

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES LEE HANK, III

CLAYTEE WHITE AND BARBARA TABACH

APRIL 10, 2019

REMEMBERING 1 OCTOBER

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV LIBRARIES

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVE

This is Claytee White and Barbara Tabach. It is April tenth, 2019. We're at the police department in Las Vegas, Metro.

Could you please share your name and title and spell your name for us?

My name is Charles Lee Hank, the third. C-H-A-R-L-E-S. Middle name L-E-E. Last name H-A-N-K. And I am the third. My position is Police Assistant Sheriff for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

Thank you. We're going to start by just talking about your early life; find out how you became a police officer; all of that, and then we want to talk about October One. Where are you from, and what was your family like?

Well, that's interesting. I'm from Chicago, Illinois. I grew up in the South Side of Chicago, very segregated community. I never really thought about being in law enforcement. I had no family members in law enforcement. Police were not our friend. When I think I see a lot of minority communities experience now where they view the police in a different way, so I had a similar view. I can remember after I started driving being stopped by the police and them asking me for money to not give me a citation. We grew up in an environment if you were victimized, say someone broke in your house or something, you just tried to figure it out, let it go, or take care of it yourself; it wasn't really something you looked at the police, to call. It was more oppressive. I grew up at the tail end of the civil rights movement, seeing the movies, like "Eye on the Prize," and seeing dogs being put on people and things like that. Then, again, it's Chicago and I think even Martin Luther King said—I forgot exactly what he said, but he said the most segregated or something, but Chicago is the worst. I think he said one of the most segregated issues with cities. I can remember going to the movies, the drive-in in the predominantly white neighborhood. We didn't have one in the black neighborhood. We got a flat tire and these folks using the N word

were throwing rocks at the van and my dad saying, “Get down,” and things like that. It was different.

We were poor, a blended family. I didn’t have my biological father in my life. Come together almost in what I called—and you guys might know; I’m making some assumptions here—but I will say we were like the black Brady Bunch, but we weren’t as well off as those folks on TV. We had only a two-bedroom, one-bathroom, and it was two boys in one bed, two boys in another bed, and the four girls—there were eight of us. There was a bunch of us. My stepdad had five children, and then my mom brought us, me and my brother, and they had another child together, my sister, half-sister.

I did very well in school. Things came easy for me in school.

As I grew up, my two stepbrothers went away. One got in trouble and he went to juvenile. Then the other one subsequently went to jail.

As I grew up, at seventh grade my mom sent me to live with my grandparents to help them out. I remember getting put on the bus. I still don’t understand why my stepdad didn’t drive me all the way over there; it’s not that far. But he put me on the bus. Now I’m sitting here questioning, why am I telling you all of this? But he put me on the bus and there I was with this big black trash bag with all I had at seventh grade, going to my grandparents’ house. It was just supposed to be for the summer, and I didn’t leave until my senior year in high school to go back home.

Where did they live?

They lived still on the South Side, just another part of town. I went there to help them out and everything and do chores and stuff. That kind of changed my life because it was—what do you call it? I forgot the term, but it was three apartments over each other.

Like a walkup?

Yes, they call it a brownstone or something. They had that building and I slept on the couch. It was crazy. I slept on the couch. I remember card games and stuff and the lights on. I look back on it and I say, *dang, I was crazy living in that environment.* My uncle had a mental problem; he was there. Just interesting.

But it also pushed me towards a different level of independence. I started working when I was sixteen at the County Hospital, food service. I would go and deliver the trays to the patients, work in the kitchen. They would bring up what they call a hot cart with all the food on it. We'd have a line set up. The ladies loved me because I'd work the hot cart. Nobody wanted to work that because it was hot, no air conditioning in the hospital, and then I'd also have to wash the dishes for that. Things just came easy for me to do that kind of stuff, being responsible.

I made good money back then. I think minimum wage might have been a dollar or two dollars, and I was making five dollars and something an hour. I also remember when I used to go cash my check at the courtesy exchange, not really a bank. I'd go cash my check and it would be packed, all these folks from the hospital over there, mostly black folks, cashing their checks at the courtesy exchange. I'd have to stuff money...I'd put some money in my private areas, and then I'd have money, so if I got robbed, in this pocket to give it away. I can remember seeing people get robbed. I remember when I got shot at after I got my job, coming home one day.

I got older. I bought a car. I bought my first car at seventeen for five hundred dollars. I saw this car for sale. I jumped off the bus, went back and knocked on the door, and said, "Hey, y'all selling that car?" I don't even remember how I found their house because there wasn't no cell phone. They said, "Yes." And I said, "I'll be back." I had saved my money. I used to give—I was like a loan. I was good with the money. I would give my aunts money. They never had

money. It was like everybody was always borrowing money from each other to help them get to the next time. They even borrowed money from me and they talk about, "Charles is so tight." I had the money in the sock drawer.

I remember getting that car. My aunt took me back over there. I gave the man five hundred dollars. I left his registration on there. I didn't get no insurance. I was driving his car. I went and got my grandmother and took her to bingo that same night. She was happy I had a car. We went to bingo. I used to go to bingo with her and eat hotdogs and sit there and help her put the stuff on the thing.

I started chasing girls. I didn't get in no games or nothing, but I was chasing girls. I would stay out too late and they would get worried about me. Now as a father, I understand it being so late, where are you at? They said, "You've got to go back home." Here I was a senior and went back home to my mom's where everybody else was at. Again, my two stepbrothers are gone, so the only one there is my biological brother and the four sisters. I think the oldest one had left to go to college.

I came back and I did well on the ACT or SAT. I started getting offers for scholarships. I remember going to my mom—and my stepdad, he was a great guy, but just a provider, not really a mentor or nothing. I remember going and saying, "Mom, I got these scholarships. I don't know what to do and I'm trying to figure this out." She didn't go to college. They were both postal workers. I said, "I'm trying to figure out what to do." People in my life that would come by, they do what I call drive-by mentoring. I didn't really have nobody to give me no, *hey, Charles, here's what you do*, like I'm doing with my kids now. They don't appreciate it. Because of my scars, I think I spoiled them.

I will try to make this not take too long, but you shouldn't ask because it's on my heart as I get ready to retire here soon because I've got over twenty-nine years here and I'm about to leave here soon.

I went to her and she said, "Well, how are you going to pay for it?" And I was like, "I don't know." It didn't cover everything. It just covered tuition. It didn't cover a lot of stuff. I didn't know nothing about loans. I didn't know nothing about anything and all the stuff that's out there that I could have went. I look and say, *man, I would have...*

I wanted to be a doctor. After I would deliver the food, I would go back and wear the scrubs and go up in the observation thing for other doctors that you could look down and watch the surgeries and stuff. I would go in there and watch the surgeries and imagine being a doctor. I lied to everybody and told them I was going—I think I said I was going to Fisk, a black—

Meharry?

Is Fisk—I was going to do pre-med. It was a school in the South.

It wasn't Meharry?

I don't think so. I thought I said Fisk University. I don't know why.

Okay, Tennessee.

I understood that I could do pre-med there. I had it all figured out, but didn't know how to get there. After my mom said, "How are we going to pay for it?" I said, "I've got to figure something else out." I remember my friend had approached me and he wanted to do a robbery, because we didn't have much. He said, "Charles, I want you to do this with me." I at first talked about it and I said, "You know..." I didn't show up. There were no cell phones. I just didn't go, didn't do it. We kind of broke up after that because he was mad I didn't do it. He didn't do it

either, so it was good I didn't show up. But we were conspiring to do something. Again, getting shot at—

What were you going to rob?

A place called Kresge's. It was like a Woolworth's.

Clothing store.

Yes. He worked there and he knew where the money went and all that. I was all thinking about it and I thought about it and I was too scared and I knew that wasn't right and I chose not to. We kind of fell apart. Then we got back together and we decided to go to the service, the buddy system. We went and talked to somebody and we were going to do this buddy thing.

I went to vocational high school. I learned how to do stuff with cars and I can rebuild an engine and all that. I had this whole attitude, just like I learned how to work on cars and I learned how to drive and stuff, if I go in the army and learn how to fix helicopters, I'll learn how to fly helicopters. I did great on my testing. I had good scores on that. I could do anything in the military. They call it ASVAB; I had like a hundred and fifteen or something, and so they said, "You can go anywhere."

They took advantage of me. They knew—I can tell you what happened. He said—and then he made a face. I think God had a plan in this for me and everything just came out the way He—I'm getting a little emotional now—planned for it to be. They said, "Why you want to fly helicopters? Why don't you do this?" They had a shortage of MOS. They signed me up for it. It was fixing heavier weld vehicles, motor vehicles and stuff. I didn't know no better. "If you wanted to fix helicopters—" This is the recruiter. "You should have went into the Air Force." Turn to find out, the army got more helicopters than any branch of the military.

So you were in the Army.

I was in the Army. I got screwed out of what I wanted to do, but it actually worked out better for me. Now I get in the Army. I had never been on a plane. I had never been thirty miles outside of Chicago. Here I am with this bag again. I don't think it was a plastic bag this time, but that's all I had. I ain't been back since.

I'm going to speed this up a little bit and give y'all the shorter version. But I go into the service. I wound up getting married to the high school girl, at eighteen, because I'm homesick and all this, and that didn't work out because we didn't know nothing and it was just a mess there. But I get over in Germany. I get in this unit; I get this MOS; that's your specialty. It turned out it was the best thing for me because there was a shortage of MOS.

When I got in there and I didn't like the Army. I tried to get kicked out. They tried to send me to West Point because of my scores and stuff. I was like, I don't want to do that. I didn't know nothing. I didn't know that was college and everything else. All I know is they said, "You're one of the tallest dudes." They made me a squad leader. These guys were requesting to go home and they went home. I was like, *hell, I want to go home*. They're teaching me to kill people. They taught *kill, kill, kill, ice cold steel*. Ah, I'm like, *this is crazy. What am I doing?* I wasn't with my friend because he had a medial thing that he couldn't come in when I went in and I could have got out of that, so all of this is happening. Then they said, "You're going to Korea." And I'm like, "Korea? Where the hell is that?" There wasn't no Internet and all of this stuff. I'm trying to fail the fitness test. The dude who winded up passing me said, "I think you did enough." When I look back this is crazy.

I didn't go to Korea, but I get with this unit, one of the first air defense units. They still use this system now. I'm sure it's advanced. It's called the Patriot Missile System. It was used a lot in a lot of our conflicts. I wind up getting in that unit and they had created a new MOS job

specialty for heavy weld vehicle maintenance. And there was a shortage of MOS; there wasn't a lot, so they had a lower cutoff score for promotion.

Back it up real quick, I figured out real quick...I started emulating this guy; they call him Top; he's a first sergeant; he's a senior noncommissioned officer. We had this term we called strack; that means your stuff is polished, your boots are shining, your uniform is immaculate. Back up, I'm washing. I'm cleaning up toilets. I'm picking up cigarette butts. If you're the private, you do that. I saw there were some guys that weren't doing that and I said, "I want to do what those dudes are doing." I start emulating this guy and I would start calling cadence; that's the guy that would sing "Left, right." I'd sing that and they'd repeat what I'd say, because that's what the first sergeant did. I got my uniforms pressed. I polished my boots. And other people looked like crap. I remember when he had me go with this one guy. He took me to 7-Eleven. We go and he buys a Mad Dog, and I'm like, "Man, I don't want none of that." It was crazy. I just stayed away from the riffraff and I followed that path.

Then I got promoted, so I stopped picking up cigarette butts and stopped cleaning toilets, and I said, "Oh, this is the thing." One story short, I go to Germany. I make E-6, which was fast. I made sergeant in two years, staff sergeant in four years. I tell that to people and they're like, "How the hell did you do that?" It was a shortage of MOS, so the promotion points were low. I started going to school in the military, college, because you get more promotion points. I knew how to figure stuff out.

I went to school and I was there taking classes on weekends. I go in this street survival thing for police, for the MPs. Ain't nothing but white dudes in there. But it was a quick three credits and I'm thinking I can knock this out in two weekends. This is before "Cops" was on TV and all that and I know nothing about policing. Here I am and this retired white guy from Florida

and all these white dudes in this class and he's showing all these videos. He had some surveillance stuff. He's showing all about law enforcement. I was like, wow. Kind of like the stuff they show on TV now. I said, "Man, I get to tell people what to do. I get to carry a gun. I'm outside. I'm doing something different every day. My marriage is falling apart because I'm in the field." The Army sends you out there and they make you dig a foxhole. We weren't in a war at that time. I said, "This is stupid." Then with my relationship falling apart, it was like, *I'm out of here.*

I remember I spent like six hundred bucks—and that's a lot of money back in '88 and I wasn't making that much. I was making probably seventeen thousand a year or eighteen thousand a year, living on military income. I spent about six hundred dollars trying to get to the West Coast. I'm thinking like "Beverly Hillbillies;" California is the place you want to be. I'm thinking about loading up the trucks. I'm thinking about getting there. I didn't even want to go back to Chicago, too damn cold, and Germany was cold. The closest I could get was Colorado Springs, which was nice.

But I was further west and I had an uncle here. That's part of the reason I was getting emotional, because he just passed away back in December and he was like a father to me. He took me golfing for the first time. He took me to my first pro basketball game. He lent me a car. I had bought a couple of cars for him in Germany. At my rate, I didn't have to pay taxes. He basically got two BMWs for the price of one. That's when we still had the Deutsche Mark before the Euro. He came over with my aunt. He's always just been a great guy to me. He let me live with them while I was in the academy here.

It's crazy and I'll wrap it up here, in the early part. There I was in the Army. I got the job for Metro. A guy was working for me in the motor pool in Colorado and he had this bulletin and

it had Las Vegas in there. I said, "Man, I've got family in Las Vegas." My uncle was here. I dropped the keys off for the car and he gave me a car to use because I sold my car in Germany, and I drove that up to Colorado. I see that Vegas is hiring. I had already went to the library and got all the stuff for CHP, LAPD, LA Sheriffs. I was thinking L.A., California.

Come to find out, Vegas was hiring. I remember they were paying twenty-four thousand and one dollar. I said, "That's more than what I make, and I've got family there." I called my uncle. He had his assistant send me allocations for Las Vegas Police, Henderson, CHP, and North Las Vegas. I looked at Las Vegas Police. He said, "I think you might want to check out Metro." I applied. I called and they said I wasn't getting out; the timing wasn't right.

Then they brought the test to Denver. They went on the road. I went out there and took the test. I remember I was coming down for my interview and I said, "You know what? I don't want them to see me as a soldier." Mind you, I'm just figuring this out. Ain't no Internet. I ain't got nobody coaching me. *Hey, dad.* There ain't nobody. I'm just figuring this out all by myself. Me and my ex was having issues. We had a little daughter. I said, "How am I going to do this? I don't have a suit." I went to JCPenney and I bought a suit. I tucked the tags in. I went and did my interview and I took the suit back. I sure did.

And this was an interview for the police department.

I didn't steal it. I paid for it. I paid for the suit, but I took the suit back after I did that. Then they made me the offer, and here it gets even better. This is why I said God had favor in my life. I was supposed to get out in November and they sent me an offer in July and said, "You're starting the academy in September."

I don't know if you know the military. You can't just quit. You can't just resign. If you leave, it's AWOL; you go to jail. There I was like, dang, I've got a job and I can't take this job. I

remember sharing—and if you look in my DD214—that’s the document you get from your military service—it doesn’t have my signature on it because I wasn’t there. They let me go. I went into the commander and he said, “Sergeant Hank—”

Oh, by the way, the Army barred me to reenlistment because I wouldn’t go to drill sergeant school. I would have had to stay longer. I said, “I’m not doing drill sergeant.” They work hard, twelve, fourteen hours. I was on the track. The Army thought I was what they wanted. Army wasn’t what I wanted no more. I remember I went in there. He called me in and said, “Sergeant Hank, I hear you got a job to be with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.” And I said, “Yes, I do, sir.” Basically I went in and he said, “Sergeant Hank, I’m let you go. First, I’m going to lift your bar to reenlistment and you can come back to me. I’ve seen the way you work in the motor pool. You are what we want for this Army.” He was a colonel. He said, “So you want to go be a...?” I said, “Sir, yes, sir.” I probably shouldn’t have said this, but I said—he said, “I’m going to lift your bar for reenlistment and I’m going to let you go.” Then he said, “If it don’t work out being a police officer, you can come on back.” I said, “Sir, I will take a paper route before I come back here.” I don’t think I said it in a rude way. I don’t think I pissed him off. But I was tired of the service. I had lost my marriage. I was like, *I don’t want to be here no more*, and all of this.

They let me go. I left there one day and the next day I was in the academy, September fifth, 1989. I’m going to have thirty years September fifth of this year. I don’t know if you guys know. We can retire at fifty or twenty-five years with no penalty, so I could have been gone. I told people that the department has been on probation for the past four years because I can leave. I don’t have to take suits back no more. I’ve got a lot of suits and a lot of shirts and stuff, so I’ve been blessed. I think that’s enough about my early childhood, I hope.

Tell me what a currency exchange is.

A currency exchange is in lieu of a bank. It's basically a facility—it's not quite like the cash places you have here, but they're similar. In a lot of minority cities, particularly in Chicago, we don't use banking. You don't have enough money; it comes and goes so fast, it was never there. You get a hard check. If you didn't have a bank account because you really couldn't sustain a bank account because the money didn't stay in there, you didn't have enough to leave it in there, you just go cash your check and everything was cash. You cash your check there. You could get your vehicle registration stuff there. You could do a variety of other things.

You just made me think about another thing. I remember standing in line and without a calculator we would try to add up our food because we didn't have enough money for that. We would have to put stuff back. Now I go to Costco and I spend five hundred dollars damn near every time I go and don't even blink. It's probably more like two hundred, but...

What was your first car?

A Camaro, 1973 Camaro.

What color?

It was a tan color. It had a lot of rust because Chicago uses a lot of salt and everything back east.

Which area of the city did you patrol when you became a police officer?

I patrolled them all, but I primarily always came back to the Strip; that's where I wound up.

During my initial training—they move us all over in training—but I seemed to always gravitate...When I made sergeant I went back to the Strip; when I made lieutenant I went back to the Strip; when I made captain I was the one who opened up the first area command that oversaw the Strip; then I was the chief of the Strip. I was a chief the night of October first.

Tell me what happened. How did you find out about what was going on October first?

We have this system called the Communicator. Something comes into dispatch and then dispatch has key people in the Communicator that they let us know, so all the executive staff. I don't know if you've ever seen one of our org charts. Have you guys seen that?

No.

I'll give you an org chart so you can see what it looks like. We're getting ready to put out a report on October first here, so you guys might want to check that out before you finish your history thing. It's going to be public.

We thought you had already published the last one.

No. it's coming out here and it will actually have—I might have a copy of the one from that night because I save them. It shows how I'm moving around. I have a bunch of them here. But I have the most current, as well as—you see it's a stack. I always tell my assistant, don't throw the other one away. Actually she only has the one since I've been assistant sheriff. I definitely have one where I'm a chief. I can get another one of these. Here is where I am now as assistant sheriff. Here's where I was that night; I was the Tour Safety Division Deputy Chief. I was over here where you talked to Andy Walsh; he's over that now. So I was here. This chief is in charge of all of these commands. This command, the Convention Center Area Command, which is the one I said I opened as a captain, that's the command that oversees the Strip. That's the captain that was there, John Pelletier. He's at the FBI Academy right now.

Here's what funny about this. John is a good friend of mine and John's wife is part of this Lives of Metro group. That Lives of Metro group's communication system is faster than our Communicator system. There were some wives at the event. They called John's wife and then John called me. I got the call before I got the call from the department; John had called me. I was his first call after his wife got the call and they told her. He called me and he turned on the radio.

I then called the sheriff and the undersheriff. They forgot about that at first, and then when I reminded them they remembered. I went back and looked in my phone records to see the times. When they say he went down, the suspect, I pulled my phone and had John pull his, because I was trying to say, am I blending things that I recall or what really happened? I remember turning on the radio and hearing the shots being fired as I was getting dressed. He was still shooting when I got the call and I turned on the radio. I'm multitasking; I'm getting dressed, I'm listening to the radio, and I'm trying to call the sheriffs.

First, I called my boss. Where Sheriff Zimmerman is now, that was Sheriff Kelley at the time, and so he was my boss. I called Sheriff Kelley. He had just arrived in town and he was at the airport. Then he says, "I'm going to go home and get ready." Then I called Kevin and Kevin didn't answer. His wife answered. She's a captain with our department as well. He's married to Captain McMae. You'll see. I don't know where she's at right now. She's over here somewhere. Kelly McMae is over here somewhere. That's his wife. She was up here in OIO at the time; she was somewhere else. She says, "He's doing something." Then I called the sheriff. The sheriff said, "Where do you want me to go?" Now he's changed his story. It sounds better saying he got the call from somebody else, which they may have called before me, but I called him. He said, "Where do you want me to go?" And I said, "I'm going here. You can go where you want, sheriff." I said, "I'm going to the command center." He said, "Maybe you should go here." I told him to go to headquarters. I don't know quite where he went. I just came and went to South Central Area Command where we were setting up the command post.

Where is that located?

There is a station just south of Russell. There's a station right by the golf course, Bali Hai; that's the South Central Area Command, right south of Mandalay Bay. We went there and Captain

Pelletier had beat me there. I'm driving code. I don't drive code that much. That's when I turn on the lights and sirens. I'm driving with the lights and sirens to get there and I'm still listening. I remember them saying, "They hit us; they hit us." I thought it was a lot of people. We had what we called the echo calls. We give it a term now. Echo calls is where they—what I'm thinking about is—are you familiar with Mumbai in India?

Yes.

When they hit Mumbai they hit airports and multiple locations. As I'm listening to the radio—and people are spread out. I don't know if you guys have ever seen one of our presentations. The people started fleeing. He's shooting from Mandalay Bay and they started fleeing towards the airport and north on the Strip. It's kind of like if right now someone started shooting here and we run into Building A or Building B and Walker Furniture and Costco; it's going to come out like they're shooting at all those places.

And it sounds like that.

Yes. You've got victims showing up saying, "I got shot here; right here." It sounds like they're everywhere. I remember hearing this: They got us. I have been so much involved in events because I was the captain of events planning; that's the captain that oversees all the major events that we do, like Life is Beautiful downtown, which he thought about doing something there, Electric Daisy, the Marathon. I was the captain that ran that unit, and so all the tabletops I would always go to as the chief and I'd always say it's not a matter of if, but when; complacency. Trying to drive home that we've got to be ready; we've got to be ready; we've got to be vigilant; that whole sheep and sheepdog, the people are the sheep. We're the sheepdogs and we protect the sheep and the bad guys are the wolves. We're coming towards that gunfire.

I just remember, “Gosh, they got us.” I thought it was much worse than it was. At first I thought it was happening at Mandalay Bay because you have that Michael Jackson theater in there. I thought he was shooting in there. It was confusing. I didn’t realize until I got to the command post and then the undersheriff shows up and then another sheriff, Assistant Sheriff Roberts shows up, Assistant Sheriff Fasua shows up. I’m a chief. Another chief shows up, Chief Zimmerman, my friend. We’ve got all of these command people. We’re like, *what have we got?* It’s still chaos. Devices. Active shooter. Hostages. It’s like it’s happening at the airport and everything. I can remember I was trying to help John; that’s John Pelletier, who had called me, my captain. I could have just taken over, but I was just giving him guidance; like, John, think about this; do this. Christine—he had a lieutenant—I said, “Do this. Look at this.” Then the sheriffs, these people higher than me, come in, so you’ve got all these leaders. And I remember saying—we didn’t know. We didn’t know where it was at. Sheriff McMae said, “Go to all those places. Just send people. Just send people. We’ve got to stop the threat.” He was saying, send them there. Then I said, “Okay, if he’s giving instructions, we all can’t be giving these guys instructions. Who is in command at Mandalay Bay?” I remember saying it. “Who is in command at Mandalay Bay?” Then they said, “I think Captain Greenray is there.” I said, “Well, we know there’s a threat at Mandalay Bay and we don’t have anybody taking command.” Because we weren’t hearing anything. I said, “I’ll go to Mandalay Bay.” So I grabbed a captain, a lieutenant, and a sergeant, and I said, “Come with me.” I said, “Sheriff, I’m going to Mandalay Bay.” I told that to Undersheriff McMae. He said, “Go.” I pull out of the lot.

Then my brother is out front as a lieutenant, Carlos. He is a lieutenant with us. He’s out front. I remember telling my wife, I love you, because I didn’t know if I’d see her again. I see him and I don’t know if I told him I love you. I said something to him. I just got in the car and I

went. I remember they were following me and we were going to Mandalay Bay to just take command and try to find that guy because we hadn't gotten a room yet. By this time, the shooting had stopped, but it still sounds like things are happening other places. They've got a car here; it was one of those autonomous vehicles. They thought it was...all the wires hanging out it at the Luxor. Then we had the people who had gotten shot over at Hooters, but they were victims of his shooting, and all kind of stuff everywhere. People at New York New York; there was an explosion on the top of this. Everything was just chaos.

I remember pulling up northbound Russell and the Boulevard and they had it blocked off, the officers. I remember I asked an officer, "Is this area secure?" He said, "Chief, nothing is secure." Right then I said, *what the hell am I doing out here? I could have retired.* That went through my mind. I said, *what the hell am I doing?* I never imagined being back at the front line. I remember pulling around the back of that hotel, the four of us in those cars, the captain and the sergeant and the lieutenant. We pull around there and I get out and pull my gun out and I'm looking all around and I see all these people. I'm thinking, any one of them...some guy could jump out with a gun.

I'm like, "Okay, we need to go..." Because I'm think about the Walmart; if you remember when they shot our two officers at Cici's, they went to a Walmart and we got in the surveillance room. I'm like, "We need to get to surveillance and see what's going on, where he's at and where you're at." But I'm also thinking as we're doing this, *what if they come out shooting?* Dang. You're thinking it's this, so I was scared. I said, "Let's get in there."

We go in there and I remember getting on the elevator with the captain. Captain Dave Lewis is on the elevator with me and he's crying. I'm like, "What's wrong with you? What's going on, man?" He said, "My son got shot." His son is an officer and he was an officer that got

shot. He wasn't killed. Hartfield is the only one that was killed. I said, "Man, go." He's like, "No, Chief." I said, "I'm ordering you to go." He went back and got up and went to the hospital.

I get down there, come back up, get outside, and now we start clearing it. I remember my wife calling me.

Start clearing the hotel?

Yes. My wife calls me and she's like, "Do you know where Officer Hartfield is at?" I said, "What are you talking about, honey?" She said, "I think we've got an officer killed and I think we've got two or three officers shot." She was the only one there, and so I said, "Honey, I don't know. I don't know where he's at. If I hear something I'll let you know." She was doing her thing and I'm trying to do my thing.

SWAT is clearing the hotel. I just was there managing that at the hotel. Then the other chief, Zimmerman, went with another captain over to the venue. That's what happened for me that day. Then I went up in the room later on. We went in the room and I looked in there and then I also actually walked across the street, which I wish I hadn't done. To hear those cell phones ringing and nobody answering that's pretty heavy on my mind, those people calling their folks. And then they stopped for a while and when the morning came they started ringing again. You know someone is looking for their loved one. I didn't bust in the room or anything, but that's kind of what I did that day.

What was the feeling when you were hearing, "They got us; they got us?" What is that feeling for a police officer?

Well, you don't want that to happen on your watch. I'd work an event. I'll give you an example. I was working one of the first Electric Daisy events out at the Speedway and I was there as a commander. I think I was a captain then. I remember the sound went out. There was wind

blowing over stages. As an officer and a sergeant, I shut down parties at clubs, but here I've got a hundred thousand people and I'm shutting down this party. I was like, *oh shoot, I have a mess here.*

You think about these things and you think about Mumbai and you think about Columbine and you think about Virginia; you think about all these various places that it's happened before, other countries and not yet here, and so I was always preaching that hyper vigilance. Every time I'd work one of those events, I'd be so glad when it's over because it's like I'm up so high in adrenaline and stuff. Even though I'm not out on the front line, as a commander you have a sense of responsibility for it. They came in our home and I'm responsible for protecting that. It's tough. You feel like you've failed; that I missed something.

Did the police department ever think about somebody shooting from a height like that?

Not really. We hadn't really considered that. It's kind of like what they said in New York after the towers. I can't remember. I probably should look up the guy who said it. It was one of the commanders from New York. "They tried to blow up the World Trade Center before at the ground level, but nobody ever thought about planes." I think they said, "We weren't devious enough; we didn't think devious enough."

I can remember even after that because right after this I was still was in command, I still had the Strip, and here comes the Marathon a few weeks later. I'm like, *oh shit, we're about to put twenty-five thousand people right back out on the Strip in front of the Mandalay Bay, and what if we get a copycat?* We started thinking crazy; obviously thinking about a high point, and we start thinking, *well, we tried...*

The thing about Las Vegas, the hotels are pushed back because they always want people to think about their experience and being able to think about *let go*; just free and not think about

reality. Here we are trying to balance that with... You see a lot of countries where they have their guns out; that's not something we want to do. You know how we are as Americans. We want to keep faith. We don't want to stand in line at the airport, but we don't want planes blowing up either. When you increase security you lose something; it's a give and take.

We started thinking of things. I wouldn't say it was just me, solely. But we started thinking about adding over watch and having the rifled deployed, because we had rifles that day; they just were in the trunk. Now we got them out to go take out that threat. Then we had people designated just for the potential threat. We made some changes right away there. We made some more restrictions. We added some more response teams. We did a lot of things.

I started looking at, okay, imagine if they would have hit the hospitals. Now we have provisions for people to go and preserve the hospitals, because they might try to cut us off of some of that stuff. You're thinking of what can they think of or might do that we haven't thought about. Here is the deal. If someone is committed there is nothing we can do to stop it. You just can't have the event. I appreciate who we are as Americans, the resilience that we have to go on, but we also have to evolve in taking steps to reduce the opportunity for someone who desires to cause that harm. We cannot just continue haphazardly and just do whatever we want. I really don't get that mad at the airport. I get it. I get some of the stuff. I don't get mad when people are checking out stuff and things like that.

It's crazy though because I can remember about week after we had tickets to Janet Jackson at the Mandalay Bay. I remember my wife still wanted to go, but I didn't want to go. It wasn't that I was scared. I just didn't want to go to Mandalay Bay, but she wanted to go. I remember pulling up and she started wanting to talk. I said, "Honey, I can't talk about this right now."

I don't even like talking about it now because it's emotion for me. For police, we compartmentalize that. I could sit here and share stuff that I've seen that I don't wish nobody to see, just like that stuff I saw that night, seeing those people out there and some of the things that I've had access to, and I don't wish anyone to see that stuff. I got to see the video from New Zealand, this guy that they took down. Sometimes because of my position I have access to stuff that I wish I didn't have access to. Like I said, it scars your mind and you don't want that.

I'll tell you it also gives me a sense of purpose to reduce and prevent that from happening again. As a commander, you don't want that to happen on your watch, but then, in the same way, you do want it to happen on your watch because you know your level of commitment and what you're going to do to fix that and address that.

Did your psychologist here at the police department tell you that it was good to talk about these things?

Yes. We've had a lot of—I think many of us have been to counselors and talking to people, and they say that...But we're cops; we're cynical and we misdirect and all those things. I've been traveling over the country and doing the presentations and some of these guys really like that. It's hard for me to do it. It's just hard for me to do it. People have told me I do a great presentation. They love me for me to come do it. Every time I go I get invitations to go to more places to do it. I'm now at a point that unless I'm told to do it, I don't do it. I feel like it should be done because you're trying to share the experience, not to brag about what we did right because we did some things right, but to really identify what we did wrong or what we could improve on and our shortcomings so that they don't have that happen because we've got a record that we didn't want and we don't want nobody else to pass it. We don't want nobody to break it. It was something right after this; I think the Olympics or something was coming on, Winter

Olympics was in January. You look at all these people breaking records and stuff and you say, we've got a record that you don't want to see broken and you wish you didn't have it. It's not the record you're proud of. But, at the same time, you don't want it to be broken because you know there is a lot more loss of life if someone breaks that record in our country, and so it's tough. With the community we live in there are so many opportunities based on tourism. These folks, they want a body count and they want the media exposure, and so trying to balance that we have to be very strategic in the things we do. We've got a baseball park opening in Summerlin this weekend.

Yesterday.

I have tickets tomorrow night.

The thing is we were talking about that and we were talking about how many staff they've got. We're going to have so many police there, even that they're not paying for. People will still have their experience. We know how to do this. But if somebody is thinking about it, we want them to go, oh shit, I can't hit this place; we want to send that kind of message. We try to balance come there and have a great time, get a good hotdog or whatever.

I'm building a house right down the street from there. I can see it. I've got a view that I can see that sign. I love that area. But I don't want anything to happen there. I want people to have a good experience and I want to get those bad guys and I want everything to be safe.

As one of the commanders, we sit down in the hall and we listen to our briefs and hear what our plan is. We're poking holes. We're looking at; we're what iffing different things. A lot of it, people don't even know what we're doing, some of the briefings we get and stuff that we know. I wish I didn't know it. You know what I mean? But it's good that we know because we can do things to address those things. I have a clearance. I'm not going to talk about some of the

stuff we talk about, but it ain't nothing to worry about right now, not with this weekend. Go have a good time at the game. I might be there, too.

Okay, good.

You've got to constantly think about it. Summerlin Parade, I live up there and I love that parade. I don't know if you guys have ever been to that, but it's a great opportunity. We've got to constantly be looking for what if.

What is the message when you do this presentation in other communities? What's your ending message to the audience?

I open it up with this; I open it up: On October first...Our vision of the Las Vegas Police Department is to be the safest community in America, and on that day we became a location of the most deadly shooting in modern history. So, what I'm about to share with you today is not from a braggadocios "look how good we did" and everything, but to really pick this apart and share some of the challenges we had, as well as some of the things we did right, and offer you some considerations that can help you. Then one of the things I think Andy probably left you with, we typically end it with the victims and just let it go through. More than often we have people crying and standing ovation and everything.

The message is prevention. The message is the response. The message is the leadership. The message is how do you...? There was so much stuff we weren't ready for. We had food come in and pallets of water. Everybody wants to be a part of something that matters. That's why a guy joins a gang; he feels like he has a purpose. We just try to share, here is a few things we did right, here is some things we're doing now to prevent this from occurring again, and here are some things you need to think about. People are writing because they know they learn from our

failures and our experience. That's what it's all about, to prevent as well as respond if this were to happen again.

The way the community responded, how do you think that changed the world's view of Las Vegas?

It's interesting because I'm a part of this sheriffs' leadership series where we bring a group together. I co-facilitate that with a guy by the name of Dr. Rick Culley. He is a consultant. Part of what we do is we go out to different places and we set up to have our sessions at different places and learn from different people. We actually went to the Las Vegas Golden Knights. We've been there twice and met with Mr. Foley and their people and they have low egos, which I like because we have such big egos and Type A as cops. But I think the timing of the Knights had just kicked off within a week and then they did so well, it gave us something as a community. It wasn't like a mini run. I'm going to be a Raiders' fan, but it's almost like we're adopting them; they were already born somewhere else. This is Vegas-born; this is ours from the jump street. And then with their success, it gave us a distraction. Some of the things where they have our guys out there dropping the puck and honoring and retiring the number of fifty-eight, it gave to our community.

And then just to see the coming together of everybody, it changed it from it's not just those casinos and all of that gaming and stuff; it's people; it truly is a community. We have all these block walls in our neighborhoods and very often we don't even know our neighbors. I think sometime with tragedy something good comes from that and I think it gave us more of a sense of community and people view us more as a community because there have been times people think we live in hotels on the Strip.

And your mother is a showgirl and your dad is a card dealer, yes.

You grew up with the police officers not acting the way they should in communities, but especially communities of color. I still feel that today. What are police departments, including this one, doing in communities of color to make the situations better?

I'll say most are not doing enough. We're not doing enough. I had someone say to me not long ago, because I've recruited so many people, both black and white, Hispanic, Asian, I try to share to everybody about how good this is and I jokingly said, if no gang members knew how good we got this, and even more black folks to be honest with you because I've had many of my family members come to me like I'm a sellout and, how can you still do that, of the stuff that happens around the world and the country with law enforcement and whole Black Lives Matter movement and so forth. I don't think most of law enforcement does enough. I think we do well. Do we have it perfected? No. Do we have still room to grow? Absolutely. What I mean by that is establishing those community relationships before you have these significant events, and I think that's what we've done pretty good. Some people attribute, okay, Vegas hasn't burned really since Rodney King with events, and we've had some questionable shootings or some mistake-of-fact shootings and things like that, but I think because of the relationships we have in the community, it's helped us not have that stuff.

Certainly people will talk about the whole dynamics of Vegas; that you don't have the collaboration with the different...like you do in Chicago or Philadelphia or New Jersey or New York, a concentration of the minorities in the same way; it's more dispersed and things like that. But I think it's a lot to do with our transparency. I think it has a lot to do with things like this where we talk to the community. We embrace the community. The sheriff has a multicultural advisory committee that is made up of sheikhs and people wearing turbans and people of different lifestyles and genders. It looks like the United Nations when they have that meeting

once a month. We see weren't doing enough with the blacks in recruiting and brought in those groups and they're giving us suggestions and making recommendations and holding us accountable, not just because of me because I showed up. I was pleasantly surprised that a lot of stuff has happened in the absence of me because I'm in charge of that. I'm in charge of human resources; that's one of my commands now and I can influence a lot of that. In spite of me directly influencing that, we're doing some of the things we're supposed to do. But I still think we can do better. I think there is still a lot of room.

There is still biases. There are subconscious biases. I don't think as many people are as racist as we might think. I see some things and I deal with certain things. Some people are outright racist and then some people are what I call the subconscious bias; they don't realize they're conditioned a certain way and that they have these biases and so forth and don't understand different cultures and different experiences that people have.

I would never—and I hope I don't either one of you with what I'm saying—I could never understand what it's like for a woman to have a baby or go through menopause; I don't know that. I think a lot of times people don't put themselves in a place and try to empathize and realize that. That was one of the things I liked about Sheriff Keller when he was here. He said, "I'm a six-foot-something white boy and I don't know what it is to black." That's why I encourage with Sheriff Young and Sheriff Gillespie and now Sheriff Lombardo. Two of the top dudes in this department are black, myself and Sheriff Kelly. Now, what's troubling is there ain't nobody behind us. We've got one black captain. I'm not saying they've got to be a certain color, but when you have that different perspective...

I remember I was in the room one time and we were talking about something. I'll try to make this brief. We were at the Hard Rock; I was at (Charlie Vince) planning. They bring the

rappers in. Well, there's probably going to be some shooting when the rappers come. I listen to that music sometimes, but I don't go to those events because there is probably going to be shooting. Here they've got this thing; they're bringing in these rappers at the Hard Rock Café, not the hotel. There is a venue right on the Strip. It's small in there; you only get a few hundred people. They're bringing in this rapper and we had some cops there and something started escalating and the cops called the police and we came and nothing happened; it worked.

Another captain, happens to be white, he comes in about how he rode in on his horse and saved the day. Now I'm getting my ass chewed like Charles because I'm the commander of the events thing. *Why did that happen? Why didn't we have more cops there? Rah, rah, rah.* Well, the law doesn't require them to have the cops there and it worked. I used the military model. Everybody doesn't stay up at night. You put guards out there to say, the British are coming; they're coming. You put the guy to watch. The guy has to watch, so that guy saw some stuff escalating. He called. We all rode in and we all took care of business and nothing happened. That's how it's supposed to work. I'm getting my ass handed to me because, "We should have had more cops there; we should have had more cops there." I said, "You can't have more cops there. The cops will cost more than the money they're making. We are expensive." And I said, "So now they can't get the talent they want because people want this stuff. And so it's trying to find that dollar. So I say let's keep doing what we're doing. It works."

I get called up down the hall here. I was a captain. "You've got to come brief the sheriff." I come in there and I'm explaining what happened. The sheriff is like—this is Sheriff Gillespie—"Charles, I'm going to tell you what. You write them a letter and if they won't do it, you just tell them we won't be there." I'm not on the executive staff yet; I'm just a captain. I spoke up and I said, "Well, Sheriff, can I say something?" You see those chiefs; they're looking like, he needs

to shut up; you don't do this; you're out of work. I said, no disrespect, "Sheriff, may I speak?" He says, "Yes, go ahead. What is it, Charles?" I said, "Sheriff, we're going to be there anyway." "What do you mean?" "We're going to be there anyway." I said, "Sheriff, if we don't put anyone there, we're coming to clean up the mess when they start shooting. Would you rather go and be there and have someone on the watch to see this coming, or would you rather go and clean up that stuff?"

Now, I'm not saying either the sheriff or anybody in that room was racist. But we thought we didn't have stuff at these other events, either, because there wasn't that many black folks at Route 91 and that was worse than this. We had a whole lot of people there and they paid for. Usually those are a non-event. But we sent people; we did what I said we should and I'm putting my ass on the line, but I spoke up.

That's one of the things where Sheriff Lombardo, he actually told me later—I think he got to see me when I wasn't looking because captain I earned. Chief, I'm appointed by the sheriff. Assistant sheriff, I'm appointed by the sheriff. Here I'm tackling and saying, I want you to be in my appointed administration. I make more money, but I serve at the pleasure of the sheriff. I earned the captain thing. But he said he saw when I was lieutenant my work ethic; when the two of us were lieutenants together, he saw how I work. Then he pulled me aside a few days later, he had already won the election, and he said, "You know, Charles, I'm looking at putting my command team together and what you did in there, those other people won't do that and I need somebody that's going to speak up and say what we should or should not be doing."

That's happened at other times where we looked at doing certain things in communities or not doing certain things, like when we deal with the Martin Luther King Parade. They want to do all these different things sometimes. It's not racist; it's just not understanding different people

and different cultures. I have an understanding of that culture because I'm in it. When you have that type of insight with someone with my background and being from that, it's a value. We've all seen movies when they have a guy that he's from the place; he knows the way to get there. It's similar to these caddies. I golf now. They from the court; they can read that green for you; they know how that ball is going to break. You've got a better chance of making that damn putt. There is some value when you have that diversity at all levels within an agency.

Speaking of diversity, another project we're working on is the Latinx population. Is that represented well in the police force?

Actually we're not in line with the community. I don't know the latest numbers you've got, but depending on who you talk to, maybe 25 percent or so Hispanic.

We hear higher.

Or higher. That's conservatively. But we don't have that much on the agency. Same with blacks. What are you hearing on blacks, twelve, eleven, ten?

Twelve percent.

Twelve percent. And we're running about ten percent. There are also some cultural things and I don't know if you agree or don't agree. Unfortunately some of the other cultures are a little bit more collaborating at times. I'm giving you my perspective. We see times where blacks are more divided and not helping each other, and that troubles me. Some of it is our fault, too. It's not everybody else's fault. That's just my view. I'm not trying to offend you or anyone else.

No, no, you can't change my mind.

I think we need to do better for ourselves as well. It comes from both sides. I use an example. A white guy recruited me and helped convince me to get here. That's why I encourage my white brothers and friends that you can make a difference. You don't have to be black or whatever to

help recruit people, but you do have to listen; you do have to try to understand; you do have to let these people be heard. It's no different when you go help these people at shootings. I've seen times, "Get back; stand over there." We just don't treat people the way we want to be treated. That's how some of these riots and stuff start.

Take Ferguson. They left that man on the ground for hours. Then the thing is sometimes you've got to let people see stuff. I don't know if you saw me on the news recently. We had some very questionable stuff, shootings and an in-custody death at the jail, and we showed it and it looked concerning. I think what helps us is we put that out. We don't try to hide it. That was difficult for me to do that press conference because I've got to now keep my own personal stuff and I've got to represent this agency, but it's troubling at times.

What has been nice here—as I get ready to make this turn, I feel torn at times because I wish somebody else was there to be able to pass the baton and be there to listen and give a different perspective because that's what it's all about. We bring life experiences. We bring a different value of stuff that makes us so much better. If you just put one ingredient—I like to cook—you need to mix some of that stuff up sometimes. Some of those ingredients by themselves are toxic almost, but when you put that stuff together, you can get good stuff there. I see that as we as people and as a community, the value of the diversity is important. I gave you a long-winded answer.

Did you serve with Greg McCurdy?

I did. I just had lunch with Greg yesterday.

Fantastic. He's one of my favorite people.

Greg is a great mentor. He asked me yesterday, “Charles, when you leave can I give you a badge at your ceremony?” I said, “Greg, I’m not even looking to have a big thing, man.” I had to do that yesterday and as I get older I get more emotional.

I’m getting more angry.

Reflective.

I’m getting more angry.

But I’m looking at mortality, too, because I lost my biological dad; he died at fifty-three. I’m the third. His dad died at fifty-three. I’ve fifty-five, so I’ve already beat the fifty-three. Just different things. I had to speak at a funeral the other day of a young kid, another doctor, Dr. Robert Taylor. I don’t know if you knew him. He was an ophthalmologist here in town. He lost his son. His son got caught up in this Oxi and stuff. Then he’s like, “Charles, I want you to speak. You’re known in the community.” I don’t want to. I’m messed up. The older I get, it’s like I’m getting more—I don’t know if it’s soft or more emotional and you start to see things a different way. Then, for me, I’m starting to see the mortality and I’m losing people too soon. Twenty-three. My uncle is sixty-nine. I’m looking at this house; his name is Dr. Tyree Carr. I don’t know if you knew him, but he’s an ophthalmologist. He was here in the community for many years. There I am standing—this is just in December—standing at the house. There is the Tesla plugged in, the Mercedes in the garage, million-dollar house, million dollars’ worth of art. Like they say, you’ve never seen a U-Haul behind a Hearse. He’s gone too soon. As I get ready to go, I was telling my wife, “Baby, I just want to get a few years out of this and enjoy my grandbabies and be there for my kids to give them some of those nuggets to help them with life as they go through. We’ll see.

Any police officers among your children?

Yes. My son is a correction officer right now. He is actually going into the police academy at the end of this month. I did not encourage that. I actually told him, "I wish you would stay in the jail because it's changed on these streets." I'm torn because I'm proud and then I'm also worried in a sense because this world has changed. But he doesn't have the street smarts that I had and he didn't dodge bullets. I did get shot at. But you know what? Things happen for a reason. He worked in the jail and he's Charles the Fourth. I've got a grandson, Charles the Fifth. I was going to leave before he graduated, but I'm going to wait because I want to be on the department and I want to be in uniform. What's the wait another couple of months? I stayed this long. I'm going to go over there and pin his stuff on and then I'll be out of here soon. I've got some ideas of some stuff I'm going to do.

What are you going to do?

I'm going to do some stuff on the Internet and it's not going to be porn. But there is a lot of money out there and I've got some ideas that I'm still working through it, this whole social media thing. What have I got to lose? I'm going to have a decent retirement. You could go to Transparent Nevada and see what I make and figure it out. I'm going to be doing okay. My wife is going to leave with me. I'm going to travel a little bit more and see some things. I like that because, like I said, I left at eighteen. I feel like I've been responsible my whole life, so I'm going to have some fun.

That's great.

That's wonderful.

But I'm also going to give back. I've got some things I want to do with minority kids. I have a heart for the homeless and I have a heart for the mentally ill. I don't think I've been blessed with all of this to hold it in. I think I'm supposed to share some of this and I think I can help some

people and maybe be there like nobody was there for me. I just wish my kids would figure it out because they don't take advantage of what they've got. I'm spoiling them.

They will eventually catch up. I do believe that.

Oh, yes. You can cut that off, but I've got to show you my granddaughter real quick.

[End of recorded interview]