

1 GVP44, Sandra Saltzstein

2 D: Please state your name.

3 S: Sandra Saltzstein.

4 D: And Sandra, how old are you?

5 S: I am 52 years old.

6 D: You look good for 52.

7 S: Thank you so much.

8 D: You're welcome and what nationality are you?

9 S: I am Caucasian of Eastern European descent.

10 D: Okay, and please share your story in reference to gun violence.

11 S: So, the summer right after I turned sixteen and I'm trying to remember whether I heard the

12 story first from my mom, or whether I first read it in the newspaper. But I was made aware that

13 my childhood best friend had been killed. That her mother had shot her and had shot her younger

14 brother while they slept.

15 D: Oh my god.

16 S: And she had moved, she had been my childhood best friend. We had the same first name. We

17 had to be separated several times in class because we would sit next to each other and would

18 cause confusion about answering questions. And we had drifted apart a little bit after she moved.

19 I had not seen her as much. The last time I saw her, which became a vivid memory was actually

20 at my aunt's funeral. She had the paper route at my aunt's house and she was delivering the

21 paper during my aunt's memorial service.

22 D: Wow.

23 S: Outside at her house. And so, I saw her and I waved at her and of course, had no idea that was
24 the last time that I would see her.

25 D: Oh my gosh.

26 S: Yeah.

27 D: And what area of town was this?

28 S: This was in Fox Point, so suburban Milwaukee. Yeah.

29 D: Did her mom, was her mom prosecuted for this?

30 S: Her mom took her own life as well.

31 D: Oh my gosh.

32 S: Yeah. So, her, her mom, her brother and herself. Yeah. And I can only imagine the impact that
33 it had on her dad. And I was young enough at that point, when I, when I look back on it now, I
34 feel very badly that I didn't attend a funeral or her memorial service that they would've had for
35 her. And I don't remember asking to do that, but I'm not sure that I was aware it was a thing I
36 could've done.

37 D: Oh my gosh.

38 S: Ya know, so.

39 D: How old was she when she was murdered by her mom?

40 S: She was my age. So, she would've been, she also was fifteen, sixteen.

41 D: Okay.

42 S: Yeah, I've forgotten when her birthday was. But I would've turned sixteen a few months
43 before this happened.

44 D: Do you know how old her brother was?

45 S: He was younger and I want to say he was younger by two or three years.

46 D: Okay. And when you describe the area in Fox Point was the, was the dad, was it, can you kind
47 of like give me the area of where in Fox Point? I know you may not know what it's called, that,
48 that street or around what area in Fox Point?

49 S: Right. I don't know that I can place it more exactly except to know, that's where it was, it
50 would've been in the area near Cardinal Stritch.

51 D: Okay.

52 S: So, that narrows it a little bit. Somewhere near there. Because I know because of her
53 proximity to my aunt's house then.

54 D: Okay. And when, did you know her dad?

55 S: I did know her dad. And her parents were separated, so, her dad was not present when this
56 incident took place. Which again is why I'm just sure it's unimaginable to know what his
57 experience would've been or how, you know, he was able to recover from that, but I did know
58 her dad. And I knew her mom. And I did know there was a previous incident in the family
59 involving the traumatic death of an older child that seemed to have, as it would, forever changed
60 her mom. And I think that all efforts to try and mitigate that didn't seem to work in the end. And
61 how there was a gun in that home is completely beyond my comprehension. So, when I, and I
62 don't know. And this goes back many years, so I don't know what the legislation would've been
63 at that time, whether they would've needed a permit, whether it was there for her protection since
64 she was on her own, but it turned into just a recipe for tragedy.

65 D: Oh my gosh.

66 S: Yeah.

67 D: Today, post-traumatic stress is experienced by many of our youth, especially in the inner city.

68 If you were youth and you experienced this, what would you say to a young person who

69 (inaudible) a friend or a family member recently being shot and killed by gun violence?

70 S: I would say to try and find trusted people to talk to about your feelings. And if you're a person

71 who writes or draws or has ways to express your feelings that way, I would encourage you to do

72 so. Which I ended up writing an essay about you know, my experience and my memories of her,

73 which helped me to find a way toward understanding or a way toward coping with those

74 emotions.

75 D: Wow. Did you write that when you were a teenager?

76 S: I did. I wrote it actually, it was my college essay, was talking about how, how much I tried to

77 appreciate the experiences I was having because she was not.

78 D: Oh, wow.

79 S: Yeah.

80 D: So, you could say that post-traumatic stress even affects you years after the incident?

81 S: Yeah, I mean, I still think of her. And I think of her as my child has reached her age. And I'm

82 thinking of her now, as we talk. Because it just, I sort of just put together that my daughter has

83 actually reached that same age.

84 D: Oh no.

85 S: So, yes. Yes. It becomes even harder for me I think, to understand as a mother how far that

86 distress had to carry her, that that seemed to be the course of action that she needed to take. And

87 I have never been able to understand that, and still can't. And even more so, it gets harder as I

88 see my children grow up, to understand that. But, you know.

89 D: What would you say to our elected officials on what you'd like to see changed, if anything, to
90 lower gun violence or eliminate it?

91 S: Oh, boy. Well, I would, I would love, love to see common sense legislation that takes
92 automatic weapons off the table. just, I don't see any reason for those to be really in anyone's
93 hands, but certainly not on the streets. I would love to see tougher standards, I would love to see
94 more education, I would love to see more requirements to make sure that people who are in
95 distress are truly not able to get guns in their hands. It's just, you know, and, and just the, the
96 sheer number of guns that we have right now, it's little bit incomprehensible. So, that would be,
97 any and all of that, you know?

98 D: Is there, is there anything you'd like to add?

99 S: (pause) I don't think so. I think that says it.

100 D: Thank you!

101 S: You bet. Thank you.

102 D: I owe you, wow.

103 S: Wow.