

AN INTERVIEW WITH CINDY BACA

BARBARA TABACH

MAY 22, 2019

REMEMBERING 1 OCTOBER

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV LIBRARIES  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVE

**This is Barbara Tabach and today is May 22, 2019, and I'm sitting with Cindy Baca.**

**Cindy, I'd ask you to spell your name for us, please.**

C-I-N-D-Y, B-A-C-A.

**You told me you were born and raised in Las Vegas. Tell me about your life growing up here.**

I grew up in the central part of town.

**What neighborhood when you say "central part of town?"**

Off of Eastern and Maryland Parkway by Sunrise Hospital. Everyone that finds out I'm a native thinks it's really cool, and they're like, "Well, there's not many of you." And I'm like, "Everyone I know is a native." I've only lived here in Vegas and I don't know any different, so I can't compare it to anything.

**We're sitting in the library of Edmundo Escobedo Sr. namesake's middle school. How did you get into education? Did you go here to college and everything?**

Yes, I went to UNLV. In school I always wanted to be a teacher and I just followed my dream. I was the first person in my family to graduate from college. I have four degrees now, only one at UNLV. That's it; I just followed my dream and here I am twenty-one years later.

**Wow, four degrees. What did you get the additional degrees in?**

I have an associate's degree I started at CSN in early child development. I thought I was going to open a daycare center until I really learned about the meat of it and I kind of switched gears into elementary ed, so I transferred to UNLV and got my bachelor's in elementary ed. Then I got my first master's in information technology, which is a fancy word for library or to be a computer tech. The reason why I decided to do that is because my favorite part of the day when I was teaching elementary was reading with the kids and doing stuff that had to do with reading.

Literally, one day I was sitting in a rocking chair, reading to the kids, and I was like, I want to do this forever. I went home and told my husband and he looked at me like I was crazy. I started school like three weeks later and became a librarian.

Right when I graduated with that master's, I went back for educational administration because I thought I might want to be a dean one day. But just going through that process I realized that—young kids—I wouldn't have the time to devote to do that job to the best of my ability. I really enjoyed being in the library, so I just continued here in the library, but I got the degree and it's just kind of sitting there, maybe for one day.

**I love being around libraries. My office is in a library although I'm not a librarian.**

Oh, you're not, okay. I didn't know that.

**I'm an oral historian and I come at it from a different way, but I love the environment.**

**Even as a parent I remembered when we moved to a new city, I volunteered at my daughter's middle school in the library.**

Oh, interesting.

**I was a former educator—librarians are the heartbeat of the school, more than people realize.**

Yes, for sure.

**Do you think that's still true?**

Absolutely, yes, I try. That's my goal; I strive to make this a retreat for kids to come to. It's not a traditional quiet library. You can have music playing in the background. We've got games in here and I've got Legos and I have a maker space. At lunch they come in here to read and do work, but it's not so quiet, but not chaotic. I have students that might be just talking and hanging out. Some might be working on a school project. Some might be playing a game of Sorry. Some

are working on computers. I really...especially with middle school because it's hard to get them and get them interested in school because it's awkward at their age. Then I get them in here and I get to know about them and then I can pawn the books on them once I know what they're interested in.

**Isn't that wonderful that you have an impact?**

Yes.

**That's probably the reason I found out about you is the impact you were having. For the Remembering One October project, the first thing I usually ask is where were you and how did you learn about the shooting? Then tie in your personal story.**

I was at home. My husband and I wanted to go to the concert. Once prior we were talking about how we wanted to go, but the tickets were just so expensive. It was like, is it worth it? Maybe we'll do it; maybe not. We were kind of the fence for a while and finally we decided, no, we have better things to do with money at our age, like bills.

At the same time, our daughters were talking about going. They went to Faith Lutheran High School and it seems like all those kids were going to a lot of these big concert festivals that were super expensive, and we never really wanted them to go to those, just a fear of chaos and everything that can go on in a big environment with them being so young. The only concerts my girls had went to prior to that were Christian concerts. They had seen Chris Tomlin and they saw just ones that our church were having, concerts. We actually went to a big one at UNLV once. It was their senior year and they were starting to ask about it more and we thought they were joking because they knew we were pretty strict all the way along with concerts. Before they would joke about EDC [Electric Daisy Carnival], and I'm like, "Are you crazy? No, you're not going to EDC, not until at least you're eighteen and I can't really say much about it."

But then one day my husband and I were like, “Well, it’s a country concert. How bad could it be?” Giana’s boyfriend called us and said, “I want to surprise Giana and buy tickets for her and I to go to the concert. Would you guys be fine with that?” Because he kind of knew how we were. My husband and I decided, you know what? We’ll let her go. She’s with Parker. He’s going to take good care of her. She’s got someone who is going to be with her. It will be okay.

Then Natalia, her sister, was kind of feeling a left out because she didn’t get a ticket. Obviously, Parker is not going to buy them both a ticket. She started talking about how she wanted to go, but she didn’t want to spend the money for the concert as well.

Then it was Saturday night and Giana had already went Friday and Saturday to the concert, and Natalia was like, “I’m thinking about going Sunday. Somebody is selling a one-day ticket and that’s the headliner. Can I go Sunday?” And I said, “Well, only if you go with Giana.” She was getting the one-day ticket for a good deal. I said, “That’s fine.”

Then Sunday rolled around and the girls had cheer practice because it was getting ready to start homecoming week. They had mandatory cheer practice until seven o’clock that night, or maybe six; it was pretty late, and the girls couldn’t miss cheer. They were kind of annoyed because the concert started earlier, but they couldn’t miss cheer because they were the captains. I said, “Just go when you’re done with cheer.” But then they were like, “Well, it’s a school night and you usually want us home by nine.” That’s where my husband and I were like, “All right, we’ll let you stay until it’s over. It’s a once in a lifetime event. It’s your senior year. You guys are seventeen. You have good grades in school. You can break curfew as long as you come home right after.”

They went to the cheer practice. She got asked to homecoming by some boy. That was another thing she was worried about because Giana had a date and Natalia didn’t because she

didn't have a boyfriend. Last minute, he...I say proposed. It's like a proposal. They did this big old thing with flowers and it was videotaped. She sends me the video and she's all excited that she's getting asked to the dance and she said yes. But she felt bad because she had to tell him, because it was after cheer practice in the parking lot, "I've got to take my flowers and my balloons and kind of run because Giana and I are going to Route 91." They literally had to change their clothes in the car and zip over there, so they didn't get there until, I want to say, after seven at night.

My husband and I were kind of worried, but then we're like, oh, whatever; it's a country concert. Giana has been there the last two nights. Parker is with them and a group of their friends that were all really good kids. My girls had a lot of friends that were older, like twenty, twenty-one, because they always would say, "We don't want to hang out with people our age because they're immature," and this and that. Their group of friends were an older group, but they were really good kids.

It was like nine thirty at night and the girls text me, saying they were having a lot of fun and that they weren't going to be out too late; that Jason Aldean was getting ready to come out and as soon as he was done, they would leave. I was like, "Okay. Your dad and I are lying in bed, so we may or may not be awake when you get home, but have fun."

It was like ten at night and we literally had just turned the light out and were lying in bed to go to sleep and starting to kind of fall asleep, but not really because we knew that they were at the concert. We weren't technically probably going to fall asleep until they walked in the door.

**You're still parents. You're on twenty-four seven, yes.**

Yes. Then it was like ten fifteen and my best friend Rachel called me. My phone rang and I thought it was the girls. I kind of grabbed for it. At the same time, his phone is ringing and it was

Rachel's husband calling my husband. He is on the other side of the bed and we're literally grabbing our phones. All I remember is Rachel said, "Do you know what's going on? Have you heard from the girls?" And I said, "No. They just called me like thirty minutes ago. They're at the concert." She was like, "Okay, calm down. Don't freak out, but both of them have been shot. There is a lot going on down there. I don't know any other details. Everyone needs to get to the hospital."

Annalisa called me—that's her daughter—and told me what was going on. That was another thing; we felt comfortable because her daughter, Annalisa was there; it's like the twins' aunt who has been with them since they were born and she is twenty-two years old.

**She was a part of that group.**

She was part of that group kind of watching over the girls, and Rachel's sister, who is like forty, she was there, too, and so we knew we had these eyes on the girls.

I just remember standing there shocked. I was like, "What? What?" My husband is running in the closet, throwing clothes on. He's like, "We've got to get dressed; we've got to get dressed." I kind of couldn't comprehend what was going on. I was kind of numb and just standing there. He's like, "Snap out of it; snap out of it; snap out of it. You need to get dressed or you'll ruin your pajamas. We need to leave to go to the hospital." I just remember saying, "What hospital?" We didn't know what hospital to go to because we didn't know where they were going. We just knew that something was going on and they were going to a hospital somewhere and we didn't know if they were together or whatever.

I just remember we jumped in the truck and we were going out our gate. In our neighborhood there is a SWAT guy that live in our neighborhood, and I remember he came out whishing around us with his lights on. I was like, *uh, that was weird*, but we didn't really think

the magnitude of what was going on. My husband is going over a hundred miles an hour. We get on the freeway and all the sudden we see all these undercover cars with lights just flying by us, and we're going well over a hundred ourselves. I'm like, "Does that have something to do with all this? What is happening? What hospital? Are we going to UMC or Summerlin? Where in the heck are we going?"

In the middle of me saying all that—and I had called my other best friend to tell her what was going on and she was kind of freaking out because my husband was like, "You need to call someone and calm down." I was starting to hyperventilate in the car; I couldn't breathe. He's like, "You call Jenny. She'll calm you down. You need to talk to someone. I need to focus on driving." Because I just kept—I don't remember what I was saying.

I called Jenny and she was kind of calming me down. While I was talking to her, he got a phone call on his cell phone and it was Dean McAuley, the firefighter that had Natalia with him. He had found her in a medical tent kind of blue because her lung had collapsed. He had taken her with him and was giving her medical attention, but he was off duty. He was a concert-goer.

### **He was a stranger?**

A stranger, yes. When everyone was running, trying to get out of there, he went into firefighter mode and ran to the medical tent, saying, "What can I do to help?" He is, I guess, scanning around and saw Natalia in distress and no one was helping her. He called my husband and said, "I want to let you know I have your daughter with me. We are in a car." It was some guy who worked the set for Jason Aldean, one of the band people. "He's taking us to a hospital. What hospital do you want me to go because I don't know Vegas?" My husband said, "Sunrise Hospital. That's the closest one to the concert grounds. We'll meet you there."

Then my husband was like, “All right, we’re going to Sunrise.” I remember we were passing the Meadows Mall, still not knowing which way. Like, “UMC is coming up. Are we going to UMC? Are we going down to Sunrise? Where are we going?” So he said, “We’re going there.”

I’m like, “What about Giana? Is Giana with them?” “No, Giana is not with them.” “Where is Giana?” “We don’t know. We’re trying to call her phone.” She’s not answering because both girls lost their phones in the madness when they were running.

Then we went to Sunrise Hospital and it was all madness there. We still didn’t know if Giana was there, what the heck was going on. It just went on from there. That’s how I found out. **When you walked into Sunrise—I can only imagine what the scene must have looked like.** Yes, it was terrible. Well, we just pulled up. There was nowhere to park because there were cars everywhere. I just think my husband parked in some illegal place because it was packed. I remember walking up and there were cops and military people with big guns pacing the front of the hospital. I’m like, “What the heck?” People are crying and trucks are pulling up and they’re throwing bodies out of it and ambulances are coming in. It was surreal.

We go in and there is blood everywhere and people screaming. I am like, “What the heck?” I’m at the counter and I’m like, “My daughter is back there. I don’t know if my other daughter is back there.” And they’re like, “I’m sorry, I don’t know what to tell you. We’ve got all these people to deal with. We’re not letting any family members back. You just need to take a seat until we get this figured out.”

I tried to stay calm. My husband is more calm than me. I was kind of freaking out. I remember looking at the TV in the waiting area and it was like, *eleven casualties, fifteen*

*casualties*; these numbers are growing and they're starting to talk more and more about what's developing. This is less than an hour after it all happened, so things were still coming out.

I remember going outside and I was like, "Why are there all these guys with guns?" Well, then we found out that they thought it was a terrorist and they were coming to attack the hospital. I was freaking out more.

I kept going to the counter and the people were overwhelmed. They didn't want to deal with anybody. They're like, "We're taking care of the people back here. As soon as we get names of people and whatever, we'll call you back." Then finally I just yelled, "My daughters are underage. They need consent to treat." The lady was like, "Oh, your daughters are underage? We didn't even know we had underage. Most of the people seem like adults back here." She goes, "Hold on a minute," the nurse, and she left and I thought, *I'm never going to see this lady*, because there were people just everywhere.

Before that, rewind, my husband had gotten a call from an Uber driver that he had Giana, the other twin, in her car and she wanted to know where to take her, and he said, "Bring her to Sunrise."

At this point I knew they had both arrived. I said, "Both of my daughters are back there." And the lady is like, "What's their names? I'm going to go look. I'll be right back." When she left I didn't think she was coming back because it was so chaotic. I just stood there and like five minutes later she came back and she said, "I found one of your daughters. I don't know about the other, but I found one. Don't tell anyone, but I'm going to take you back here. You're going to see a lot of things that you probably don't want to see. You need to know that. Can you handle that?" And I was like, "Yes."

She ran me through the ER and it was chaotic. There were gurneys and people crying and blood everywhere. It was the worst thing I've ever seen in my life. She took me into hallway where there was a long line of stretchers waiting and my daughter Giana was there.

**She was alert?**

She was alert. She was waiting to get an MRI. She had blood all over her. I remember looking down on her bed and it said *Natalia Baca*. I said, "This isn't Natalia. This is Giana. What the heck is going on? Giana, where is your sister?" And Giana is like, "I don't know where Natalia is. Is Natalia okay? Did something happen to her?" I was like, "She was shot, too. You didn't know that?" And she was like, "No. I haven't seen her." They were like twenty feet apart when it happened.

Giana starts freaking out because she didn't know what was going on with Natalia. I said, "You can't freak out. Your sister is here. Someone called your dad. We've just got to find her."

The nurse was kind of tugging on me, saying, "You can't be back here. We've got to do this quick. We've got to get going."

**Did you have an idea what the nature of her injury was at that moment?**

Oh, Giana, no. I had asked her, "Where did you get hit?" I saw blood all over her thigh. She was kind of explaining, "Here and here." And I said, "Okay. We do need to sign for her. I'm getting an MRI. They're going to kind of see what's going on." So I said, "Okay. Are you in pain or anything?" At that time they had given her, whatever, some kind of pain-relief pill.

**It's just you back there, not you and your husband?**

Just me. No, they wouldn't let him. They said, "Only one person." So my husband said, "Please take my wife." Like I said, he was the calm one and I was the one freaking out.

Oh, and I was freaking out—I'm trying to remember all this stuff—because when the Uber driver called about Natalia, she had told my husband that Natalia was hit in the back and she was having a hard time breathing. I just remember saying to my husband, "If you talk to her, talk to her, tell the driver to get her on the phone. Get her on the phone." He was like, "Yes, I talked to her. She can't really talk a whole lot, but she is okay." And I said, "Is she going to live? Is she going to live?" My brain was just kind of out of it.

When the nurse said, "All right, I don't know where your daughter Natalia, so we're going to go on a tour of the hospital, basically. They've set up emergency rooms in different places for this. It's an emergency situation. So we're going to be kind of running all over. Do you want to do that?" And I said, "Fine, yes."

We kept going in these different areas, and she would say, "You have to stand in the hallway. I'm going to back there and see if she's back there." And she would go behind the doors and I would just stand there and all the people are running around, doctors. She would come out and she would go, "Nope, she's not in there. All right, we need to go to..." Because they had found out she was in an ICU trauma and I think she said there were three or four different areas that they set this up. Then we go to another and another.

Finally we get to the last one and I'm losing hope, like, *where is this kid?* And she was in the last one. She goes, "Okay, this is the last one. If not, we're not going to give up on you." She goes in the door and she comes out and she goes, "I found your daughter. I'm going to take you back there to see her if you want. I'm going to tell you the situation looks really scary. You're only going to be able to be in there for like a minute because there are a bunch of doctors getting ready to go in to work on her." So I'm really freaking out.

She grabs me and takes me in the room kind of where there is a nurses' station and there are ICU rooms with the big glass windows. I'm walking up and I can see my daughter and there are tubes and all these things hooked up to her. I kind of walk in and peak over her and her eyes are open. She just starts crying at me. She can't talk because they've got all this stuff hooked up on her. She was trying to talk to me, and I kept saying, "You don't have to talk. It's okay." Well, finally I got what she was trying to say. She was saying, "Is Giana okay?" And I said, "Yes, I just saw her. She's downstairs. She's worried about you. But as soon as you're done, I'm going to go find her and tell her that you're okay." She was crying, saying, "I'm scared."

And right as she said that all these doctors rushed in and grabbed me and kind of pushed me out of the way and said, "Mom's got to go. She can't be in here." And I said, "What's going on?" And they said, "We have to work on her now. She's very critical and we can't have you in the way."

The nurse grabbed me and we left and we ran back downstairs and told Giana that we saw her sister. I kind of sugarcoated it a little because I didn't want her to stress. I said, "Your sister is okay. She is in a different part of the hospital. She's going to be fine." At this point I didn't know if she was going to be fine, but I wasn't going to put that on her.

Then the lady said, "I have to take you out of here. You can't be back here anymore. But there is a waiting area that's not as chaotic as the ER." Like I said, there were people coming in crying and bleeding and ripped clothes. They are concert-goers that are getting dropped off or coming in with friends and family. So she took me in a more quiet area to sit and I was texting my husband, saying, "I don't know why I'm in the hospital, but this is what I saw." He said, "Okay, you stay back there and we'll figure all this out." That was that.

Natalia got admitted in the ICU. Giana spent hours for them to wait for the MRI to come back to see the extent of her injuries. I think at like four in the morning Natalia finally got up into a room, an ICU room. Giana, they released her, but they gave her a bed in Natalia's—they put Natalia in a huge ICU room and put Giana in a bed next to her so she could hang out even though she was released. The nurse was like, "Technically she shouldn't have gotten released because she's a gun-wound person, but because she's not critical and there are over two hundred people in here critical, they've got to kind of pick and choose." And then that was that.

**So that worked out well.**

Yes, they're really good.

**Are they identical twins?**

Yes.

**It's interesting they had the names mixed up.**

Yes, I know. I still don't understand how that happened. I don't know if maybe Giana came in and was maybe out of it or maybe said, I have a sister Natalia, something, and they wrote her name down.

**The recuperation time for the girls physically, how much...?**

Natalia spent a week in ICU. Well, she was there until Friday. She probably should have stayed a little longer, but she was pushing to get out because it was homecoming week and there was an assembly at school and a football game that she wanted to go to. She was like, "I want to go to the football game. I'm missing out on the most important part of senior year. I already missed" — they do all these things every day—"I already missed out on all this. Can I go to the concert (sic)?" The day before the nurse was like, "If we can get your chest tube out." Because she had a chest tube because her lung collapsed. "Then we'll monitor you and if you're okay, we'll take

you, but you will be very limited on what you can do.” They made me promise to keep her at bay.

Long story short, she got out and we literally left the hospital and made it to the school on time for the football game and got to walk in with her and she was all happy.

The recovery time—I took a month off school because they had so many doctor’s appointments and they were both down and I was caring for them. I spent like a month at home with them. They weren’t getting around obviously that much. Giana could barely walk. She was in a wheelchair because her leg. Natalia couldn’t move around a lot because she would get winded and her lung was still trying to rebuild from the wound. Natalia seemed to, ironically, get better than her sister sooner when she was the one that seemed more extreme at the time because she could go back to school and last a little longer where Giana would text me and say, “I need you to come get me. My leg is really hurting.” This and that.

Her wound wouldn’t close, her bullet wound, the exit portion of it. Now it’s December; it’s almost Christmas; it’s like two months later. I’m calling the doctor and I’m like, “Is this normal?” And they’re like, “Your daughter sustained a bullet injury. It’s going to take a long time to heal. You’re going to need to understand that.” I’m like, “But it’s oozing stuff. It doesn’t look...I’m not a doctor, but it’s looking worse than better.” We finally got in and they did an MRI and noticed that there was a piece of shrapnel that was kind of cutting at her because of the movement of your leg and it was causing it not to close. They’re like, “Oh, you were right. She’s going to need surgery to take this out.”

She got surgery in January. When the shrapnel came out, then by February it finally closed; that piece. But she still has hundreds of pieces in her hip. To this day she is still not better. She’s getting an MRI tomorrow because she is still getting pain and numbness and

sometimes she loses control of her leg and almost will fall. It kind of comes and goes. I was thinking she has nerve damage. She went back to her surgeon. He doesn't know if it's nerve damage. He thinks it may be something else that has to do with the whole injury. She may need surgery again.

She is also my one that more emotionally has been struggling. I think she tries to hold it in and act like everything is okay, and then she'll fall apart. Then I'll say, "You know, you really should go to counseling." I'll tell both of them. They're like, "We don't want to go to counselors. We've tried that and we talk about it and it makes it worse. You don't understand. All they want to do is talk about it and talking about it makes it worse." They've tried a few different counselors. They try to find other ways to deal with it.

They both go to school now—well, Giana graduated from makeup school, and Natalia went to cosmetology school. But they've both got like three jobs that they don't need. They work like crazy. Two months ago I was like, "Why do you keep picking up another job, another job? You work twelve hours a day." This is when they were living at home. They moved out two months ago, probably about three months. Before they announced that they were wanting to move out possibly, I said, "Why are you guys working so much?" And they said, "You don't understand. We don't sleep at night. We get nightmares. If we keep ourselves busy all day and we work a lot, we make ourselves so tired and it keeps our mind off of it all day because we're busy and then at night when we lay down to go to sleep, we can actually fall asleep. Not to say we will sleep all night, but at least we can fall asleep where before we couldn't." I was like, "Okay. I just feel like you're going to crash and burn. You guys are really overdoing it. Maybe you should do yoga or therapy or go back to a counselor." And they're like, "I don't want to hear it." You know, they're nineteen; they know it all.

Just last week Natalia, the one who has physically been better—I went and got my hair done; she’s at Aveda. I looked at her and I said, “Man, I’m sorry, but you don’t look good. What’s going on?” “Mom, I’m working a lot now that Giana and I are out on our own.” They’re tenants. They live in the house they grew up in. They’re renting the house that we own and they pay rent. She’s like, “You don’t understand. I have bills now.” I go, “I understand. I have a lot of bills, too, but I think you’re overdoing it. You look exhausted.” She goes, “I am. I’m here like ten hours a day and then I come home and I work until one, two in the morning because my clients, they need me.” I said, “You need to slow down. You’re going to crash and burn. You’re nineteen, but you’re not invincible.”

Well, the next night, last Saturday, we get a call, my husband and I, at like ten o’clock at night from Natalia. She said, “Um, I just wrecked my car.” We’re like, “What?” She goes, “Can you come down here? I’m by myself.” We’re like, “You’re by yourself? Are there police? What’s going on?” And she’s like, “Um, I put my car through a wall. I fell asleep driving.” And we’re like, “What?”

She kind of didn’t know where she was and that was chaotic. Long story short, I made it to her. She totally her brand-new car into a wall. She hit it, bounced like eighty-seven feet. Luckily she is still alive because her car—I have a picture—is like a tin can; it looked like it. Luckily it saved her life because of the airbags and stuff. The cops were there. Of course, they’re testing her for drugs and alcohol because it’s ten o’clock at night on a Saturday. She was fine.

My husband comes. He’s like, “Were you texting and driving? What do you mean you just fell asleep?” I didn’t tell my husband that the day before I was telling her how tired she looked. I said, “Mike, you need to calm down. I really think she fell asleep. I saw her yesterday and she didn’t look good. I was just telling her to slow down.”

The cop was interviewing the people; she hit their back wall. The cop was like, “Did you hear her brake or anything?” “No, it was full impact. It was like, *boom*, and then we heard a dragging.” What was her car dragging. So he is doing measurements in the street. He looked at my husband and he goes, “If she was texting and driving, the distance she traveled before she hit that wall, she would have braked out of shock, or if she was impaired, you would have tried to brake. But because she just went full force into it, she had to have been asleep.” Then he was explaining the way her car went down the street.

I was saying, “Oh my gosh, yesterday I was telling her she needs to slow down.” I said, “I’m not trying to make excuses, but she is a Route 91 survivor and this is an issue.” And then the cops felt bad. They were like, “What?” And her sister was out there; she had gotten there. I go, “Yes, both of them. It’s just been a struggle.” This and that.

She is alive from that, but she was all bruised up and everything. She doesn’t want to go to the hospital because she’s dealt with the hospitals before and she doesn’t like the hospital. She never went that night. She had bruises all over her stomach from her seatbelt. She was at least wearing her seatbelt.

That was an opportunity for me to talk to her again to say, “You and your sister need to go to counseling. This is almost two years later now and we’re still having these things. I don’t care what you say. You might say you were working because you have to bills to pay, but it’s beyond this. You admitted that it’s stemming because of lack of sleep.” This and that. She just kind of looked at me and was like, “I know, I know.”

**Did they join any of these support groups?**

Oh yes, they have a good group of survivors and they meet. Matter of fact, I went with the girls last time for a luncheon at Lazy Dogs. I’ve gotten to know all the people because they know I’m

the twins' mom. They stay in contact with each other, which is cool. They have Facebook groups that I used to be a part of a bunch, but I had to get rid of some of them because it kind of wears you down. Some of the main ones were—because some of the survivors go on there, and I get they want to say their feelings, but sometimes you read it and you're like, *ugh, this is heavy duty stuff*. I stay in contact with some of the main active people because they'll reach out to me about the girls. "I saw the girls last week at coffee. How are you doing?" They still talk to Dean, the firefighter, from Seattle.

**Were any of their other friends in their group at the concert injured?**

Yes. They have a friend who was hit in the leg. I think it shattered her shin and stuff. Their friend Artie was hit in the chest. He has a whole reconstruction of his stomach. It was crazy because when we were at Sunrise and they told Natalia after day four that she could get out of bed and she needed to walk the halls to build her lung to get her to breathe a little, the first time we walked her in the hall I was shocked because she ran into three people she knew that she didn't know were patients there. It was literally like, "Oh, what are you doing here? You were shot? I was shot. Oh my gosh, where were you shot?" I was standing there like, we're having a reunion in a hospital in the ICU floor with their friends. One of them was in the room next door to us and she didn't even know, her friend Aspen. She was like, "I can't believe Aspen's been next door this whole time and I didn't even know." And I'm like, "I can't believe your friend Aspen is in the room next door."

**Did they have any recollection of how they got from the concert grounds to the vehicles that got them—**

Yes, they have spotty parts, but they knew. Natalia remembered that Dean was in the car with her and he was showing her pictures of his dog. Then he came to the hospital; 20/20 flew him to

the hospital, so they got to reunite, which was really cool. Giana remembered there was an Uber who still has her number and, I think, texts her from time to time to this day to see how she is doing. They knew bits and pieces.

It was crazy because we watched 20/20 because then they were interviewed and on 20/20. We didn't know when we watched it for the first time; there was raw footage of Natalia sitting out in the parking lot with Dean, with an IV bag, waiting for the car to come get them. I remember all of us were like, "What? Where did they get that footage?" We still to this day don't know how 20/20 got it. The irony of them finding—it was a body cam, I think, from a cop, how they got it, because it looked like it was down low.

They'll tell you that they remember randomly bits and pieces that they didn't remember from before, but then they'll forget it. It's kind of like this weird...Parker, Giana's boyfriend, he laid on top of her when they were raining bullets and he got grazed in the leg. I remember when we were at the hospital the next day, I said, "By the way, show me your leg. You act like it's nothing." We look at it and it looks infected. He literally got grazed. He said he was laying on her and it was like this. We think it's the same one that hit her in the butt. We send him to the ER and he comes back up. He goes, "I'm fine; I'm fine. They just gave me some penicillin."

Well, his dad is SWAT. His dad was up in the room apprehending the guy when this whole thing was going on. There is a whole video, as you can find online, of the conversation of Parker and his dad where Parker's dad is telling him, "You need to stay calm. This is where you need to go. Don't go to this area." In the middle of the chaos. "I'm going up right now to get this guy." And this and that. That was a whole other piece of it.

Parker wants to be a cop. Even though he was shot, he was very like, *oh, I'm fine; compared to the twins this is nothing; let's worry about the girls; stop talking about me mentality.*

### **Did they go to homecoming?**

The girls did go to homecoming. They went into the dance. They walked into the dance. Wait a minute. No, they didn't. I'm sorry. They did not go to homecoming. They didn't go to the dance. They went to pictures. They went to the game and the dance was the next night. They got dressed up for homecoming because they already have hair and makeup and all this stuff set up. We bought dresses and all that. They had dates. They said, "Let's get dressed up and go and we'll take pictures, but we're not going to the dance because of the noise. We can't deal with all of that at the dance."

But, ironically, the same time at the game the night before, Dana White of the UFC, because his kids go to Faith Lutheran, he came and talked to the girls and invited them to the UFC fight at the T-Mobile, which was the same night, Saturday. He said, "I promise you I'm going to have security. There is going to be police there. I'd really love to have you girls join me." The girls decided, for whatever reason, they felt comfortable going to UFC because they thought it was so awesome that Dana invited them.

### **That is always a question we ask is the preparedness to go out to a big event.**

Yes. It was literally the day after she was released from the hospital. They dressed up and they took dance pictures with their group that they were supposed to go out with, their dates. Well, Giana's boyfriend went to UFC with us, but the other date of Natalia that had asked her the night of the thing was totally fine with her not going to the dance.

Then we left and we went to UFC. I remember just pulling up to the T-Mobile center and I was so stressed. I didn't want to go there because we still didn't know what the heck was going on. *Was this a terrorist act? Now we're going to put us in the T-Mobile, this huge building? If a terrorist wants to get this building, what a prime place.* But my husband and I knew we needed to support the girls because maybe they were feeling like they needed to try to be normal again and get back out in public.

We went there and Dana met us and we went down into the octagon. He sat with the girls. They have pictures of them. He sat with them the whole time. He didn't leave their side. There were cops all around. He pointed out the cops. There were cops posted behind them. My husband and I got to sit behind them. The whole thing was crazy. They got to go in the octagon after and they met some famous people. We got to go in his special green room and have this dinner. He gave the girls very beautiful crosses as gifts to wear.

My niece went, too. My niece was at the concert with the girls and her boyfriend was shot, too. He was shot in the back. She got to go, too, and was sitting up front with all three of them. Her boyfriend wasn't able to go because he was still dealing with the bullet; it was near his spine.

Anyway, they went and we were mind blown. But the whole time I was scanning the crowds. I feel like I was more damaged than they were. I was shocked how good they handled it still. But I think they just felt comforting because they knew there was tight security.

**You hit upon a thing. Being a parent you're minimizing and you're trying to be strong. Did you do things to take care of yourself?**

No. I just mostly kind of focused on them. Still to this day I feel like I don't want to talk about me, but to this day I still struggle going places, like movie theaters and stuff. I'll just be in a

theater watching a movie and I'm like, *what if someone comes in with a gun?* I'll look around. All the sudden I'll get freaked out and I've got to get it out of mind and focus on the movie. Then I try to hyper focus on the movie.

We took the girls to Disney World for graduation. There were nine of us girls that went and we all were there for a week. Every time we would go I was getting panic and anxiety every day and I wouldn't tell the girls or anybody because I didn't want them to think, *oh, she's crazy. You weren't even there. This isn't you.*

Even to this day at school when we have hard lockdowns, I hate them. They'll announce, 'We're having a hard lockdown drill next week,' and I literally have contemplated calling in sick because I just...I won't because I know I need to be here for the kids. But I guess it's because our first—and screaming like that always freaks me out—our first lockdown drill after all that happened was a few months later and I remember I had a class of sixth-graders in here. I had them all in the corner. I had a sixth-grader, little, like eleven-year-old, say to me, "Well, what if the bad guys break the window? What if the bad guys come in the ceiling?" They're asking me all these questions. I was just sad because they're so little and they think this way. But then it made me think, *what would I do? We can go out the front door.* I told them, "I will do whatever it takes to get you safe. We can go out the front door." "But what if you open the front door and the bad guys are there?" It's very... You know.

**It seems wrong that young people have to even think through those scenarios.**

Matter of fact, two days ago I saw a thing; someone posted on a school district Facebook page about the bulletproof hoodies. There was someone saying, "Can you believe they have these?" Then it started a debate of if it's good; if it's not good; would I buy my kid one; wouldn't I? Finally I said on there, "I wish my daughters had those on when it happened." Then somebody

said, “Well, they’re giving out some free ones to educators, but you have to apply.” I actually applied for it. I don’t know if I’ll ever get it. I’m not saying it would help where you have it on in every instance. I have messaged the superintendent about school safety with all the guns this year.

Like I hate that right there. You never know what’s going on. They’re all wild right now.

**Because the kids are all passing and it’s the end of the school year.**

Yes. But it’s all the guns and everything on campuses.

**Let’s talk about the board. There are different ways that people heal. You have this board, which we’re looking at right now, the Honor 58: Random Acts of Kindness. I read the article that was in the Nevada Independent, which was really nice about your experience in this. Can you tell me the story behind this?**

It’s getting close to October one, the anniversary, and everybody was kind of starting to talk about it again. I was trying to think, what are we going to do at school? Everybody at school kind of knows what happened with me and my family. There are other kids, obviously, and teachers that were affected. I was just trying to gather ideas because there were things going around, like wear purple or typical things. I don’t know. I literally just was like, how can we honor these people in our lives? There had been things going on, these ‘random acts of kindness’ slips that was on survivor pages that you could do out in the community, but they were all adults doing them. All the sudden I got an idea one day. Maybe I’ll just make a bulletin board and do the same kind of things. It just came to my mind randomly in the middle of a day. It was almost like godsend, you need to do this. Middle schoolers all need to learn how to be kind and we’re a ‘be kind’ school. We wear shirts on Monday that say ‘be kind,’ but they’re not always kind. It just came to me.

I started looking up all the people, trying to find pictures of them that I could post on the board because some of them might have a beer bottle because they were at the concert or whatever and I knew it was for a middle school. That took a while. I stopped everything I was doing—it was really weird—and I just kind of worked on this. It took me a few hours. I didn't tell my principal. I didn't ask for permission. I was like, I'm just going to do this and they're going to like it, at least I hope they are because I spent a lot of time.

**You thought you needed to do this.**

Yes. It literally just like came to me. I made it. Then I got my principal in here, who was just here; that was her. I said, "I made this. Is this okay? I know it's a little heavy, but I really feel like I needed to have their pictures." Because I tossed in my mind, *am I going to have the pictures of the people or just their names? No, I'm going to have their pictures because I want the kids to look at it, and if they connect with someone, that's the person that they're going to take this thing and do it on behalf of, so I need their pictures.* Plus for middle schoolers everything has to be very concrete or they're just kind of...So I'm like, *I need this. They need to see these faces if they're going to honor these people. Then they know who they're honoring.* My principal came in and said, "Okay."

I took some pictures of it when it was done. I was like, *oh, this looks pretty good,* and I took some pictures and posted it on my Facebook page. I'm like, "Look what I made at work today. It just kind of came to me and we'll see how it goes." Then all of a sudden it started getting shares; people are like, "Can I share this?" But my Facebook is private. They are like, "Can you not make this private so I can share?" Like, other teachers because I know a lot of teachers. "Maybe some at my school want to make it."

I changed the setting that anyone could see it. All of a sudden, the next day I woke up and it had been shared like a hundred times, two hundred times, three hundred, and people are emailing me. “Do you have the lesson plan for this?” I’m like, “I don’t have a lesson plan. I made it up. But I can make a lesson plan.”

I literally when I had time I made this lesson plan. I luckily had saved the pictures. I said, “Well, I can’t give you the task cards,” because I had found them on Teachers Pay Teachers. It’s a site and they had kindness cards and you pay to get the idea, but it’s copyrighted and being a librarian I can’t just give copyrighted stuff away. I was like, “But I’ll give you a link to the Teacher Pay Teachers if you want to pay.” It was only like three bucks for the cards. “You’re more than welcome to.” I created this lesson plan with links to the places to buy the cards.

All of a sudden other schools were sending me pictures. They were like, “Can I make this? Do you care?” I’m like, “No, I don’t care. Go for it.” They were sending me pictures of their schools’ boards they recreated. It turned out really good.

Anyway, I had showed her what I made, and she was like, “Oh, that’s awesome.” I’m like, “Is it okay? Are the pictures...?” This and that. She was like, “Yes, I totally trust you.” I’ve been here eleven years. We’ve worked together for many years. I guess I kind of did it without asking because she has trusted me over the years with things that I do. But I know at the end of the day I’ve got to run it past her before I do something like that. She was like, “Oh, no, no, I really like it.” This and that.

When I came to work the next day—because they hadn’t been shown to the kids; it was literally after school when I showed it to her and I was like, “I’m thinking about putting this up. Is that okay?” She said, “Yes.” Literally after school I hang it and now I post the thing on my Facebook. I go to school and I’m realizing it’s getting shared. I came into her office the next day

and I said, “That board that I made, I put it on Facebook and it’s going viral. I probably shouldn’t have posted it without asking you, but I really didn’t think it was a big deal.” She was like, “No, I don’t care, whatever.”

Then we started telling the kids about it and there was a good response; the kids were coming in here and pulling things. That’s where people were emailing me from the families.

**Just back up. The cards are already in the pouch?**

There’s cards, there’s pockets, yes. Each person has a pouch and in the pouch is a deed card, which you’re welcome to look at, or act of kindness should I say. They are all different. Some of them have multiple because when I was looking around on Teachers Pay Teachers for kindness cards, I found a couple of different sets and I couldn’t figure out which one I like best, so I bought them all. Then I just made a bunch of copies and some of them I would have three different sets in there, three different cards.

Then I just started telling the kids about it because they always come in here. They were like, “What is this?” I needed to announce, we’re remembering the Route 91 people and these are the people that passed. They would just come in and be like, “What’s this?” I have directions on it. I would kind of tell them and it was interesting to see the students. They would stand there and just stare at it and look at all the people. They were like, “How do I pick one?” I was like, “Whoever speaks to you. Whoever you feel like.” It was interesting because a lot of them like the police officer; a lot of the kids like the military guy because they’re in uniform. Some of the boys liked the prettier younger girls. It was interesting. Sometimes they would pick someone older. Sometimes if I had time, I would say, “So, I’m just curious, what made you pick that person?” “Well, she looks like my grandma.” Or, “My aunt knows her.” You would see them

looking for specific names. Or, “He lives out in Green Valley. I’ve seen him on the news. He plays basketball. I like basketball.” It was interesting to see how they would pick.

They would open their card. Sometimes they would look because one of them is like ‘buy Starbucks for the person behind you.’ That’s the only one that they couldn’t really do unless they were with a parent. I would say, “If you get anything that you feel like you can’t do—“ Or one might say, “Write a sibling a note telling them how much you care for them,” but they’re an only child. I would say, “You may get something that you can’t do for whatever reason. You don’t need to tell me why. Maybe you just don’t want to do it. You can put your card back and pick another one.” Sometimes they would pick a different card. Some would ask me, “Can I take three?” I was getting such a response at first, I would say, “How about you just take one at a time and when you’re done come back and get another?”

But I told them, “After you do your card, save it and pass it on to somebody and then tell them what it’s for and tell them, ‘do it in remembrance of your person.’ Then those cards instead of one by one, one could get circulated all the way through.

**There was that concept of paying it forward.**

Yes. It did really well. It kind of slowed up after Christmas break. Plus we start doing testing, things going on where not as many kids were coming in here. But I still get ones that will randomly come in here and they’ll just grab cards. I don’t say anything to them anymore. There are my certain kids I know that—I’m an Honor Society advisors and they get hours for doing service. My Honor Society kids say, “Can we get service time for doing those?” I’m like, “Yes, do them all.” I actually have one that has tried to knock through all of them. I never did ask her if she did all of them, but she would keep coming back. She’s like, “All right, I’m doing these; I’m doing these.”

I always remind them, “Remember we’re not doing this for something. I know you’re getting Honor Society hours for service, but service at the end of the day is what you’re doing in your own heart, not for money, not for bragging rights.” I told my Honor Society kids, “When you’re doing something to honor someone with nothing behind it, if you get the Starbucks one and your parents say you can do it, you shouldn’t be on social media. I see grown adults all the time, ‘Today I was at Starbucks and I bought a coffee for the person behind me.’” I go, “You don’t be boastful about it. It’s something you do quietly in your heart and then later something good will happen back to you quietly in your heart. It should be something that we’re all doing. We don’t always go to the neighbor’s house and offer to pick the weeds in the yard because they’re elderly because we want them to pay us five dollars. We’re just doing it because they might not be able to bend down and pick the weeds.” I was hoping in the end to kind of teach those kinds of things and I think middle schoolers need you to be principled about talking about the kinds of things they’re going through.

**Well, all of us need to be reminded what random acts of kindness, the impact that it can have.**

Yes. The one thing that people always ask my daughters and I since Route 91, they always seem to ask us—my girls went to Faith Lutheran, which is a Christian private school, and they’ll always say, “So has this impacted your faith? Do you still believe in God?” Everybody wants to know that. I give the same answers like my girls. First of all, I believe even more now because there was one bad guy, but there were thousands of people that did good in return. I didn’t cook dinner for a month. My doorbell would ring and there would be food just dropped off or delivered. I don’t know who it was from. Little things like that. I would get emails from people in England, “I just wanted to know if your daughters are okay,” these strangers on the other side

of the world. We learned even though there was one really bad thing, there was a lot more good that came from the one bad thing. It never, in fact, impacted our faith. They always say, “Well, you have hope for humanity?” And I say, “Yes, there are a lot of people out there doing good.” There is a couple doing bad, but there are millions doing good.

**You can’t get too cynical.**

Yes.

**When you look back, being born and raised here in Las Vegas and you’ve seen all the changes in this city in general, one of the things that resonated after One October was how the city came together. Did that surprise you? How did your feelings about this being home change in any way?**

Everybody came together. It was overwhelming. I remember being at the hospital. They had a room in the hospital you could go to where people that donated blankets and sock and underwear and stuff, you could just go in this room and they would just hand you this. “You need this; you need this.” I go, “No, I’ve got like five blankets in the room.” “Well, here’s five more.” Or there was another room with food and all these companies delivering food for you to go in there and it was like, “Are you hungry?” They’re handing you food. “We’ve got Cheesecake Factory; we’ve got this pizza; we’ve got all these.” It was overwhelming, like waters. I went home with so much stuff in boxes.

I remember at one point we had like fifty toothbrushes and just these boxes. I couldn’t just throw it away. I didn’t know what to do with it, so it just sat there. I remember one day coming home and my girls had all these baggies out on the counter and they’re sorting out all this stuff. I go, “What are you doing?” They said, “Oh, we’re going to keep a bag in our car and we’re going to hand them out to homeless people.” They went one day and they did it and they

sent me a video of them driving around by Sunrise Hospital handing out these bags from all this stuff that was donated because we didn't know what to do with it. It was more than...

Anyway, the reason I'm saying it is it was overwhelming, but it was good. That whole Vegas Strong thing made us realize that there are a lot of people out there coming to help in any capacity. I couldn't even write thank-you cards and I felt guilty, I still do, because there were so many people. There was a Go Fund Me page with hundreds of people that donated that I didn't know or people I did know. I remember just putting on Facebook, because at that time that's how I could reach everyone, "I just want to tell all of you thank you. It's not that I don't care from a person who donated ten thousand dollars to someone who left breakfast at my front door; it all means the same to me; it's not a monetary value of what it was. But I don't have enough time to thank all of you individually. Just know from the bottom of our hearts that we care." Still to this day people, especially the Route 91 group, they are there to help each other.

Like my principal alluded, it was like—then the next shooting happened; I think it was the church in Texas, which was not too long after that. Then a lot of it gets diverted to the next tragedy and then it's the next tragedy and then it's the next tragedy. I feel like it's still in people's minds what happened here, but it's just sad that we live in a world where now it's like life goes on the next day. Life has to go on; I know that. But it's so much on the news now that you kind of see it and you're like, oh, it's so sad for those people, but it's different. Like 9/11 happened and it's like the whole world stopped for ten years—not really stopped, but it was very heavy. Now it's just like these things happen so much I feel like people have gotten numb to it.

People are mean. The things I read on news posts and stuff, what people say about just...I feel like the world came together and they're really good, but I feel like they've also got desensitized and they're not as empathetic. Some people don't understand. It's made me look a

little more to walk a mile in someone's shoes, not be judgmental, even the thing with the bulletproof jackets the other day on Facebook. This is on a CCSD teachers' site with adults that are, I would hope, compassionate. People are like, "Oh, you people are still moaning and groaning about this? This is really stupid." I finally said on there, "You people need to be compassionate. You might have a different point of view, but your delivery, how you talk to people, is so not appropriate at all."

We're not all going to agree. That's the thing that makes me crazy on social media or just the news or life in general; it's like everybody wants a platform to say what they believe and they want to put it right in your face and remind you of it. But the minute that somebody doesn't agree with it, instead of just saying we can agree not to agree, they're so violent against each other.

I feel like with all these things going on in the world, you should almost be thankful you're alive today. Let's not sweat the big things, but let's work on being kind and not being mean to people because you might not be here in ten minutes. Anything can happen.

**I'm assuming these were teachers that reached out to you for your lesson plan.**

Yes.

**Where did they come from? Were they just local?**

All over. I know there's some local schools, but some out-of-town schools because it just got circulated around.

**Did you hear back from them, any feedback about (indiscernible)?**

Yes. Some sent me pictures of the boards they did. Some said, "Is it okay if I tweak it a little?" I go, "This is not a copyrighted thing. You can do whatever you want. If it gives you an idea to branch something off, you don't have to check in with me. If you want to show me what you did

that's great. Maybe I'll get an idea to add to mine." Some in elementary school, they were like, "Well, I really think the pictures are heavy. I might just do kindness cards. Is that okay?" They wanted to check in with me, which is fine; they wanted to see, maybe, because I had been through it, what my thoughts were. But I really was like, "Anything you can do to make a positive impact with students, it's fine with me." I know quite a few of them did do something.

I'm going to take this down tomorrow because we have to take everything off the walls for the summer. What I think I'm going to do is save that for each October and do it as a month of October theme, like a tribute, so people will never forget. Also, because it's close to the start of a school year, it kind of kicks off a kindness chain each year. So we'll see.

### **Have you been to the Healing Garden?**

Yes, I have been there once. I went with my daughters and my girls had been there prior to that. We went on October first, the one-year anniversary. When we were there, there were a lot of people there, lots of media and stuff. But when we were there, a couple of blocks away, apparently there was an explosion in a garbage can, so it made the whole experience terrible. We thought it was gunfire. We all ran. We ran to the cars. Dean, the firefighter, was here from Washington with the girls. We weren't there that long. That happened and—oh, no. The girls and I had been there. I went with the girls there when it first opened. I take that back. That's when we first saw it, but I hadn't been back since. We jumped in the cars and left. It was really scary because we thought that something was going on there again. It's always like those weird situations.

It wound up being nothing. I called some of the news people I knew and said, "Can you guys see what's going on here?" One of them got back to me. She said, "Yes, there was a homeless person that started a garbage can fire." I don't know.

But I have not been back. I know my girls have been there. They have went and helped clean it. There are some things going on down there, I think some special projects or new signs and stuff.

**It's more permanent now. They've added to it.**

Yes, yes. When there was really high winds—we had high winds a few months ago—some things got damage. I remember the girls went because they are a part of those Route 91 groups. They don't even tell me. I'll be like, "So what did you do today?" "Oh, I went to Healing Garden to clean up." I was like, "Oh, why didn't you tell me? I would have went with you." But I've got to remember that they're grown adults and they need to do a lot of these things without their mom always with them.

**It's hard being a mom.**

Yes, it is hard. And you think when they turn eighteen, then you're done with your duties. It's like, no. I have a twenty-five-year-old son, too. It's like, man, do I get a break? No. I love it.

**How did he react to knowing his sisters got injured?**

He freaked out, yes. He was at the hospital. "I'm going to find this guy and I'm going to kill him." *He's already dead.* "Well, I'm going to find out his friends." It was that whole big brother mentality. Then he struggled, too, though, because the girls were getting so much attention and stuff and he was going through some things with himself, some problems with himself, and a lot of the attention shifted to them, so he kind of struggled with that. I would have to remind him, "Your sisters were both shot. I care about all of you equally, but right now we've got to focus on getting them healed. Yes, we can work on things you're dealing with, too."

**It's tough.**

Yes.

**Anything else you'd like to share with me about your experiences and the community?**

No. The Resiliency Center is really good. The girls still reach out. Matter of fact, Giana, when she was getting the pain in her hip still, she wasn't sure what to do. I said, "Try the Resiliency Center. Call them." She called them and then they told her about trauma yoga, which I think she wound up going to last week. They are really good about you can still call them.

I thought originally it was a temporary place that they had, but it seems like it's still very active because I wound up having to call them. They are the ones that called the FBI to find out if the girls have, still, money in their Victims of Crime fund to help pay for Giana's possible next surgery because I was worried about that. I literally called them and she took some information and she did all the footwork for me. She called me the next day and she's like, "I'm going to email you this. I called this person, this person and this person." They are still very...So I'm thankful for that; that those resources are still there.

They sent us some quilts that were made. It's nice because they actually check in to see how people are doing, which is nice.

**Those Resiliency Centers are a movement, essentially.**

Yes, I know.

**That's unfortunate that's what you're talking about, but it's good to know that they exist and are used in a positive way.**

Yes. Hopefully they'll still keep going because, as we had mentioned earlier, the one that just committed suicide the other day from Columbine, it's like...And there was one, I think, last week; the one last week was from Parkland, and there was a Route 91 person a few weeks ago, a survivor. These are the things I see on these Route 91 survivor pages. Lisa Fine, who is a survivor in California who is very, very active, I'm friends with her on Facebook, so she'll reach

out to me, saying, “How are the girls doing?” She will update me on, “Did you see we lost another survivor to suicide? How are the girls doing, really?”

The only bad thing that I think has come out of this whole Vegas Strong, if I could say negative, is this whole Vegas Strong, at least for my girls, has made them feel like they need to be strong in the eyes of everyone. If you ever see them on an interview or out, everything is like, we’re fine; we’re strong; we’re Vegas Strong. But really behind closed doors at night they kind of struggle. I wish the society was more understanding to depression and mental health, not to shove stuff under the carpet. It’s okay if you’re struggling. It’s okay if you have nightmares. You’re not always completely strong and sometimes you need help. Because if you keep burying that stuff, I think that’s where all these people kind of lose it.

**That reminds me. I heard the word *warriors* is used. I didn’t know that until just recently.**

Yes, warriors. My girls even have a hard time with *survivor*. They know they’re survivors, but there are certain words they just don’t... They would just rather people know that they were involved in this and not say anything. Still, they will be out and they’re like, “Well, we went out to dinner today and these people were pointing at us and they said we are the survivors. Can you believe that?” And then I have to explain to them, “Well, you are. It’s okay they noticed you because you’ve been on the news. You can’t get upset.” “Well, we wish people would just... We want to be normal.”

**They would rather not be identified.**

Yes. Even though a lot of the news outlets are still trying to get ahold of them, “I’m done talking to people. I don’t want to talk about it. I’m fine. Nobody needs to know how I’m doing now.”

Anyway, that’s it. I’m thankful my girls are alive. You can’t complain about that. There are a lot of people that can’t say.

**I'm grateful that you agreed to do this interview. This is a tough time.**

Thank you. You've got to get help.

**I appreciate it.**

Yes. Let me know what comes of it. Share anything.

**I will. I appreciate it. Thank you so much.**

And if a book is written or whatever, send me links or whatever.

**I will, yes. I'll know more about that—**

They were interviewed by John Woodrow Cox of the Washington Post. I don't know if you saw.

There is a couple-thousand-word phenomenal, might I say...Look up John Woodrow, W-O-O-D-R-O-W, Cox. He wrote an article—well, he's doing a whole series about youth violence in America. He did a whole thing with the twins with Route 91, and the writing is phenomenal, out of all the media people I've dealt with. He, I think, is in the process of writing a book. He spent a week with us after Route 91. He basically almost lived at my house and followed us around. But we felt really comfortable with him.

**What was that like?**

He was actually one that we liked a lot. He just wanted to know what life looks for us and stuff.

He just became—I still talk to him. But stuff you're gathering—I don't know exactly what's going on—if you want statistical data about shootings and reactions and age groups and minority groups, the Washington Post has done a phenomenal series. A Pulitzer Prize? He won all kinds of awards. All you have to do is look him up on the internet and then click on a thing and you'll see all his stories. You might get some good stuff that you want to add to your story from him.

**I might even talk to him just to let him know—**

Yes, yes, yes.

**—how we worked with this. Yes, it's been a very interesting...That seems like such an odd word.**

Well, you've probably got so many different...Because, from talking to so many people that are survivors, we know some that still can't get over it. They still cry every day and they can't smile. They still struggle so bad. Then some people will say, "How are you able to talk about this and not cry?" I think everyone deals with it differently. I don't know. It's like you just have to keep moving.

**I am really interested in the topic of youth violence because one of the themes that comes through, Cindy, for me, and you touched upon it as an educator as well as a parent, I mean, wow. But I've had a police officer talk about his coming home after being on duty and breaking down in front of his children, his young children, and how they reacted. How parents who were attending and survived, but they didn't tell their children when they got home what happened, and then their kids learn about it at school through an announcement over the PA, and they go, oh my God, my parents were there. Kids, the impact, the ripple effect.**

Oh yes. When I came back to work—I'm a cheer coach here—my cheerleaders had made all this stuff. I've got a poster, a big old thing in my office, still that I have out, and a basket of stuff and they were all calling me. When I came back to work, everyone just goes, "Oh my gosh," I think because I was out so long, plus stuff was on the news and it was circulating, like in Providence. I live in Providence and it went on our Facebook page. There was five thousand people—I live in the neighborhood that this school, the kids go to. All my neighbors are also students that I've had or they're still here; they're adults now because I've been here so long. That it kind of went out.

When I came back to school, it was just interesting to see their reactions. Some kids were scared to come talk to me. Some were like, "You have to tell me everything." It was different.

**I really appreciate this.**

Yes. Thank you.

**This has been excellent.**

All right, thank you.

**[End of recorded interview]**