

Transcription

M-“Alright Devin, tell me a little bit about yourself. Where were you born and when did you move to Ventura County?”

D-“I was born in Inglewood, CA. About an hour away from here. And I do believe I moved to Thousand Oaks in 1972 with my family. Went to Newbury Park High. Graduated. Did the whole nine yards. Went to Pierce College. Got married. Moved to San Diego. Umm...got a job as a patrolmen for a tribal entity. i.e. police officer or tribal police. Did that for a few years and then retired from that. Then came on out here to take care of my mother. She was in the twilight of her life. And that was truly a privilege and a blessing. She passed away a couple of years ago, so...met a girl. Stayed up here, so. It's the circle of life. You end up back where you started.”

M-“Absolutely, so what do you do now?”

D-“I work for Sprouts. I'm a grocery manager.”

M-“Oh ok, how long have you been there?”

D-“About three years.”

M-“So you mentioned you were involved in security, what other previous occupations have you had?”

D-“Yeah, well that was it. After I graduated from school. You know I have a degree? Criminal justice from Pierce College. So I did that for many years.”

M-“Yeah? What drew you to criminal justice at the time?”

D-“Law enforcement you know? That was my intent. But umm I played football/baseball at Newbury Park High School and injured my knees. Went to LAPD and didn't make it because of

my knees. Settled for the tribal you know security. Unfortunately, working on the reservation. The State of CA doesn't recognize us as being you police officers. Retired or active. i.e. the Federal Government gave all control of our pensions and retirement to the tribes. To try and make them more self-sufficient. And we got it. We got hosed big time. You know? I was making a lot of money while I was working there but then I got out. You know there wasn't much there anymore. And like I said I had the privilege to take care of my mother and what savings I had and my 401K I used to take care of her. So its ok you know?"

M-"Yeah absolutely. Ok so you mentioned your mother and your sister. Tell me about your family. How many are there?"

D-"Well I have four sisters and one surviving brother. I had two brothers. But yeah just one surviving. Mothers passed. Fathers passed. So yeah my brother lives in Maui with his wife. One sister lives in Ventura. I live out here. And one sister lives right out here. Right off of Hampshire. And that's the one I'm taking care of. And one sister lives in Oregon. One lives in Napa."

M-"Wow, all over the place. Ok so how old are your siblings. Are you the oldest? Youngest?"

D-"Nah, I'm the youngest."

M-"You're the youngest?"

D-"Yeah me and my twin. The one that lives in Ventura."

M-"Oh ok, interesting. Ok so can you tell me a little bit about...you mentioned there not being funding at the reservation. Tell me about that."

D-"In terms of no funding?"

M-"yeah"

D-"Well no, what happened was the Native Americans as they were given everything. You know the land, etc. You know they had their own gaming casinos. Shopping malls. You know outlet

shopping centers. Try to make it more self-sufficient. Listen. It worked for them. You know they pay no federal taxes. Very little state taxes. And the tribe I worked for. The owners were making 200-300 thousand dollars a year. See their entities. It's horrible man. We had to keep them under control. Through the law and federal law. You know? Not municipality. We had to basically treat them with kid gloves. And let them deal in terms of punishment through their judicial system."

M-"So is their judicial system separate?"

D-"Oh yeah sure. You know they're on their own. Different rules apply. Big time. And they're own their own land. We gave it to them. That's their land. So you know the proverbial you owe us syndrome. It's horrible. You have no idea."

M-"Ok so in terms of all of that. What was your most surprising experience that you encountered?"

D-"You know as the years went by. You open your eyes and see the misuse of our federal dollars and you know. Why are we given them all of this money? You know man? They live in squander. They're boozers, meth users, mammers, the whole nine yards. As you live on the land. You have to fight with these people. They didn't want us there. But they don't work hard enough. They're not intelligent enough to take care of themselves. i.e. with the law-wise."

M-"Well what caused you to leave? The above reasons?"

D-"Well yeah and you know I went through a heavy divorce. She wiped me out financially in that aspect too. But you know she worked there. We both worked there for many years. But yeah that was it man. I Couldn't stay."

M-"Ok so you mentioned your mother. Was she your main reason for moving out here?"

D-"Yeah to take care of my mother. So my divorce and everything."

M-"So how did you deal with and cope with the struggles? Both financial and emotional."

D-“My faith. You Know? I believe in Jesus Christ. Born and raised. My mother was a Christian. My father was a Christian. The way I was brought up that’s the way it is. I respect her and I love my mother. And I would do anything for them. I know the sacrifices they gave for us. And you know I truly believe it was the Lord’s will. Through all the heart ache and pain. There was joy there as well. She died in my arms. You know so the Lord has a plan for everybody. You know the divorce was difficult. But it was well worth it. You know she lived a blessed life. She was 92. And that’s the way I look at it.”

M-“That’s great. And you were there for her when she needed you.”

D-“Yeah to the day she passed away. I was in her home. You talk about the Lord’s will. You know I was there. She died in my arms. So the Lord has a plan.

M-“Yeah absolutely. So in terms of just your financial well-being right now. You mentioned you’re taking care of your sister as well. Is that difficult?”

D-“Well you know just the atmosphere. She is finding cancer which she beat already and is fighting again. You know I had a fiancée in Ventura and it was mutual. I decided to move out and live with my sister. Unfortunately it didn’t go well. I cheated. But I’m not an abuser, nothing like that. But you know? I believe it was the Lord’s will. And my sister is in Hawaii. So now I live with my sister I give her money, I make sure she’s alright. I feel that I am her shield. She lives with her 34 year old daughter who is a dope user. Has been forever. Has five different kids with five different men. Horrible. I’m just trying to keep her going. I absorb a lot. She’s a blessed woman and she’s a kind woman. And I may not agree with her methods but that’s what the Lord wants. You know? I would have put up my distance. A big gap. She didn’t do it. She still lives there. Its real trials and tribulations. But you know it’s not the kids’ fault. I follow the Lord. I’m schooled in the law. Black and white. My integrity is black and white. And I refuse to buckle

under the pressure. I'm there to make sure that she is on her way out. She has taken enough from my sister. My sister enabled her. But she's had enough. I'll do whatever I have to do. I'm not going to allow my niece to suck any more life out of her. You know? Even though my sister did it. It's not going to fly for me."

M-"So is that draining for you?"

D-"Oh yeah, always a struggle. Just picked up an offer from Whole Foods in Oxnard."

M-"Really? Going to pick up a third one then?"

D-"You know, what are you going to do?"

M-"What other job are you working at?"

D-"Besides Sprouts? Fresh n Easy too. When I go to Whole Foods I'll drop that one though. Its unfortunate too Matty. You know? Working at a grocery store. You have a lot of customers who come in that have masses of green. You know? They just found jobs out of their fields. Its horrible man. You know this country is just wow. You're just dumbfound. I truly believe that the Devil has a hold on this country.

M-"Yeah, you know I'm glad you brought that up. So having had the experiences you've had. I mean you said you've witnessed some horrible things at your previous job. How have your views on society especially American society changed?"

D-"You know I'm red, white, and blue. You know I'm an American."

M-"Right, but I mean what would you change?"

D-"Oh man, you know. Hard work and recognition is a thing of the past unfortunately. It's all about who you know. And that is so unfortunate. So unfortunate. This country. I have no opinions on immigration. My parents came to this country from Central America. Panama. And you know? Law abiding. Paid their taxes. Honest. And now it's a way different ball game now.

They came here over 70 years ago. And now it's just like they let them come in. I try to keep out of that policy. Snaggles. But in terms of this country. My brother came home from Vietnam. I saw what that did to him. He died at a young age from drug abuse and alcohol. It's not a good thing. Sending our young. Going to war. Maimed.

M-"Mentally scarred?"

D-"And maimed. You know? Out on the street begging for money. Why aren't they taken care of. Americans. It doesn't sit well with me bud. As I said, I'm not a radical. I don't provoke violence. I just pray to the Lord. Guide me and help me. Help me to help those who need help. That's about it. Everybody has an opinion. You know? I don't quite agree with the way things are but what are you going to do? Just pray. My faith is what keeps me going. Who else is going to listen? Through my pains and my triumphs and my low points.

M-"Have you ever reached out for government assistance in any way?"

D-"oh well I've collected my unemployment. You better believe that. Other than that? No. Why? The Lord blessed me with a strong body. Strong mind. And the ethics are you go out and work. There's honor in what you're doing as long as its honest. The Lord provides. Believe me through my trials and tribulations. I'm not rolling in wealth but I have my credit scores like 780. I have my car and my Harley. And I work bro. And I just do my best. The only thing you're going to have left is your integrity when it's all said and done. And unfortunately you know? My poor sister. Tax payer. All her life. In order for her to have the proper surgery we have to wait. Just horrible.

M-"How long is that supposed to take?"

D-"Well you know she's already had two surgeries now were waiting on the third. The third to finish off the other ones. It's horrible man. She pays taxes. Take care of her. It's just wow. That's

what breeds hatred, violence, theft. Everything. I truly believe the Devil has a hold on this world. It's just wow.

M-"Ok I have a few reflective questions. Based on the experiences you've had in your life what advice would you give others to provide them with insight or hope for the future?"

D-"Well you know I would say keep your nose down, work hard, don't self-abuse. You know cause I did for years. Even while I was on patrol. I started abusing a prescription drug. Probably cost me my second marriage. Even though I had everything. I traveled the world but I self-abused. I'm not a saint but I don't do what I used to. So praise the Lord. And one good thing about it. Your father has been a friend to me. He knows my ups and downs. I would never lie to your father. So that's what I would say. Stay honest, work hard, praise the Lord. And keep your faith. There's always someone out there who is worse off than you. If you can reach out your hand to help someone and feed them do it.

M-"Would you say that your faith was where you drew most of your strength from to endure through your hardships?"

D-"Yeah of course. And the thing is Matthew, in the last five, six years I've tried to get really involved in it. But just like every human being we fail sometimes."

Dr. Nam. This is the point where unbeknownst to me, my audio recorder stopped during the interview. So unfortunately this all the transcription I have to offer.