

Las Vegas shooting memorial: 'None of us will ever be the same'

By **KEN RITTER**
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A flock of doves fluttered skyward at sunrise in Las Vegas today, each bird bearing a leg band with the name of one of the 58 people slain in the deadliest mass shooting in nation's modern history one year ago.

Marking the anniversary of the night that a gunman opened fire from a high-rise casino suite on a crowd of 22,000 country music fans, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval gathered with several hundred people at an outdoor amphitheater remembrance ceremony.

"Today we remember the unforgettable. Today, we comfort the inconsolable," Sandoval told survivors, families of victims, first-responders and elected officials who gathered at dawn.

He added: "Today, we are reminded of the pain that never really goes away."

Among those who offered prayers, songs and speeches was Mynda Smith, whose sister Neysa Davis Tonks was killed.

Mynda Smith said her sister, who pronounced her name "Neesha," was a 46-year-old single mother raising three boys in Las Vegas. Smith called her sister energetic, adventurous, a fan of all kinds of music and a person who danced when no one



People pray at a makeshift memorial on Sunday for victims of the Oct. 1 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas.

AP Photo/John Locher

was watching.

Smith started a scholarship fund for victims' children and said she reached out to loved ones of almost all the dead.

"None of us will ever be the same," Mynda Smith said. "We have all been broken. But we can find a way to pick up those pieces and glue it all back

together. Yes, the cracks will be seen. But it can be whole again and we will be stronger."

Christie Kraemer, a Las Vegas real estate agent who wasn't at the concert but knew people who were, said "I never want Oct. 1 to happen again. But I love Oct. 2 because of the way everyone came together."

Shooting survivors Chris

and Larisa Rapanick of Chesapeake, Virginia, made the trip to Las Vegas for weekend events including a 5K run, a country music club show and a reunion of survivors on Saturday. At the sunrise service, they stood with their two adult daughters.

"We weren't going to let this ruin a place we like to

come to," Chris Rapanick said. "I'm glad to be standing here."

Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo recalled the chaos and confusion of the shooting, and the prayers to "heal broken hearts," blood banks filled with donors and "acts of kindness that comforted the suffering" that followed.

"When the sun rose the

next morning, grief turned to anger, anger turned to resolve and resolve turned to action," Lombardo said.

Many who were cheering Jason Aldean's headline set on at the Route 91 Harvest Festival late Oct. 1, 2017, said later they thought the rapid crack-crack-crack they heard was fireworks — until people fell dead, wounded, bleeding.

The Rapanicks heard bullets hitting a canvas awning near them as they fled and saw a shot hit a plastic cup that flipped in the air.

From across neon-lit Las Vegas Boulevard, a gambler-turned-gunman with what police later called a meticulous plan but an unknown reason fired assault-style rifles for 11 minutes from 32nd-floor windows of the Mandalay Bay hotel into the concert crowd below. Police said he then put a pistol in his mouth and killed himself.

Medical examiners later determined that all 58 deaths were from gunshots. Another 413 people were wounded, and police said at least 456 were injured fleeing the carnage.

Lombardo declared the police investigation over in August, issuing a report that said hundreds of interviews and thousands of hours of investigative work could not provide answers to what made Stephen Craig Paddock unleash his hail of gunfire.

Problems mount for Pentagon's immigrant recruit program

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Stricter Trump administration immigration policies have stymied Pentagon plans to restart a program that allowed thousands of people with critical medical or Asian and African language skills to join the military and become American citizens, according to several U.S. officials.

The decade-old program has been on hold since 2016 amid concerns that immigrant recruits were not being screened well enough, and security threats were slipping through the system. Defense officials shored up the vetting process, and planned to relaunch the program earlier this month.

But there was an unexpected barrier when Homeland Security officials said they would not be able to protect new immigrant recruits from being deported when their temporary visas expired

after they signed a contract to join the military, the U.S. officials said. They were not authorized to publicly describe internal discussions and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The program is called Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest program, or MAVNI. The plan to restart it was backed by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who believes that noncitizens can bring key skills, language abilities, and cultural knowledge to the military.

Mattis, a combat veteran of multiple war tours, has fought with and commanded foreign nationals, and he believes their service adds to the lethality of America's fighting force, according to the officials.

The Pentagon chief told reporters late last month that the program is designed to enlist immigrants with needed skills. "We need and want every qualified patriot willing to serve and able to serve," Mattis said.

President Trump says he supports 'comprehensive' FBI Kavanaugh probe

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE** and **MICHAEL BALSAMO**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said today he wants the FBI to do a "comprehensive" investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct by Brett Kavanaugh. But he also said he stands by his Supreme Court nominee "all the way."

Trump said during a Rose Garden press conference that he wants the probe to wrap up quickly because the accusations have been "so unfair" to Kavanaugh and his family. But he said it's fine with him if the FBI wants to pursue accusations made by three women who have publicly come forward even as he has left the scope of the investigation to Senate Republicans.

"My White House will do whatever the senators want," Trump said. "The one thing I want is speed."

The president added, "We don't want to go on a witch hunt, do we?"



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

President Donald Trump speaks about Supreme Court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh in the Rose Garden of the White House.

FBI agents interviewed one of the three women who have accused Kavanaugh of sexual misconduct as Republicans and Democrats quarreled over whether the bureau would have enough time and freedom to conduct a thorough investigation before a high-stakes vote on his nomination to the nation's highest court.

The White House insisted it was not "micromanaging" the new one-week review of

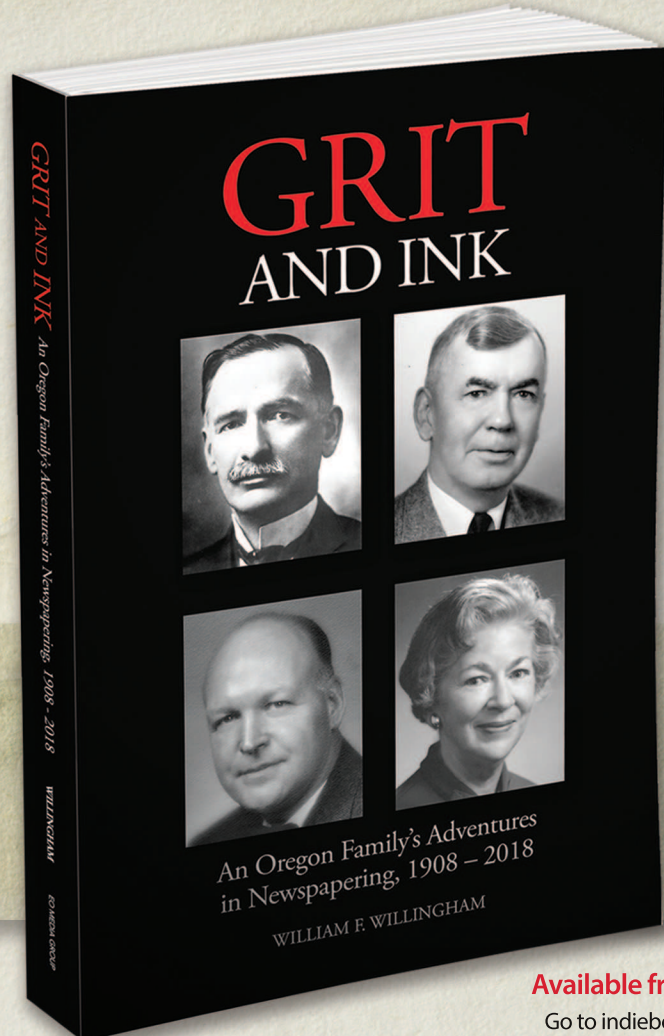
Kavanaugh's background, but some Democratic lawmakers claimed the White House was keeping investigators from interviewing certain witnesses. President Donald Trump tweeted that no matter how much time and discretion the FBI was given, "it will never be enough" for Democrats trying to keep Kavanaugh off the bench.

And even as the FBI explored the past allegations

that have surfaced against Kavanaugh, another Yale University classmate came forward to accuse the federal appellate judge of being untruthful in his testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee about the extent of his drinking in college.

As the fresh review unfolded, the prosecutor who was brought in by Republicans to handle questioning at last week's hearing outlined in a new memo why she did not believe criminal charges would be brought against Kavanaugh if it were a criminal case rather than a Supreme Court confirmation process. Rachel Mitchell wrote that she did not believe a "reasonable prosecutor would bring this case based on the evidence before the Committee."

Mitchell argued that there were inconsistencies in accuser Christine Blasey Ford's narrative and said no one has corroborated Ford's account. Ford, a California college professor, was not questioned as part of a criminal proceeding but in the confirmation process.



Meet the Author

7 p.m. October 18 at Fort George Brewery

William F. Willingham

A native of Pendleton, Oregon and a consulting historian working in the fields of American history, historic preservation, architectural history, and water resources development. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles, consultant reports, and books

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