful for the love that we've received by our city.

DD: I really want to add that a lot of the businesses here have been very kind and done a lot of nice things for the families of the fifty-eight, as well as survivors and the people that were affected. But the people here, just the average everyday people have just been wonderful. You just hear stories. The people here have embraced the city and each other and not even the people that were affected; they've embraced each other as a whole. The citizens one to one have become stronger as a city. I think we were always a good city, but people used to say to me, "How do you stand living in Las Vegas?" And I'm like, "Well, we don't live in front of a slot machine. Our bed is not in between gaming tables. That's not the life." But we have a beautiful city; we always have had, and it's even better now. We all found our place with each other, I think.

MS: We had a moment. The boys wanted to do a viewing of Neysa. She was cremated. But before she was cremated, it was important to them to see her. We went out, if you want to talk about that at all. When we left we were just starving. We had actually gone to the crosses for the first time, I think, right? Then we went to the viewing. You're just so drained and your emotions are just fed up and we were starving. I said, "I'll call Port of Subs. I called them and I said, "Hey, we've got twenty of us. We're hungry. Can you make us some sandwiches to be ready? We're on our way, half an hour." They said, "Oh, no, we need three hours for that." Then you just say okay—it happened a few times where you just say, okay, I've got to...I said, "Listen, we just saw my sister. We're one of the fifty-eight. We're starving. Can you just help us in any way?" Which I hate doing; I hate asking. They said, "We'll have it ready. Don't even worry." We pulled in and they said, "We called corporate and they said we're not to charge you." And I said, "Please. No, no, no, we don't want that. Please." They said, "This is our honor." To just feel that, man, it's such a small thing. It is such a small thing, but it was so huge to us. That fueled us. We needed fuel. As much as that, somebody giving us water, that's what we needed, and that's why the

convention was so important that night because I don't eat crappy food. I don't eat chips. Man, when that fuel came that is what we needed, it was so appreciated.

I'm on three tissues. How are you guys only on one?

DD: I keep laying mine out to dry. I use it (58:45/ indiscernible).

That last story was it. What did you learn about yourselves during all of this? What new thing did you discover?

CD: I'm going to say this. We were a pretty strong family, anyway, but this has made our...We have a saying in our bedroom. I'll mess it up I'm sure. But it's something about you don't know how strong you are until you have to be. We had to be. We had her little kids and our little kids in Salt Lake and our new little kids' family.

We found early on that we didn't communicate like we wanted to with our family. This nucleus here, we got together and said, "We've got to change that, you guys. We're leaving people out. They don't know what's going on. We're planning a celebration of life at Red Rock and people are getting left out." We decided to have family meeting. We had to have, I don't know, how many people here; I'm going to say a hundred, so there might have been ten.

DD: At one point—I have a picture—I think there's twenty-nine people in the meeting. She got to so she was calling the meetings and it was about every hour. She would yell, "Family meeting," and we would all go, "Oh, not again."

MS: Well, kind of, but it also was a good thing to everybody.

DD: It became a funny joke.

MS: It was a funny joke at the end. It also was so beautiful to just sit down—

CD: Oh, my God.

DD: It was.

—and gather and do different things. My little niece wanted to sing.

How old?

MS: She's sixteen, fifteen. She sang the most beautiful song. Moments like that are what family meetings came out of it. Because a lot of my mom's family came in and my daughter who was in Utah, they missed a lot of what happened. We sat at my house one night. We had a dinner there, a really nice dinner. People brought tables and beautiful food. I said, "Okay, family meeting time." And I said, "I don't want to keep trying to repeat what's happened with this group right here." My brother, his kids, his wife. I said, "Do you guys want to sit down and talk out from moment one to this?" Which was funny because we'll talk and my fourteen-year-old nephew is like, "Well, that's not how that happened." We're like, "Greyson, stop."

DD: Which is the baby now, our baby; that's Greysen. He's now fifteen, but at the time he was fourteen. You cannot get anything past him. He will correct you or he will say, "I'm done with this; I'm leaving the room; you all are driving me crazy." He's a pain, but he's also delightful.

MS: Because we sat down and did that, it brought everybody into an equal level. My brother really struggles because he's in Salt Lake.

DD: He's left out.

MS: Everything we do, physically you can't involve him in everything. That weekend we really came together and it was really nice to have us as a family work together to get things done.

Did you coordinate the celebration yourself? How did you get that to come together?

MS: It was amazing. And we did nothing.

CD: Amazing.

DD: It's Neysa's company.

CD: That she worked for.

Who did she work for?

DD: She worked for a company called Technologent. They're amazing.

MS: They are like computer software for businesses.

DD: She was amazing for them, and because it was such a loss to them, honestly, they just wrapped their angel wings around our family. We knew we were engulfed in their wings. I know it was difficult for us, but we would not have made it nearly as well without them.

CD: Oh, for sure.

DD: They did everything as far as the celebration.

MS: Even things like viewing Neysa's body they helped with. They were instrumental in so many things, and Red Rock was instrumental as well.

DD: Absolutely.

MS: They were beautiful. We asked if we could publicly thank them, and they said, "Please don't because it puts us in a really bad..." They said, "We've already had a family who just had a recent death unrelated to October 1 say, 'Well, we know you did that celebration of life. Will you do one for us?'" They said, "Please don't." We understood that. Freddy is actually the one that told us that first. He said, "They may not want you to publicly thank them, so ask them." We did and they said, "Please don't."

Neysa's work brought a production company here into the house and said, "We recommend you guys record your own statements. We're going to make a video and just play it at the service." None of us talked there.

You didn't have to.

MS: No. We did it here. Each interview was like twenty, thirty minutes. We were like, *we don't have a clue what's going to be said*. I don't know how they did it so perfectly.

DD: It was so nice.

MS: Neysa is a Pittsburgh Steelers fan and none of us are. My dad, in his interview, he was like, "Well, today..." And he puts his hat on that's Pittsburgh. He said, "Today we're a fan." Then Kaden, my nephew, did it. We were just like, *how did that all pull together?* None of us really cried. She read a beautiful poem she wrote. It was so beautifully put together that it wasn't...Everyone said there, "I didn't leave sad or drained." I can't even tell you how many people that I meet—still last Sunday at church someone said this to me, "I didn't know your sister, but she has inspired me to be a better mom." My friend who is a single mom said, "How did she do it because I want to be like her?" I said, "Well, there was a lot of help. There was a lot of craziness. There was a lot of sacrifice. But there was a lot of love and there was a lot of reward." But it's a balance. It's not all the beauty you just see that's presented there. It is hard. But she did it. She never gave up. She was a single mom for the majority of her mother years and she did it; she fought her way up. People were proud of what they saw at that celebration, which is what the boys wanted. They didn't want one tear. They didn't want anyone sad. They wanted to celebrate her. And it was; it was beautiful.

DD: They kind of said that our mom ran through life and she may have known her life was going to be short because she ran the entire time. She did. She burned her candle at both ends. She was not a sleeper, and I have never really been a sleeper. She's worse than me, but she was up early and went to bed late. If she had projects the next day, she didn't need sleep at all that night. She'd get things done and make it happen and her company knew it. She did okay. She took care of her boys. It was her whole goal to work hard so that her boys had what they needed in life and could go to school and further their education. That was all that she really cared about was to provide for them. I just said maybe she had some sense of an idea that her life was going to be short,

which she better hurry and get it done.

MS: The crazy part is we didn't know—Neysa was definitely the girl that showed up for family dinners and fell asleep on the couch. I would be like, "Well, nice to see you, Neysh." It was frustrating. Then when this happened and we found out this other side of her life that—

DD: Lots of us didn't know.

MS: I knew nothing about her work life and then the respect that people had and how hard she worked and the dedication that she had to her company. Then all of a sudden, you go, *oh, now I know why she was always asleep on the couch.* We knew she also was going and we knew she always had deadlines to meet, but we never had a clue what that meant until it was—

DD: I knew a lot.

MS: I didn't.

DD: I knew a lot. I didn't know a lot of...Three women said to me, "She helped me get pregnant." I said, "What?" She said, "I have been to fertility clinics. I could not get pregnant. I have two children." One said, "I have this little girl right here." And it was like a three-month-old baby. And another one said, "I have three children because of her." I said, "I don't even know that. How could she know that?" They said, "She just told me things to do and I got pregnant." I said, "Well, that's real weird. I don't even know how she would know to do that." She interacted with people.

Another guy told him [Chris] that his mother was diagnosed with cancer and she had five months to live or something. He's a big corporate guy here in Vegas, and he said, "She helped me all the way through. I would not have gotten through it without her." It's not a romantic thing. It's a supportive thing. He said, "All the way through she was there for me. My mom died five months after they diagnosed her. She just was my rock. I owe her a great deal of gratitude." He

took the boys one night to a Knights game and took them out to dinner. Just a nice, nice man, very kind. The boys had a great time. We said, "You don't need to do that." He goes, "I really want to. I have a wonderful mom."

And I know they have a wonderful mom; we do. We just didn't know she did that kind of stuff. We knew she was a good business lady. She's a great salesman. She could sell an Eskimo ice. She really could. She just had that knack. But she also had this kind little spirit. Sometimes she just seemed hard, didn't she? Like, *yeah, get over it*.

MS: Yes, she was.

DD: She was the person that if you would say, "Did I hurt your feelings?" "Yeah, don't worry about it."

MS: What did she used say to the boys when they'd get upset over something? She had some saying she said.

DD: "Get over it. Move on. Get over it."

MS: It was with *shit* in it or something.

What was that?

MS: It had *shit* in it or something. I can't remember because I was like, *oh, we can't write that one, guys*. She was; she wasn't super sensitive. She was very girlie. If you saw her on the street, you'd go, *oh my gosh, that girl is beautiful and she's girlie*. But most of the time she was in shorts and a tank top and no makeup. She hardly wore makeup. She wore mascara. She had the most beautiful eyelashes. But that's probably it. She was very naturally beautiful. But she was the one that her guy friends said, "Hey, do you want to go do a Tough Mudder?" And she was like, "Okay," and she ran a Tough Mudder."

DD: Do you guys know what the Tough Mudder is?

No.

No idea.

DD: Have you ever seen American Ninja? It's kind of like that but it's worse.

MS: It's in mud.

It is in mud, oh.

Oh, my manicurist just was talking about it. I didn't even know that's what it was called.

MS: You climb walls and you go under things.

Yes, yes. She was talking to me this morning about that.

DD: They have mud that you have to crawl through and it has electrodes that hang down above the mud and you have to stay low in the mud. If you get up too high, you get electric shocks on your back.

Oh, no.

MS: Yes, yes.

DD: These guys said to her—there were three or four guys and they said, "Do you want to do the Tough Mudder with us?" She said, "Well, what is it?" They told her. And she said, "Yeah, I'll do it."

She told me and I said, "You're going to have to train for that. That is really hard." It's twelve miles. She told me and I go, "You're going to have to train really hard for that." And she goes, "I'll have time to train for that. It's in a month." I said, "You can't do it then." She said, "Oh, I'm doing it." And she finished.

Twelve miles.

DD: Yes, twelve miles.

MS: She could do anything like that.

CD: Yes.

DD: She was kind of a rock star. She could just do it all. And you do, too.

CD: That's kind of how the mentor program came out at UNLV, when we learned this other business side of Neysa and how many people she actually did mentor. When we met with UNLV and they presented this program to us, that's why it made so much sense to both of us.

DD: Yes.

CD: It's like, *oh, yes, that's Neysa*. That's how we came on to the endowment with the library people.

Fantastic. Would you spell her name, please?

MS: It's N, as in Nancy, E-Y-S-A.

Her last name is?

MS: Tonks, T-O-N-K-S. But we say Neysa Davis Tonks, because we put her maiden name in there.

Wonderful. This is amazing. I thank you so much for sharing all these memories.

DD: I don't know if we gave you what you want.

Oh, more. She is beautiful. She looks just like you.

CD: She does, huh?

DD: When she said she was the ugly duckling, I don't think that's what she meant.

Oh, please, oh, no.

MS: Well, I was. When I was young, Neysa always had good hair and she had a good style of clothes, and I was literally, well, not much farther than today, it's like throw up my hair, I don't really care. When I had three girls, I was like, *oh, I've got to learn how to braid*. But Neysa was always jealous of the girls' side because she was girly; she liked to shop; she liked to do nails.

She did miss out on that by having three boys.

I have to say that in all of this, what we have strived to do is to teach our family to embrace every moment, to find the light because no matter what we do, the darkness is around us in everything you do. People are either coming at you or something else is going to happen. We just want to constantly find light in everything we do because it's always there, and the boys are working on that; these guys and me, we're working on it, because the emotions are real.

Trying to find the fifty-eight families, when I find one, there are some that...Yesterday, I talked to two more and I was just uplifted by them. Then you'll talk to someone—where Dad said he had a choice to get in there and step up and move forward with this, well, we've met some that aren't doing that; that are taking it very differently, and some of them were at the concert, so that's a harder thing for them. But they're very negative. We've kind of chosen we can't have that around us because you have to move forward in the direction that you want to go in, which for us is in the light.

I think we do a pretty good job with our families. There are struggles. We had a foreign exchange student that we found some very—well, she is bipolar and it all made sense. Once the shooting happened, she told my husband that and then all the previously things that we have made sense. Then after that it got really bad and she eventually got sent home by the company. Because of her and because of my situation, my little family fell apart and I wasn't expecting that. I was here, and I still am, probably more so devoted to this mission we're on. They said to me one time, "Put it aside. It's okay." And I said, "Are you going to put your stuff aside?" Because we can't. Until we get all that figured out and until the anniversary, it is a bit of a heavy weight on our shoulders. My mind is bleeding over into other sides that I wish it wasn't.

But I did get advice by one person who lost someone. She said, "My friend was killed

and I had this picture of her hanging over my wall, weighing me down of sadness and death, for twenty-two years. And I finally found a doctor." And she's a doctor, so it was interesting. She said, "I finally found a doctor who helped me." She said, "Now instead of this heavy weight of this big picture, it's just right here and it's where I can love her and embrace her and always have her, but it's not weighing me down." That was huge for me because I do feel that heaviness. It's not necessarily Neysa; it's this bigger picture of the fifty-eight. And it's overwhelming. It's balance; it's finding it. I'm still working on it and I don't do well all the time. We're just moving forward and trying to balance it all.

May I ask how the boys are doing, her sons?

DD: Well, I'll tell you. I think children are resilient. Unfortunately for our twenty-four-year-old, he's probably having the hardest time because he's not so young. He really struggles. I think he's suffering from depression. Thankfully we're in counseling and I think he'll get the help he needs. We try to stay close with him and help him through it.

But the two younger boys, they have their moments where they have meltdowns here and there, but they are resilient and they seem to be working through it well. They do a lot, especially the eighteen-year-old, he's doing a lot to try to honor his mom. He's pleased. He's going to try to be a dermatologist; that's his goal. He wants to do that to make his mom proud and he's happy to talk that way. Then the fourteen-year-old, we'll see where he goes. He's kind of like his mom and he'll dance to his own drum.

CD: They're doing okay and we've got them all in therapy and we have them all getting help because we found that we're pretty good now, but we're not the ultimate help. They need to talk to somebody that's not family, somebody that can give them a different point of view.

Are the three of you also getting help?

CD: Yes.

DD: We are, a little here and there.

MS: It's hard because in the beginning it was the boys; they were the priority, but we found out quickly that the three of us needed the majority of the work.

DD: Yes, so we could help them.

MS: Yes. Between our relationship with each other and then just dealing with it, it was a struggle. I would say right now at this moment I worry more about those two and myself, I'll say that, in all of it than the boys are a worry. They are always going to be the worry, but, like my mom said, they do pretty well. But because of our new roles in life and because of the overwhelming sense and the fears of *are we doing the right thing with the boys?* there's so much that we're trying to figure out that we have a lot that's on our shoulders that makes it difficult. It will work out.

DD: When she died I was sixty-four and she was forty-six. I said, "This is exactly opposite. I should have been the one that died and she's the one that was. It's just reverse. Our numbers were reversed and it was an accident and it just doesn't make sense." I couldn't get that out of my head. You should not ever have your children die before you; it's just the wrong order. I didn't want to breathe. I thought, *if I just stopped breathing, maybe she can come back and maybe it won't be true.* So many things go through your head.

Then when I got here, and especially the fourteen-year-old, he's teeny. He's like his mom; he's just little. I put my arms around him. I can't just sit and cry. That's all I wanted to do, but I can't. I can't let that darkness just take me and then put it on him. I live in this house. This is her home. I have to smile and I have to be happy, and we are.

CD: We try.

DD: We cry a lot, but not in front of the boys. It has brought happiness to us to have to be happy for them and it helps us through it. They actually save us every day. They don't know it, but they do, because we have to find that way to be happy for them, and you do, too.

MS: It's been interesting because different things have...My dad said to me one time, "I get so angry at you sometimes for the way that you can take the same situation and change it." That I'm happy and he's mad about it.

I saw someone in Costa Rica that was Neysa. She was walking towards me. And your mind just goes, *there's Neysh*. She ended up sitting next to me. Finally I just said, "I'm sorry. I have to tell you that seeing you makes me just feel her and I'm so grateful."

When I told him, he said, "Well, that's crazy because I see people that look like Neysa and I want to punch them." I don't want to feel that. I'm sad that she's not here. It's been so crazy about some of these things. We struggle with the same thing, but differently, and we've learned that we all have healed so differently. Our healing is so different and the boys are the same. One wants to absorb it; my oldest daughter wants to know everything. My middle daughter wants to talk nothing about any of it, which has been hard for me because I walk in the door and I have found three families today and I am like, *ah—oh, I can't tell her*. It's hard for me because I'm a very verbal person and to not have someone want to talk about that is difficult.

I think for each of us, the crosses was a challenge.

DD: Ugh, was it ever. I didn't like the crosses at all.

Why?

DD: Because I felt like I was going to a graveyard every time I went there and that makes me sad and I don't want to do that. For her it was comforting and for me it was depressing. I went maybe four times, she went a lot, and he went somewhere in the middle.

CD: I'm in the middle.

MS: He'd get mad at me if I'd go and not tell him. And I'm like, "Oh, I just went spontaneously."

DD: I didn't go.

MS: My reason to going was not to be there as if I was grieving or going to her cross. I don't like that. My anxiety came because I felt like it was getting trashy. People were leaving so much stuff. Someone left a cup of lard, and I don't know what culture it was, but it was a cup of lard on each cross. Well, there's rats at night. People are leaving chocolate and it was getting melted. I would go in and I would clean it and then I would be like, *okay, who is taking my picture, what paper? Crazy lady is taking from the crosses*. It was such a hard balance of respecting what people left, but, yet, keeping it clean, because in the beginning the crosses were almost three-quarters of the way up with flowers. My daughter went down and I said, "Clean it up a little bit." And she goes, "Mom, I couldn't touch it. Those are people's things that they left." It finally got to where the city got on top of it and they started cleaning up. When they were doing it, then I felt like I could. I would go and people were leaving beautiful things, and we don't want people stealing it because people were stealing things. I would collect things that I felt like were personal that we would want. Someone had made shirts and left a shirt at each cross. We took that and we have that. Some beautiful things that were left that I didn't want to...We were in the path of the plane, and so if a certain jet would be going away and he'd hit his jets, all the crosses in the path of that would get knocked over. I show up and everything was just everywhere. Maybe the wind. It never rained. That whole time it never rained. I just needed to take care of it. I needed to protect it.

Because of that I would be there—somebody was talking about this on Facebook the other day where people would show up taking pictures and how wrong that was. I said, "There

was both sides of it." We went the first time as our family. We're all sobbing. He's—

CD: A mess.

—a mess. Her friend had come. We said, "Please ask people just to respect us." This man came by and she said, "Will you please not take pictures?" And he said, "It's a free country. I can do what I want." She started kind of getting in an argument. And I said, "No, no, no, we are not here to fight. Make the circle tighter and we're just going to make a tighter, tighter, tighter circle, and he's out." And we did. Everyone else was respectful. I would go and there were a few people that would ask to take my picture. You obviously can tell when somebody is there taking care of that stuff. I'd say, "I don't mind if you take it from behind, but I'm not going to pose." I thought that was respectful because people were trying to capture emotion and there was so much emotion there. I took pictures on my phone. I wanted to capture it, so I understood it. It's just those that crossed the line that were hard. As survivors would come, they would be sobbing. If they were sobbing, I would say, "Are you okay?" Then I would tell them my story and they would tell me theirs. Fifteen minutes would go by and both of our hearts had healed. There were so many of those each day that I almost started to look forward to that. I'm going to go down and I'm going to find someone and they're going to need me maybe as much as I need them, but maybe today they just need me and maybe the next day I would just meet someone that I just needed. It really was a two-way...He felt that and he got that experience at times, too. It did feel like there was beauty down there as well.

But when they were gone, it was a weight lifted off my shoulders. That was very overwhelming to feel the need to be down there and to take care of her stuff. The Healing Garden has been different. People don't leave stuff like they did at the crosses, so we don't feel that overwhelming sense to be down there all the time. It's just such a blessing. But it's all

beauty. It was all brought by beauty. Our emotions all connected to it differently.

I think this is wonderful.

CD: Thank you.

DD: Your questions that you had didn't really apply to us because we're a different category.

MS: Can I see that card? Dad, you gave it to her, but I want you to explain that too.

CD: Another one of our causes is we would like to do—it's funny, we started calling it random acts of kindness, and we left the *random* out and said, we just want to do acts of kindness, not even random. As we go around, for instance, our gardener, we'll go buy them a sack of doughnuts and just say, "Hey, here's an act kindness on behalf of our daughter Neysa." We had a whole bunch made and they're all over the world. We give a website on the back and people will actually go on the website. It's funny, they pass it on.

Wonderful.

CD: Yes. We're having cards like this made up for our foundation as well. We have so many people who want to help and contribute and do some things. We're trying to find an easy way to get that out to them. Like Mynda says, we're not that family that's going to push somebody to donate. That's not us. If Neysa has touched them somehow and they want to do something, they can.

DD: I went to breakfast with my friends. We had this great waiter. When we were done I gave him an extra tip and I said, "This is extra tip because you've done a really great job, and I lost my daughter." It made him really uncomfortable. I thought, *I don't want to make people uncomfortable*. So I don't say that anymore. I just say, "Hey, I just know someone that lost their life here, this is her, and I just want to give you an extra little tip because you did such a great job." Because I don't want people to feel uncomfortable. I had to change that up a little bit.

I just want people to feel the need to be kind to each other. Somebody—and you know who it is and you can't take it off the wall. Some lady made this for us and it's, "Be the good you want to see in the world." I don't know who said that, do you?

That was Gandhi.

DD: Was it Gandhi?

I'm pretty sure that was Gandhi, yes.

I have it on my board behind me in my office.

MS: But is it like this?

No, not like that.

MS: Then it says, "Be the good..."

"In the world." It's a version of Gandhi, anyway.

MS: She made fifty-eight of them and then gave it to this man who started what's called Honor Fifty-eight. He had leather bands made with every victim's name and he drove to every city that that victim was from and he did a random act of service on their behalf and then gave the band and said, "Please keep going forward." I don't know that we've ever seen how far it's gone, but he's continued that. It's a movement now where people do this Honor Fifty eight. Some woman made these and gave to him and said, "Please give them to who you want." I had met him, and so he sent us one.

DD: I've glued those hangers on the back of those three times. They better stick this time.

MS: I talked to someone the other day and she said, "I was the one who made them." I can't remember why or who she was.

DD: I don't remember who she was. I thought you would remember her story. Anyway, I love that it says, "Be the good."

I like how that's done. That's really nice, yes.

DD: I just think we should all feel the responsibility to be the good because so many people don't think they have any responsibility in that avenue and I think we all do.

It's the only way we're going to have the peace in the world is to be the peace.

DD: Absolutely.

CD: Yes.

MS: It was a cute funny story—and I can go on and on, so you just have to say, "Okay, we've got to drive home." But my sister drank and, because I said I'm the oddball, I don't drink. We were skiing and it was St. Patrick's weekend, and Neysa loved to ski on St. Patrick's Day weekend. I had a plan; I was going to buy my first beer. I got to the counter. I left my kids behind and I didn't tell them what I was doing. I said to the lady, "I want to buy the next person in line a beer." She said, "Okay, well, what kind?" I was like, "Oh, there's kinds?" I had no idea. "Bud Light. I don't know." I'm like, *oh my gosh, now I've got to get the guy...* And I want him to know.

So he comes up. I said, "Listen, I want to buy you a beer. It sounds so odd, but my sister..." And I told him. He looked at me and he said, "Please, could I buy you the beer?" He goes, "I don't want to take one, I want to buy you one." I said, "Well, it doesn't work that way. And I don't drink, so." When we were done and I paid for it, he said, "This is one of the most beautiful things I've ever had and I will always remember this." You just think, *you know what? It's not the big things, it's the little things.*

That's exactly right.

MS: It doesn't have to be that you're saving the world. It just means that you have to make one person happy so that they can have a better moment than they may have been having. We have

felt that by so many, but we're now trying to teach the kids that you share that; that you've got to give what you want to gain by. You can't just be a receiver; you've got to always be on both sides of it. Being receivers has been really hard for us, but we've accepted it. We appreciate it. We had meals brought in for thirty days. After fifteen, I said, "We're good. We don't need any more meals." My friend said, "We have a list of people that want to help. Please." I can even say that if those other fifteen meals have been brought in, I don't know that our days would have been as nice. We gathered every single night as a family. Whatever food was there, we ate and gained some pounds for it. But it was so beautiful. It was getting away.

DD: It was really, really sweet, but it was hard. I felt really guilty. I felt so guilty that people were having to do that for us. I said, "You've got to tell them to stop. We can cook for ourselves. We're good." She said, "They won't stop." I said, "But we can't take it anymore. You've got to tell them to stop." They wouldn't, so we just kept taking it. But it's hard to let people do for you. It's hard.

MS: But I think I learned more so—and I've always been a giver and so have them—but if you don't allow people to give, they can't heal either. We learned saying no to people wasn't a kind thing. We had to accept. It was hard because you get to that point you don't feel like you're worthy of it. I still can't wrap my head around what (1:36:16/indiscernible). I at times just go, "I don't get it; I don't get that we're in this big bubble of craziness." Because it's our tiny, little world that we...But then something will happen and I'm like, "Man, that's us. Oh, they're talking and that's about us, on TV." You just don't get it. It's a hard balance. It's a hard thing to absorb at times.

But the beauty of it all, the Honor Fifty-eight, the people that still are out there tagging me on Facebook and sharing the Knights. Some girl, and I don't even know who she is, made a

post that said, "You want to know why the Golden Knights are as good as they are?" It was our flag of the fifty-eight that they retired.

CD: She said, "This is the clearest fifty-eight reasons why we're so good."

MS: Yes. It was beautiful. You're just like, *man...* To feel that from a stranger, that's so beautiful.

DD: I just want to say one last thing. We have heard stories about a few of the fifty-eight families that are living in their cars because things didn't process well for them and they got kicked out of their apartments or their homes. I think some of them, the breadwinner died, and the mother or the father, whatever it might have been, didn't have money for rent, didn't have money for food, and they live in their cars. It's so sad to us that that happened to them. We have our own challenges, but we've tried to set up our estate. Mynda is the executor of the estate. We're still not set up. We don't have access to—

MS: The courts haven't finalized it.

—some of the things that we need to do to take care of certain aspects of her stuff. But we're okay. We're going to get through it fine. It's just a hassle. But we know of these other families that are just in dire straits, and it breaks our heart. I hope somebody is now reaching out and helping them. We don't know who they are. It's one of the reasons if we can get these whole list of fifty-eight and if we can figure out—and we're close—then maybe we can make sure they're all getting a little bit of help that they need.

MS: On a side note with that, my first thought is, well, there's a victims fund; they just got a big old check. What we're learning is that someone may not have been divorced and the wife that he didn't divorce got the money. And now the new family, who maybe he's had a child with or something, didn't get it. Or the mother who was estranged got it and not the couple who was getting married but have been together forever.

DD: Some strange stories.

MS: That's where these situations come in that you go, oh my gosh, we are so lucky. Somebody said, "Well, you don't need to raise money for college for your nephews." Because they've been blessed with our own GoFundMe and then the national GoFundMe. And we said, "Okay, first off, it's not that much money." We will never complain, but to raise three boys and what their needs are, to keep this house going, it's not going to last forever. But even at that, to have my nephews go to college in honor of their mom, I don't care if we have the most money in the world, if we can send them to college and say, "Do it for your mom because this money was raised for her for you, in her honor for you," that to me is priceless, and that's where we want to find these kids to say, "Whatever your situation, don't give up; keep going; don't let this be the end." We can only help so many, and I think we've taken on a pretty big role anyway, but it helps us to sleep better at night knowing that we can maybe help some of these people that are challenged.

How many more do you have to find?

MS: About twenty. It's really sad to sit here. One I just found today that I heard the dad that was killed, his wife had just had a stroke a while ago and is pretty bad, and so the children are now...The families are looking at who is going to adopt them because they can't...You just go, *oh*. It is a heartbreak for me to hear the stories. It sometimes puts me in a little spiral because I hear their stories. The majority of the couples were at the concert together, and so you hear their individual stories. One, the wife just told me that she was with her husband who was shot and he died right on the thing. He was probably the first one to die because she said before Jason Aldean who was performing stopped singing, he was already gone. That was right in the beginning.

CD: It had to be.

MS: She stayed the entire time. When they finally were coming in and cleaning up, they forced her to leave him and leave him there. She didn't want to leave him because she's got him and she didn't want to. And they said, "You have to." It took them until Wednesday to find him. That was Sunday night and it took them Wednesday. She said, "All I could vision was him rotting out in the sun." She goes, "But I learned that he wasn't there that whole time." But they didn't know. There's so many of these stories that you have to absorb, and I've got to listen in order to be like, "Okay, come in our club. It sucks, but welcome to it."

DD: Back to the endowment and the foundation. Early on we talked to one guy and he said, "Well, what if my kid who is six right now, what if he doesn't go to college and what if I don't want him to go to college, can he have a car?" I said to Mynda and Chris, "Hopefully because we make this available that six-year-old will grow up and in spite of his dad thinking education is not important for him, maybe if he knows this endowment is here and/or the foundation, he'll choose to go to college. He'll choose that for himself and have a value beyond what his dad thinks." Because that to me is everything.

At least you're giving him an option.

CD: Yes.

DD: Parents should have more value in their children. What's a car going to do for him?

Not all of us are the best parents in the world.

DD: No, no.

MS: Right. We've seen other foundations started and there are a few that are talking about furthering children's education in this fifty-eight. But in all of them there's almost this little discrepancy that says, "For education and/or for needs as seen fit." There's this little out to say, "Oh, we will give you that car."

Honestly we really appreciate the gifts to the boys, but we also want them to learn to earn things. We've been blessed in my home. My husband has worked so hard. We could definitely spoil these little girls. My daughter goes to Target and Kohl's and shops for her clothes because we don't give her that. We don't want to take away these boys' ability because people have loved them and blessed them and want to continue. We want them to have value for a dollar and for hard work and for getting where they are because they've put the time in and now they can reap the reward and be proud of it. Some of those gifts are a little bit challenging, but we'll figure it out along the way.

You will.

DD: No doubt about it.

CD: What is your next step? What happens now? What do you do with all this?

We have them transcribed and we will eventually put them online so that other cities that are going through exactly what we're going through will be able to look at them. A coroner in another city will be able to look at what the coroner here said.

CD: Oh, nice.

DD: I will add that he was wonderful, the coroner. He was so kind. I think everybody was pulling at him. "Can I just have five minutes; can I just have five minutes?" And nobody ever takes just five minutes. He was so kind to us. Two times we talked to him and he came back by and said, "Are you guys okay?" And we said, "Yes, just when you can help us." He said, "I'll be back." Then I don't think we saw him again the second time. I'm sure he was...

MS: Somebody told me that not only did fifty-eight people die in one event, but he also had all the other people that had died that day, your regular schedule.

He had another thirty.

It's an average of thirty bodies they have to take in every day.

MS: Every day?

Yes. It took them—they believe; they weren't clear themselves because time was a blur—it took them four days before they identified the final of the fifty-eight because they wouldn't do it without being one hundred percent sure.

MS: I think one did say that they had seen a body and it wasn't theirs. I know that they were so hesitant to open those drawers for us, and we understood. We were trying our hardest to break through any wall they were putting up on us.

And I understand. I would have been doing the same thing.

DD: It's such a terrible thing. It was so difficult, for them as well as us. We talked to a fireman down at the game one night and he said, "It's the worst thing we have ever experienced for all of us, all of us. We just haven't ever had anything..." And the difficult time they have even now thinking about it.

Yes, they're having therapy as well.

MS: I say to anyone I meet, when they say, "Oh my gosh, my pain is nowhere close to yours," I say, "Anybody that was at the concert, anybody that was in those areas where they were helping people, the hospitals that were in the middle of that in any way, they are hurting just as much as we are." We lost Neysh, but they are dealing with different emotions that are more raw than we are in ways. I think we're all an equal playing field of emotions.

DD: It wouldn't have been easy, for sure.

MS: Well, it was lovely.

CD: Thank you.

DD: Thank you so much.

Thank you very much.

This was wonderful. Thank you so much.

[End of recorded interview]