

1 GVP51, Susan Schmidt

2 D: So, please state your name.

3 S: Susan Schmidt.

4 D: And Susan, tell me a little bit about yourself.

5 S: So, I'm a middle-aged white lady. (laughter) Single mom, I have two kids. And I have my

6 own business; I'm an entrepreneur. So, I'm fortunate enough to, I do wholistic skin care

7 practicing in Bay View so I'm able to just ride my bike to work. So, I'm really about, whole

8 body, wholistic organic being, living kind of. You know? I just believe that the more, the simpler

9 we can be in life and the simpler, you know the less hectic stress, you know, just keeping it,

10 everything authentic. You know? And real is, that's my goal.

11 D: How old are you?

12 S: I just turned fifty-eight.

13 D: Oh, you're a year older than me.

14 (laughter)

15 S: So, you were born in '62?

16 D: Yep!

17 S: So was my sister.

18 D: Alright. (laughter) And—

19 S: Oh no, my brother was '62. Scoot was born on July 30th, '62.

20 D: Okay, so he and I would be the same age?

21 S: Yeah. I was only one year and two weeks old when he was born.

22 D: Oh, wow.

23 S: Close.

24 D: Wow, that's real close.

25 S: I know, July and then the following July.

26 D: Wow.

27 S: I know, Sandy (laughter).

28 D: I don't know if you've mentioned your gender, would you?

29 S: I'm a female.

30 D: And you did mention your nationality?

31 S: Yep.

32 D: Okay.

33 S: I'm white.

34 D: And what neighborhood do you live in?

35 S: I live in the lovely community of Bay View. Wisconsin.

36 D: And how long have you lived here, in Bay View?

37 S: I've lived here since my early twenties for ten years. I left and I was fortunate enough to live

38 in the San Francisco Bay area.

39 D: Okay. Okay.

40 S: But came back to Bay View. To raise my kids.

41 D: That says a lot about Bay View.

42 S: It does. Yeah.

43 D: And tell me your story in reference to your experience with gun violence.

44 S: Okay, so it all started May 26th, 2005. And I received a phone call from my folks at about

45 5AM. They were at Froedtert, my brother had been shot. And I just got in the car and went there,

46 he was in surgery when they called me. And they were optimistic when they called me. So, I just

47 got in the car and went to Froedtert. And then, this was at five o'clock in the morning about, the
48 doctors came down at about six o'clock and said that they were able to work on the femoral
49 artery. They surgically were able to fuse it together and they were very optimistic about, they had
50 a pulse. So, they were very optimistic because he was shot in the femoral artery, right here.

51 D: I was just about to ask where it was.

52 S: Yep, it's right here.

53 D: On your thigh. Inner thigh.

54 S: Yep. And so, basically it was just a matter of waiting, he was in recovery, right? And so, at
55 this point there were no police officers. I don't, we didn't know what happened, we knew
56 nothing about the story. We just knew that my brother was in recovery at Froedtert. And at about
57 eight, eight o'clock or eight thirty I asked at the front desk if we could go up. You know? And
58 they checked and they said, "Sure." So, we actually went up, my mom and dad and I. And we
59 went up to the trauma center, where he was and as we were walking into the room the nurse
60 made a horrible mistake by just saying to us, when I said to him, "Oh, is he awake?" And she
61 basically just said, "His eyes are fixed and dilated." And I didn't know what that meant. And I
62 said, "I don't know what that means." You know? And we're walking in the hall when this
63 happened. And this was as we were turning the corner into the room and she said, "His eyes are
64 fixed and dilated." And I said, "I'm sorry, I don't know what that means." And I said, "Does that
65 mean he didn't wake up yet?" And she said, "That means he's never going to wake up." He,
66 "There's no brain- he's braindead." And both my parents just like, dropped.

67 D: Oh my God.

68 S: It was horrible. It was a horrible experience. Ten years later I went back to Froedtert to have a
69 conversation because it just didn't sit well with me, you know, and I just thought, I kept thinking

70 about that over and over and I kept thinking it had to be how I was feeling at the time. But then I
71 waited ten years and I still felt that it was a terrible mistake and so I went back to Froedtert and I
72 said, "Something, somebody needs to do something about this because this is just a terrible thing
73 that happened." Because after we came up, then my, his girlfriend and my friend were told the
74 same thing in the hallway. Beause they thought that he was up, that's why they were allowed to
75 come up. And so, they walked into the room and they were just told the same thing, this was like
76 five minutes after I was just trying to get my parents to like, revive them. You know? It was
77 awful. Anyhow, is, what happened is that my brother was shot, he lived [in Brewer's Hill] and he
78 was shot in his home. The woman who lived upstairs from him ran out of the house and across
79 the street to the liquor store and called 911. My brother was helping that woman because she was
80 a single mom with a little baby and no electricity.

81 D: Oh wow.

82 S: And she was involved in a gang member. And he was actually looking for a shelter for her,
83 right? This I know for a fact because the shelter pamphlets were in the house when I cleaned it
84 out. And most likely, what the detectives came to the conclusion, is that there were a couple of
85 guys from the gang that came down just to give him a warning, but he had a big dog. And these
86 fellas do not like dogs, right? Especially huskies. So, most likely Cosmo was shot first. And
87 Cosmo was shot in the neck, but he lived.

88 D: Cosmo the dog?

89 S: Yeah. You know Cosmo the dog. You met him. So, Cosmo was shot first, but the police
90 officers took him to the medical veterinarian emergency and they saved him. My brother was
91 shot in the, so, most, that's why they probably shot him in the leg not to kill him, right? Because
92 if you're going to do that, you don't shoot somebody in the leg.

93 D: Right.

94 S: But they hit the artery, the femoral artery. So, basically when the police arrived, he had bled
95 out. And they were able to revive him, get him over to Colombia St. Mary's which is right down
96 the road. And they got him stable and then they transported him to Froedtert to have the trauma
97 surgery done. And so, they were, everybody was very optimistic that it was just a matter of time,
98 but they didn't know how long he had been without breathing. And that's what happens you
99 know, when you bleed out, your cells start to collapse and things start to deteriorate very quickly.
100 And so, even though they were able to revive him and stabilize him and get a pulse, your
101 heartbeat is basically just a, it's a, what is that called? Not, like when your knee does that, it's a
102 reflex. So, that's how the heart, the heart is. You know, it's basically, it won't, it'll just keep
103 beating. Even if your brain doesn't tell it to, right? So, you can be brain dead but your, your heart
104 still beats. And so, at that point, we were told he wasn't going to wake up and that was horrible.
105 And that was horrible. And then we had to make decisions about organ donating and my sister
106 lived in San Francisco so, she had to be notified and so basically, we asked that he be kept on life
107 support until my sister got there. And what they said was basically that he would be on the
108 respirator, as soon as they disconnected the respirator then he would die, you know? So, that was
109 a tough day. Yeah. That was a tough day. I got this. So, it was, the hardest part, Debra, was he
110 knew so many fucking people in this city. You know? And so, I had to call Rosie's and, which is
111 where he worked, and those guys, that's like his family down there, and I said, you know, "He,
112 he's not," you know, "he's gone." Basically. And I said, you know, "We can't handle a lot of
113 people here. I, my parents won't be able to tolerate it." You know? And so, Darrell and Jim were
114 the owners and I mean, Scoot was, worked there for twenty or thirty years.

115 D: Wow.

116 S: On Water Street. Yeah. He knew everybody on Water Street, everybody. I mean, that's why
117 when it was his memorial, they closed Water Street.

118 D: Oh wow.

119 S: And they named Scooter's Pub after him. You know?

120 D: Oh wow.

121 S: So, but those guys came and honestly, they were trying very hard to be respectful of our
122 privacy but there were so many people that had to say goodbye.

123 D: Oh wow.

124 S: So, there was a constant, just a constant line of people. Grown men, just, that just collapsed
125 when they saw him and said goodbye. I mean, it was like, there's a lot, a lot of people that you
126 know, like [...] You know, there was so many people. And I have just never seen so many grown
127 men just fall to pieces. You know?

128 D: So, did they all come to the hospital?

129 S: Yeah.

130 D: Oh wow.

131 S: They all came to the hospital to say goodbye before and, and then, my sister came at like nine
132 o'clock or so. My kids were young, Paris was only three and John was nine. And it was just, I
133 mean, how did this happen? You know, like, it just, he was just fine the day before.

134 D: Oh my God.

135 S: You know? That's why, and when she said that, Debra, like, I don't know, I, I felt like my
136 heart, I thought I was having a heart attack at the hospital because my, I think it was just, I
137 couldn't handle it. And I thought, "You can't have a heart attack right now. Your parents are

138 falling down because this,” you know. It’s like, “Get it together Susan.” You know? And then I
139 just had to start making phone calls and you get into that, you just have to do it.

140 D: Automatic mode.

141 S: You couldn’t, I didn’t have any time to grieve at that point. It, it wasn’t even like, possible to
142 like, process it in my brain that my brother was dead. You know? And everybody, I mean it was
143 just, they just kept coming in and it was a tough, long day. So, my sister came and then they, we
144 got everything sorted out with the donors, you know, because we, we didn’t know exactly how
145 long he had been without breathing, we didn’t know if his organs were going to be okay. But, so,
146 we, we did know that we could donate all of his skin and his eyes. So, that’s what we did. And
147 so, when my sister got in and you know, we just told her that he was in surgery because how do
148 you, you know, get her home from San Francisco just knowing that he’s on a respirator, you
149 know? So.

150 D: Right.

151 S: But as soon as I picked her up from the airport, she said the second, she’s like, “He’s already
152 gone.” And I knew, I could tell when I walked into the hospital room that he was gone. You
153 know? It was just like, it was just his body there, you know? And I can still see that and I don’t
154 like it. You know what? I know that that’s just part of it but I still see that image of him in the
155 hospital and it, it was just awful. Because he was never laying down, you know? He was like a
156 big guy and just like, a big happy guy all the time. So, it was 11:55 on May 26th, that, that his
157 heart stopped when they turned off the respirator. And then there were folks that were there for
158 my mom and dad that got them home. And I’ll never forget just driving over the whole bridge.
159 And it was a full moon, it was a beautiful night. And I, I just said it, “My life is never going to be
160 the same.” It’s never going to be the same. And of course, I couldn’t sleep. You know, you don’t

161 even know what day it is or like, everything was just so strange. And about, right at about eight
162 o'clock in the morning, my phone rang. And I didn't know the number and it was, "Hi, is this
163 Susan?" And I'm like, "Yes." And he said, "Hi, my name is," I can't even remember his name.
164 And he said, "I'm a friend of Scoot's. And he called me The Gatekeeper." He said, "I'm a
165 mortician and I'm going to take care of everything." And I was like, "Who are you?" You know,
166 like, I don't know how this works, you know. And he said, "No, I used to, I used to visit him at
167 Rosie's and he took such good care of my car and he was just, you know, he always would joke
168 about me being the gatekeeper. And," he said, "I'm going to do it for him." You know, so, he
169 said, "I'll pick up the body, I'll take care of everything and I'll, I'll bring him." He's like, "You
170 know, he wanted to be, he you know, he wanted to be cremated." And I said, "I do know that
171 because just last week, we were at a funeral for my uncle and so, Scoot was there with me. Oh
172 my God, and he was wearing this suit and the moth had made holes in it." (laughter) I'm like,
173 looking at him going, "What the hell are you wearing?" And, but, but we, we didn't expect to go
174 to the cemetery. We just went to the funeral parlor, and somehow my mom talked us into going
175 to the cemetery. And when they were putting the casket into the ground, this is the week before
176 he died. Paris was only three, right? And she, she looked at him and she said, "Scooter, why are
177 they putting Uncle Mike in the ground?" And she didn't understand, you know, and she just saw
178 Uncle Mike like, nice and peaceful in the casket resting, you know, she thought, she was okay
179 with that. And I said, "He's not sleeping." You know, he's not, I had to explain that to her, but
180 and so, I did explain all that before we went to the funeral. I didn't explain this part because I
181 didn't think we were going to the cemetery, you know? So, Scoot said, he bent down on one
182 knee and he said, "You know Paris, I'm not sure why some folks choose to be buried. It's
183 something that I never want for myself."

184 D: Okay, wow. Oh man.

185 S: The week before. I mean, him, we didn't talk about stuff like that obviously. We were in our
186 forties, you know? So, that was it. And Paris said, "Oh no, me either." (laughter) And so, that
187 was like, that's just how it was and the day that Scooter died, that morning, this fella called me, I
188 think his name is Dave. And then I was out in the garden. And it was so crazy too, because Paris,
189 I was out in the garden and it was May 26th that he died, so, May 27th it was the day that like, all
190 the butterflies.

191 D: Oh wow.

192 S: They all came. That day on the, on the morning of the 27th. And Paris said, "This is how it's
193 going to be, Mom. He's got wings now." You know?

194 D: Oh, how beautiful.

195 S: Yeah. And so, to this day whenever, especially in spring she's like, "The butterflies are here.
196 The butterflies are," you know. So, it is, the butterflies do have a very special. Especially the
197 yellow ones. We talk to the butterflies and we, so, that day was the morning, the next morning.
198 And then like I, I don't even, I think it was Darrell and Jim from Rosie's, they just said, "You
199 know, Susan there's a team of us here. And we want to help to organize the memorial." And I
200 said, "Good, because I don't know what to do." I mean, I've never done this before. My parents
201 are pretty much paralyzed, you know.

202 D: Oh, yeah.

203 S: Like, they are out of commission. So, they said, "Well, come down here and we already
204 started working on some picture boards." I'm like, (pause) "This just happened." Like, "How did
205 you know this?" Like, so, I went down to Rosie's and there were probably thirty people there.
206 And they just said, "Just tell us what you want. Anything you want. Anything he would want.

207 We'll make it happen. You know? We'll just—" And I said, "He would want a, really he would
208 a celebration." You know, he wouldn't want anything gloomy. He would want colors and you
209 know, so, I said, we decided on Pier Marquette and we were going to do a walk from Rosie's
210 through down-through Water Street over the bridge and I said, I, I just want to, at that time it was
211 still okay to do balloon releases. (laughter) We didn't know how bad it was, but so we did do the
212 balloon release. But it, I said that you know, just a celebration and they said, "How 'bout, like, a
213 picnic after?" I said, "That's great." And I mean, they, you know, they said, "Okay, we'll get
214 started. Everybody'll bring their favorite pictures." And then like, the next, the next day that was
215 on, he died on a Thursday night. And we were going to have the memorial, we decided on
216 Memorial Day.

217 D: Okay, wow.

218 S: So, that was on Monday. And it was crazy. Like, every business on Water Street closed. And
219 the street closed.

220 D: What a beautiful honor.

221 S: It was, it was crazy. You know, it's like, "Okay, we got the food taken care of." I'm like,
222 "What do you mean?" You know, it's just, they're like, "Every restaurant and everybody in the
223 city has donated, Susan. You have no idea how, how many people your brother knew."

224 D: Oh, wow.

225 S: You know? And it, I mean, I knew he knew a lot of people because we couldn't go anywhere
226 without running into somebody, (laughter) you know? But I just had no idea how many people
227 that he touched. You know? I mean, honestly, on the day of his memorial at least thirty people,
228 women, said, "Aw, Scooter, he was the best. He helped me move every time." I'm like, "Every
229 time?" (laughter) You know? No wonder he always had a broken back. And it's true, it's like, he

230 was always helping somebody move, they could always count on him. You know? But, about I
231 don't know, the Shepherd did a really nice story at that time. There were I think over 700 people
232 that showed up that morning. And I, the, the, the, the, we started at Rosie's and as far as you
233 could see, it went to Pier Marquette. It was all the way down the street, around the corner, to the
234 park.

235 D: Oh my gosh.

236 S: And it was the balloons, all the colorful balloons. It was spectacular, it was just spectacular. It
237 was so beautiful and it was a lovely opportunity for everybody to just share a story, a funny
238 story, a silly story, it's something positive. And it was, it was just a beautiful sharing experience.
239 You know, I think that the shooter was there. I saw, I saw a young man that didn't belong there,
240 and he, he had a backpack on, he had really bad skin, I remember him vividly because I said,
241 "How did, how did you know my brother?" And he said, "Oh, through other friends." Which
242 would be normal, but I said, "Who?" And he walked away.

243 D: Was the shooter ever caught?

244 S: Uh-uh. But many times shooters will go to funerals because that, that's normal. I mean, I've
245 heard that over like, people that, that, that does really, truly happen. Like, the detectives told me
246 that, because I said, I, and I said, "You know, I'm a reiki person. You know? I pick up on
247 energy, that's my job, you know?" And I said, "This person was, he very uncomfortable and he
248 wasn't, he was out of place." I mean, out of seven-hundred people, I could tell the one person
249 that just didn't belong there. It's like, everybody else was black, white, and yellow and he was
250 blue.

251 D: I got you.

252 S: You know, but anyhow, that's neither here nor there. I mean, that's just my personal thing.

253 D: Why did the detectives say that shooters, the murderer will go to the funeral?

254 S: They said that that happens a lot.

255 D: But why?

256 S: Because, maybe because for many people, it might make them feel better or worse about what
257 they did. Based on the reaction or the, the, the compassion, empathy, the, you know. And I just
258 thought like, it, "Look at what you did. Look at this. Look at all these people. This is somebody
259 who really mattered in this city." You know? And you know, I just thought I mean, from day
260 one, Debra, I never wanted to go to court. I never wanted, my dad did a reward as dad's have to
261 do. Because that's what losing a son and he needed an answer. I always felt like whoever did this
262 was already a victim. And I felt like that from day one.

263 D: So, you forgive the shooter?

264 S: Yeah. Yeah. Because I mean, (pause) they didn't have a good life. They didn't have a good
265 life because they were in that situation at that time with a gun. And if they had a good life, they
266 would be doing something much different than that. And I don't necessarily think they should be
267 scot-free. There should be a consequence for their action. I don't think it's prison.

268 D: Right.

269 S: Because I don't think they're going to, they're going to come out a worse person, not a better
270 person from prison. You know? But I don't, I don't know what it is. But they never did catch the
271 woman that lived upstairs was in, she got, she got put in jail for a number of days for obstructing
272 justice.

273 D: So, she wouldn't tell?

274 S: She wouldn't tell. (pause) But you know what, Debra? She couldn't tell. She would be dead.
275 And she was a mother with a little baby. She couldn't tell. You know? I mean, and even like,

276 when I was there. Fortunately, the young man that owned the house was a friend of my brothers.
277 He lived there because he was helping him to restore it. And that young man had all the blood
278 clean, every, he had his service come and take out all of the bad stuff, you know? And I mean,
279 the detectives still had all the fingerprint shit everywhere. But I mean, there was, it wasn't a
280 horrible, terrible crime scene when, when we went in there for the first time. You know?
281 D: And where is this property located?
282 S: [In Brewer's Hill]. So, that would be the east, northeast corner of [the block].
283 D: Okay.
284 S: And so, so anyhow, at the end of the day, I think I have to get a paper towel, oh I can use this.
285 This is a nice little napkin from yesterday (laughter), this'll work just fine.
286 D: Are you sure?
287 S: Yeah. Yeah, this was my napkin.
288 D: How would you say, I, I didn't ask you, how old was your brother?
289 S: He was forty-two.
290 D: When he was murdered?
291 S: Yep.
292 D: And what nationality is he?
293 S: White.
294 D: And—
295 S: Scott Schmidt. Scott Paul Schmidt and he went by Scooter, one word.
296 D: And, he was male?
297 S: He was a male.
298 D: Okay. How would you say this experience affected your family and the community?

299 S: Well, I would say (pause) it was the single most devastating experience I've ever gone
300 through. But I have to say the way the community came together for the memorial was the single
301 most beautiful experience I've ever encountered.

302 D: It sounds like it.

303 S: So, everything was donated and paid for and at the end of the day, I was handed five-thousand
304 dollars. I mean, a memorial for 700 people. And even bands came and played. There was music
305 (laughter). It was a beautiful memorial. I mean, there it was, it really was a beautiful memorial.
306 There were so many stories shared and you know, and so basically, everybody just want, they
307 didn't know what it was. They, they just said, "Here. Use it for John or use it for yourself, or
308 whatever Susan." But you know, I mean, these people donated you know, twenty or thirty dollars
309 each. And I took that money and I, it was, I held onto it, this was in May. And I held onto it and I
310 did a lot of research on small non-profits in the community because I thought that it would be a
311 really lovely gift. And the more I checked into the non-profits, I recognized that five-thousand
312 dollars isn't very much. And especially if the overhead is 50%, then only twenty-five hundred
313 dollars of that money was actually going to go to the cause. And that bothered me a lot. Because
314 these are people that handed over twenty or thirty dollars each, right? And so, I just hung onto it
315 and then you know, at the end of every year, they have a candlelight vigil for all the families of
316 homicide in Milwaukee. And we went and all of the officials were there, but the people that I
317 heard that day were, they campaign against violence. (inaudible) And I heard, I heard those fellas
318 and their poetry spoke about the children in the city and how they're just crying and we're not
319 listening. And that's what I mean by this young person that did it to my brother was one of those
320 kids. And the way that we could do it is if we could reach those kids. And so, it was Christmas

321 and so, we were emotional and I waited a little bit, you know? And [he] gave me a calendar, he
322 gave everybody his calendar, he's famous for, you know.

323 D: Yeah.

324 S: The next year, I was selling his calendars. (laughter) But he gave me his calendar and I just
325 kept, it really kept resonating with me you know, what they were saying. And, and so I talked to
326 my mom and dad about it and I said, you know, "The, the words that were spoken really made an
327 impact on me and I feel that, that would be something that Scooter would really believe in, you
328 know?" The young people in the city, in his neighborhood, you know? And I said, you know,
329 "Unfortunately, sometimes they don't know the difference and making the choices aren't, they,
330 they don't understand how, how just making the wrong choice will ruin their life, you know?"

331 D: That's true.

332 S: And so, to have some guidance and to have some goals and to have some choices and rewards
333 and, and positive impact. That. And so, I called, I called the number on the calendar, (inaudible
334 name) and I just said, you know, I said, "I was there. I was like, the only white person, family.
335 Right? That year. And I—" He's like, "Oh yeah, I remember you." I'm like, "Yeah." And I said,
336 "I just really would like to talk to you about your organization and can you come over?" He's
337 like, "Sure!" And so, he came over and that was in March. And you know, he just, we just talked
338 for a long time, you know. And I said, "I'm just not finding you know, the right match. It's
339 almost been a year and I'm just not finding it." He's like, "Well, you know, if you don't find it
340 Susan, you just start your own." And I was like, "I don't know how to do that. Like, I can't do
341 that. You know, I, I am, I do facials in a spa. What do I know about non-profits? You know?"
342 And he said, "You'll figure it out." You know?

343 D: And you did.

344 S: And I did. (pause) Yep. So, he, he continued to say, like, "Let's talk about what you want to
345 do." And I'm glad he did because I wouldn't know where to begin, you know. But he said,
346 "Okay, so let's talk about your brother's neighborhood and where he lost his life. You know?
347 What's there?" And I, I said, "I don't like it there." I said, "You know, like, I've been in other
348 places around there, but like when he moved in there, I did not like it."

349 D: Oh wow.

350 S: And I, I told him. I said, "I don't feel good about this place, Scoot." And, and he said, "Susan,
351 I'm six-foot-five, with a big dog, come on I'll be fine." And I was like, "I don't like it here. I just
352 don't like it here." You know? "It just doesn't feel, it just doesn't feel good." He's like, "That's
353 why I need to be here."

354 D: Wow. Wow.

355 S: There's so, and then I also went to see a medium and she didn't know anything and she said
356 the same thing. She's like, "Susan, this is really bad. This is dark, I get it. I understand, this is,
357 this is, this is way worse than what I was expecting when I talked to you on the phone." She said,
358 "He, he took that bullet for a reason. He took that bullet for reason, he knew what he was doing.
359 He signed up for it, now you got to do something about it. And if you don't, it's not going to
360 count." And I was like, "Shit, you guys." (laughter) "You're putting, this is like, you're putting a
361 lot of pressure on me you know?" But then (inaudible name) had said, "Let's talk about the
362 young folks. Let's talk about how we can get to the young folks, let's talk about what we can do.
363 What did your brother like to do?" I said, "He loved to be outside. He loved to roller skate and
364 fly kites and just like, play. He was like a big kid, you know?" And he said, "Well, that's perfect.
365 Let's do that. Let's do, let's do that with the kids." You know? "Let's start there. Let's get them
366 to play, let's get them outside, you know? Let's call it, you know, Scooter's Day and we'll just

367 provide them with, you know.” So, the very first outing, guess where I took them? To the
368 lakefront. Who takes thirty children to the lakefront? First of all, the lakefront. Then, puts them
369 paddle boats, puts them on roller blades, puts them you know, like, it’s insane. But it worked, it
370 was beautiful.

371 D: Aw.

372 S: It was amazing, you know. Even the paddleboat people are like, “Thirty kids that don’t
373 swim?” I’m like, “Yeah.” I said, “But I’ll have a lot of adults. I’ll have, you know.” And they
374 were so skeptical and you know, and this is so true. The people where I would take the kids, they
375 saw so much joy they never charged me.

376 D: Oh wow, that’s beautiful.

377 S: It is. They, and year after year, like, I could take the kids on the Milwaukee Boat Line and
378 Jake would call and say, “When are you bringing your kids?” And not charge me a penny.

379 D: That is beautiful.

380 S: You know? All over the city. You know? The firemen came to Pier Marquette to, so the kids
381 could see the fireboats. Oh my, I mean, there’s so many great people in this city that want to
382 help, you know? So, so we started that, we had our, the, the, we did a one year, the first annual
383 Freedom from Gun Violence Peace Walk. We did that one from, that was down Water Street.
384 And then, after that, we did Washington Park. But then, I mean it really hit me that the people
385 that were there were the people that already believed that we had to make a difference. And I had
386 to do more to convince the people that weren’t there. And so, that’s why I decided not to put as
387 much emphasis and effort on the peace walks as I did on the children and the monthly outings,
388 you know? And so, we started with Oliver Wendell Holmes because it was the closest school,
389 that’s where he voted. And fortunately, I was you know, paired up with Ms. Mayes, she was the

390 guidance counselor at the time. And she was our angel. I mean, we had Ms., Ms. Mayes on the
391 inside and I worked on the outside and it was really beautiful and, but I would pull up in front of
392 that lot and it was so depressing. You know? Keep in mind when, when I started my garden, the
393 house on this side was also a vacant lot that was boarded up. That house, like, people had taken
394 out the plumbing and everything. It was bad. You know?

395 D: Wow.

396 S: So, it was, it was depressing and despair. And that's where the children stood when waiting
397 for their bus. And so, when I came to talk to Janet about the outings, one day I just said, "We got
398 to do something about this." Like, we got, we, look at this. And she's like, "Well, what do you
399 want, what do you suggest Ms. Susan?" And I said, "Something pretty!" So, "A nice place for
400 the, for the kids. You know? A nice, even benches. You know? Let's just start with benches. You
401 know?" And she said, "They're never going to do it." You know? It's like, and at the same time
402 I'm watching my kids' school, they're building a whole garden with a aquaponic greenhouse."
403 (laughter)

404 D: Wow.

405 S: Right at Fernwood in Bay View. And I thought, "Well, if my kids can have this, these kids
406 deserve to have their own garden too."

407 D: Amen.

408 S: You know? And of course, everybody told, told me I was a lunatic. And I said, "That's okay.
409 I, I can do it. We can figure it out." You know? This is a vacant lot. It was bad, Debra, it, it's
410 where they, the traffic, the drug-traffickers would cut through. So, that was like a dumping point
411 for needles and—

412 D: Oh my God.

413 S: It was terrible. it took me three weekends to clean it out before we could start to build a
414 garden. That's how terrible it was. That's where these kids were waiting. It was so terrible. And,
415 but then, you know, I went, Ms. Mayes said, "I think about this organization now that lets you
416 lease the lot." You know? And I said, because I said, "Well, I'm not going to, we can't just like,
417 take over the city lot. I mean, we would be squatters." You know? And she said, "I think there's
418 an organization—" Which, which there was and then, so I went to them. Well, first of all, we got
419 it, a group of young people called the Garden Group to start. And just talked to them about their
420 thoughts on the garden and so forth. And they designed it. But it was just on a piece of paper
421 with like colored pencils. So, I went to the, the Milwaukee Urban Gardens to get a lease for that
422 lot with this paper, with the drawing and they didn't really, well, they gave me a one-year lease. I
423 went for a three-year lease, they gave me a one-year lease. So, like, "If she can get through with
424 this piece of paper and colored pencils this year, you know, we'll, we'll give her another chance
425 next year."

426 D: Right.

427 S: Basically.

428 D: They didn't think you'd stick with it.

429 S: You know. They didn't think I would. They didn't think I would. And so, we did it. We took
430 the picture and we built it and that was the start, that was you know, that was a good start. And
431 then the next year, they gave me a three-year lease and now I'm on my tenth year. (laughter)

432 D: And the name of what did you call the lot?

433 S: It's Scooter's Garden of Hope. Yeah.

434 D: That's beautiful.

435 S: It is beautiful. And it is, it's a safe place. We wanted a place that it doesn't matter what color
436 you are, what class you are, it doesn't, none of that matters. It's a Garden of Hope.

437 D: Where is the garden located?

438 S: So, the garden is located [in Riverwest] right across the street from Oliver Wendell Holmes
439 School, and it's two city lots. So it's a beautiful garden. (laughter) And it's been a great
440 opportunity for the children. A lot of different interns have come through my garden. Katie
441 started as an intern and she now runs Fondy Market and she runs the market at the Domes.
442 Charlie came through my garden as an intern and he started Teens Grow Greens. And they're
443 doing great.

444 D: Wow.

445 S: So, now my kids when they leave eighth grade, they can go to Charlie's organization, Teens
446 Grow Greens. And then they can also work in places like the Tandem and yeah, it's beautiful.

447 D: Beautiful stuff!

448 S: I know, it is! It is.

449 D: That's wonderful.

450 S: And you know, talking to Will Allen about agriculture and there's a lot of opportunities.

451 D: There is.

452 S: Especially with Hemp right now. It's huge and we need young farmers. So, this is the second
453 year I have the Young Farmers Program going. So, these kids start out as the young farmers, so
454 they start out by growing things. Then they take their stuff on their bikes, they have special
455 baskets and things, and they sell them, their produce. And then they have some pocket money.

456 D: Wow! That's beautiful!

457 S: I know.

458 D: Susan, I'm going to have to stop right here because I've got to take my husband to, but I'm
459 going to call you and we're going to finish this—

460 PART TWO: 30:17

461 D: So, you saw the lots.

462 S: So, we found, so basically, you know, whenever I came to the school I would park across the
463 street and I was parked in front of this vacant lot that was, it was terrible. And it made me sad
464 because this is where the children waited for the bus. And that's, I mean this was like "despair"
465 written right across that. You know? And I thought, "That's just not right." You know? And I, I
466 just wanted to put something there that would be positive or hopeful you know? So, I was talking
467 to Ms. Mayes about it (laughter) and—

468 D: Mrs. Mayes is?

469 S: Ms., Ms. Mayes is was the guidance counselor at Oliver Wendell Holmes.

470 S: And she really provided, she was my insider at the school.

471 S: You know, and she really gave me an education on how things work and about really, like,
472 learn, I mean Ms. Mayes taught me about like, when I first started this whole you know, the
473 foundation, basically, you know, "Who am I to take thirty kids on a outing?" "Who are you to
474 say you can take my kids?" Like, I didn't really, I just assumed people would want to go.

475 S: You know? And, but I was so different than what they were used to that, Ms. Mayes made it
476 clear that I had to earn their trust. And I had to earn their respect. And it was going to take a little
477 bit of time.

478 S: Because people come and go and their full of great ideas, but then they're gone.

479 S: You know, and many of the children they already had issues with people leaving and didn't
480 need to put their eggs in one basket and then that's gone too. So, they were, pretty leery about it.

481 And again, so, Ms. Mayes was like, “I don’t know Ms. Susan. That seems like a really crazy
482 idea.” (laughter) You know, like, “We don’t do that kind of thing here.” You know, and I was
483 like, “I don’t care. I mean, you should.” You know? A garden, I mean, it, it’s for everybody. It’s
484 you know, it’s all children and adults. It’s a safe place, it’s a positive place we can talk about.
485 You know, we can talk about nutrition and, and the kids can grow the things and so, so we
486 started by you know, I had to get this drawing together so we created a sign-up sheet for a, a
487 garden team. And (laughter) and I created a billboard and a sign-up sheet and you know, like, I
488 had picture of other gardens and I just needed some leaders to help me to you know, come up
489 with some ideas so we could put a plan together to take to present to the planning committee
490 you know? And, I really wanted it to be respectful of what the students wanted, not what I
491 thought they wanted or what I thought they needed. You know? And so, yeah, we had a good
492 response! There was like, thirty-five kids! I’d say there was thirty girls (laughter) and probably
493 five boys to start. But we, you know, we had a meeting and we had some good snacks and then I
494 just really wanted to see how much interest there was. And then I actually went to Whole Foods
495 because they had a classroom at the time.

496 S: And because I realized when I had this first meeting that most of these students didn’t
497 understand what I was talking about when it came to the different vegetables and things we could
498 grow, you know. Like, because they were talking about certain things, just like, pumpkins and
499 watermelons. Well, that’s fine. That takes up a lot of room and there’s a lot of the other things
500 that we can grow, but they weren’t accustomed to it, you know. They—

501 D: What, what was the age group of the kids?

502 S: They were primarily six to ten. Primarily. But we took all, all ages. So, anyhow, I met with a
503 Whole Foods and they provided us a classroom and they did a tasting. So, all the kids could

504 come and we could taste all the different vegetables. Some of them were cooked, some of them
505 weren't, but they saw how they were cooked even. You know? And they got to try, aw gosh, I
506 think there were twenty-five or thirty different things that they got to try.

507 D: Wow.

508 S: So, they had a sheet and then they could put down notes, if they liked it or if they didn't like
509 it. If it's something they want to grow or, or not. You know. So, we did that and then we planned
510 our, our garden, you know, like we wanted some benches, a bird bath. The girls wanted roses.
511 You know, like, and so we took that drawing and we did get approved for a one-year lease which
512 was pretty amazing.

513 D: Who approved it?

514 S: The Milwaukee Urban Gardens. At the time, it was Bruce Wiggins. He's such a good man and
515 he's lives really close to the school, too. So, he kind of had a special place for the Scooter
516 Garden. You know? So, so we, we had a plan and now we had a lease. You know. And again, it,
517 it was a challenge because we were working with an MPS school.

518 S: And they don't want anything to do with it, at the time. Now that was over ten years ago. You
519 know? So, that was a big risk. And, but fortunately the lease comes with insurance. So, they
520 could not say no because I was insured. So, basically all I had to do was get the kids out the front
521 door and across the street into the garden.

522 D: Wow.

523 S: And then, and that was insured. You know, we never needed that insurance for any reason, but
524 it is you know, what MPS requires, you know. So, then we started. Okay, so then we had to build
525 the garden and because we had the plan, the blueprint that we, you know, so then I went to
526 different community, like Bliffert and different organizations that provided the Victory Garden

527 Initiative, they provided the beds. Sweetwater organization at the time, they helped build the
528 beds and brought over the dirt. So, I had, our first day of building the garden there were about a
529 hundred volunteers that showed up.

530 D: Great!

531 S: On April 23rd I can't remember the year, I remember the day. And because it was Earth Day,
532 and it was pouring rain and fifty degrees and we built it. (pause)

533 D: (laughter) That was some dedication. Oh, you going to be okay Susan? Want me to stop?

534 S: Nope. It was just incredible. It was so beautiful. I got some. It was just amazing, everybody
535 showed up even though it was pouring rain. So, we had to put up these pop-up tents because of
536 the electricity which we don't have electricity in the garden so, we had to use our neighbor's. So,
537 we had to put an extension cord through her windows. You know? But we did it. It was just
538 beautiful. And all the kids were there. It was so great. And so, yeah, we built the garden. And
539 you know, after that then we went through the catalogs and we got all the seeds and they started
540 growing the seeds in the classrooms. And that's, up until the last two years now, you know, we
541 don't have a, principle that's willing to participate.

542 D: Oh no.

543 S: Yeah. It's really hard. It's really the last two years. So, he's just, it's really challenging for me
544 to see because he's just, he doesn't have to do anything. You know? He doesn't, he just doesn't
545 want to be involved. And the thing is, he was the vice principal from our last principal that was
546 there for five years and Mr. Chapman did everything and he came to the outings and he had the
547 kids in the garden. And now, Mr. Chapman went to central office because he's a good principal,
548 you know, that's kind of what happens. And so, I have Mr. Caldwell. And Debra, this is like, it's
549 everything wrong, the dynamic between him and I.

550 D: Oh no.

551 S: So, he, I think he had to do a lot of the leg work when Mr. Chapman was there, so now he's
552 gone. And now he's just like, "Screw it, I don't want to do it." But there's nothing to do. I mean,
553 but, it's tough. Because the man I went to filing with, I just went and waited so I could talk to
554 him. And I went into his office and I even had brought Alexander, my farmer who worked with
555 the kids and he's brown and a man. So, I thought that would be helpful because Mr. Caldwell is
556 little man, like that big, and honestly like I said, black, white, man, woman, tall, short, all of it's
557 wrong. You know? And when I met Ron Finley. Did you ever hear of Ron Finley?

558 D: I think so.

559 S: The Gangster Gardner. He's in LA. So, he has these gangsters trading in their guns for
560 shovels. So, I met him at the conference and he explained this, you know, this dilemma and he
561 said, "You don't go in the front door, Susan. You find the back door or you go through the
562 basement window. Just get yourself into that school."

563 D: What about the, the principal who left?

564 S: Mr. Chapman at central office? I haven't been able to be in touch with him, but I know it's
565 terrible. My teachers are still, they, they think that I pulled out which had made it even worse,
566 you know.

567 D: Because that's what they were probably told.

568 S: Yeah, it's been a challenge.

569 D: So, can you go to the school and communicate with the teachers or no?

570 S: Well, I'm going to, I'm going to just make a real push for it in September. You know. So, the
571 last time, like Alexander came and we went because I said, you know, "Mr. Caldwell, I've sent
572 you ten texts, I've left you messages, I'm not exactly sure we're not getting anywhere. Maybe

573 you can tell me who to talk to in order to, for you not to be in, in the loop.” You know. And he
574 said, “No, you just email me.” I’m like, “You just—” So, what he said is, “Yeah, you know, I
575 never get my emails.” He said this in the beginning of the conversation. He said, “Even when I
576 got my principal appointment, I didn’t even get that.” And I’m like, “Okay. So, you just told me
577 you, that you don’t get your emails and the only way to reach you is to email you.”

578 D: In other words, he’s saying, “Don’t call me.”

579 S: And he had like, I had to move the Flaming Hot Cheetos off of the desk chair in his office, the
580 principal. And I was like, “Oh, nice!” And, it, you know and I’m like, the kids could be eating
581 berries. You know? I mean, so anyhow, it’s really hard. But you know, sometimes, you just got
582 to be patient and you, you know, in order for this to be, work, we all have to be on board. And
583 you know, I’m hoping that with this new school year, there’s going to be a new dynamic and
584 something changes. You know? So, right now, I have the kids with the COA is doing their
585 summer school and after school. And I know, what’s his name? The guy at COA, he’s a, he’s
586 been a, a good supporter for the foundation and I’ve done outings over there by the hill and stuff.
587 You know, so, he’s a good man and he understands. So, we do have the kids in the garden, but it
588 could be, but I didn’t get to grow the seeds in the classrooms, you know. So, anyhow, but we are,
589 I’m not going to stop, we’re still working on projects and the, we just put in the library. You
590 know.

591 D: I saw the library.

592 S: And Reading Thyme, we’re working on that area so we’ll just have like, that whole section
593 will be just thyme. So, they can sit on it. You know? Which I think is, is going to be great. But
594 really, this is, Will Allen started the Young Farmer’s program. As really a way for the young
595 folks to not only learn about what they can grow and how it impacts them, but as you know, a

596 means of not everybody is college bound. And there are great careers in agriculture. You know,
597 culinary careers that are, you know. So, you get started as a young person and you get to pick the
598 seeds and grow them and then sell them to the neighbors. And there's a little farm stand that we
599 have over by Fish Burgers. That they, kids can sell their greens, you know. And they earn a little
600 pocket money and then they learn that we have to put some money in for next years' seeds, you
601 know. And they talk to the neighbors to find out, like, what they want them to grow. So, there's
602 this good communication. You know? And the neighbors are happy to support the kids, you
603 know, of course they are. And it gives them, like, just a good self, sense of self, you know.

604 D: And community.

605 S: And community, yeah, it's a beautiful thing. You know, so, this is the second year that this is
606 happening with the Young Farmers Program and we were the first school garden to be picked so
607 that's a big thing, you know. But we have been, work, like I said, with Charlie and the Teens
608 Grow Greens and our kids get into like, just working in the garden provides them experience on
609 their resume when they're seventeen years old or sixteen years old, so they can get a job you
610 know, at a restaurant because they know, they'll say, "Oh yeah, you, you've been working in a
611 garden, you know what this is about." And they understand nutrition, you know. So, there's so
612 many components, there's science, I mean, you name it. You know, we did composting.

613 D: Oh, wow.

614 S: And bees, I mean there's all these like, great things that go with the garden you know. So,
615 unfortunately, because of the principal situation, I haven't been able to take the kids on outings.
616 You know? And we haven't had the same type of participation in the garden. But I don't, I think
617 it's just a setback. Just a temporary setback.

618 D: I agree.

619 S: You know? And, and then other things have happened you know, like the event that we had in
620 the garden, that was beautiful event. You know. So, you know and I've talked to other people
621 and just said, you know, "I really want this garden to stay focused on children. Because there
622 isn't a children's garden, just for children, anywhere in the city, you know? And the, the
623 component is that if it's for, a children's garden, then of course it's for adults. You know? I
624 mean, adults of course it's for adults. But it's built for children, you know and they're, it's, the
625 intention is to have a safe place where we can have conversations and most importantly, it's a
626 place that we can, it's a grieving garden. You know, we can share stories about you know, our
627 loved person that we don't have or you know, just casual conversations about how, you know,
628 so-and-so brother or uncle made a bad decision now they're in prison. You know, and but they're
629 talking about it. It's a conversation and they're learning that there are consequences that go with
630 the bad choices. And there's consequences, then there's good consequences that come with
631 doing the right thing. You know, so, slowly but surely. I mean the, with the mission of the
632 foundation is just you know, one child at a time and just providing you know, opportunities that
633 they understand that there are other choices. And sometimes in environments that are filled with
634 despair, it's hard to see that there is hope out there, you know.

635 D: How do you think, in addition to the agriculture, I know also there's scholarships that can be
636 used towards college too for agriculture, so you're right about that.

637 S: And culinary school and apprenticeships you know, like at the Tandem. I mean, they do that.

638 Where they take students that are gardeners and they take them in as apprentices and, and—

639 D: I didn't know Tandem did that.

640 S: Yeah. Katelyn.

641 D: Okay.

642 S: She's cool.

643 D: I already asked, did you have a photo you wanted to share along with your story?

644 S: Of the garden?

645 D: It can be of the gard-, I'm going to go take a picture of the garden. Unless you already have

646 some.

647 S: Well, I have some nice pictures of the garden.

648 D: Oh, okay.

649 S: So, I was going to show you, this is a, a picture. Okay, so this was, this (inaudible name). This

650 was Paris. That was the last pictures of the, the Easter, so my brother, that was in Easter and he

651 died in May. That was in April. But he, isn't that beautiful. And he was so tall! Like, he had to

652 really scoot down for Paris.

653 D: Well, I figured he was tall because you tall.

654 S: Yeah. So, this was the, this was our memorial car that we had. And I can tell you, I'm not a

655 good duster.

656 D: So, you can let me know what you like to see, we can do a combination of things. I know they

657 can do a split picture. But I can just take a picture of everything and then let those guys, the

658 creative teamwork it out.

659 S: Okay.

660 D: Okay.

661 S: I mean, I can send you a few pictures.

662 D: Okay, that'd be great.

663 S: I can, I can—

664 D: Via email?

665 S: I can, yeah. I can—

666 D: Because I want to be downloading them and adding them.

667 S: Let me see, I may only have one picture, but I know like, you have any, do you get any

668 pictures from the garden event? From the Wear Orange event?

669 D: Yeah.

670 S: Did you see some of those? From Brooke, or?

671 D: Hmm, I didn't see anything from Brooke.

672 S: I think I sent her some pictures. I think that, I bet you, you didn't even know I had some

673 pictures of you.

674 D: No, I didn't.

675 S: Let's see I have to find it.

676 D: How (inaudible) to be a cosponsor for that event was through WAVE?

677 S: Aw, you're right. Okay.

678 D: And (pause).

679 S: So, yeah, because it was me too through WAVE.

680 D: Right.

681 S: So, Heidi, it was Heidi.

682 D: Heidi.

683 S: That introduced me to Brooke. Let's see here. So, I only have a few pictures. But I mean, I do

684 have like.

685 D: Oh, that's perfect.

686 S: You know, that one's pretty.

687 D: with the Scooter Foundation in it.

688 S: Yes, there's me in the garden. There's, that's Alexander. So, we had our own rain barrels, our
689 old ones and we cut the- we painted them orange for the event. And then we cut them in half and
690 we planted potatoes in them. So, the, that'll be our Wear Orange, they'll be our orange reminder.
691 So, we'll keep them in the garden. But—

692 D: Is there anything you'd like to say specifically to elected officials or to the communities?

693 S: Look at these.

694 D: Those are great too.

695 S: Aren't they? This is when the kids were, and there's the bed that- there's Brooke. That's a
696 nice picture. I don't usually like those, look at all that orange food. (laughter) We had a lot of
697 orange food. My friend Michelle, so, she dated my brother and when he got shot, she left. She
698 couldn't handle it. And she hasn't been back for fourteen years.

699 D: Wow,

700 S: She came for that event.

701 D: From where?

702 S: From Colorado.

703 D: Wow. She really cared about your brother and you.

704 S: Yeah. She came and we worked, building all the stuff for the days before when we were
705 painting and building and cleaning and all, all that work that we did. Like, she, I mean I'd work
706 in the garden six or seven hours a day by myself and then Michelle, when she came from
707 Colorado, she's like, "Okay, let's get this done." (laughter) "Tell me what to do." I'm like,
708 "You're not even a gardener." You know? But the garden kind of looked like Hell a few days
709 before the event because that's just how, I mean, we had a tough spring. You know, and we
710 couldn't get out there and that's how it was.

711 D: Oh, I understand. I'm a gardener, I understand.

712 S: Yes, it was tough. You know, you couldn't get in the garden. But there's a lot of nice pictures,
713 I don't know.

714 D: I like the one with the "Scooter".

715 S: There's Alexander. He's my farmer, he's the one that works with my kids. And these guys are
716 from Milwaukee Urban Gardens. So, all of them came. Plus, they never go to events, isn't that
717 great.

718 D: That is great.

719 S: They all came. I love these guys, look at they're making their signs. Yeah, there was a lot of
720 people I didn't know, but I, that's my mom.

721 D: I know.

722 S: There's Michelle.

723 D: I know your mom.

724 S: You know my mom? (pause) You can tell that we're not very comfortable standing next to
725 each other. (laughter) Look it.

726 D: It doesn't appear that way.

727 S: It's just so strange right now because of the whole administration, you know. Like, ugh. Yeah,
728 there's Michelle and my mom. That's pretty isn't it?

729 D: The fact that she came back and, and I like that because it shows the name of the garden,
730 Scooter's Garden. I, what is that, the H that's faded out, right there?

731 S: Oh, Scooter's Garden of Hope.

732 D: Oh, oh.

733 S: It says, see the Hope is on the end.

734 D: Okay, now I see the “of.”

735 S: Yeah, it’s kind of fading, you can’t see it very good. Oh yeah, that’s the recipe for the crumble
736 (laughter).

737 D: So, is there anything you’d like to say to elected officials or to the community?

738 S: (pause) Say to elected officials, I mean, what I guess I can say is that it was very difficult I
739 think for a lot of people including myself, when New Zealand changed their gun laws in one
740 week. After one disaster. Because it shows how things should be done and can be done. And, and
741 how when the country is run by people who care about it and not by all, and not allowed to be
742 run by money. And the NRA. You know, that’s what can happen. That’s how it should be. It
743 should take one disaster and we should make a change. I mean, I don’t know what it’s going to
744 take, you know, at this point. I thought it would be Sandy Hook, I thought for sure once those
745 little white kids got murdered our gun laws would change. You know, I mean, not even a nudge.
746 Not even a nudge. You know, there isn’t, I guess what I would say is that I have rights too. You
747 know? I feel like screw the second amendment when it comes to your guns because I have the
748 right to live and so did my brother. You know? And I don’t believe that it’s the right to bear arms
749 is more, has more weight than the right to live. And unfortunately, I feel that that’s where our
750 country has gone. It’s not in balance, you know. And we have to elect officials who are willing
751 to take that back and make a change. Because this isn’t acceptable. It’s not acceptable. And you
752 know, we can all do our part to, we can all do our part to, in our grassroots way to make it a safer
753 environment for our community, for our children, you know. But, but the big guys are going to
754 make the big difference and that’s not happening. You know? I’ve seen some great things with
755 Parkland kids and I’m grateful for the change that the Parkland kids have had. I feel like the
756 impact that those kids have had is probably more than what we’ve been able to do in twenty

757 years. But why? Why is that? So, why is this so hard to change? You know, I don't, I have never
758 talked to anybody who did not believe in safe gun laws. You know, I have spoken to people who
759 believe it's wrong to take the guns away. That's not going to happen. And that's not what people
760 are talking about. I would be fine if it did happen because I don't, I mean, guns kill people. You
761 know, that's what they're designed to do. They're designed to, that's what weapons do, you
762 know. And so, when I see that poster that's, or hear people that say, "Guns don't kill." It's like,
763 "Yes they do. They really do." It is the gun that killed my brother. The bullet that came out of the
764 gun, you know. Guns do kill people and we have to, I think we should have a campaign about
765 guns do kill. Yes, they do. Whoever says that they don't is wrong, you know. So, I guess that's
766 what I'd like to say is that, I hope that, ethically and morally I think that we have an obligation t
767 to our country to do better. And we're sell, we've sold out up until now and we have an
768 obligation to do better. Like this, you should be able to go to Walmart, you know, on a Saturday
769 afternoon without afraid, being afraid for your life. That's just wrong. It's crazy. It's crazy. And
770 honestly, you know, unfortunately I believe that the passive aggressive lunatics out there are in
771 full aggressive mode with this administration. And I just see that they've been given permission
772 to, that they're, they're not discouraged and even after that happened, what's going to change?
773 Not a thing. Right? I thought I heard Trump say something about, something he was going to do
774 that was positive and, I heard that he ended up, he bent the, the gun laws that were in place for
775 the mentally ill for Obama, Obama changed. He, he changed it back.

776 D: He did.

777 S: So, he took away that, he just gave permission for people, for more mentally ill people that
778 should not have weapons. I mean, how can that be anything but hurtful to, to this country. I
779 mean, where's the benefit in a mentally ill person owning a weapon, even for themselves. I mean,

780 suicide is the number one, right?

781 D: Yeah.

782 S: So, I mean, now you're giving people that sometimes I mean they, they have no right to own a
783 weapon. You know? They don't have the mental capacity to make the right choices. It's, you
784 know it's beyond I guess it's, it makes me really sad a lot when I look at it from that perspective.

785 And so, what I can do is just work with the children in the garden, have these conversations and
786 whether the gun laws change or not, hopefully the children will think when they're making a
787 choice when faced with that decision. Whether they have the weapon or not. You know?

788 Hopefully, you know, one child at a time they'll understand that you know, there's a lot of great
789 things to live for if you do the right thing, you know? And the thing about our garden is that it's
790 just, it's safe on all levels. On you know, anything that, it's pretty non-political. You know, we
791 really have to stay non-partisan on things, but really, it's about encouraging conversations and
792 you know, sometimes it doesn't seem like, especially with this generation with technology that
793 there's where we're sort of losing out on communication, basic communication skills, you know.

794 And just chatting about things. And understanding yeah, sometimes you're uncomfortable,
795 sometimes it's weird, you know, but you can actually like, sort of fix a disagreement by talking
796 with each other because once you understand each other typically you can figure out how to
797 work on that. You know, and I think if more of those conversations are to be had, there would be
798 less need to have to pull out a gun in a situation, you know? So, that's where I stand on it.

799 (laughter)

800 D: Thank you. Is there anything else you want to add?

801 S: I don't think so. Anything you can think of?

802 D: Do you have a different message for the community versus elected officials or no?

803 S: I mean, I just want to continue. I mean, I want to encourage the community to visit the garden,
804 to volunteer in the garden, to use the garden as a canvas for you know, events. So, you can put
805 my contact information in there, you know, which, do you want me to say it?

806 D: You can say where the garden's located?

807 S: The garden is at 2464 North Buffum Avenue, Scooter's Garden of Hope. [...] I'm old.

808 (laughter) Yeah, but especially, I would like to encourage you know, I'm always looking for role
809 models and people that want to just come and especially, I hate to say this, but young men. You
810 know, our kids need some positive male role models in their lives. And they really look up to the
811 young men when they come into the garden. And so, that is my email and please like, feel free to
812 you know, reach out, there's Scooter's Foundation is on Facebook, too. But I don't do Tweeter,
813 Tweetering. (laughter) Tweetering, yeah that's why I don't do it.

814 D: You're not on Twitter.

815 S: Yeah. Okay.

816 D: You're not on Twitter, thank you!

817 S: Alright. Anything else, feel free to reach out to me. So—