

Strong Medicine Interview with Samuel Spencer Gilfeather, 3 June

2014

[00:00]

ILACQUA: This is Joan Ilacqua and today is June 3rd and I'm here with Samuel Spencer Gilfeather at the Countway Library in the Finland Room. And we're going to record an interview as part of the Strong Medicine oral history project. Spencer, do I have your permission to record the interview?

GILFEATHER: Yes, of course.

ILACQUA: Great, excellent. So, as I mentioned, our first set of questions is really background on you and I just want you to tell me about yourself, tell me about your nursing training and how you ended up in this field.

GILFEATHER: Sure. In April of 2013 I was in nursing school at University of Massachusetts Boston. I ended up in nursing school in kind of a roundabout way. I guess I would consider myself an older student. Before I moved back to Boston I -- it was like a while ago. I ended up working in a small like rural hospital in northern Mississippi and I was exposed to -- one night there was a tornado that hit the Caterpillar plant that was just north of the town and there were several people that came in and

I distinctly remember one woman had a large piece of metal in her leg. And at that point I helped transport her into like trauma one and I didn't know how I could help her and it was like very frustrating to me. My mother and father are both -- or I should say they both are in medicine. My mom's been like an OR nurse for 30 something years and my father was a pathologist. And it never really occurred to me to enter medicine. It was always kind of like at the dinner table they're talking about all these horrific things or seemingly boring things. But after the incident with the tornado it was kind of like I need to find a way to help people and to have a career where I could give back and have some type of meaning to life, outside of just, you know, recreational activities. So I ended up moving up here and getting into the nursing school at UMass Boston. And the way I got involved with the marathon was through the undergraduate program director, Dr. Wald, Adrienne Wald. I was working with her on a project to -- we were trying to start an initiative to get -- to make the campus like completely tobacco free. And so I was like meeting with her like maybe like once a week or so and then one she was like, "Oh, we're doing this thing with the Boston Marathon, we need some medical volunteers, and I have a slot. It's like a standby slot so if you want to do it I could put you

on the standby slot." And sure enough, one of the students couldn't make the obligation to be a volunteer so I think she emailed me or something and I just like -- it was like the day before the event so I kind of showed up a little disoriented, not knowing what was going on, and we went to the briefing and that was that. So that's how I kind of got to the scene, so to speak.

ILACQUA: So on Marathon Monday last year what sort of -- what were you expecting from it? What did you think the day was going to be like?

GILFEATHER: Dr. Wald had talked to me about it before. She said, "This will be good experience for you, for your future nursing career and just seeing like what things that you would experience with like exercise related injuries, maladies, stuff like that." So I was expecting to see hypothermia, hyperthermia, hypernatremia, dehydration, all those types of things that you would associate with someone who just ran 26 miles. So I think she had worked on some articles, I read some articles that she had forwarded to me about like exercise related injuries. And it was kind of interesting to me. It was more, honestly, I mean I was really eager to be involved because I had watched the marathon on television a couple of times and I had never went down to Copley to see, you know, be at the finish line.

So I was like this is like a great, I guess, segue or a way to merge the nursing aspect with just seeing something really great, like Patriot's Day. So that's what I expected going in.

ILACQUA: And so that morning what sort of stuff were you doing?

GILFEATHER: So I remember I took the train. They said parking was going to be a nightmare, as usual, so I took the train in and then met with my classmates. [05:00] We had a briefing with the BAA. They had some -- I don't remember if it was like a cardiologist or someone gave a really detailed briefing on, you know, mostly signs of injuries and stuff like that and what to look for and what do we do and where the wheelchair is located and where are the tents. And they had like a map and they all gave us maps and I have a map here. I don't know if -- you can't really see it through the recording obviously. But so yeah, we went to the briefing and they put me in zone seven. My classmates, I think there were like 30 of us, we were divided into different zones. And the zones were kind of, they kind of surround Copley Square and that whole area by the finish line. So my zone was way down by Arlington, and that's kind of another story in itself of how I got from there to the finish line.

ILACQUA: OK, so --

GILFEATHER: I don't know if I even answered your question,
I'm sorry.

ILACQUA: Oh, no, no, don't worry. So you were all the way down
by Arlington. If we could shift a little and talk about
when did you know something had happened?

GILFEATHER: So as the day progressed I was down by -- if
there are any runners are listening I was down by the buses.
And the way it works is as the runners exit across the
finish line they're walking down Boylston and they can
either take a right onto Clarendon or they can go further
ahead down toward Berkeley and Arlington where the -- I
guess they had stored their gear. And so from the early
morning it was pretty uneventful. The elite runners came
in, it was still sunny, it wasn't really windy. And then
it got progressively colder, or maybe like the shadows or
something from the buildings were making like the tunnel
kind of cool. And I was moving forward to where you could
either -- the runner could either take a right or go
straight because I wanted to be closer to the action, so to
speak. I felt like most people were just asking me for
directions. I'd have runners saying oh, where is this,
where is that, I need to find my family, and I knew it was
like my job to like help people that were really, you know,
suffering from these exercise related injuries. And I took

some people via wheelchair, or actually carried one runner to a medical tent B because his legs were cramping and stuff like that. And so I kept moving forward and forward up the chute toward the finish line and I moved actually closer to the finish line side past that junction. And it was whatever time the bombing happened, whatever time that was, I was facing the finish line, I was maybe like a block away or so, and the first explosion went off. And at first -- I went to school at the University of Mississippi before UMass and whenever they'd fire a touchdown -- or whenever you'd have a touchdown they'd fire a cannon and so at first that's what it sounded like to me. It sounded like a cannon. And then I looked up the street and I could see the debris cloud coming from the right side of the road and I thought first, that's really strange. And then like it started sinking in because I remember watching like 9/11 on TV -- I was like, how old was I? I don't know. I was like probably 20, 21 when that happened. I saw that on TV and then I was -- I got this like really awful feeling like something bad's happening. And of course right after that the next explosion went off and I just started running. I guess part of the thought was well, I mean nothing's going to detonate there again because I mean a bomb would set off any other bomb, so started running. And I didn't have

anything on me -- I had like this little red bag with me. I had like a bottle of water, my stethoscope, the map that they had given us of the zones, and I think that was really it. It was funny because when I was with my classmates at the briefing in the morning they're like, "What do you have that bag for?" and I was like, "I don't know, like I have my stethoscope" and they're like, "What do you need a stethoscope for for dehydration?" and I'm like, "I don't know, whatever." It was kind of like silly, like nursing students always have their stethoscope with them. But I ended up using it later. [10:00] So that's kind of when -- it was right after the second explosion when I started running down the street. Knowing that I had like pretty much nothing on me, when I was running I saw a woman, she was -- we were all wearing these white Adidas like jackets that the BAA had given us and that's how the runners could find the medical personnel. So as I was running up the street there was another girl in a white jacket and she had one of these medical bags with her and so she was like -- I mean we were both kind of disoriented, I think, and I was like, "Come on, we've got to go" and we both just started charging down the street. And I mean once we got to the scene of the first bomb I don't -- I never saw her again. I haven't seen her since then. I don't even know what her

name was. So, but that when everything kind of got really weird.

ILACQUA: And do you want to talk about the kind of first responder actions you were taking or...?

GILFEATHER: Yeah, I -- two days -- it actually was the night -- I don't know, I didn't sleep for like three days in a row so I'm not really sure -- and it was like right after the bombing I wrote a letter to my classmates because I knew there would be a lot of questions and I was really concerned with particularly one of my classmates because after the bombing she was pretty rattled. And I knew that we had class two days and I knew that when we returned to class there would be a lot of questions. And personally the day of I was already getting like a million phone calls and Facebook this and Tweet that or whatever, and it was like overwhelming and at the time I didn't want to talk to anyone. I had to process everything. And so I knew everyone in school -- and they care about us and -- but I figured the best way to address it would be to write a letter to my class and that would answer their questions and I could politely, tactfully say please leave me alone, I'm OK, like we'll get there. So I wrote this letter and it kind of -- excuse me -- recorded like the events. Is it --

ILACQUA: Yeah, you can -- if you want to read it that would be
--

GILFEATHER: I think it would maybe be -- and maybe I could
add something else to it.

ILACQUA: Yeah, sure.

GILFEATHER: I'm trying to log in here. This is a letter I
later forwarded to some family that instead of recalling
the events over and over again this was kind of a useful
thing. Let's try the beginning. An open letter to my
classmates, my experience on Boylston. My dear friends, as
we struggle with the events of yesterday let me first say
this. Our resolve as Bostonians and future nurses must be
strengthened and that we will not let these atrocities
affect our wellbeing, our city and our career path. I can
only hope to be at next year's marathon volunteering in the
same capacity and for many years to come. Yesterday was
going as anticipated initially. As a medical sweep team
volunteer my job was to quickly assess runners experiencing
the onset of typical marathon maladies like dehydration,
hypothermia, hyperthermia, hyponatremia, etc. We would
then transport the runners to the nearest of the two
medical tents. We walked or wheeled many runners to the
tent to be triaged and treated and everything seemed to be
running like a well-oiled machine. I was assigned to zone

seven on Boylston after halfway between Arlington and the finish line. It was actually further, closer to Arlington. I had moved far out of my zone to be on Berkeley closer to the finish line because I was having trouble assessing the runners as most of them were approaching me asking for directions instead of medical help. To clarify, the Berkeley/Boylston intersection was a junction where runners were sorted by bib number and they could either then continue toward zone seven down Boylston to the buses or take that turn down Berkeley toward the medical tent and family meeting area. As I advanced beyond the bottleneck the first explosion went off and it was evident that it was on the northern right side of Boylston by the finish line. I was facing the blast watching the runners as they were walking toward me. Everyone turned around and got quiet and then a few seconds later the next explosion went off. I knew immediately it was a bomb. Throughout all the strange sounds that occur at a race that sound and smoke did not belong. One runner, an older woman, was yelling, "It's a bomb, it's terrorists," inciting fear to all those around her. A few runners and myself were yelling for her to not say that. I started walking faster, not wanting to cause a panic, but then decided it was more important to run because people were [15:00] going to need help. One of

the thoughts in my head was that doubt that you are just a student nurse, but as I ran I noticed I didn't see many white jackets -- those are the medical volunteers -- and that my few skills like CPR or limited combat wound classes that I took in the Marines would be better than nothing. As I ran I saw a woman in a white coat with a medical bag and grabbed her. We ran to the scene. The smoke was still heavy in the air and the stench of explosives and organics filled the air. The smell is something I can't describe but won't ever forget. There were people with wheelchairs but it was evident that -- that is to say that there were volunteers who were using wheelchairs. But it was evident that they would be useless with the high curbs, the rubble and the severity of injuries. There were already EMTs and firemen on the scene working on a man with a badly mangled torso. There were parts of bodies all over the ground amongst the hot smoldering pieces of blackened debris. I stepped around him and I was immediately upon a man and woman clinging to each other. Her clothing was on fire at the torso so I whacked out the flames. She had some third degree burns on her torso but that wasn't an immediate priority. There were little down feathers sticking to her face where she was bleeding. The feathers were at first very confusing but I now realize they were probably from

someone's down jacket that had been torn to shreds by the blast. We didn't have scissors or knives or anything sharp and we were tearing at clothing to expose wounds and find the bleeds. Her leg was badly mangled but mostly intact, but she was losing a lot of blood. At this point I'd say we had talked about in my medical surgical class about hypovolemic shock and what it looks like and one of the words -- you learn these words like cyanosis or pallor and you don't really know what pallor is and it was like this day that you could see pallor, like just a pale almost waxy look and someone's skin is really cold and it's just from blood loss. So that's something I unfortunately learned that day. Sorry. So her leg was badly mangled but mostly intact, but she was losing a lot of blood. Someone was elevating the leg and we tied it off. The man and woman were husband and wife and as I struggled to keep her awake I began assessing her, checking her torso, checking the pulses, alertness and orientation. We did the same with the husband whose leg was severed halfway distal to the knee. We used some torn clothing to make tourniquets and someone began yelling for a board. Myself and maybe four other people carried the woman on the board running toward medical tent A. Inside, the nurses and doctors sprung to action and the tent rapidly became reorganized for the

incoming level one priorities. It was amazing how fast the nurses moved and reorganized as to all of the marathon patients. Noncritical or trauma, every patient was assigned to a team. When we arrived I saw a young faced physician and I was yelling, "Where do you want her?" Luckily there were some seasoned ICU nurses that took charge with some EMTs. We dropped the woman off to be loaded on a stretcher for transport via ambulance. Already a team of IV nurses had swept in to hang lines. I ran back to the scene and found the husband who was fading in and out. I kept talking to him and asking him questions about his wife. He told me that she's a nurse at MGH. I don't know if --

ILACQUA: Do you want me to pause?

GILFEATHER: Yeah.

ILACQUA: OK.

[18:50]

END OF AUDIO FILE 1

[00:00]

ILACQUA: All right, go ahead.

GILFEATHER: So we had no boards to transport him so we carried him with his hanging, nearly separate, leg to a wheelchair. He was turning a ghostly white. I didn't want

to move him by chair but it seemed like it was more important to get him to the tent than wait for a board. As we raced with the chair it began to speed wobble and jar him, so I ended up supporting the dangling leg with my hand. I now realized that it was probably a futile effort as surely that leg would have been amputated, but I wasn't really thinking very clearly in the haze. If we had a sheet or anything flat it would have been better perhaps. We got him on a bed and then on a board inside the tent and then I ran back to the finish line. The cops were throwing up a barricade to block the road to the scene and I was yelling, "No, no, make way, make way" and I was trying to push past the cops. And one of the cops grabbed me at the arms and said, with a sad firm look, "No more victims. All clear, all clear, we got them all." I found out later that they were quickly setting up the barricades to maintain the area as a crime scene, so I ran back to the tent to help. Even though I don't know much and I was completely under educated I knew people had to be moved and staff needed to help hold the IVs since there were no poles to hang the bags. There was a woman in the tent strapped to a stretcher with lines in and no legs, an older woman who looked like she was going to sleep. I tried to awake her and continued to assess her carotid pulse. It was weak. I

tracked her apical pulse with my stethoscope until she was transported. It was in the 40s when she left. I don't know if she made it. She was in very bad shape when she was loaded up. I'd say that this was -- when I wrote this I was very -- I hadn't slept in a while so I don't know if she had no legs. I don't remember if she had no legs or not, but I wrote it so, I don't know, anyway. After that the situation was much more under control. The EMTs were steadily rolling out patients, patients were fixed with priority tags. The last man I saw had a bad arterial bleed, tourniquets on both thighs. The tent was not equipped with packed red blood cells as far as I know and so he had to wait until an ambulance became available. I looked around. The tent looked like a war zone. Gloves, gauze, clothing and blood covered the floor, pools and pools of blood. We threw down some Chucks pads to hide the gore. Across the tent there were marathon runners, lower priority people suffering from things like dehydration. A girl in her 20s suffering from cramps and a fluid imbalance was sitting in a wheelchair crying. It occurred to me that these people needed to talk. They had just witnessed a horrible thing. So I spent some time with her and then left the tent to get out of the way. I met outside of the tent with some of my fellow nursing students. We assembled as a group and set

off to find our other classmates from other zones. One of my classmates sent an email to everyone telling everyone to meet in medical tent B. We got there, we rallied and we went to the Boston Common to finalize a headcount. That was when I met up with my two professors and we left to go to her house afterwards to debrief. I'm just going to skip ahead a little bit. It was a beautiful day turned ugly. No one should see or smell these things or have to have their hands inside it. I do not regret being there, only guilty that I did not know more or that I could not help more. It was an inspiring horrible thing that strengthened my desire to learn more, to excel. Many of your fellow classmates are troubled by yesterday's events. Many were exposed to death. I have no doubt that each of you will provide any emotional support needed in these troubling times. To those affected students I would say this. What we must do as students is simple. We must succeed in our mission to become nurses. In horrible times when tragedy occurs it's the medical professionals like the heroes in tent A that can win the day, cheat death and help the innocent. In our profession we don't have weapons and we can't stop the bastards of this world, but we can fix people. That for one is a reason not only to live but to flourish. Please do not waver. We are all here for you.

Love, Spencer. So that was what I wrote right after it happened.

ILACQUA: Did you -- there's a couple of ways of asking this, but how long did it take you afterwards to sort of get back to normal? That was an insane week in Boston after the fact. I can't imagine being someone who was actually there and experiencing it and then [05:00] trying to go back to school two days later. What was that like?

GILFEATHER: It's all really blurry because I didn't sleep at all for like several days. I remember wearing sunglasses a lot indoors. I think one of my professors, who was actually there with us, she said to me, she said, "Are you hung over?" I said, "No, I'm not drinking. Just my eyes are, you know, photo sensitivity." I went to class, we all went to classes, and just kind of was trying to take it all in. I can remember, I mean I didn't really talk to anyone about it but it was good that in the following semester we had a psych rotation and in my psych rotation I was at the Brockton VA where I got to talk to a lot of guys that were diagnosed with PTSD. And I would never claim that I have PTSD but we've all had these symptoms of nightmares, insomnia, flashbacks and stuff, and crying for no reason. I mean I don't cry about anything and I do remember two distinct things. Like I mean one day it was like this

beautiful day, I was driving up Morrissey Boulevard and I just started crying and I wasn't even thinking about the marathon. I just like burst into tears and it was like what the hell is wrong with me, you know? That's probably the first time I ever mentioned that. But another time was when it was also a nice beautiful day, I was just walking around Castle Island and adjacent to Castle Island there's this big container shipyard where I guess they unload containers or whatever. It sounded like I guess they dropped a container or something, it was a really loud explosion noise. And what happened is the same thing that happened when I was driving. It was like, it felt like all the pores in my skin just opened up and I just started sweating like immediately and it was painful and it was this kind of like electric feeling of like fear. I don't know if it's like adrenaline. I don't know the pathophys of it but it was a really awful feeling and it was just like, you know, it takes your breath away. So the first few months were pretty awful. One of my classmates, she's actually I guess a semester ahead of me, she was like -- I think it was like two days after the bombing she just ran, and ran 13 miles. And I don't think she had ever run more than like maybe three ever in her life. It was all like how do you cope, you know, what do you do? one of the

things -- I mean I always -- I mean I've run some road races, like little races and stuff, and I was like maybe I need to start running. I think a lot of people in the community started running as like a coping strategy. So I started running for sure.

ILACQUA: I don't know if I'm skipping too far ahead, but you ran the 2014 Boston Marathon. Could you tell me about how you got to that point in deciding that you were going to run?

GILFEATHER: Yeah. Right after the bombing I think the first big race was the Run to Remember and it was a rainy day. I signed up for that pretty quickly and it was great because I mean the Run to Remember is dedicated to fallen policemen, like killed in the line of duty, and of course -- who's the MIT cop?

ILACQUA: Sean Collier.

GILFEATHER: Yes, Sean Collier, thank you. He was killed, so the Run to Remember was dedicated to him and there was a huge -- I mean the race swelled. I don't remember how many people signed up, but it was great. And so that was in May, a month later. I ran that and then it was like -- I think it was my friend told me that the BAA Half was coming up, so I ran that race. What I didn't mention before was so one of my classmates who wasn't a medical volunteer, she

was there as a spectator, she was right by the finish line -- or she down by the other... she might have been by Starbucks, but anyway she was wounded from shrapnel. And so [10:00] eventually through the One Fund and Boston Strong and these different support organizations and the BAA, they handed out some bibs to all the survivors and she was like, "Hey, I got two bibs, I'd like for you to run with me." And before that we weren't really -- before Marathon Monday we weren't really friends. We knew each other, we had something in common like we had both worked in restaurants to pay for school or whatever so we always talked about that stuff, but after the -- it was like she got it. She understood. We kind of had this silent understanding that yeah, like that was really messed up and I don't want to talk to people about it. We didn't want to talk to like support organizations or psychologists, psychiatrists, whatever. But anyway talking with her she was like, "I got these bibs, would you want to run with me?" I said of course. And then as the year progressed she was like, "I don't know." I mean I think she was having some trouble returning to Copley and it was pretty overwhelming for her, and understandably so. Eventually she was like, "I'm not going to run the race but here's my bib, my other friend is going to take the other bib and you

can run the race." So I had this like special waiver through the BAA to run the marathon, so I did. And I met her after the race off of Boylston. I met her at a restaurant near the family meeting area, so we met up afterwards and it was great. But she was very supportive and stuff the whole time. It was good. It felt really good to see Copley in a new light, for sure.

ILACQUA: That's excellent. We have kind of glossed over -- the first time that I met you was at an event leading up to this year's marathon. I think it was after the memorial event. But how did you approach all the memorialization and events like that that were coming up this past April?

GILFEATHER: The tribute I guess?

ILACQUA: Yeah.

GILFEATHER: Immediately after the bombing I will say that the University of Massachusetts Boston was very supportive, or they put forth a very good effort. I don't think anyone really knows how to like deal with anyone who's like been exposed to trauma or whatever. So it was like Nurses' Week after the bombing and it was like oh, we want to highlight the nursing students that dadada. And we didn't want anything to do with it. We didn't want to be part of any type of, you know, the media was like -- I mean it was like MSNBC, everyone was just like after everyone to try to get

on TV and -- I mean understandably I guess the public wants an answer, but I didn't really want any part of it. So at first when I heard that they were going to do these, you know, like the tribute it seemed -- I mean I don't know, maybe this sounds like jaded or cynical but I was like it seemed like kind of like grandstanding that you would have all of a sudden have these like political figures at these events or whatever. But then it was like, after talking to my friend that was injured, it was like you know, this is probably a really good thing. And you can't say that everyone in Boston hasn't been incredibly supportive for everyone. I mean I wasn't even injured. I mean I just did a few things and it was just like it was great. It was really like all of the -- the tribute in particular was very well executed. It was great to see the survivors, you know, take the city back. That's what we needed to do is take it back.

ILACQUA: Is that the tribute that was on April 15th this year?

GILFEATHER: Yeah, that was the one year anniversary. At the six month, I don't know, anniversary sounds like kind of a weird word, but six months after the bombing I went back to Copley for the first time. I felt like I just needed to go down there because I didn't even want to go anywhere in that area. And nothing -- there wasn't anything going on.

And so like me and my girlfriend, we brought down some candles and like put them in front of [15:00] Marathon Sports. And so I was really surprised that there was like something that happened at the one year. I was surprised because nothing had really happened at six months. Then I was like well, maybe everyone's trying to forget, but I don't know. It was good.

ILACQUA: And you had -- and you don't have to read it if you don't want to, but you had mentioned that you had written something else around the six month. Do I remember that correctly?

GILFEATHER: Yeah.

ILACQUA: Which, yeah, like I said, if -- were you reflecting on it, was that part of the being able to go back and... ?

GILFEATHER: Six months was really tough. I mean I was a little rattled going back there. Because there's like, in front of Marathon Sports where the glass like on the, I guess the adjacent property, the glass had been broken and part of the building was like boarded up and stuff. Going back to Copley it was like so weird because now there were taxicabs and people walking around and the tables were gone. These are the tables that were like flipped over and the orange netting or whatever was gone. It was good but it was like oh, like everyone's forgotten or something. It

was like there was no sign that anything had ever happened. Which is good. I mean it's good that we're moving forward and we don't dwell on these like horrible things. And so at that point, at six months, it was like frustrating. I was like kind of frustrated that part of -- it's not like - a memorial's not important because like you remember the terrible thing that happened, but the fact that it happened and we're moving forward was what was important to me then. It seems like the tribute was a great way to move forward. At that time, you know. It was like I was just running and I was like a chicken without my head cut off, without a head, you know. Yeah, in this thing I wrote what was really cool was down by the Arlington Street Church, which is kind of down Boylston right before you hit the Public Garden, people had sent all these prayer flags in. They were like these little scraps of fabric and people had written handwritten notes on these little flags and they'd tie them to the fence. And so for a while, I don't know, a large section of the block, there was just a fence with all these prayer flags. And that was pretty cool. And I think they took them down and maybe put them somewhere. I don't know if they're in an archive or something, but at that time that was like the only thing that kind of was evidence that anything had ever happened. So...

ILACQUA: That's interesting. I'm not sure how quickly they took down the public memorial last year. And that all ended up at the Boston city archives and then eventually a group came together and put together an exhibit at the Boston Public Library. But I'm not sure what the permanent memorial plan is at this point. And I hadn't realized that it was so gone, only six months after the fact.

GILFEATHER: It was, and then later, yeah, the BPL exhibit was up. And then it was like some time during the winter, I don't know if you saw it, I don't even know if it was commissioned or it was just a private artist, but there was the ice sculpture right in the Copley Square. There was like this big -- I took a picture of it. Someone made this big like BAA logo, it said 2013 with the horse or -- I'm sorry, unicorn on the logo. That was pretty cool and I was like ah, like I -- it melted but I think eventually there will probably be something there. I'm sure someone will put something there.

ILACQUA: Some day. So I think that we've touched upon most of the points between last year and this year and I'm curious, you had said in your first letter that your resolve in being a nurse and training to be a nurse had not changed.

GILFEATHER: That's correct.

ILACQUA: And so you're still on the nursing path?

GILFEATHER: Absolutely.

ILACQUA: Can you tell me what your plans are? Do you think
that the marathon -- it strengthened you essentially.

GILFEATHER: Absolutely.

ILACQUA: Could you talk about that a little bit?

GILFEATHER: Yeah. [20:00] It's like with terrorism, and I
don't want to get into like the politics and all that stuff,
but terrorism is like designed to instill fear so that you
change your way of living life. In a community sense or in
an individual sense you change your pattern, you change
your original plan, you change the way you ride the T or if
you lock your door at night, things like that. And it
became kind of like this defiant thing, like no, I'm not
going to change my way of life. And the original goal of
this whole nursing thing was to help people and the only
way that I can help people is by continuing through the
program and becoming the best nurse that I could possibly
be so that in any type of -- you know, will I ever see this
terrible tragedy? I hope not, but if I do I want to be
trained. I want to be the expert that everyone relies on.
I don't want to be confounded in a stressful situation. I
want to be able to react, do the right thing. Obviously it
isn't always possible but... so, yeah, it's definitely

strengthened my resolve to be a nurse. I want to work in an ICU, maybe do some trauma. We'll see.

ILACQUA: And so, like I said, essentially we touched upon every question on my list of questions. Are there any other stories that we didn't get to that you wanted to share, any parting words that you have?

GILFEATHER: I don't know. I can say that I ended up -- the husband and wife couple that I mentioned, I ended up meeting them after the tribute at the reception and talking to them and have been in touch with them a little bit. And it was like -- it was very inspiring to see people that are now amputees move forward. I don't know, everyone says like Boston strong and it's kind of like become this very clichéd thing, but the community is stronger now and everyone is moving forward, whether or not they have two legs or not. And I think that's kind of like the most telling. Like what we can learn from all of this is that we take something bad and we make it good. I guess that's it.

ILACQUA: That's --

GILFEATHER: Try to move forward.

ILACQUA: That's a powerful statement to end on. So thank you very much for talking with me today. And this will conclude our interview. I'm just going to hit stop.

GILFEATHER: Thanks.

[23:25]

END OF AUDIO FILE