

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDREA GARDEA

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REMEMBERING 1 OCTOBER

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV LIBRARIES

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVE

**Today is June 26, 2019. I'm sitting in my office at the UNLV Library with Andrea.**

**Andrea, will you state your name? It sounds so official when I say that. And spell it for us.**

Andrea Gardea; A-N-D-R-E-A, G-A-R-D-E-A.

**Great. We're here for the Remembering One October project. Even though it's about an event, I like to start with the background. You've been so engaging already about how you're a UNLV alum, so let's start with that story.**

Backing that up, I was saying that when I was younger, I was a little girl probably about seven, eight, nine years old, we used to come out here. My brother would have wrestling tournaments and I would have cheerleading competitions with my best friend. We would come out here with our families. I would always say when I was a little girl, "That's my college. That's my school. I'm going to go to that school." Anytime we'd come out here for another event, I would make them take me to the store, actually, and get a UNLV shirt. I was a ten-year-old walking around with a UNLV shirt on or something.

Then life goes on and I was still in Orange County in California and was graduated from Harbor High School and was dating a guy for a little while. We broke up and after we broke up I just was like, it's time for me to go. I applied to UNLV and got accepted and then started looking for an apartment online, back when it was dial-up; AOL had to wait for things to dial up. I started looking for apartments. When I found five of them, I finally told my parents, "I got accepted and I'm going to move to Las Vegas." They said, "We always knew you would." We came out here April of 2002 and started looking for apartments. August of 2002, I started school out here.

I went home for about a year, actually, to California. It was out-of-state tuition and whatnot, so I'm like, "I'm going to save up money and I'm going to go back and I'm going to finish." I actually moved back to Vegas again to finish college and ended up actually graduating in 2008, which was in December, actually, and that was the last time it actually snowed in the valley, too, which was kind of funny. I remember when they came out for my graduation, we went to dinner and all the sudden all this snow started coming. We were laughing and we just couldn't believe it. We went back to my apartment. I was living in Green Valley on a golf course then. I just remember seeing people get their snowboards out and do the little hills at the golf course, but it was a lot of fun. Up until this year it was not snowy in the valley or on the Strip and then this past winter came.

When I graduated I couldn't have been happier. I take every chance I can to come back to the college because I love it here.

**That's great. I'm really curious. Specifically what about UNLV or Vegas caught the fancy of a young person?**

I don't know. Sometimes I joke I've got a ninety-year-old woman inside of me. I grew up listening to Loretta Lynn and Elvis and Johnny Cash and that was everything that Vegas was back then to me. For me it was very comfortable, it was very homey, but yet there was something romantic about it still as a kid. It must have been the lights. I don't know. It was something about it. I remember thinking when we passed the school one time, *oh that's where I'm going to college. That's my city.* I'm an eight-year-old, which was kind of funny. I don't remember exactly what it was, but I think there was something very nostalgic about it even then to me.

**Interesting. Your parents came here as tourists? Were they vacationing here?**

Yes, they would just come on vacation as tourists and for my brother's wrestling tournaments. We would come out for the weekend. It's actually kind of funny, too, because my childhood best friend then, her parents had a huge RV back then and so we would camp over at Sam's Town. They have a campground there and we'd always go camping there. Then it was like Sam's Town was relatively new because we were so young. It was thirty years ago, which is funny. Now I am the marketing manager for Campgrounds of America and one of my campgrounds is Sam's Town, so we lease that space. As I come full circle now, it's so weird that even though this camping company is the largest corporation of camping in the world and they're based out of Billings, Montana, but we have a few campgrounds that are owned and operated by the company and I handle marketing for them and it just so happens to be that that area at Sam's Town, their camping one, is one of my campgrounds now. It's really weird, I know, but my whole life is this whole 'how did that happen?' kind of thing.

**Very serendipitous.**

Yes, it really is. It's very homey to me and I love it.

**Sports, you mentioned your brother wrestling and you came here for wrestling tournaments and all of that. The reason we got connected with each other was through Deryk and Melissa Engelland, so if you want to talk about that for me, too, that will fill in the gap for me there.**

My family was big into activities for us kids. I have two brothers and myself. I was big into dancing and cheerleading and gymnastics, and they were big into football, baseball and wrestling. We didn't do very many vacations so this was always our—and the weird thing was is that tournaments always kind of happened here. Coming from Orange County it was such an easy destination. I think that was kind of how I was always into sports. I wasn't really huge into

performing arts or art necessarily, but sports I just always had a draw from. I just grew up always watching sports in my house and having that. I had been a cheerleader, I don't know, from the time I was five years old until the time I graduated from high school. It was my rebellion stage and I was like, "I'm not cheerleading anymore; I'm done." I was just tired of going to the basketball, baseball, all the sports, but I missed that sports atmosphere and I actually started watching hockey. Back in California I would watch the Mighty Dogs, back then, so they were owned by Disney, and I started working for them and that was at the same time that I got accepted to UNLV.

When I did I moved out here and I was working at ESPN Zone, so another sports thing, which was owned by Disney. I migrated and just transferred out here. I started working at ESPN Zone inside New York New York. It's not there anymore unfortunately. As I was working there I came to school full-time and did my internship with what was then the brand-new ECHL team, which was the Las Vegas Wranglers. My love for sports migrated to hockey in California and then moved out here with me and I started my internship with the Las Vegas Wranglers in 2002 when they opened. Deryk played for the hockey team and I was one of the marketing interns.

Melissa was actually was going to UNLV, so Melissa and I went to college together. Deryk was a player for the Wranglers. It's so funny because as much as there is chaos and always something going on you think it would be easier to meet people, but it really wasn't. When we first moved out here, we were young; we left everything we knew at home. Deryk came from nowhere British Columbia, Melissa came from Wisconsin, and I came from Orange County. It was a little bit easier to get friends to visit, but none of us had very much here, and so we all sort of found each other and realized, okay, you're not too bad; you're not one of the scary ones that are out there that you hear of all those city folks or whatever. I think for them I was

probably the scariest one because I was more city than they were. But, yes, we just kind of found each other. They met one night after a hockey game when we were at McMullan's and it's been history ever since. We've kind of just been one little family that we made on our own out here and kind of just grown together ever since.

**I think that's wonderful.**

It's a crazy little story, but it's been so nice for all of us to have each other in our little home, in this city that we built kind of together.

**Right. Well, you've seen it grow with the last boom.**

Yes.

**You were graduating at the beginning of the recession, but you've also stayed here.**

Yes.

**Your major was in marketing at Greenspun?**

Yes, journalism and media studies, but marketing was my overall goal, but over in Greenspun, yes.

**ESPN Zone, I was going to ask about that because I have a friend...What was your job there?**

I was just a server there. I was a food server.

**Okay, I've got that.**

We will circle back to that one.

**Yes, we will circle back because it may or may not be a small world. We'll figure that out later, though. Anyway, with the Remembering One October, a less fun topic for sure, can you tell me where you were October first?**

Yes. October first was a Sunday that I woke up extremely exhausted. My older brother and his wife were in town along with our childhood friend and her husband, and we had been going to the concerts all Friday and Saturday. They were obviously staying in a hotel. I was staying at my place and then just meeting up with them when it was time to grab lunch, dinner, and then head over to the concert. I was in the process of starting to build my house so I was still in an apartment over on the west side of town and I woke up thinking, *oh my God, I just can't go another night*. They are long nights and you're just hanging out and everybody is having fun. It's always nice to have my brother and family out here to visit, but it's always kind of funny because I'm like, I have to go to work the next day; I'm not on vacation, the lifelong saga of the people that live in Vegas. But I was like, *they're out here and it's Jason Aldean*, and I love Jason Aldean. I'm like, *okay, buck up, take a little nap; sleep in a little bit and get going*.

I was getting ready to go and I went to go meet my brother and sister-in-law. Our two friends went a little bit early to the concert area to go catch Big and Rich, I believe, was starting earlier, and so they headed to the concert a little bit earlier and we were just going to meet up with them. Stephen, who is my brother, and my sister-in-law's name is Ashley, we met and we went to go have dinner at MGM and then we were just going to walk over there and meet them. We headed over there still when the sun was up, just very relaxed, and headed there grabbing all of our stuff, getting set up kind of in the same spot that we had been in both other days.

### **Where was that spot?**

I'm sure by now you're familiar with it. We were center stage, but pulled back just a little bit where the bars were. The speaker is right next to us, so not back towards the bleachers or any of that stuff, but still center next to the bar area, like towards the end of the green. We were there kind of where we had stayed the whole time. We're like, we don't need to be front and center

and we don't really need all the people around us; it's fine. We thought we were hanging back, like where we were was in a good spot, but no spot was a good spot that night.

The concert is going and Jason Aldean finally comes on. As we're there, he is into his fourth song, which was my favorite song. We're in a line; there is the three girls in the front. Actually, one of my coworkers was there with us the first two nights and she was like, "I'm too tired; I can't go." It was just the three of us girls, and my brother and my friend's husband were right behind us. As things started—it was so weird, which everybody said, you didn't know what was happening at first because of the sounds and the way things echoed. Also, there was the helicopter airport that's right there in the path. There was a lot of side noise anyways. The first little bit, the first two shots, I remember thinking, *oh maybe that was just a speaker or something maybe on the street*. Then the next couple went a few seconds later and our childhood friend, her husband is actually an EMT in the Marines and he knew the second that the first shot of the second round went out, and he was just, "Get down." He was walking through the crowd telling everyone to get down.

Then they turn on the flood lights and we were down because he was like, "Get down; get down." In my head—it sounds terrible—when I grew up we were in a city called Norwalk, California and I was five or six, it was fine when my parents bought there, obviously, and then it turned into more gang area so they moved us out of there. I remember there was a high speed chase. In my head I was like, *oh maybe this is a drive-by*. I couldn't even fathom anything else or understand. I didn't even understand. Also, it was in different directions the way that he was shooting. Our friend Derrick, he knew immediately and he moved us down. The next thing I know, you're almost blinded by their floodlights that they turned on when you turned around to kind of see if things were triggering with other people.

Then after the first two initial spouts, which is where I believe, in my head, he shot out the windows to get better access, they just started going; the shots just started ringing out. At that point I got separated from all of them. Derrick and Lauren, our friend, they were together. My brother and his wife were together. But somehow I alone ended up underneath a bar table by myself not knowing where anybody was at. At that point I lost everyone. All I remember once I realized I was under a bar table is turning around looking at some guy who is holding me down, just saying, “Stay down.” I don’t know who he is. He just has these eyes and I can see fear in his eyes. I can see him heavy breathing. In slow motion almost I feel like, *is this really happening?* And I’m like, *oh my gosh*. Then it hits me that this is really happening. As I turn around I see one girl just down. She gets shot as she’s running out and just face down. At that point I’m like, *how is this going to happen? Is this real? Is this seriously real?*

We were there for a couple of rounds and then I remember just hearing the guy say, “Okay, run,” as the guy—

**The guy that was protecting you.**

The guy that was holding me, yes. Again, I’m like, no clue. He just says, “Okay, run,” and he pushes me up from underneath and everybody underneath that table starts running at one time. It’s just like a herd of us running. As we were running you can obviously see people, stuff happening along the sides of you in your peripheral, people with blood and people going down or people just trying to stay together in one thing to almost make a barrier of yourselves. I don’t know, again, when people—I’m really kind of bad with times. I don’t know how long I was sitting there.

**That’s so understandable.**

It's still kind of weird. There are key moments that I remember. As I'm running I remember getting out of the gates now at that point.

### **The gates on the street side?**

On the inside, so where Koval kind of wraps around, towards the church. I'm out on the church side. I remember seeing the cop there. There was always a cop there and every night my brother would always shake the cop's hand. The same cop was there that my brother would shake his hand. I remember seeing him there as I'm running past him. But then I remember I'm like, *oh my gosh, he's obviously got something going on, so I can't just hide here; I have to keep running.* Everywhere I was looking I kept looking for places to hide. You couldn't tell where the sound was coming from. It just seemed like it was going from everywhere. All I can think is just, *make yourself small and hide.* But it was just going and going and going.

Finally I'm running and I run past the cop. I remember thinking, *I'm for sure going to die tonight. I have to figure out how to move myself to not get stomped on when I'm dead.* I could see on the corner now there are two people bleeding out lying there. My parents are very Catholic and they raised us Catholic. I'm like, *my parents would much rather pick up my body at the church, so I'm going to run to the church so they can find me.* I know, it's terrible.

I get to the church, again not knowing where this sound is coming from and still not believing that it's still going. I just couldn't believe how long it's going. At this church—I'm sure you've heard—there is almost these window cutouts and I'm hiding behind one and I'm thinking, *okay, get down and hide behind maybe this little—it's probably this big, so it's not going to cover me—but thinking, this will help me at least.* I didn't know it was still coming from right next to me. When he stopped shooting again, then I kept running and got through the church. I'm thinking, *oh my God, I got through the church. Keep going.*

Again, it's just like everybody is trying to fit through this one thing. People are trying to open gates. You could just see them trying to help pregnant people. Everybody now is trying to help each other over these fences and these gates. Now I'm in between Tropicana and Hooters. I am running in between cars trying to hide and it's still going and it's still going. I get to Hooters now and there is a guy in their laundry room who is looking out like, what is happening? Somebody is like, "Let us in; let us in. There is somebody shooting at us." He's like, "Come in, come in, come in." He pulls like fifty people in there. He's like, "I'm locking the door." Then it hits me, I don't know where my brother is at. I'm like, "Let me out. I have to go find my brother."

Then I start running back to my brother. Somehow and I don't even know how—I was wearing these cargo-type pants that have a pocket and in my pocket my phone stayed there. I've realized that my phone is still in there. I'm trying to call him. No answer. I'm trying to call him. No answer. I'm like, *I have to go back*. I start heading back to the scene. Right at that moment as I'm getting ready to go from the parking lot over to the church area again, I see my brother's hat. He is wearing a cowboy hat. I'm like, *oh my God*. Even to this day I still can't believe it happened. I see him and his wife and we get each other and we're like, "Let's go." I'm like, "Go. You have to follow me."

I parked at MGM that day thinking, *you guys will stay and party after the concert. I'm going to go home and go to bed because I have to go work tomorrow*. I grab them. I take them to my car. We get to my car at MGM and we're like, "We have to find Lauren and Derrick now." We're calling. Can't find them. Can't find them. I get my brother into my car. We call my parents and tell them, "This is what's going on. We are safe right now. We're getting out of here."

I get them in the car. How we even got out of the parking structure I don't even know. The things were up. It must have been some emergency call. All the arms were up so it let us get out of the parking structure and I got to them quick enough before they shut off any of the roads. I just couldn't stop driving east. Even though I lived on 215 and Fort Apache, I kept going east thinking, *I have to get us away from here and I have to get us away from the airport and I have to get us away from anything else that could be a target because I don't know what's happening right now.* I don't even know how far I went. I just remember going east and my sister-in-law stopping and saying, "Are we there yet?" I'm like, "We're so far from there. Oh my gosh, we have to go home to a safe place."

I get on the 215 and I start driving home and we finally get ahold of our friends. They were shot, both of them. She was shot in her leg in her main artery and her husband was shot three places across him. Somehow he was still able to get her to a medic tent, put a tourniquet on her and get her to a hospital. They threw her in the back of one of the trucks, somebody's truck, until they found an EMT or an ambulance; they flagged them down. We stayed at my house, basically awake in my apartment, awake, staring at the TV just trying to understand, in shock, until we were able to go get them the next morning.

That was basically where I stayed after that for the next week and a half because I couldn't even leave my apartment. My brother and sister-in-law had to go back to California the next day because their baby was two and a half at that time and was with my parents. They were watching. They had to leave and come back. So much of that time I'm just like, *holy crap, what happened?* Trying to understand. I still try and really understand what happened and sometimes I just give up. There is so much skepticism around it and everybody has their theories and whatnot. It comes to the point where I don't even care what a theory is or whatever it is. There is

still so much healing that even I do and I wasn't shot, to everything that I do. Before I would go to concerts, no problem. I can't go to strange places anymore. I didn't even go to the gym. I finally started working out again. It was six hundred and sixteen days I stopped going to the gym because I didn't want to get stuck in a place where people aren't paying attention and there is loud noises, and things like that I just would have never done before, for like a year. I've never been a supporter of medication and I was on the highest dose of antidepressants and anxiety medication, hypertension medication, sleeping pills, anything to get me to sleep because I just couldn't. I was crawling in my own skin. The healing process has been...it's so hard.

The only saving grace that I have is my friends that were shot, they came out alive. She got to keep her leg and she thought for sure she was going to lose her leg. He healed from it. My brother and my sister-in-law, when I go home to California or they come out, we always have our long talks of how we're doing. It's hard to tell people that weren't there because it is the scariest time in your life that people will never understand, but you don't want them to understand because of how scary it was.

I try to find these ways to move forward with stuff now and try and find who I was before again and push myself to do little new things every once in a while, but I would be completely staying in my house for the rest of my life with my dog. I'm so scared of strangers now. I have to know where the exits are. I have to know what the plan is. I have to be standing by an exit. I can't have my back to—like this where I'm like, *okay*.

**If you want you can move over here.**

I'll just be stressed out anyway.

**I always watch, too.**

Oh yes, I'm stressed out anyway all the time. Just things like that that I never cared about before. But also it changed my view on things. I don't sweat the small stuff anymore; that's for sure. When you realize and you have to come to terms with your last day on Earth, I think you have a different perspective about things from there on out. That is the one thing that's helped me lighten the load with some of the stuff I used to care about that I no longer do. That is the one silver lining that I try and take and move on and share with people. At the end of the day this could be your last one. Does it really matter? Maybe it's a morbid way to look at it. That's how I try and find the easier ways in life now.

**Did you seek professional help?**

Yes, I did. I did for about a year. Then I got upset with my therapist actually because at one point—so it was kind of like, “Now, okay, it's been a year. You need to move on, Andrea.” I'm like, “Okay, well, it's really hard. You say that.” He would always be like, “What are the chances of this happening again?” I'm like, “Really quite good. They happen frequently, maybe not to this magnitude.” It was two weeks after that there was the shooting at the country bar in California and one of the guys that was at Route 91 was killed that night. And so I was like, “See, this is why I'm afraid still.” He has daughters and I was like, “You're telling me you're not afraid at all about your daughters going and this happening to them?” He was like, “No, I'm able to separate it.” I'm like, “Okay, then you're not understanding how I'm not able to separate it yet or how I feel like the world is a safe place still.” I was like, let me just heal a little bit on my own before I keep digging into all the wounds. I did for a while and it actually helped. But at the end of it when I was at a turning point, I'm like, “I just need a minute.” Every other week it was just a lot of rehashing, rehashing, and I was like, *I don't feel like I'm healing. I feel like I'm just keeping the wound open so it doesn't get to scab.* But I've actually been better since I've stopped

because I've been able to, okay, now we have to start working on stuff still and now there are these little things that you still need to do to be normal, get back to the old ways kind of things without being so scared all the time. I try.

**That's remarkable.**

Thanks. It's been a process. I think all of us, like at my friend's baby shower, the one that got shot, she was in a support group and there was actually a mom there at her baby shower that was shot in the face. I see some of the struggles. We talked and even though she was shot, she said, "Whether I was shot or not, I would have been the same. Just now I have this extra healing piece to do here." But I just look at everyone and everyone has been so good and so strong and we just try and help each other through it all, I think, which has helped us a lot, as part of that concert community.

**That helping each other, the camaraderie that was developed afterwards, do you belong to some of those Facebook groups or any of that?**

Yes, I do.

**Can you tell me a little bit about that?**

I am still a part of them. I've just almost hidden them from my timeline because everybody heals in a different way and what I've learned also is that your upbringing and the stuff that you have had from the past, which is what I learned a lot in therapy, has a lot to do with the way you heal as well. Because so many people have so many different upbringings and different healing processes and everybody is at a different stage in how they move forward, I had to—I still like it because there is an understanding that's in that group that somebody is going through the same level that I am, but there were some people where I'm like, *wow, this is still so dark*, that I have to for my own sake not read it every day. I've had to almost remove myself a little bit from it to

move on or to heal a little bit. I don't know if *moving on* is the right word. I think you take it and you adjust as you move forward. I'm never going to forget. I always jump when somebody slams a door or drops something or pops the bubble wrap. Little things that I never would have cared about before happen and tears immediately. The other day I was over at Melissa and Deryk's and they got a deliver and he was *pop, pop, pop*. Instantly I just fill up with tears. He's like, "Oh my God, I'm so sorry." Little things that would have never been an issue before turn into an issue. If I always go back to that night, if you're on Facebook every day and you go back to that night every day, it's not good. It wasn't good for me personally. But I'm still a part of them and I still will read them sometimes and see how people are doing. I always want what's best for everyone so I want to make sure that there is positive movement in that group, not that I can—I can only try and be a positive force.

**You said something about your parents right away when you go for the church, the spirituality. Then put that in combination, which I have read a lot about and I am familiar with, with how we heal from PTSD, our personal tool kit is set before we ever get to that traumatic event. I'm wondering, have you thought about the spirituality? Is that part of this?**

I was raised Catholic. I went through all my sacraments. I am spiritual. I am very thankful for that support that I have. I don't go to church all the time. I'm not hyper religious. I still am Catholic and I still will be thankful. At this point I'm like, I'm thankful to any god that has helped me out. I'll take them all. I don't even care. But, yes. It was hard because actually my parents came out for about a week after to help me. I couldn't get out of my apartment. I couldn't go to the grocery store. Melissa had to come over to sit at my apartment while I took a shower. I was so afraid to get stuck places. I was so afraid to get abandoned or stranded somewhere. It was

the craziest thing. I was frozen, and so my parents came out. It was kind of hard because they were like, "We have to go to church and pray." They meant well by it, but it was too soon to be in a group and I haven't been able to go back since because I was just so crazy. I'm like, "No, I can't. This is a very dangerous place. Nobody is paying attention." I think I always go back to that moment because we're all focused on Jason Aldean where no one is paying attention. We've all been drinking for three days now and we're tired.

It was kind of weird, like one of the ironic things is that I have a friend and he hates flip-flops with everything in them, and so I was like, "I'd almost worn flip-flops because we all had been wearing boots that night, even." My brother and the friends, they bought their passes, but I actually got a free pass to go during that time. The guy that gave me the pass, he works for MGM and he hates flip-flops. He was like, "Don't wear flip-flops they're so dangerous. There could be a zombie apocalypse, you never know." I'm like, "Oh, God." But that Sunday I was like, *I'm going to wear flip-flops. I can't go boots anymore. My feet are killing me.* Then I was like, *I better wear strap sandals maybe just in case I get stuck somewhere.* I had never been more happy that I took his advice, the one time that I remember this guy's stupid joke about the zombie apocalypse. I was like, *nah, there might be stuff on the ground or I might step on something. I better just wear strap sandals.* I wore strap sandals that night. I remember that guy calling to check on me afterwards and he is like, "Oh my God, are you okay?" I'm like, "I just want to thank you because I didn't wear my flip-flops that night." And he's like, "I'll never forgive myself for giving you that wristband." I was like, "No, thank you so much. I didn't wear flip-flops. You saved my life." You just saw flip-flops everywhere. People ran out of them and you'd had to run barefoot because there was so much beer and dirt and blood and everything on the ground. You would step on something and it would just be all over.

The crazy thing is I have terrible knees from cheerleading and dance and there's nothing in them anymore. I haven't run since probably I was twelve years old because of my knees. My brother was like, "Oh, I bet you learned how to run that night." I was like, "Yes, I did." Didn't even know it.

There were just funny—not funny, but ironic things. I feel very blessed, to say the least, that I got out of there alive and that I made the choices that I did. I'm like, whatever powers from above helped me do that I am very thankful for. Like I said, I have a really hard time going into crowded spaces with lots of people and church being one of them just because I also feel like it's a big target for crazy people as well. Those are just little things that I have to still work on as I move forward.

### **Have you gone to another concert?**

I have. I've been to concerts. They were all indoors up until May. I finally went to my first outdoor concert over at the M to go see my favorite country artist who came out. We were all together; Melissa and Deryk were there and my cousin came into town. Luckily, with some of the perks with Deryk, we got a spot off to the side where there's lots of security. It took me actually a long time to get in there. I had to let the whole crowd get in there first. I got in there right before Gary Allan started. Even then I had to be escorted to show exactly where the exit was. That one was hard. Most of the time when we go to concerts now we're in the suite area or, if I go to a hockey game, we're up against the wall. It's a lot of places where I know where I'm going. It's the places that I don't know where I'm going that make things difficult and understanding my safe places.

I haven't been to Mandalay Bay since, just not a place that I can go to. I don't care what country concert is in there or New Kids on the Block. I don't care because I'm not going to it.

It's hard because I do love the city so much and I had many wonderful times at Mandalay Bay, but I just can't go to it. It still has such a dark place in my heart. Maybe one day, though. There are little things that I try.

**Do you think in any small way or big way that sharing this experience with your brother and close friends has been helpful to you?**

Huge, yes. Because it's so hard to heal, to do things, to be comfortable in my own skin sometimes, just with my surroundings and sounds and strangers, having my brother and my sister-in-law and our friends understand that at least it helps because there is somebody. I think one of the hard things is I couldn't even go over Melissa and Deryk's house and they are my family, even to see the kids, because it was too much noise, the first week and half after it happened, and that was heartbreaking. But I'm like, "I can't." I couldn't be there for opening night. They would be like, "We love you and we want what's best for you and we want you to heal and we want you to feel safe and you're always safe here." It's like, "Yes, but you don't understand of how the anxiety of sounds feels."

Having somebody understand that, having somebody understand being scared all the time or the jumpy feeling or having anxiety...My anxiety is so bad. My ninety-one-year-old grandma and my godmother and my mom were out, and talking is so hard when my grandma can't hear, so it's like everybody is yelling, and I'm like, *oh my God*. Then my mom and her family are a cross between Mother Teresa and Marth Stewart; they're just angels, my aunts and my mom. My grandma bought this book about the American flag and they started singing and I had an anxiety attack. I had to go upstairs in my room and just cry it out. There was so much commotion that my body just doesn't even...even though it's my grandma and my godmother and my mom, safest people in the world, inside my own home with my dog there, I could not take it, the chaos,

the sounds. There are only so many people that understand that. The anxiety that still lingers is really hard to describe to people.

But knowing that I have people that get it, that go through it—my sister-in-law is the same way. My brother is a little bit better. I have this weird theory that him and our friend Derrick that was there—they're like, "We're okay, we're okay; we have moments"—I have this theory that men growing up knowing they have to protect so I think that they go into things knowing that I have to get my wife or my girlfriend or my sister through this and I do that; that's my role. Where girls are not prepared to be shot at. It's like one of those things where we're talking about Derrick, the Marine, and he's heard those before. He was the one that helped so many people get down, which is right he ended up getting shot across him. When she went to go help him, she got shot in the leg and then he helped her out. I feel like they have this more battle breed that men have in them because they feel like the protectors all the time anyways. I think they healed a little bit quicker than some of the girls did.

**Is that part of the country music culture, too?**

I think so.

**When you think about the themes of the songs and all of it.**

Very manly, tough, macho; that stuff. It might be. And they're very proud. Those men are very proud. My brother gets it, though. He's great. My brother and I are best friends. His wife and I definitely understand each other on the anxiety level and having those anxiety attacks because they just—it's crazy—they just come out of nowhere and next thing you know you're like tears pouring. One day those will go away. But still, it's been nice to have them understand, for both of us. When they have a bad day, we would always call each other. "How are you doing? Anything happen this week? Are you getting through it?" Obviously we've kind of pulled back

from a little bit, but we still have our nights when we get together and talk it out. They'll be out here for Fourth of July.

It was cool, though. This past October after the year anniversary, there was a Vegas Strong Marathon and Derrick and Lauren, who were shot, they came out, and so we all got together and had a reunion. I'm not good with everybody running kind of thing still. They were a little bit better with it so they did the Vegas Strong Marathon and I just met them afterwards. They actually conceived their baby on October first and they just had him a couple of days ago, so good came out of it.

**Sounds like a blessing.**

The sad thing was they actually lost their baby. She was pregnant that night and she didn't know it and she ended up having a miscarriage from it. It was this Vegas Strong miracle baby that she lost that night and then she got pregnant again a year later.

**Wow.**

I know. It was a crazy story. They just had him a couple of days ago.

**Oh my.**

I know. New baby, little Vegas Strong baby.

**This is a theme obviously we've dealt with in this project is how an individual heals. We've talked to people and here we are really getting close to the second anniversary of this.**

I know.

**And it has changed. People I run into—we haven't sat down and interview them, which I think would be interesting in and of itself. But one of the other aspects, and that's how I got communicating with you, was how the community heals. You just said you weren't there that night, the opening game, right?**

Yes.

**Can you talk a little bit about your involvement with the Engelland Foundation? Talk about your role in that.**

Yes, sure. The funny thing is I was staying with Melissa and Deryk. They could have probably claimed me as a dependent that year. I just lived at their house basically after that. Once I was able to get over there and be around the kids, then I was very protective. I didn't want anything to happen to the kids, so I would stay home with them a lot. I basically moved into their spare room. I was like, "Sorry, guys. I probably owe you a few meals."

But, yes, I'll never forget that morning, actually. I woke up and I walk out and I see Deryk—this is funny—I see him lying on his stomach on the ground. I'm like, "You okay there, bud? What's going on?" And he's like, "Oh, my stomach is upset. It's okay." And Melissa is like, "He's nervous." And I'm like, "About what?" Well, they didn't tell me what he was doing. She is like, "He's going to do a speech tonight." And I'm like, "Oh. Do you want to practice it with me?" So he was practicing it with me that morning. I was like, "I'm so proud of you."

It was kind of funny. I was there for the home opener for the very first preseason game, which Deryk played in. As we were walking out that night from the back under the tunnels and stuff, we wait for him usually and then after the game we'll walk out and go to their house and have a glass of wine on the patio or something. We walk out and somebody is filming us that night as we're walking out—well, they're filming him and Melissa and I just happen to get in it. It's kind of funny because as they did that I didn't realize it, but they were doing the preshow and they showed him doing that and we were in the clip walking out. I was like, *well, it's like I'm kind of there*. I didn't go to a game for months afterwards, which is unnatural for me. If there is

hockey and there is ice, I'm always at it. I helped navigate Melissa into the hockey world to help here understand what rules were and stuff.

I remember waking up that morning and running through it with him and we all went our separate ways. She went to work and he went to practice. I think I went to work that day and then just gone home early. I remember sitting in front of my TV, like, *okay*. I didn't know what they were going to do. I knew he was going to give a speech, but I didn't know the extent of what the whole production would be that night of the game. Then the game started and that happened. Obviously, I was just in tears hearing him do that in front of everybody. Deryk is not at all a man of words. He's not good with public speaking. He doesn't like the attention. He's from a one stoplight town in nowhere, British Columbia. He is so down to earth. To get up in front of that many fans and say stuff is unheard of. That speech changed everything and it changed the way people...I don't know...it gave them something positive to focus on. It made them so happy and it made them so proud and it wrapped that love around the hockey team, too, and then Deryk. It's caused a lot of issues when we try to go out to eat now, but in a good way. No, it's always good.

We've all been the same; we've all made Vegas home and we love it for what it is. We do our laundry the same way anybody else would if they were in Wisconsin. As part of that they really just wanted to give back to say thank you to the city, to give them a reason to heal, something positive to look forward to. I think that's the one thing, hockey players are very optimistic, happy people. They play a sport they love for their career and they're with boys all day long just doing boy things. They're a very happy-go-lucky group. They were the only, almost, happy-go-lucky thing in Vegas at that point. They wanted to make Vegas happy again, all of them, Deryk and Melissa especially.

They started honoring the One October first responders and victims and whatnot and that kind of carried on into this past year, which they've owned the Engelland's Vegas-born Heroes. They've realized that not just that night, but all days there are amazing people in Las Vegas doing amazing things that just get overlooked because there is a new show in town or there's a concert or somebody is out at something or the hockey team is doing things. Taking it outside of hockey, but obviously the platform that's being used is the hockey games for the most part to announce them and kind of give people—because everybody wants to go to these games. They're so expensive. Kind of the big announcement platform is the hockey game. But going outside of the hockey games and outside of one tragic night, there are so many amazing people and it's been so crazy to see this city—people voted for people; they submitted—people that submitted these heroes and these great people from custodians to little girls selling lemonade, everything.

It's just me and them, really, and some help from the hockey team and keeping it small because Deryk is not a social media person. Probably once his career is over, it will have to go away. His agent is always like, "You should do it by this." He's like, "No, that's not my life; that's not what I do." We try and keep it simple and intimate, but also just what it is: thanking people for their hard work and making sure people know that people out there do stuff and it's a great city and, hopefully, spreading more of that positivity and that love for Las Vegas and doing good deeds so it's not always like you turn on the news and something negative is happening.

Engelland's Heroes developed and this past season was great, just recognizing all the people where we have a Heroes Dinner at the end of July where we've invited them all back. Zappos is actually helping us host it. It's going to be at their headquarters, which is awesome because they're very engrained with the city as well. We'll have them back and just have fun

gifts for them and a check. We've been raising funds all year, so a check that they can put towards their charity or their organization. Even the custodian guy, he's so sweet, he's like, "There's a kid at our school who has a cancer and a Go Fund Me. Can I donate to that?" Even those things, just having those nice things. Really just trying to give back to them, which has been a nice way for me to almost stay involved in the community and have this positive outlook still. That part has actually been huge with me. I've loved it because I'm like, *ah, look at all these nice people that are still out there. Not all of them are going to try and shoot me.*

**Well, it helps in your healing.**

Yes, it really has. It's been nice and it's actually given me a platform. One of the things is having something else to almost distract me. When I go to the games or when I meet these people, because they're strangers I admit instantly I'm like, *god*. But I'm like, *you're doing a good deed; let me focus on this and make sure I get your information and let me talk to you a little bit*, and kind of work with them with that and that part has helped me heal a lot, just meeting these new people. Then they're not strangers anymore and then I don't have to be afraid of them. It seems so weird. It seems very childish. It's almost sent me back to a weird thing where I'm like stranger danger. The more people I meet, the better I feel, especially the ones that are doing such amazing things. It's been good, yes.

**Another aspect of the healing in the Las Vegas community was the Healing Garden. Had you gone to that dedication?**

I've been there once. Derrick and Lauren, the ones that were shot, Derrick actually came out to make a video for his wife. He pretended he was playing in a poker tournament or something, and for her birthday he made her a nice video. We went together because he went and got some video and some shots of the Healing Garden. He and I actually went together to that place, so it was

nice to go with him. Again, I don't go to some of those places very often just because it's so sad. It's just heartbreaking and it makes it real again. But I have been. Yes, I have been. I went before they gave it a facelift, made it a little bit bigger.

**They made it more permanent.**

Yes. I haven't been back since. It has been on my radar and they will all come back on October first again and I take the day off of work. It's turned into actually my New Year now. The day that I got to start over again and start fresh. I'm like, "You guys can have January first. I'm taking October first." Last year Melissa and I went and we just went and got manis, pedis, and we went and sat on a patio and had some wine. Some of my other friends and Deryk all came over and we just relaxed. Some of my good friends that had helped me get through the year, and we did that. I'm like, every year I think I'll just take one October off or just sit and soak it up, just relax and make it a less stressful day than it used to be. My brother and sister-in-law and Deryk and Lauren, they'll come back out on October first and I think we'll go back down there then all together.

We try and make sure we stay together; we'll always have a bond now that keeps us tighter, not that we didn't have a bond, but now there is this different level of complexity of it. But, yes, I think we'll all go together. It makes me happy that they come out here actually still because I do love this city so much. I've loved it since I was a little girl, obviously, and I was so afraid that no one would want to come back. This is where I live, though. I just want you guys to come back still. I think they found a way to make it a new chapter for themselves, too, so they come back now, which is good.

**That's optimistic and positive.**

Yes.

**It really is, so that's good. That helps.**

It helps a lot.

**Yes, yes. When it comes to gun issues, we always ask everybody this: Did your attitude towards guns change from before to after?**

Oh god, it really is a hard question. Yes and no. I personally used to go shooting. I haven't since, obviously. I can't even have bubble wrap pop. But I was staying with a friend one time and her fiancé always has guns around, like just on the table, and I'm like, "I can't. Please put it away." And he's like, "I'm so sorry." Just having them lay around, I'm not okay with, just having them there nonchalant. To me they can do so much damage. I'm not against people having guns. I'm not against people having—rifles that are like an automatic weapon, like automatic rifle that can do mass destruction, you're not in the military; I don't think it's necessary. So in that sense I'm like, let's dial down what people can get their hands on. In my head, if you need a gun for protection and people could sell guns, everybody should get a revolver because after that you've got to go back and, *hold on*, fill up it back up again and it's not a magazine of stuff just ready to pull. The excessiveness. It's very up and coming, so everything anybody does now, how do you make it bigger and better? Down to the guns. I don't think that assault rifles, obviously, should be allowed to be given out unless you are in the military or if you're a cop or something or SWAT, maybe then, somebody who is like a good person having them, not just some nineteen-year-old that got kicked out of school or some guy that's lost all of his money. I don't even know. I'm not even going to give that guy excuses. But I think that guns at home for protection, maybe. I say at home for protection because I to myself have said, "Do I get a gun?" I have nightmares all the time that people break in or are trying to hurt me. It's just my brain goes to crazy places when I sleep. I have a German shepherd now. I have a stun gun. I have an alarm. I

put sealants in all my windows so they can't break into them. I have pepper spray laying throughout the house. I don't even know if that makes it better than just a gun hidden, put away somewhere. Yes and no with the gun question.

**That's reasonable, for sure. Anything else about this whole episode or the community or any part that you would like to share with me?**

Gosh, I don't know. It's like it's been such a saga. I don't know. I think that most of it is just me still loving Las Vegas. I love it so much still here. I just want it to be back to normal. For me I always think, *what are they going to do with that concert space? Like, how do I walk into Mandalay Bay again?* It's not like that place is going anywhere. I don't know. It's still in such a process still to me. It's still new, kind of, and a learning curve for me as I go through stuff, and I think most people. But I think that the one thing that all of us try and stay is to just stay positive, find our happy place again. But it has been nice to still have the support of people and have people still understand and not sweep it under the rug, I think because it's like so many people are like, *okay, move on, get on to the next thing*, and it's just not that easy for us. So having people that still understand—and I imagine people that go to war have the same thing: How do you get people to still be compassionate towards something so traumatic? You would never want anybody to have to run for their life for ten minutes while being shot at. I never want anybody to have to come to terms with their last day on Earth. But how you get people to still be understanding and sympathetic while not rehashing the past is always a hard part.

I think it's great that it's being documented. I would do anything for UNLV, so I'm happy that I'm here.

**Well, I'm happy you are, too.**

And thank you for my parking spot. [Laughing] It's just a process and we do our best.

**You know Nick Robone.**

Yes.

**Nick actually was one of our first interviews.**

Oh, was he? Nice.

**Yes. He felt that it was helpful for him to talk about what happened. He talked about it a year and a half ago when it was pretty fresh. He also shared with us how he reached out to other shooting victims, not with One October but other cities.**

Oh, okay.

**You're a very articulate person. That may be something you should consider.**

Thanks. Yes.

**Unfortunately that we have to even say this.**

I know.

**It's not over.**

It's so hard. My friend lives in Florida and the anniversary of the Pulse Nightclub shooting just past and he was very emotional that day and he wasn't even at the club. But I think that people are realizing how close you can come to something like that and how often it's happening.

I never even thought about that. That might actually help bridge the gap, too, and just find a different perspective if somebody else that's moved on or how they've healed and also be a source for them, too. That might actually help. Good job, Nick. I didn't even think about that. Good for him.

He definitely was very vocal. I remember he came over to Deryk and Melissa's for something and I was obviously there because, again, I used to live there for a while. He came

over for something. I think he was raising money and he asked for an autograph or something. He was coming over for some stuff.

**He had a fundraiser, yes.**

Yes. I just remember he was like, "Oh, hi." I'm like, *get away from me*. Don't make me look bad, but, again, I think the men just did something different. Any of the guys that I talked to...My boss at the time, she worked for Caesars and she actually had to move out of Vegas. She moved to Cincinnati because she just couldn't take it anymore. She was dating a guy that was actually there, too, and he was like, "Yes, I'm great." I'm like, *is this real? Why are all these guys making us feel like crap?* I don't know. I just feel like the guys did something different that night. Something was in the beer and we were drinking Vodka. I don't know what it was.

**Maybe.**

I don't know. But kudos to them. It's been a long one.

**The verdict will be out on that for sure.**

Yes, exactly.

**Don't be harsh on yourself or are gender.**

Right. That's true. That's true.

**Resiliency is, I think, genderless.**

That's true, yes.

**You're doing good it seems like.**

Thanks.

**I really appreciate your help.**

No problem. Thanks for having me.

**And sharing your story and everything. Thank you very much.**

Anytime, no problem. Thanks.

**[End of recorded interview]**