**Kathie Simon Frank**

**Narrator**

**Amy Sullivan**

**Interviewer**

**March 15, 2017**

**At the Home of Amy Sullivan**

**Minneapolis Minnesota**

Kathie Simon Frank -KSF

Amy Sullivan -AS

**AS:** This is Amy Sullivan, it’s a beautiful sunny morning, March 15th. We’re at my house in Minneapolis interviewing Kathie Simon Frank. Kathie do you give me permission to record this interview?

**KSF:** Yes, I give you permission Amy.

**AS:** Thank you. Let’s just get started with your early life. Whatever you feel like sharing.

**KSF:** My parents, my mom was twenty-nine and my dad was twenty-six when they got married. I was born when my mom was twenty-nine in 1942 in Berkeley, California. My dad was working on a project; he’d gotten his PhD. My mom had a master’s in political science and I don’t know if she was working. We lived in Berkeley. My grandmother lived in San Andrea which was by Oakland south of Berkeley. My mom had family in that area. Six months after I was born my dad got a job at Illinois Institute of Technology and they moved to Chicago.

**AS:** Was he in science?

**KSF:** That’s a hard question to answer. He has his PhD in political science but he was at the University of Chicago and he never really considered himself a political scientist. He worked in city management and things like that. He kind of worked in political science but was really interested in problem solving and decision making kinds of things. Eventually in his long life, he lived to be eighty-six, he taught first in a graduate school of Industrial Education at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh where I moved when I was seven. Then he had an appointment jointly in psychology because he was doing cognitive psychology and computer science. He did a lot of work with the early creation of artificial intelligence. You can look him up his name is Herbert Simon.

He played a really big part in my life because my mom, and this is relevant, was really wanting a boy. She was the oldest of two girls and was very close with her younger sister. She’d grown up in the Bay Area. She wanted a boy she had decided. I wasn’t a boy. She was quite disappointed actually which I learned because there was a letter in my baby book which she had written to my great aunt, her aunt, it said that. After her initial disappointment with not having a boy...Then my next sibling is a brother named Peter. Exactly two years younger and then exactly two years after that my sister Barbara was born. It was always clear to me that Peter was favored because he was the boy my mom wanted. My sister was favored because she had red hair like my mom. Beautiful, beautiful bright orange hair, which of course she hated. My mom loved it because it was kind of like her hair. I was close to my dad. I always had quite a troubled relationship with my mother. She was extraordinarily critical and she was a mom who liked things to go the way she wanted them to go. She was a very positive woman, very creative, very talented. She did a lot of sewing and tailoring and was highly accomplished in what she did. She did not work when I was growing up. In those days people didn’t. Did I say I was born in 1942?

**AS:** Yes.

**KSF:** It was always very difficult but my father always came to my defense. I could always count on him. My brother as it turns out had some kind of issues. I’m not sure if that was ever diagnosed as a child but he was extraordinarily defiant and really difficult, very, very bright. Like he had read millions of classics by the time he was ten years old which I hadn’t even heard of. He also was extraordinarily jealous of me because I got along really well in school and didn’t have these issues. We did not ever really have a good relationship because he had decided that our chemistry was wrong or something. I could never figure it out so I could never do anything to make it better. In that sense our home was quite dysfunctional because Peter was always an issue. Like in families where there is an alcoholic that person becomes the focus. Peter was the focus. My parents did the best they could. My brother as he got older, I was his target. He beat me up a lot. He was a lot bigger than me. I was often in physical danger. He wouldn’t beat me pulpy but I always had bruises on my shins from being kicked and on my arms from being punched.

Christmas Eve was always a horrible time in our house because Peter with the increased sort of tension of everybody focusing on Christmas Peter would act out more and more. There was always a crisis on Christmas Eve. I’ve gotten over now but it took me a number of my adult years to not be really apprehensive on Christmas Eve that something horrible was going to happen. My sister was four years younger. The fact that my mother was sort of in the middle trying to legislate relationships, always triangulating, made it really difficult for me to ever really get to know my younger sister. It wasn’t until my parents were in their, I guess my mom was just turning eighty, and they decided to give up their big old house in Pittsburgh where they had lived for fifty-some years. My sister and I went to help them clean out their house and move to their condo. We were left together a lot and we just had the most wonderful time. We found out how much alike we are. We could just laugh about things. It was wonderful and we’ve continued to be close. That was in the mid-90s. My brother, I had little touches of him.

Let me jump back. When he was twelve or so, maybe eleven, physically he was getting bigger and he being his violent self and taking it out on me. My parents would try the best they could to keep him from hurting me. They finally decided they were getting some psychological help for him and for themselves. They eventually decided that Peter should go to a residential treatment program. He went to Connecticut from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Madison, Connecticut to a treatment school where he was all year round except for four two week periods spread evenly throughout the year. He got very sophisticated. He would come home at the age of sixteen or seventeen smoking a pipe and wearing a tweed jacket. He was tall, way taller than I was. He had these kind of sophisticated airs. I hardly ever saw him. These visits home were not particularly easy because instead of being physically violent towards me he was verbally violent towards me. They still weren’t pleasant and I couldn’t really develop a relationship with him. At least I wasn’t getting beat up anymore.

Then he disappeared. He ran away from the school when he was about seventeen. No one knew where he was. He was just gone. That was a difficult year for my dad. I remember there was some other stuff going on in my dad’s life at the time. I remember him sitting in a chair. Even though Peter wasn’t present he was still a huge presence in our lives by being absent. As an adult learning what was going on at the time when he finally reappeared. He actually showed up in Malibu, California having gone for help to some friends that were many yearlong friends of my parents whom we had grown up. We knew their family very well. Peter had found them. They lived in Los Angeles. They befriended him and notified my parents. Eventually Peter went back to school for another year. There really wasn’t a time in my life for any extended period where my relationship with Peter was very good. I considered him the addict in my family. Although my dad in some ways had an addiction to work. A workaholic. It was very clear that his order of preference of his focus was his work, my mom, and then us. More me because to talk to my brother and sister now they don’t really know my dad the way I knew him.

Our views of our parents are totally opposite. They’ll talk about my mom and I’ll think to myself, “I don’t know who they’re talking about.” They don’t know my dad the same way I do which is interesting. We were all growing up in the same house. I remember once when my dad took me to visit a couple of colleges when I was in high school. I said once to my dad, “How come Peter is so different from me? From us? We were all raised in the same family.” My dad said, “As parents you have one chance with each child and you do the best you can.” That I thought was great wisdom. That stuck with me. You do the best you can. As a parent I’ve realized it isn’t just what I do with my children it’s who they are as well. I have some influence but they color where I start.

That’s addiction in our family. My parents hardly drank at all. They didn’t really say anything about it. They’d have parties and they’d pour a little bit of wine. I don’t know maybe there was a couple bottles of alcohol in our house. My dad I don’t remember ever seeing him drink. My mom would have beer. My mom smoked also. Actually both my parents but my mom really smoked. My mom developed sort of an addict’s way of dealing with it. She would smoke a cigarette under the vent in the kitchen with the fan going so all the smoke was taken out of the house. This was before smoking bans. She would empty the ash tray in the garbage outside and come back in and wash the ashtray.

**AS:** She didn’t want the house to smell like it.

**KSF:** I don’t think she wanted any evidence that she had been smoking. It was kind of the denial that she was smoking even though she was smoking. A friend of hers died of emphysema. That was my mom’s wakeup call. This was way after I was out of the house. When she gave up smoking she’d been an incredible letter writer. She would write a letter to the family once a week. She would send copies of that with little notes attached to each individual. These went to my great-aunts who she was very close to and her mom and me. Barbara was still living there. I don’t know exactly who all was getting them. Her mom and her sister and me for sure. When she stopped smoking that was a trigger for her. She apparently would sit down to type at the typewriter and then light up a cigarette. When she wasn’t lighting up a cigarette she wasn’t writing these letters. That was a loss. You think that things change when somebody gives up an addiction.

My mom sort of drank beer in the same way. She’d have a beer before dinner and then she’d wash the glass and put the glass away. It was like there was no evidence that this was happening. She really wasn’t an alcoholic. She had one beer. I don’t ever remember seeing my parents drunk or even high on anything. My dad very disciplined person. He developed an ear ache. He had been smoking a pipe and occasionally a cigar. He one day decided that the ear ache had something to do with, after seeing doctors, the ear ache had something to do with smoking. He gave up smoking and his ear ache went away. He never smoked again. That was years before my mom stopped. That’s kind of our history of addiction. My sister doesn’t have any addiction that I’m aware of. Mine if I can identify it is probably chocolate and paper.

**AS:** You mean like fancy paper?

**KSF:** Like accumulations of paper. It’s hard for me to get rid of paper. If those are two things I really don’t have a lot of control over and continue to be issues in my life.

**AS:** Talk about your early adult life and parenting and your kids.

**KSF:** In terms of growing up and the sort of people in our house. We lived in a big old house in Pittsburgh where we moved when I was seven. My brother was away at school. There was just me and my little sister. When I graduated from high school my mom and dad went to Santa Monica. My dad worked summers for the Ram corporation. He went out that year and Barbara went with them as she was like a sophomore. Really dreaded going back to school, the school I had gone to in Pittsburgh. It was a public high school but in our neighborhood, a good school. For some reason Barbara dreaded it. She ended up going to a private school in Lenox, Massachusetts.

I kind of in a certain way grew up as an only child with this noise from my brother whether he was at home or away at school and with this little sister who was totally annoying. Little sisters are always annoying. Once I graduated from high school when I went home often she wasn’t even there because she was off at school and Peter was off at school or wherever he was once he graduated from high school. That was kind of my upbringing. My grandparents lived one grandma in California and one grandma in Milwaukee. We didn’t see them more than two or three times a year because we had to travel. We didn’t have any extended family in Pittsburgh.

I do know, this is relevant, that I was really aware in high school that our family was somewhat different. We were an academic family; we were Jewish but not really practicing Jews. We lived in a Jewish neighborhood and so the rule was that I could stay home from school on Jewish holidays if I went to synagogue but I couldn’t if I didn’t. My Jewish friends were all staying home from school and not going to synagogue. There was always this kind of identity thing that was always a little weird. I always identified as a Jew but we weren’t practicing until in high school I did go to Sunday School. From sixth grade on I went to a Sunday School at the temple that was near us. My parents really didn’t participate in that community very much at all. We were different in that way. My parent’s values were; my parents were very green before that was even a known entity. They were very, very interested in nature and the outdoors. My mother was a recycler before that was an issue. She cooked really healthy meals, a lot of wheat germ and natural grains and vegetables and not much sugar. That was sort of a point of teasing. My mother had what we called a cookbook lady which was *Adele Davis: Cook Right to Eat Fit.* I hated her because even in the chocolate chip cookies which my mother would make had to throw wheat germ in it. That was kind of my parents. We were different in that way and in terms of how we spent our money. I was kind of challenged a lot by friends, the friends I went to school with, about why we were doing this differently. My parents were devoted, not devoted, they really truly deeply believed, they had values that they really stood by. I understood those values and respected them as well and adopted them. It was awkward to kind of defend myself. On the other hand, I felt I had the backing of my parents. In that sense I kind of felt different but I did have a good group of friends that we were very close, did a lot of things together. I’ve remained friends with many of them. We’re not in touch a lot but when we get together it’s like there’s no time that’s passed. They’re really good friends.

Then I went to the University of Michigan because my dad being a college professor. My dad was a college professor and taught lots of graduate students. He had really small groups of students that he knew and they were all doing interesting research and they were often at our house. I would hear them talking. I went to the University of Michigan because I couldn’t imagine not going to a big school. I had been at a big high school my high school class was almost six hundred people, students in my class. I went to the University of Michigan, what a shock because here I was one of a thousand in my freshman psychology class and one of five hundred in my freshman geology class. I hated it. I really hated it. I couldn’t understand what this college experience was. It wasn’t what I knew of as college. I did okay my first year.

At the end of that year I went to Santa Monica because that’s where my parents were that year. During the summer I spent a lot of time, I play the piano, I spent a lot of time walking down the street to Santa Monica Community College where I could find a practice room. My parents didn’t have a piano in their rental that they had in Santa Monica. I would go over there every day and play piano. I spent a lot of time on the beach. I really didn’t know anybody there. At the end of the summer my mother sort of tentatively said, “So what are you planning for this fall?” When I came home in June I wasn’t going to go back to Michigan but I hadn’t done anything to do anything differently over the summer. I said, “I’m going back to Michigan.” I had decided I would just take courses that I wanted to take. I was interested in communication and in language and psychology. I thought I could take some sociology and things like that and I wouldn’t pay any attention to what the graduation requirements were. I would just take classes I liked and that would be more like what my dad was doing with his graduate students. In a certain sense I did that. I paid attention to what I would have had to take if I were a sociology major for example or a linguistic major which were the two things I had thought of. I had a really good year.

I’d had a kind of difficult roommate arrangement when I was a freshman. It worked out fine and I made lots of friends but not with my roommate who had asked for a Christian roommate from the Midwest and she got a Jewish roommate from the East. That really made her very upset. I didn’t care. I didn’t care who I had as a roommate. Being a Jew was a little bit unusual. A lot of the people that I got to be friends with, one girl I remember from central Michigan told me I was the first Jewish person she ever knew. They found out maybe from me that Jewish people are like everybody else. My friend Mary Barrel who told me that, it was a compliment. She hadn’t known any Jewish people but she was accepting me. It wasn’t a big deal but the next year I had a room by myself in the same dorm. You eliminated that stress. I continued to have good friends.

At the end of the year a friend of mine suggested that maybe I wanted to come to New York for the summer. She knew someone who was looking for an assistant in a New York State Training School for girls. It kind of fit in with my interests. I applied and was accepted. My parents were okay with that. I went home briefly and then I went to New York and lived in this residence in the Lower East Side. I was an assistant to the girls who were in that program. They were sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, pretty much they were runaways. They were difficult kids because they kept running away but their home situations were really, really difficult and that’s why they were running away. I’m totally unaware, I don’t think there were any drugs involved. This was 1962. There was pot on campus at Michigan. I was aware of that. Things were really tame. A few of my friends would spend the night with their boyfriends but life seemed, compared to now, so uncomplicated, so simple, so easy. These girls just needed a lot of love and a lot of attention. Some of them were in school and some of them had jobs. They lived at the residence and they had rules. One of my jobs was, we had sort of a student council and I was the leader of the student council. I did some activities with them. I was responsible for being there to sign them in and sign them out in the evening. I met a group of friends at Columbia through the friend who connected me to this job. I spent a lot of my free time, this job was probably ten to twenty hours a week.

**AS:** Was it just a summer job?

**KSF:** It was just a summer job. Then because I had extra time I also got a job in the women’s prison that was down in Greenwich Village. I was doing research for someone who was doing a research project on recidivism. I was privy to the records of the women in jail, the idea being that if we checked out certain factors, like stability factors, how long had they lived in the previous residence, had they had a job. A lot of these women had been picked up for prostitution and things like that. These were not violent crimes. I don’t remember that there were drug related crimes either. If they had a good rating on their stability measure then they were released on their own recognizance from this jail, awaiting trial. We would follow up and make sure that they showed up. If they didn’t there were big consequences to pay. It was a big study, national. I used to know the name but I can’t remember now. I worked for them collecting data and making phone calls to previous landlords and things.

**AS:** To see how they had turned out?

**KSF:** To find out so that we could decide whether they could be released on their own. I did those two jobs during the summer. I was nineteen years old around New York. I developed these friendships with the three women that I knew from Michigan who were in New York for the summer. Then a group of boys from Columbia who were our same age. We hung out with them at their apartment around Columbia on the Upper West Side. I fell in love with one of them.

When I went back to Michigan that fall I made plans to then transfer. I applied to the New School for Social Research. From what I could see it looked a lot more like what I thought of as college based on what I knew from my dad. I transferred in February after the end of fall semester I transferred to the New School. I finished up there in June of ‘64 which is when I would have graduated. I went to summer school one summer at Barnard. That worked out. Very shortly after I moved back to New York I broke up with that boyfriend and met someone else, David Frank, who is Rachel’s dad and Matthew’s dad. We graduated and basically went to Pittsburgh and the next week got married. I had just had my twenty second birthday. We were on our way to graduate school at Berkeley.

**AS:** You both were going to grad school. What was your undergrad in?

**KSF:** My undergrad turned out to be in Sociology with kind of a minor in linguistics. The New School didn’t really have a lot of linguistics. It was at the New School; I’d been interested in pottery for a long time. I’d also sewn all my life and made all my clothes in high school. I had lots of things that I loved to do with my hands. We went to Berkeley and I had applied to the graduate school in linguistics and was admitted. I had to take Latin and some other baby course my first semester. When we first got out there it was June of ‘64. I found that in the student union which was a few blocks from where we lived there was a wonderful pottery studio. I started doing pottery over the summer and stopped when school started.

By that time, we are already very much involved in politics. We were demonstrating against unfair hiring practices at Jack London Square in Oakland and in San Francisco. Then things developed and it’s a whole other long story which you may know parts of. The whole issue of whether or not we could solicit to get other people to come demonstrate with us on campus. There were some very conservative people on the Board of Regents at Cal. They made a big stink about our doing anything political on campus, it being a state school. That escalated and became the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley. All of that was going on and I was now transitioning from this wonderful summer of doing pottery to graduate school and baby Latin and I decided I wasn’t into school, I was into politics and pottery. I dropped out fairly shortly after school started to do that. My husband and I were very involved in the Free Speech Movement, not in the administrative part of it. Not in the leadership part of it but very dedicated to the cause. We were arrested with the other six hundred in Sproul Hall in the administration building. Then in January when we were having various meetings with our lawyers I got involved with helping out in the office of the lawyers.

Over the next six months or so was sharing a job, unpaid, with another person. We were basically working for the lawyers focused on this case. We were doing some fundraising, writing a newsletter, keeping in touch with all the defendants, collecting things that needed to be collected, carrying things over to the courthouse. Those kinds of things. It was really a kind of gopher job. When Albert left, he was the person I was sharing the job with, I took that over and I was ultimately paid one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month to do this job. We eventually closed that little tiny office and moved the file cabinet into my kitchen. I did that job as long as I was in Berkeley. David continued his PhD and finished in ‘67. We were there for three years. Did I say he was in mathematics?

**AS:** No you didn’t.

**KSF:** I was doing that job and continuing to do pottery. Then I was pregnant with Matthew. At the point where David got a postdoc at Oxford University. We left Berkeley in May or June of ‘67 and went to England. Matthew was born in August. We were there for a year. We came back in August of ‘68. We did a lot of travelling in Europe and that sort of thing. For me it was a really, really good year. I was home with Matthew and not having to do anything in particular but have lots of interests and read a lot and got to know some other new moms. I put Matthew in a backpack on my back and hiked around the footpaths and went to little neighboring villages with churches and stuff. Then David and I travelled a lot with Mathew too.

Then he got a job as an instructor at MIT. We came back to Boston. We moved to Boston. Shortly after that, Matthew was one when we moved back. Then not too long after that I got pregnant with Rachel. She was born the next summer in July of '69. In that time, I knew that when we were in England that David wasn't really happen. He's always been very quiet, very introspective. When we came back to Boston I'm not sure what his process was but he eventually decided that he didn't want to be married. I was pregnant. That was a little complicated. We had an almost two-year-old. Matthew turned two about a month after Rachel was born. David was actually moved out and was gone a good portion of that year. From probably Christmas until Rachel was born. We saw each other. He kind of came and went. I wanted to be married to him still. He was trying to sort whatever it was in his mind, trying to sort that out.

**AS:** And you're pregnant and you have a toddler by yourself?

**KSF:** Yes. Then Rachel was born in July and David did move back in for a little while during the summer and helped me with Rachel and Matthew. Then he knew his instructorship was coming to an end and he had to find a job. He started applying for jobs. I didn't know what was happening. I would see him but I didn't see him all the time. He'd come over to spend time with Matthew, particularly Matthew. He was interested in Rachel too but less so because she was so tiny. Eventually I was thinking, "Find a nursery school for Matthew, he's going to be three. What am I going to do with my life? Am I going to keep this?" We lived in the bottom of a duplex. "Are we going to stay here? Am I going to move somewhere else?" I had to think about myself and these children. David wasn't in our lives really. He was looking for a job somewhere else. We talked a little bit about that but one day he showed up and he had gotten an offer from Stony Brook. I think I went with him on one of these job interviews. I went with him to Penn State and thought, "I don't want to live in this kind of place. There's no chance for me. All these academic wives, everyone wants to do their professional thing and too much competition." The one other option was the University of Utah. I wasn't going to live in Salt Lake City. That was later, those were later. He applied to Stony Brook and he got this job. He invited me to come down to visit with him to look at it. I did. I thought I was just coming along. We were on friendly terms.

**AS:** You weren't divorced?

**KSF:** We weren't divorced. We had no arrangements. We were still married but we were living in two different places. He was very clear that he was doing his thing and I was being a mom to these babies. I had a job doing some data analysis for some little company. I'd get a pile of papers and go through them and process the data and take it back to them. All of a sudden one day he said something that sounded like he was assuming that I was going to come with him. I said, "I don't know about this." There was a several week period where he was surprised that I wasn't just falling into place and I was surprised that he was making all these assumptions. We did. We did move with him and bought a house and got there. We were there for five years. He didn't get tenure which was disappointing to him and me. That's when he had these offers from Penn State and University of Utah.

**AS:** Did you live together during those five years?

**KSF:** We did. It wasn't easy because he had these big swings of moods and he was clearly not totally happy with his life. We had this semblance of a life together. I wasn't unhappy. I just was kind of watchful. Years later, skip to when Rachel's fifteen, a therapist asked me if my first husband was an alcoholic. I said no. In fact, he like my dad hardly ever drank. However, unlike my dad, he when he drank got really, really mean. That, I've heard, is a sign not of an addiction necessarily but of an alcoholic. This huge mood swing. He didn't drink very often to his credit. He had these huge swings of moods. You could never, I'd always feel like I was walking on eggshells. I never knew what I could say or couldn't say because I'd always get this verbal attack. In some ways it kind of replicated my mom's criticism of me and my brother's verbal abuse of me. It was something I was used to. I hated it. I always said, I'm pointing right behind my eye, I felt there were tears right here. That I was always on the verge of crying because I really hated the way I was being treated. I realized also that he was the only person that treated me like that outside of my mom and my brother. I came to that realization way later, after David and I were separated. I wasn't happy but I had so much good in my life. I had good friends. I had things I was liking doing. I loved my children. I loved being a mom. I loved Stony Brook. Here I was on the water. We didn't live right on the water but a mile away. I could be at the water all the time. Those things were positives, way strong positives. I had some really good friends that I made at Stony Brook.

**AS:** You were there five years.

**KSF:** We were there five years. That's when David was applying for jobs for the future. I wasn't going to go to Salt Lake City and I wasn't going to go to Penn State. He got an offer from University of Minnesota. I agreed to come here. It looked like a good place. In my mind it was, "I can have a life there whatever happens with David." I don't think I ever said that but I knew deep down that here were the elements, I would be in a big city with lots and lots of opportunities and that I could thrive. We did move here. Within a year we bought a house. Then a few months later David announced, he had a trip to the East Coast and he came back and there was some weird stuff that I was picking up on. He eventually said that he had reconnected with somebody that he had known in college and he was going to be moving out the next day. Instead of giving him free reign this time like I did when we were in Cambridge, I said to him, "Okay. Where's the key?" He was a little surprised that I was setting that boundary. I'd learned a lot over the years. I wasn't going to do that again. I was quite clear that he needed to do what he needed to do for his life and I needed to do what I needed to do for my life.

We moved here in 1975, to Minneapolis. This was probably '77. Matthew was ten and Rachel was eight. David moved out. We got divorced two years later, two and a half years later. David was always, he was attentive to the kids but he didn't spend a lot of time with them. I don't know how my kids really feel about their dads. They learned once we were living in separate houses, I was aware that they learned to deal with him perfectly well. He had some ideas that were the kind of things you rolled your eyes at. The kids kind of rolled their eyes at those things. I never spoke ill of him. I didn't want to have that be a battleground for them. I learned to set some really strong boundaries. Life was not easy but I felt I had a really strong base of friends.

Rachel was the younger of two by two years. Matthew was kind of shy which I guess, I'm the oldest and I was pretty outgoing. I kind of thought Matthew was but when push came to shove and you'd ask Matthew if he'd go to a neighbor he wouldn't do it but Rachel would. Being two years younger. I was always sort of surprised about that. She always had a sort of presence about herself. They both had very clearly defined personalities. They were obviously quite different people. Neither of them were very difficult. Rachel had spent a lot of her really early childhood being very attached to me. She cried all the time if I wasn't there which was a kind of pressure. I don't know whether that, we never knew what was causing that. She was physically fine. I had her tested and stuff. She grew out of it when she was two and could talk. She just kind of climbed down off of me and was her own person. Matthew was always more quiet. You couldn't read him as well as Rachel.

Then in 1980 in the end of the year we had our final divorce hearing. On that very day I went out to dinner with some friends of mine. I had been dating a little bit. I didn't feel like I needed to be dating. A lot of the dating was very boring. I had been introduced by a friend of mine who knew me and her boyfriend knew Richard. Months and months before they had both said that we should meet. We couldn't find a time to do that. Judith and Fred couldn't. Finally, they were both in town at the same time. We were invited for a dinner to Judith and Fred's house. I took my kids to a babysitter who's going to keep them overnight. I went to this party and met this man. The other people at the party were department of engineering people. Richard's department. I didn't know any of them. The only person I knew there was Judith. During the evening I was aware that when somebody made a joke or something instead of turning to Judith to laugh I would turn to Richard. At the end of the evening I felt fine. He seemed very nice and I wouldn't mind seeing him again. I didn't give him my phone number. I figured he could find out how to get in touch with me. I knew he was going to be travelling on business. Then a couple weeks later I went out to dinner to celebrate or to have some dinner with some friends. It happened it was the night of the end of my divorce. I'd been in court.

**AS:** It's okay to celebrate your divorce.

**KSF:** I was really glad to celebrate it by this time. I had said to my friends on the way home, they were driving, I said to them I'd met this man at a party and I wouldn't mind if he called again but I hadn't heard from him. I got home and he called me and invited me on a date. That was in early December. We went out on that date. We saw each other at Christmas. We started seeing a lot of each other. He was travelling for a committee he was on. He was gone in January. By the end of January, we were engaged to be married. The only real complication was I had Matthew and Rachel who were by this time nine and eleven or ten and twelve. Richard had three daughters who were twelve and a half, fourteen and a half, and sixteen and a half. How old were the kids? They must have been by this time, eleven and thirteen. Susan was thirteen and a half. She's a half year older than Matthew. And fifteen and seventeen. At the end of the summer, their mother was very much in their lives. At the end of the summer Richard and I got married in August of 1981. We had these five teenagers.

We had a schedule where the kids spent half the time with David and half the time with me. We had worked that out. It worked most of the time. David would get a little frantic from time to time and would just say he couldn't handle it. I'd take the kids. For the most part that worked. The girls had been with their mom about half time. Their mother was livid about me even though I had nothing to do with their divorce. They were already divorced when I met Richard. She decided that I had broken up their marriage not knowing anything about me. I'm sure Richard told her we were going to get married. They had to talk to each other when the kids were going back and forth. That set up a really bad tone for us because Susan, especially Karen and Susan the two younger ones were indoctrinated by their mother that I was a horrible homewrecker. They would spend a week with her and they'd come back to us. It would take us a half of week to get that calmed down a little bit, it never got sorted out until way later. Then Richard and I figured out we could have a schedule where we were with my kids alone one week and his kids alone the next week and the third week we would have by ourselves. The kids were all together for a week, my kids alone, his kids alone, we were alone for a week. We worked this schedule out. People were kind of coming and going a lot of the time.

Rachel was a teenager and I don't remember that she was so utterly horrible to me. She had a couple friends that we really didn't like. She disappeared a few times. I don't remember exactly what ages. She was around fifteen. She would not come home at night when she was supposed to. I knew there was a lot of manipulation happening. What I did was pick up the phone and call the parents of these kids she was hanging out with. I didn't know any of them. All of them had gone to different schools in high school. I called a meeting. I guess that when I’m anxious about something I want to get together with people and solve the problem. I invited these parents over to my house, I don’t know what they thought of me. They all seemed willing to come. We had dessert and Rachel and her friend Nina were totally upside down upset at what were we going to talk about. I said we weren’t going to talk about them we were going to talk about what kind of rules we had in our houses and who did what and did kids get allowance.

**AS:** You’re just going to get on the same page.

**KSF:** We weren’t going to blow their cover. Not talk about them. We were going to talk about us and how we were trying to run a home and a family. I said to Rachel and Nina, “You can come back and have dessert with us afterwards but you’re not here for this part of our meeting.” It was really productive. We really did talk about it. We went around the circle. Like eight pairs of parents, something like that. It was this little group that was running together. Yes, everybody had to be home for dinner. Yes, everybody got allowance and some got allowance for doing chores and some got allowance just because. Were their restrictions on how they used it? What time did people have to be in? What was their curfew? Did that vary by school night versus weekends? All that stuff. How that helped me was later when things were really crazy, I could stand in my kitchen and laugh because I knew that whatever was going on in my house was going on in these eight other houses in the Twin Cities. That didn’t solve the problem but it sure made me feel better. It wasn’t just Richard’s and my divorce’s from our previous spouses. We had a teenage girl. They had teenage girls and boys.

Rachel would say as she walked out the door to school, “I won’t be home until tomorrow morning because I’m going to spend it at Elsie’s house overnight.” I’d say, “Who’s Elsie?” Never having heard from her about her before. “No you’re not.” It helped me to set some rules, boundaries about what was appropriate behavior and what wasn’t. Meanwhile what was going on in David Frank’s house was he didn’t know how to stand up to any of this. She would say, “I’m moving out.” He would call me up. I would say, “No she’s not. We’ve already decided you’re eighteen or you’re graduated from high school before you can live on your own. It’s clear to me.” I was quivering inside too. It wasn’t hard for me. I’d get back to my parent’s values. I felt like if it seemed right to me and it was respectful to other people and not hurting anybody that it was okay to be really strong and stand up to those kinds of rules.

Besides that, my kids probably would say we had rules, they were based on let’s be respectful to each other, let’s be considerate and thoughtful, let’s live with good values. Matthew and Rachel will both tell you that I was worried about them. I’m happy to be accused of being worried. I’d rather do that than just let you go to the winds. That didn’t work out too well. Matthew was a little rebellious. Rachel in the scheme of things was probably not as rebellious as a lot of kids. Rebellious enough. I had to call the police a couple times. We went down and got her out of Uptown, that mall of Calhoun Square. We found her and brought her home.

**AS:** This is in the 80s?

**KSF:** Yes. People were buying alcohol for minors which I guess they still do. Worse maybe they’re buying heroin for minors now. She hung out at Uptown a lot. In there is another whole history, we acquired a foster daughter. It was someone Rachel knew slightly who came and spent a night at our house and the next day went home and found that her mother had moved overnight and was gone. Jennifer came back and lived at our house for the next year and a half. We had custody of her. That’s a whole other story. Jennifer was part of that group too. I had two kids, Rachel and Jennifer, who were dressing punk and going to Uptown whenever. They had to be home at certain times and if they didn’t there were consequences. I was also taking a couple of courses in youth studies at the time and working full time.

**AS:** Where were you working?

**KSF:** I was working at the University of Minnesota in the Sociology Department as the coordinator of advising in Student Services. This is where I worked for twenty-two years. I was working with college students. I had watched Karen and Susan and Helen grow up and they had their own ways of rebelling. In our house those rebellions were really minor compared to a lot of things. Rachel was the most adventurous of them all. Very creative. They were all good students. They’ve all done their own thing in their own ways. Helen, the oldest, was with us most of the time because her relationship with her mother was not good at all. She preferred not to ever go to her mother’s house. She would see her mother from time to time. She was a mainstay in our house. She left for college the August that we got married. It was her freshman year. She was home but not all the time. She would come home some weekends and she would be home for holidays and school breaks.

A few years after all of that was going on with Rachel in high school she actually wrote Richard a letter which just to this day brings tears to my eyes. About how she thanked him for having stayed in there with her and hung in there with her. She just appreciated that. She did finish high school. With all these older siblings that all got along well together. She saw them all leaving the house and going off and doing college or whatever. She was determined to not be there anymore. She didn’t want to be the baby. She did summer school and took extra credits in school and graduated when she was seventeen and moved out and moved in with her friend Jessie. They had an apartment over in South Minneapolis not too far from Lyndale and Franklin near the Art Institute. I didn’t know a lot about what she was doing. She was initially interested in getting involved with things like massage therapy and that kind of thing. She had danced a lot through high school. Parts of high school. We’d gone on a trip to look at schools for massage.

She decided to go to the Southwest. I don’t remember all the details of it. She fell in with a woman. I can’t remember her name. She was living in the Southwest and I went and visited her in a little town just outside of Santa Fe. They lived in a little shack up in an arroyo. I don’t know what they did for a living. I went and visited once there and stayed in Santa Fe but visited the hut. It really was a hut. I truly don’t know what they were doing for a living or how they supported themselves. I probably don’t want to know. Eventually they moved to California. Then there was a trip Rachel and I made to the East Coast to visit her grandma, her dad’s mom. I stayed friendly with her even after my divorce. Rachel told me then that she was pregnant. She was pregnant with Brianna. I hadn’t met the dad but he was living in this part of California where she and this woman had been.

I started making some visits out there. For a while Rachel, when she was in California, was living in the mountains not too far from Reno and Tahoe in Nevada City back in the hills, not in the town. They were in a yurt and had an outhouse. I have no idea how they were making money. She was living with Kent. First they had lived in Seattle. That’s where Brianna was born. Once Brianna was born they lived in a garage that was kind of falling down. At one point Matthew said to me, “How come Rachel likes to live like a homeless person?” I said, “I don’t know.” She always was sort of seeking these creative, interesting ways of living, very challenging about how you really survive on a very basic level. Brianna’s dad was twelve years older than Rachel and had a dad who was in the framing business, picture framing, and had learned those skills. He and Rachel started a framing business in West Seattle where they lived.

When Brianna was born, I knew something was going on but I didn’t know what it was. It was crazy. Sometimes she’d communicate well with me and sometimes she wouldn’t. I did worry a lot about her. I was working still full time and didn’t have any children at home. I tried to get out to Seattle as often as I could which actually turned out to be at least a long weekend and sometimes a week every five or six weeks. Then Matthew and his fiancée got engaged and married. Kent and Rachel and tiny little Brianna came to the wedding. Brianna was born in March and that was the following July. She was really little. At that time the behavior was just so erratic and kind of crazy. Rachel seemed her own self. She seemed a little quiet. She’d go off by herself from time to time. I loved Brianna. It was no problem for me to be in charge of her and let Rachel and Kent do their own thing. On the last day of that wedding they were needing to get to the airport and we were going to take them. I couldn’t raise them. I couldn’t get them up. They were supposed to be meeting us downstairs to get a ride to the airport and they weren’t there. They weren’t up. I couldn’t get their attention. Banging on the hotel door. I was getting frantic. Finally, Kent came to the door. Their room was a mess. I almost said to them, “If I didn’t know better I would think you were on drugs.” I didn’t say it. I thought, “How can I say such a thing?” It seems so disrespectful. It was so true. How could I even think such a thought? They bustled around and they got their things together. I don’t know how we got them to the airport but they got everything. Meanwhile Brianna was fine. She was staying with us. She was all ready to go. I was putting her on the airplane with these two people who I couldn’t even wake up.

They went back to California and not too long after that Rachel called David and told him that she was on heroin and that he couldn’t tell me under sort of penalty of death, “If you tell mom I will never speak to you again.”

**AS:** Why did she tell her dad?

**KSF**: I think she just had to tell somebody. I don’t know why. He struggled with that for a few days and realized he had to tell me. He did. I was just devastated. In a certain way not particularly surprised. Rachel had in high school, the time I went and picked her up at Calhoun Square...then there was a call when she had been discovered with her head in the toilet at McDonalds in Uptown having drunk a whole fifth of gin. She was totally out of it and they took her to 20-20 Franklin which is at Franklin and Cedar, the detox there. I think it was for teens. Then we put her into a program to assess her situation. This was when she was fifteen. They said, “She isn’t addicted but she has the potential for being addicted. She has some characteristics. She needs to be careful.” There was a program at South High for kids with drug problems and alcohol problems. She participated in that, a support group. I never knew very much about it.

The following summer when she was sixteen she and a friend travelled to Europe together. She was very punk. Black leather and white makeup and black hair. She was very insulted on the way back because the customs people insisted on patting her down. She had been all the places that one goes. She’d been to Berlin and Amsterdam, all the places that one would be suspect. She and her friend were straight and she was surprised that everybody was surprised that she wouldn’t take any alcohol. In Europe you drank wine with all your meals because you don’t drink the water. She had explained to them that she had an allergy and she couldn’t drink the wine. They found other things for her. She sounded like she was completely comfortable with that. I do think she was sober on that trip. The friend she was travelling with—they were seeing a lot of family friends. To my knowledge she wasn’t drinking through high school. She had that history. To get back into that in a certain sense wasn’t completely surprising.

She saw a counselor in Seattle who was really good. Her name was Cathy. I met her a few times. That was an important touch for Rachel. I would go out there and very often she would be sort of acting like she had flu symptoms and was really sick. Somehow she’d get herself together. I’d be there mostly taking care of Brianna and fixing some meals in this primitive kind of garage they lived in and helping with the shop. Then Rachel would go out to do an errand just before I was about to leave and she’d go and get high. She was trying while I was there to get off of her drugs. She couldn’t maintain it. I wasn’t there long enough. She did go into a treatment program for a while. I went out to try and be supportive. It was while I was there that I realized, I’m paying the rent for this shop while they get on their feet. The money that I’m paying for the rent is freeing up them to pay money for their drugs. I cut that off while she was in the program so I could tell them and they could give her the support she needs. That was really hard because I knew that was their income. They were going to lose their business if this happened. I couldn’t in good conscience continue to pay for the rent if I knew what it was going for. Basically I was buying the drugs. Rachel got out of the program and she walked across the street and got drugs. She and Brianna were in the program.

Then she and Kent moved to central California and lived in a commune, a sort of Eastern philosophy commune. Kent’s dad was involved. They lived there for a while. I don’t know what drugs she was using. If she was off of heroin by that time or not. Kent was not. I know there was a lot of pot. I didn’t ever stay in their garage. I stayed in a motel not too far away. I would go over there in the morning. There were all these people sleeping on their couch.

**AS:** Were you worried about Brianna?

**KSF:** I was always worried about Brianna.

**AS:** Are you talking about times you went out there before she had called her dad to say she was using? You’re seeing all of this behavior but you’re not aware of what it is. You’re just kind of observing.

**KSF:** Right.

**AS:** What made you not confront her when you saw, you mentioned earlier having respect for people, was that what you were trying to do? Or do you think you just didn’t want to look so hard? You didn’t want confrontation?

**KSF:** I think I didn’t realize. I didn’t think about it. It didn’t cross my mind until she admitted to it. That’s when I started going, there was Nar-Anon. I forget this. At the age of fifteen when I learned that she had been drinking and she was in detox. Richard and I were seeing a therapist to sort through all this family stuff. That therapist had asked me about David and whether he had been an alcoholic. He said, “I think you might benefit from Al-Anon.” I didn’t know what he was talking about but I’ll do anything to get out of this chaos. I did start going to Al-Anon. I had been in Al-Anon not when Rachel was first discovered but shortly thereafter when there were times when she wouldn’t show up at night. I would realize there’s nothing I can do until tomorrow morning. The Al-Anon really helped me. Maybe I had been going to Al-Anon just before Rachel’s incident with detox. I remember thinking, “I don’t need to rush over there. I know where she is. I don’t need to go out looking for her.”

**AS:** You already had the tools.

**KSF:** I had the tools and I was focusing on living as healthy a life as I could. I don’t know, I can’t remember now. I don’t know if I was suspicious of her. I would worry if I wouldn’t hear from her for long periods of time. She always seemed pretty put together. I believed this flu thing. Rachel would say she had the flu and I worried about that. I didn’t ever put two and two together. I have also thought drugs are not part of my life and I think I’m very scared of them. I chose never to really read a lot about them. It’s not my life. That is an element of denial. I didn’t know that flu symptoms were an indication of someone trying to withdraw. I never saw Rachel. I would show up to help with Brianna later. Whatever they were doing with heroin earlier in the day it would have worn off.

**AS:** At what point did you start the Nar-Anon in St. Paul?

**KSF:** When Rachel finally told her dad and her dad told me.

**AS:** Were they still in Seattle or were they in California?

**KSF:** They were in Seattle. I then waited a full twenty-four hours before I called Rachel to think how it would be best to talk to her. When I did I just started off having a conversation with her. We talked for a while, half an hour or something. Finally, I said to her. She hadn’t said anything to me. I finally said, “I understand you have something maybe to tell me.” She said, “I’m not ready to tell you.” I said, “Okay. Let me know when you are.” We talked another ten minutes and then she told me lots of stuff. I don’t remember what exactly. We had a long conversation. Then when I went out there I looked to see if there was anything. I don’t remember how I found out about Nar-Anon but I found that there were several groups. I started going to meetings every time I was out there.

**AS:** While you were out there?

**KSF:** There was nothing here. Then because there was nothing here, this was 1996. This was when my parents were moving out of their house. I was still trying to work full time which I did until 2001. Then I took early retirement. By that time Rachel had moved back here. Rachel and Brianna were living with us. Richard had retired. He’s six years older than I am. He’d retired to do photography. I was—in 2001 I was ready to leave the U and do my own thing. I had kind of a plan for myself. In 1996 that’s when I started to go to those meetings in Seattle. In 1997, in March, I guess at the very beginning of 1997 I started looking around at the possibility of doing something here. I continued to go to Al-Anon. The legal issues which fortunately Rachel never had that I knew of, I don’t know maybe there were some. Just the impact, the intensity of it and the health risks and the death risks and the extreme money were all way greater than anybody I knew who was an alcoholic. There was some hint of something that went on at the First Unitarian Society downtown in Minneapolis. Apparently there was some man who every week, I don’t know because I never managed to get there.

I thought why don’t I start a group? I’m finding it’s really helpful out there. I already had many years in Al-Anon. It would be helpful to me to know other people who were dealing with drug addictions. Maybe it would be helpful to others. I was in a good place myself. I looked around at possibilities and found that the Y was willing to give us a room for no charge. With two other people from my Al-Anon group, one of whom was a woman who was in recovery from an alcoholic addiction. She never really participated in the Nar-Anon but she helped us get it started. Another woman that I knew from Al-Anon and I sent out letters to therapists and churches and tried to publicize it. We put something in the *Phoenix* newspaper. We ran a little ad in the *Southeast News.* We used our own money. We picked a date and had this room at the Y reserved for us. We showed up and for about five years it was very small. The word was out but it wasn’t very out. We did the best we could to publicize it. We would have between one and five people. In the summer often I would be the only one who would show up and bring my books with me. I’d sit and read the daily reading and wait until seven thirty. If nobody showed up, I’d go home. It was a time for me to center myself. When we first going to Al-Anon we had sent the *One Day at a Time* Al-Anon book to our family members. We bought a half a dozen copies of it. My mother had read the whole thing in one week.

**AS:** That’s funny. The day book she read in a week. It’s a yearlong day book.

**KSF:** Her response was, “This is a philosophy for good living.” I found that in my own life. This had helped me turn from a shrieking meanie into a person who could deal with things of great import in a thoughtful way, not denying my emotions but not letting my emotions control me. It allowed me to be in normal relationships with people in healthy ways. Having come from where I was from my childhood there was tons of stuff I didn’t know. It gave me so many options. My first Al-Anon meeting that I went to there were people who were actually laughing. Someone would say something that I could identify with about the dysfunction that I’d grown up with and people could laugh about it. For me it had always been you don’t talk about it because my house is the only house where that happens. I thought, “Wow you can get to the point where you can laugh about it.” I would listen really carefully about people would give ways that they had dealt with situations. I’d think, “I never thought of that.” I’d go home, some things I thought never would work, there were lots of things I heard and I thought, “Gosh I could try that.”

I remember one time on the phone with my mom, we talked on the phone even though we didn’t have a very good relationship but still she was my mother. I remember on the phone once she laid into me some criticism or the other and I said to her fully expecting to be struck by lightning, I was in my breakfast nook and I said, “Mom, when you say things like that to me, it hurts my feelings.” I thought I was going to be struck dead by lightning and I wasn’t. In that conversation my mom revealed to me some things about how her relationship with her family when she was growing up. I thought, “Oh my God.”

**AS:** Just because you said, “When you talk like that it hurts my feelings.”

**KSF:** She revealed she had said that to me because whatever I had been doing made her feel insufficient somehow. What an eye opener. Those little incidents, not so little, they seemed little at the time gave me courage to practice what I was learning from my friends. I still do. I still learn from my friends every day. It has so changed me.

**AS:** Your Nar-Anon friends?

**KSF:** My Nar-Anon and Al-Anon friends. I used to spend so much of my life with the most terrible sore throat from shrieking because things weren’t going my way. I thought yelling about it would change it. I’ve apologized to my children for having done that when they were growing up. I didn’t know any better. I was doing the best I could with what I had which was lacking. Part of my amends also is to continue to live as well as I can. That’s my way of apologizing, making amends to my kids for having made their lives less than comfortable by yelling about things or trying to control things or thinking that I was doing a good job by being in their business.

**AS:** Did you repeat a lot of the things your mother did? In terms of control and managing things?

**KSF:** I did it in a different way. I don’t remember her yelling. Yes, the control. Trying to keep things in order and make sure people did what they needed to be doing, that they were where they needed to be at certain times. That may be what my kids talk about when they say that I worried too much about them. I would express concerns about what they should or shouldn’t do to stay safe. We ate meals at pretty regular times. Even if you didn’t feel particularly well you needed to get up and go to school. That was a problem for Matthew. For years I didn’t know that he had bad stomach aches in the morning. Whether those were psychological or milk allergy we never really knew. I’d make him go to school. If he was throwing up he could stay home. And not realizing that. Eventually I think he didn’t even tell me about it because he kind of just knew he was going to have to go to school anyways no matter how he felt. I have regrets about that kind of thing. I knew what I knew and I didn’t know what I didn’t know.

Al-Anon and Nar-Anon have been so amazing. Just hearing. Even people from extraordinarily dysfunctional situations, everyone does things differently. I can learn from them. I can apply them to a less than dysfunctional situation. There can be a lot of truth and health in what they’re doing, even trying to deal with something that’s totally nuts. I guess, deep down there’s still this little element of trying to help people and this program is helpful in trying to help people. If we continued to have meetings of one or two people, I don’t think I would have been able to.

I am a rather stubborn person and I like to think that that stubbornness can be translated in a positive way into persistence. If I find enough satisfaction and rewards in continuing to go then I’m genuinely invested when I’m there. It’s not hard to keep being connected. Over the years, in the early years when I was seen as the leader I was the person who was there every week. Now that we have a good core of people who are there week after week I rarely am the trusted servant or the speaker or the reader. I try to sign up every once and awhile. I signed up for three weeks from now to do something on a topic.

**AS:** Can we pause for just a second?

**KSF:** Yes.

[Break in Recording]

**AS:** We were talking about Nar-Anon and the benefits that it had on you. You said you started Nar-Anon in ‘97?

**KSF:** It must have been ‘97. I think this is the twentieth birthday at the end of this month.

**AS:** So ‘97, when you started it where is Rachel and what’s going on?

**KSF:** When I started it Rachel’s living in Seattle. I can’t remember the order of things. In that time, she did go into treatment. Didn’t stay as long as I would have wished she could. I had no say and I knew that. She and Kent were still together. I don’t know if this was because of my Al-Anon, Nar-Anon practice or what. I love this girl and her baby and I trusted her to do whatever was best. It was her life. By this time, I had been in Al-Anon or Nar-Anon for ten years, starting when she was fifteen. This is a lot of long practice. Sitting here today I can’t tell you. I knew she was seeing a therapist. I knew she was trying her best. I don’t think she was going to any support group. I don’t know a lot about what she did because it wasn’t my business. I truly believe that she would do what was best for her.

**AS:** You really took that to heart because of what you had learned in a 12-Step Program?

**KSF:** I think so.

**AS:** As a mother you were…?

**KSF:** I was always worried how things were going. She wasn’t living in a way that I would have dreamed for her. There was nothing wrong, it wasn’t an unhealthy way she was living but it was way difficult. Things seemed to be okay. The only I guess jumping, after they moved to central California from...I’m confused about it. In Nevada City they were living in a yurt. I also think they were connected at that time to this community. Right now I can’t put that together. They were involved with this sort of Eastern philosophy community. I don’t know what I thought, whether it was drug free. I think they went there thinking that that would be a way to get away from drugs. I don’t know if it was. I don’t think it was when they were living in the backwoods in the yurt. I’ve gotten myself off track. Where Rachel was. Then they moved to central California. Things seemed to be okay. It was more after Rachel came back here that I noticed how hard things had been on Brianna. Having parents who were not able to be fully present because of their drug use.

**AS:** How did she end up back here? Can you tell me that story?

**KSF:** Yes. They were living in Nevada City. Rachel got Bronchitis or something, she got sick. I had been continuing to go out there. They were living in a yurt and then they bought a trailer. It was stuff that was falling down. I knew how primitive they were living. Rachel got sick and was getting sicker and sicker. I was worried about them and worried about Brianna. Rachel had told me she was in a program. What’s that federal program called? Not first start.

**AS:** Head Start?

**KSF:** Head Start program. I knew Rachel was in some kind of a program. I don’t know what my thinking was or how I got to this but decided I was going to try to talk to, I don’t know if it was something Rachel said to me. I think she gave me the name of the person of Head Start. She gave me the name so I thought I’ll call her. The woman said to me, “I’m so glad you called because you hadn’t called we were going to start Child Protection proceedings.” It wasn’t that Rachel wasn’t doing anything. I think they were starting to notice that Brianna was suffering from not having the kind of parenting that a child that is not even two years old needs. She said, “Something has to be done.”

I got on an airplane and went out there. I told Rachel I would come out. I said, “I’ll send you airline tickets.” I had lots of miles. “Come home. Do you want to come home?” Yes, she did. “I can’t get packed.” That went on for a few days. She wasn’t making any progress getting packed. I said, “I’ll come and help you. Is that okay?” She said yes and I got on an airplane and went out and packed her up. We got on an airplane. We didn’t really tell Kent. We left a note or something. I don’t know what Rachel had told him. I didn’t kidnap them because they went willingly. I don’t think Kent knew.

**AS:** You retrieved them.

**KSF:** We stayed one night in Reno to get our airplane back and then got on the airplane the next morning and came home and we had our friend who is a pediatrician come and look at Rachel and Brianna who were both suffering from something. It was treatable. We basically let Rachel sleep and she had been trying to get off of, I think maybe she was using marijuana, I don’t think she was using. I don’t know. In my mind it was, and I told her, “You’re welcome to stay here as long as you need to to get to a state that you need to be in and make your decision about whether to go back.” The thought was that she would go back. We had no ticket for her to return. I did say, “If you use drugs you’re out of here but Brianna’s going to stay here.” That was very clear in my mind. If Rachel decided to go back or if she decided to use that Brianna needed to be protected. That wasn’t based on anything that was true legally. I don’t think I had a leg to stand on but I said it. I believed it and I would have fought for that. When Rachel spent day after day in bed sleeping I could take care of Brianna. Brianna was quite traumatized, not quite traumatized but she was traumatized. She would get into these frantic screaming rages.

**AS:** Is she two or three?

**KSF:** She’s barely two.

**AS:** What year is this?

**KSF:** She was born in ‘95. This is ‘97 going into ‘98. I said to Rachel one day, “We think it would help if you saw a therapist.” She said, “Yes.” We’d been seeing somebody just for normal day to day things. Trying to work out my relationship with my mom who was nearing the end of her life. My craziness with my brother. I was spending more time with my parents because they were needing more help. We set up an appointment for Rachel to see Ellie. She went to see her. At some point, I don’t know the order of things, she had contacted a number of her high school friends. As she once told me they were either in treatment, in a recovery program, or dead. The people she had been in high school with. She started seeing some of her high school friends and got involved in at least two NA groups over at Fairview. One in some kind of a church in Northeast Minneapolis. I knew about my 12-Step Programs. People would call her if she wouldn’t show up for a meeting. Someone would call her, “How are you doing? Are you feeling okay? Can I come over and help give you a ride?” That sort of thing. She continued to do that. Physically she got healthy and with the therapy and NA. Then she also wanted to go back and finish her degree. She had some credits to finish. She started to look into that and eventually did that. Slowly, slowly things changed. She lived with us for I think two and a half years. Then in the meantime she had met Ed who is Malaysia’s dad. They started being together. They decided to live together. Rachel moved out. That was traumatizing for me. I was so sad. I was so attached and bonded to them.

It was interesting because Rachel and I had had a kind of tumultuous life together. When she was really little she had certain ways of communicating that she always wanted to correct what I was saying. She had these overtones of my mother’s control and my brother’s stuff. It just drove me wild that I can’t even give you an example. Rephrasing what I had just said. It just drove me wild. I was in my shrieking mode at that point. We had a hard time when she was really little at some point, and David also pushed a lot of let’s do some psychological tests on Rachel to make sure. I didn’t think they were psychological problems. At one point we went to see a therapist at HCMC and the therapist did a workshop test. We were in separate rooms totally separately talking about what we were seeing in this particular blot and they were almost identical stories. The therapist could hardly stand it. It was so spooky. Did you talk to Rachel about this? Have you ever seen this before? It was my moment of realizing how much Rachel and I see things similarly. How alike we are in many ways. Some of our abrasion had to do with that. It helped me appreciate how close we could be if we made an effort. We spent a lot of time working on getting along. At one point I had to set a boundary for myself when we were seeing somebody.

She had run away once and we were seeing somebody over at this place, The Bridge. We were seeing a therapist there. Rachel said something and I said, “I can’t see you for a while.” It was about being super critical of me. “I can’t see you for a while.” We had said we’d take her to work. I said, “I have to stop this now.” “Can’t you just take me to work?” “Nope. I can’t.” She was living part time with her dad. I said, “I can’t see you for a while.” That started right then and there. I just wept for hours. I remember I had an Al-Anon meeting that night. I didn’t see her for a week. I kept a journal of all the things I was thinking about. I invited her to go to a movie for me and out for chocolate afterwards. While we were having our cocoa she started in on her criticism. I said, “I’m going to take you back to your dad’s now.” It didn’t take too long for me to establish that if she was going to be critical of me I wasn’t going to be with her. We could spend really good time together. Whatever she thought about me I wasn’t going to make her not think it but I didn’t want to hear it. We worked on our relationship.

As she got better and better, she and I both said that there were moments where what the other one was doing was driving us crazy. We knew enough to just keep our mouths shut. We knew there was enough positive there that it could get us by. Whatever was different about it was of no consequence in the big scheme of things. She’s going to do that, it’s different from what I would do and that’s fine. I guess I’ll be in a different room right now. Recognizing that it was totally appropriate of her to move. She was getting healthier all the time. She was living in this recovery community with all these wonderful, amazing people. Brianna was doing way better. I had things to do with my life. I didn’t need to be her mother all the time. I was glad she was still nearby and I could still be involved in Brianna’s life to the extent of helping with her after school care.

That’s continued. She’s not afraid to give me feedback. From time to time she’ll say, she always prefaces with do I want to hear this. I’ll say yes. It gives me something to think about. Recently I had a little run in with Brianna. We were doing a decorating job in her house which I own. Brianna’s house. Brianna said I was making all the decisions and just asking for her opinion to be placating. I thought, “This is not true.” I sat down and wrote all the decisions we had made and ninety-nine percent of them had ended up with Brianna’s decision. One big one where I said, “It’s fine with me. It’s not at all what I would have done but let’s change this to be the way you want it. You’re living there after all.” I was feeling badly about that for quite some time. I mentioned to Rachel that I was having some communication problems with Brianna which was putting it lightly. She said something about how she could relate to that. I said, “How so?” She said to me, “At times when I was growing up I had that feeling too. That you were just placating me. You come across pretty strong. You’re a force to deal with.” I have thought about that. That was probably a month ago that she said that. I didn’t take it personally. I mean I do take it personally but in a constructive sort of way. I’m strong enough to be able to hear that about myself. I know myself well enough to know that that’s true. I’m not happy that I appear to scare people sometimes if I’m being very certain about my ideas. I come across as kind of scary. That is how I am and I need to pay attention the more that I do to how I say things. How I present things so I don’t come across as scary.

**AS:** Thank you so much. Anything else you can think of? How’s your Nar-Anon group now? What’s changed in twenty years?

**KSF:** It’s got a nice size. If it could be helpful to more people I’d be happy about that. It seems to be some of settled at about fifteen to twenty people max who come at any given time. There are people who come back. There are lots of people who are new who do return. Some who’ve been with the group for a very long time. That’s a positive I think. I don’t know if we were in a way bigger room I don’t know if more people would come.

**AS:** What changes have you seen in the kinds of situations that people are faced with?

**KSF:** Way more scary drugs now with fentanyl in drugs. Five deaths, three of them in Nar-Anon in the last year. Two in family friends. That happened because of drug overdoses.

**AS:** That wasn’t the case twenty years ago?

**KSF:** One family in seventeen years whose son had some serious mental illness and was in the service and was under suicide watch in the service. They didn’t pay attention enough to him. He killed himself.

**AS:** You’re saying in the past three years then?

**KSF:** In the past two years, five people in my life. Three of them who are Nar-Anon connections. I think that it’s hard to know over the years the majority of the people in the program have had adult children that they’ve been concerned about. Just recently in the last six months we’ve had more people in relationships with their partners, husbands or boyfriends or girlfriends. Right now at our meeting the other night out of twelve people there were four who had either boyfriends or girlfriends or husbands that they’re concerned about.

**AS:** Whereas it had been primarily parents.

**KSF:** I’m comfortable however that takes it. I sometimes thought in the olden days that it might be that there were so many people in their forties and fifties and older who were concerned about children or grandchildren. That might have discouraged some of the younger people from coming. I truly don’t know whether there’s anything about that. Some of the issues are different and the option to get out of it, not that it’s easy, but the option to remove yourself from a relationship that isn’t birth related is very different.

**AS:** Thank you Kathie.

**KSF:** You’re welcome.