**Linda Berry-Brede**

**Narrator**

**Amy Sullivan**

**Interviewer**

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Linda Berry-Brede -**LB**

Amy Sullivan -**AS**

**LB:** I’m Linda LB and I do give Amy permission to record my conversation with her.

**AS**: Thank you. Could you start with you childhood? Where you grew up? What your childhood was like?

**LB**: I was born in Chicago, Illinois and my mother was a nursing student at the time. Single, wasn’t sure who my father was, I was put up for adoption, she went off secretly and had me in Chicago. Nobody knew about it. I was there for about a month and she decided she wanted to take me home after all. She traveled to Chicago and brought me home to Minneapolis and kept me in her little apartment. Finally, my aunt and uncle found out about it because they came to visit her and it was a bar downstairs and she had me down there at the bar that she worked at. They didn’t feel it was a fit environment for a child. Eventually, within a few weeks, she agreed for them to take me temporarily until she got her life together.

**AS**: What year was this?

**LB**: This was in 1951. So, they did. They took me home and took care of me and agreed that they would give me back eventually. That never really happened. I just grew up with my aunt and uncle. It was my mother’s sister and her husband. It was a great childhood, I can’t complain about it. It was good. I had a cousin that was three years younger than me. He was born when I was five. We are three years apart. We grew up as brother and sister.

**AS**: Did you see your mom much as a child?

**LB**: Once in awhile. She was my aunt. I didn’t know she was my mom until I was in my thirties. They told me I was adopted. Well, when I was in my thirties I decided I wanted to try and find my biological mother. I asked them if I could get a copy of my birth certificate. They said they had one and they would help me. They said I was adopted through Lutheran Social Service. They didn’t have any record when I talked to them. I said, “I don’t know what is going on.” Eventually they came down and gave me my birth certificate and on that was the name of my aunt Georgina. I was thinking, “Ok, so she is my mother.” That kind of threw me for a loop. It was kind of exciting in a way, and yet kind of puzzling.

Anyway, eventually I wrote her a letter because I didn’t see her often. She was the aunt with the sports cars and she was just kind of a cool aunt. I grew up with her kind of in my teens. I would stay with her sometimes. She would let me smoke and have a drink when I was in my teens. She was cool. Very successful as a nurse. She helped start a program that used to be HCMC now, the dialysis unit. She worked with some real famous doctors. She really did well in her life.

**AS**: Did she stay single?

**LB**: No, I was a teenager when she married. I went on to find out though that they didn’t stay married long. She had two other children and gave them up for adoption. One with him and one right after me. Two boys. She was an alcoholic. She told me this when she was drinking one time. I never knew for sure if that was the truth because I think she had a kind of personality disorder when I think back on it now. Very kind, but she could turn around and be horrible.

I found out she was my mom when I was in my thirties. I did write her a letter and told her I knew. She took a while to connect with me after that. I went down to her home, she lived in Brooklyn Center, went down to her home and talked to her about it. I acted like I was really happy. Inside I was a little confused to be honest. She admitted that yes, I’m your mom and talked about how things were back then. She had hoped to get me back but it just didn’t work out. As it turned out she didn’t visit that often. She just kind of let them have me. She just didn’t seem to have the time or something. She really wasn’t happy about being my mother even as an adult.

**AS**: No motherly instinct.

**LB**: No motherly instinct really. Really independent and a narcissist almost. That is how my childhood started out. That’s how, as an adult, I found out she was my mother. We didn’t have a close relationship really. Cancer and she died of cancer, I don’t know, it has probably been ten years ago now or more. She had a living boyfriend that was my age. He somehow changed her will I think, unless she lied to me, but I got nothing from her. She didn’t leave me anything. She said she would. I was the only child that had any contact with her. He took everything and we always wondered if the will was changed somehow because she had said, “You’ll get…” She was very bad before she died. She didn’t know what was going on. He took care of her. He was a terrible alcoholic too. Very chronic. Who knows.

**AS**: What a story.

**LB**: Yeah. Let’s see, where do I go from there. I got married when I was very young. Right out of high school. I was pregnant my last month of high school I remember. We moved out of Minneapolis to Brainerd my last year of school. I went to Brainerd high school, graduated in 1969 and my boyfriend at the time moved up there to go to college as well. I found out I was pregnant in May right before I graduated. We planned a wedding, told my parents, and went through this whole thing. They didn’t care for the guy I was going with, Bob. Not at all because he had long hair and my dad was a barber and she was a hairdresser [laughter]. And he had very long hair and dad didn’t like it.

We got married in September then. I had my first son, Jason, the next February. That was ok I guess, it went ok. I was so young that I think it went ok because I was so young. Both Bob and I partied a lot, drank a lot. That was kind of our focus then was having fun and partying. Within a year I had another little boy [laughter]. His name was Gabriel. It was very hard because my husband by that time was really a full-blown alcoholic and was never home and going out with other women and girls in high school. We weren’t very old. I was only 18 or 19 when I had Gabriel.

My aunt and uncle that raised me helped me a lot with that. We ended up going up there and staying a while because he was really abusive, my husband was abusive.

**AS**: Was he your age?

**LB**: A year older. Physically and mentally, you name it. I tried to kind of still stick with that lifestyle of going out a lot, drinking, finding baby sitters. We had his mom and dad living in town. They were great and took them a lot, the kids. Things straightened out a little bit. We lived in a little town west central Minnesota called Cosmos. I was a big town girl. I wasn’t into small towns at all. The only thing we had there was the Legion. We would look forward to the Wednesday night steak fries.

I wanted more for my life than that. My family was more well-rounded and really encouraged me to do something. They wanted me to go to college, but I didn’t of course because I had kids. It was ingrained in my mind that wasn’t enough living in a small town and going to the Legion on Wednesday nights. I wanted more. I wanted to go to college and I wanted to do somethings in my life. In fact, we built a new house. He worked with his dad they had a Ready Mix company and were doing fairly well with it. We weren’t hard up for money at all. We built a new house and back then of course it didn’t cost very much. I got into that and things settled down and straightened out. We had a pretty good time for a while there.

It was still partying and then I got pregnant with my daughter. She was born in ‘76. That was really awesome to have a girl. I really focused on the kids. Sewing and I made everything for them. I was really into homemaking at that time. Things seemed good for a while.

As time progressed, Bob was really an alcoholic and was very physically abusive. I started going out with other people thinking I would find somebody better. He was going out with other people and eventually I didn’t want to be with him anymore and I didn’t want to be in that town. I went out with a guy that I thought could get me out of there. He was just totally not the right kind of person. That didn’t work.

I moved to the Twin Cities for a while. Left my boys behind and took my daughter with me. Got a job at Simer Pump Company. I will never forget that. It was just a no life job. It was just to make some money to live. I was so lonely down there. I had friends, but it was just my daughter and I. One day my husband and his friend came down and took my daughter away from me and brought her back [with them]. It was horrible.

**AS**: How did they manage that?

**LB**: I was staying with a friend, they came to the apartment, my friend let him in because my friend wasn’t really concerned. She knew him. They just took her. They grabbed her out of my arms and took her and brought her back to Cosmos. Within a few weeks I moved back and went back to him because I couldn’t handle not having my kids. I felt so guilty about my boys and then not having her. He put her with a friend of his to take care of her every day. I just couldn’t deal with that.

I went back. I tried to make things work with him but I was over him. We even went on a vacation and took all kinds of things but it wasn’t… Eventually the abuse got so bad I ended up calling county social worker. I didn’t know what to do. My parents weren’t really standing behind me because they thought, they were kind of old fashioned. I will never forget a statement my brother made: “Maybe if you stopped making frozen pizzas he would leave.”

That did it. I called the social worker, I told her I couldn’t live with him anymore, and she brought me to the women’s shelter in Willmar with my kids. We were there for probably a couple of months. I moved out of the house and petitioned for a divorce. They helped me with a lot of things there. We got an apartment and back then there was a lot of help. There was a lot of financial help available through the county that there isn’t now. They helped me pay for an apartment, they helped me get furniture, they helped pay my tuition while I went to the college in Willmar.

My life was evolving. I missed Bob in a way because I missed the companionship. He could be nice sometimes, but overall it wasn’t good. The kids had also been somewhat… the boys were physically abused and mentally abused. Kristin wasn’t. She was only three and doesn’t remember it. We lived in an apartment then and the life was kind of, I don’t know, it was ok. I was trying to find another guy right away rather than be by myself. I had a series of nothing really. I would see some people a few times and then leave. I had kids and… I was a lot of baggage with all that.

Then, I met my current husband, and that was in ‘78 when I met him at a bar. He was into racing, star car racing and I really liked that. I don’t know why even. My girlfriend and I would go to races. They had a race track not too far. I knew he raced but I thought he was married but I really didn’t care [laughter]. My morals weren’t too on spot back then.

I started seeing him out at the bars and eventually he left his wife and asked if he could move in with me. This has been a matter of months. And, “Of course you can move in with me.” He brought his suitcase and he kept seeing other women and I would let him use my car. I was totally desperate for this guy. He had a really nice family that lived out on the farm out there. They were super people. Very Christian oriented, kind of like my family was. I felt comfortable. I joined their church and I became very involved in trying to find a family and … in their activities. For the next two or three years he still continued to see other women that he knew. I put up with it because I was so desperate.

He was very good with my kids and was like a real dad to them. They would go visit their dad but he was so bad with his alcoholism that he would leave them with his parents and if he did bring them with him they would end up at some party or a bar. One time the county sheriff brought them home from their home visit. He had been put in jail because he had a bunch of trouble in a bar he was at and the kids were with him. They came home and the boys didn’t seem phased a whole lot they just kind of dismissed it. My daughter was kind of scared. She was about five or six I think.

**AS**: And they were like 10 and 11?

**LB**: Yeah. They were also diagnosed, the oldest boys, were diagnosed with borderline, back then, retardation. That’s what they called it back then. It wasn’t disability. I kind of always assumed it was because I drank when I was pregnant. I thought it was fetal alcohol syndrome. I don’t know if that was the cause. They didn’t look like that, but they had some of the issues that went along with that because I went to a lot of seminars later in life.

We got divorced then, Bob and I were divorced finally. Craig is his name, my husband’s name. He got divorced a couple of years later. He was really down and out, too, because he had lost a business and wasn’t really sure what he was doing. We were broke. He was living with me and I got welfare. That was what we lived on and I didn’t record that he was living with me. He started working some jobs and was starting to make some money. I was in college then. I started college at the community college in human services. I did really well in college. I was surprised I remember because I hated high school.

Things just evolved. We moved into another subsidized townhome and his brother was a very successful farmer. He purchased some land and a house right outside of Willmar. He bought it for us and we took over the payments eventually, but he enabled us to get it. We went into that together. The kids loved it. I felt like at peace out there. It was a lot of work and the house was rickety but his dad helped us with a lot of the work on the house. It was exciting.

The only thing was Craig would not commit to me and I felt used. Eventually I left him for a while. For a period of time I moved to Willmar. I tried to go out with some other people. I was like this is it he won’t commit to me. He was still seeing other people I believe. The guy I was dating was one of his friends and he decided to go back to his old girlfriend. He left me and then I had to go back to Craig I felt. I cared about him but I didn’t like his lifestyle. I demanded that he married me if he was going to live with him. I wasn’t just going to live with him anymore. We had lived together for ten years.

**AS**: By this point it is like ‘88?

**LB**: It is about, yeah, It was actually ‘87 when we got married. Right before our wedding, three months before, I found out I was pregnant. I thought, “Oh my god. This is not going to look good to his family at all.” I considered an abortion. I had had two before that, earlier. Which makes me sick to this day, but anyway. Three days before the wedding I miscarried twins. What happened was I lost one at home and still was in a lot of pain and went into the hospital and they were going to do a DNC and they did and there was another fetus they said. They didn’t tell me right away. They aborted the second twin. They didn’t own up to it at the clinic. The doctor didn’t. They didn’t tell me they just said there was some fetal material. In the records, there was a gal at work there, and she saw in the records that it…

**AS**: Why would they keep that from you?

**LB**: I don’t know. I suppose they were worried about a lawsuit. This woman, because she talked to me about it, she was going to lose her job. She was the girlfriend of the guy I had dated before and she hated me. There was a lot of animosity there and I was scared of her because she had tried to come in my house while he was there and she pushed me down the steps. She was going to kill me. Threatening me all the time. I was afraid of her and I told Craig, “I can’t deal with this. We are getting married in a few days.” This went on for weeks after we were married. I said, “I can’t do this anymore let’s just forget about it and not do anything.” I found out later the clinic was gearing up for a big lawsuit with this doctor because he didn’t do an ultrasound or something beforehand.

That took a while to get through. I was really depressed and we got married a few days later. That was nice, and we got through it. Got married outside under our pine trees. We still live there. Marriage was fairly ok. A year later I had Seth. He is 27 now and that was in ‘89 I had Seth. We were just delighted. It was his first child, he didn’t have any kids. Seth was everything to us. He couldn’t have been spoiled anymore than he was [laughter].

Five years later we had Jordan. Jordan is our youngest, he’s 22. We just did everything with those kids. Craig was one of them to raise. We got them involved when they were really young into snocross racing. They raced snowmobiles. We spent a ton of money. At that time Craig had started his own business again and was doing fairly well. Between that we had milked cows, we had taken over his dad’s farm. We had done a lot of things together. We had quite a history at that point. He was starting a new business and that was going fairly well. We were financially doing a lot better. Fixed up our house. Did a lot of things. Things seemed to be going well.

The kids loved snocross. We took off every weekend and went to where the races were and traveled all over with them. Seth got to be very good. He was with Arctic Cat with their team. Jordan, he raced, but he was a real big kid. He was really big for his age and that wasn’t good in snocross because you had to be lightweight like his brother was. His anxiety would come out… his boots were this or that. He would just go nuts every time. That was Jordan. That was my first taste of his anxiety was when he was a little kid. He was the one who eventually had the most problems.

We ended up having to quit that because my husband Craig wanted to get Seth into car racing. It was either that or snocross we couldn’t afford to do both. We had a team of racecars that we had other people drive. Two dirt car models. We had some friends of Craigs’ drive them for us. It was time, he thought, to quit that and get our own kids involved. We got Seth involved and that was 2009. It wasn’t all that long ago. We got him involved and he took off. He was just a gifted racer and just excelled at that.

I’m going to step back a little bit. When they were in school, because we traveled with the snocross and it was really hard to do school, I started homeschooling them. We were gone on weekends and every Friday and school didn’t like it. We homeschooled and that was not successful at all. Seth did it for a little bit and then he wouldn’t do it. I just let it go and I started with Jordan. Jordan begged me, “Please, I hate school, I hate my teachers.” And he didn’t get along with his teachers at all. Both the boys were horrible in school. They were nice people but they just couldn’t stand authority. Neither one of them. I don’t know if that came from us. I don’t know, I don’t think so. They both had a real problem with authority.

I tried homeschooling and that didn’t work for either one of them. Eventually I just gave up and they just quit school. They just didn’t go to school. I feel guilty about that to this day that I didn’t push it more. In the meantime we took in a foster son. Like I needed anything more, but we knew this little boy. He was a friend of Seth’s, my older one. We took him along with our family because I had a job I ended up as an independent living coordinator. His parents were in my program. I knew them and they had two babies that were both mentally handicapped and it just wasn’t a good situation so we took him on.

At first it was so fine because he got to race and we got him a snowmobile. He was with us all the time. Later on that turned out to be a disaster. For a while it was good and we felt like we were doing something good.

**AS**: Was he the same age as your kids?

**LB**: He was Seth’s age, yes. The 27 year old. They were the same age. It turned out they were horrible together. It didn’t go well.

**AS**: They didn’t get along?

**LB**: They were just wild together. I think they both had ADHD. I know he did but I think my son must have had it too. We couldn’t go anywhere with them. They would make a scene, wreck things in the hallways of hotels. We couldn’t take them out to eat for dinner anymore because the two of them together we would have to separate them or something.

Anyway, I’m probably missing some things.

**AS**: I am wondering if we should go outside. It is getting louder in here.

[pause]

**AS**: How old are your kids? You have a foster son, John…

**LB**: That was when my second youngest, Seth, was probably 11 or 12. I think they were in fifth grade.

**AS**: So they were big. They could make some real trouble.

**LB**: Oh yes. Together it didn’t work very well for those two. My youngest son didn’t like him really. They later became very close once, I don’t know, Seth kind of broke away from them and had his own friends. My youngest son Jordan started getting closer to John.

Little did I know that was when the drug use started. Jordan started drinking when he was like 15 because he went with Seth to a race and Seth called me and said, “Mom, you got to come and get this kid. I’m not watching him. He’s drunk, he’s running around the campground here causing trouble, fighting with people. You have to come.” We got up in the middle of the night and drove up to Huron, South Dakota to pick him up. We were going to go the next day to watch Seth race. Seth was racing. We picked him up to the police station because they had brought him in and charged him with underage drinking. I was on the phone with the police the whole way down there. They were picking him up and bringing him in. We were just sick.

We had had some problems with Seth, too. Not with drinking or drugs but some mental stuff where he would just go off. We kind of had our fill with that and now we thought, “Jordan! Not Jordan.” He seems like such a good kid, doesn’t seem to be influenced by that kind of stuff, you would hope.

We went out, picked him up, and brought him home. He was still drunk and it was just terrible seeing him like that. I couldn’t handle it. The next day we told him he couldn’t go back out but we took him back out the next day. That was the beginning that we knew he was using. We thought, oh, he is just experimenting like kids that age do and he just drank too much. “Oh I’m never going to do that again!” Of course.

That was the beginning. Him and John I think then started smoking some weed because I would kind of smell it when I would go out. We had a shop with a kind of office in it that was separate from our house. That is where they hung out a lot because they were working on different things and they would fix bikes out there and they were always doing things and I thought that was good. They were out of my hair a little bit, and yet they were doing good things. One time I remember thinking, “It smells like weed out here or something.” I started suspecting things little by little. Seth had kind of moved out. When he got to be 18 he moved out and got his own place if I remember right. I didn’t think he would do anything either because he wasn’t into drinking at that point really. He was obnoxious but he wasn’t into using I didn’t think. That changed too in a short hurry. We found out he had gotten an underage consumption [charge] and that is when it all started basically.

We went through that with Seth the older one and then the younger ones started picking it up more and more. I think probably at about 18, when Jordan was 18, he’s 22 now, we noticed things started getting more out of hand. He started acting strange. All him and John did was play video games. We had a house in New Ulm as well. My husband worked in a big piping project when the butter plant burned down. They rebuilt it. My husband and his company. We stayed there and rented a house there. Video games non-stop. I’m thinking, “This is too much, video games are going to ruin them for life.”

After that I think was when they started doing more and more weed. Jordan fell down and broke his leg. He had many broken bones over the years. That is when he started on pain medication. Percocet, they gave them out pretty readily then.

**AS**: This is how long ago??

**LB**: This was when he was about 18, yeah, 17 or 18. He had a girlfriend then that he had had for a couple of years. She wasn’t really into using but she noticed too that he was just so awful. Demanding, he started going downhill. We noticed his behavior changing. I thought it was the medication. I said, “Maybe you need to get off this stuff and take some Tylenol.” He has never been able to withstand pain. Even when he was a little kid, everything was horrible if he was in pain. Everybody had to cater to him.

He had to have this pain medication. I thought, well, I suppose if he needs it. The doctor kept refilling it. He was on different ones. I’m sure he was hooked on it. Then he broke his shoulder, or he had to have surgery on his shoulder. That was about a year later and he was on more pain meds, of course, because he probably needed them at the time.

I don’t think he ever got off of them. Then he started finding more ways to get them. I am finding out now that he started snorting them. Because I found a pill crusher out in the shop. I started looking for things. Sure enough there was stuff out there. That was a real red flag but when I questioned them they said, “We tried it once.” You know.

It just progressed and eventually I found out through the grapevine that John was selling drugs. Our foster son. He had gotten on probation for something else. An assault or something. He was on probation because he assaulted someone and got in trouble. He didn’t go see his PO and they had a warrant out for him. I kept saying, “You need to turn yourself in I’m not going to let you stay here. I could get in trouble for this as well. You need to go talk to your PO.” He wouldn’t do it. I called the sheriff and I said, “He is out here and I can’t have him here anymore. I understand he is possibly selling drugs.” They said, “Yeah, we have been watching him and we pretty much know he is.”

They picked him up, ransacked my shop and all my things up there. “Could we search?” Ok. They totally wrecked half my possession up there looking for drugs. They didn’t find any. I’m sure they were hidden well. They did find a little bit of marijuana on him but they did find a gun and he had a felony against him, the assault. That sent him to jail and eventually a prison sentence.

**AS**: Where did he go?

**LB**: First he went to St. Cloud of course and then they sent him up to Moose Lake. He was there for quite a while. He was very upset with me because I had turned him in.

**AS**: What is quite a while?

**LB**: Probably a year. In the meantime my son was getting out of hand. He was hanging out with some of the guys. I don’t want to be prejudiced but there are a lot of Mexicans and Spanish up in Willmar.

**AS**: Did they work at the Jenny-O plant?

**LB**: Yes, that was a lot of it. A lot of them have become professionals and there are a lot of good ones. But there are also a lot of drug dealers that moved there from Chicago. Jordan started befriending a lot of John’s old friends. I believe that is when Jordan started selling drugs as well. It was like, “You need to get a job.”

There is of course a little bit of guilt because maybe we should have… and he wouldn’t have sold drugs. Eventually, John was in prison, he got out, and he came and worked with us in our business. He was a great worker. Him and Jordan hung out together all the time. That is when I suspected no good. They were up to selling, using, they were goofy all the time. We couldn’t count on them to come to work. Jordan would sleep all day. He then moved in with his girlfriend, they got a place, a couple of different places together. Moved out, got evicted, things just weren’t going well. I suspected…

[pause]

I’m trying to think of what order this all took place. Shortly after I discovered Jordan was selling drugs and using pills, I suspected anyway, he got caught selling weed. An informant made a purchase from it. It was one of his friend that had turned into an informant. It was only 60 dollars but it was still a drug charge. He got put on probation. No jail time at that time. He was put on probation with his probation to be removed once he did well and followed all his recommendations with the CD Bell and all the things they put him through. They recommended that he go to outpatient treatment. He did.

My older son had also gone to outpatient because he had a DUI so I did go to treatment with him.

**AS**: One of your oldest?

**LB**: The 27 year old. I had also gone through treatment with my two oldest boys [laughs]. I forgot about that. I had gone through treatment with Jason, Gabriel three times, Jason once, Kristin no. She was into drugs but she pulled out of it on her own. I don’t know how. Seth was in outpatient treatment one time for a DUI.

**AS**: Were any of these inpatient?

**LB**: Yes. This one [unclear]. That was more recent though. Gabriel. Jason was a long time ago though when he was younger. I am back tracking just a little.

**AS**: They are now recommending inpatient for Jordan?

**LB**: Yes. Then he got an assault on his record next because his girlfriend had a new boyfriend and he was upset. He punched him because she brought him to their house. He wasn’t going to let him in and the guy wasn’t going to let him in and he punched him in the car. They filed charged and he got a fourth degree assault. Second degree assault I should say.

Eventually, that gave him more problems. He didn’t meet with his PO and he wasn’t doing what he needed to do so he did some jail time. Then he got out and he was back to using and selling. I talked to his PO and I said, “He needs treatment. Putting him in jail isn’t going to help. He needs treatment.” They recommended treatment, he went through a CD .. again and they recommended treatment. This was about two years ago and he went to Project Turnabout. It was horrible. He called me and begged me to take him out.

**AS**: They are all horrible. They hate everybody.

**LB**: Treating him like crap. “If you don’t come and get me I am leaving here and I don’t care if they pick me up.” “Jordan, just calm down” trying to calm him down over the phone. Finally, he settled in a little bit. He actually did fairly well there. This Julie was a counselor that he hated at first and she was very good. She was there when my other son was there, my other two sons were there. I thought, “Ok good this is good.” Started going to meetings, was really good for the first two weeks. I even got one of his friends involved and he got sober. He was going to start taking charge in group. It was more than two weeks. It was probably a month.

And then it fell apart again. I could tell his behavior was different again. He was sleeping all day, wouldn’t come to work with my husband, he just wasn’t himself. I suspected he was right back into it again. He wasn’t doing his probation stuff again. He got called in again and he ended up having to go to court again for not following probation. No, we didn’t go to court again. Back up a little bit here. We didn’t go to court. He was at our house because him and his girlfriend were split up then. While he was in jail she moved out. We helped her move out in fact because we were still kind of helping her and we pretty much raised her. She was so young when they started dating. 15. He was at our house one night and this was about a year ago. He was just out of it. Craig called me and said, “What is going on with Jordan? He is crazy out here. I am burning brush and he fell in the fire. I had to pull him out.” He told Craig, “Yeah, I just want to die.” I thought, “Oh my god.” Then, he came in the house and I tried to calm him down but I was pissed. I was like, “What are you taking? Did you drink? Did you take drugs?” Because he acted like he was overdosing or something. He was like, “Oh, nothing.” His younger brother was in the living room. His older brother Jason, Jason is an alcoholic. He is just kind of a half-way functioning one. We gave up on him kind of. He is 40-something years old. And he is telling Jordan, “You can’t have any more of my cigarettes I gave you half of them.” and Jordan said, “I just want a cigarette.” And Jason said, “You are such a spoiled little brat” and got him going. Aggravated him to the point where he got up, went to the kitchen, got a poker from the fire place, and came in there after him. He hit him once. He was going to attack him. I went and grabbed the thing out of his hand. My dog came up and bit him, bit me because I am trying to get him away. Then, he went outside crazy, crazy, and he had done this before. Gone through these episodes when he was younger, but not when he was on anything. I don’t know what he was on, if he was on K2 because he talked about that. He went out in the shop and Craig called me within a few minutes and said, “You have to call somebody he is trying to kill me.” And he is standing over his dad with his big, huge… knocked him down on the floor and was going to hit him and said he hated him and wanted to see him dead. I called the sheriff. I said, “I don’t know what is wrong with him. I think he is drinking on top of it. We don’t know what to do here. He needs some help.”

They came out and he ran off. This had happened one other time too and we turned him in and he would run away in the yard and hide. I was scared. I locked myself in the bathroom because I didn’t know what he was going to do. He probably had a gun somewhere. I didn’t know where they were. The dispatcher stayed on the phone with me and I heard him come in the house and go upstairs. That is where he was when we found him. The deputies followed me upstairs and he finally surrendered. “You promise you won’t charge me for fleeing?” [laughter] It’s like that is the least of your problems!

I felt bad because he is laying on this bed and I thought, “We kind of got this going. Maybe we should have been calmer and not got him riled up like this.” Anyway, they took him out, arrested him, and put him in the car and got him in jail. I knew it was court the next morning. I went into the courtroom and I was met by a lady from the women’s shelter. I was a victim. They charged him with domestic abuse, they charged him with terroristic threats. We didn’t want him charged. We just wanted them to help him. He was charged with two felonies. It ended up being two felonies. The deadly weapon… it was big. It was big.

He was in court the next morning balling his head off. “I don’t remember it. I don’t remember doing any of that. I can’t imagine. That’s my mom I wouldn’t hurt her. I would never hurt my mom. I love my mom I love my dad. I don’t know what I am doing here.” He couldn’t remember any of it. My heart was breaking. He is in jail, he doesn’t remember it, and if he does he would have said something I think. I was just devastated. There is my, what do you call it…

**AS**: Your disaster.

**LB**: My disaster. The biggest disaster I had ever faced. We could have maybe prevented it by not overreacting the way we did. Although, we were scared. We just wanted them to take him and bring him somewhere. To the mental health unit or something. That is what I am thinking. I am thinking mental health here. Maybe detox at the most, but mental health mostly.

**AS**: Is there any kind of facility out here like that? Or is there just the jail?

**LB**: Well, they have the HMU and they have a crisis center. I am thinking “Help.” This isn’t on my mind.

**AS**: Right. When you say help that is different than what they…

**LB**: they came in and interviewed us that night and I said, “I am not charging him. I am not saying anything.” They said, “We have to. This is the state.” I knew that but I didn’t think of it at the time. Craig said, “Oh yeah, he said he wanted to kill me and all this stuff.” And oh my god it just mushroomed into this horrible, horrible thing that we had been involved in and kind of felt like we had caused. We didn’t really, but we did. We got him going. We were yelling at him instead of calming him down.

**AS**: Right, but you were also at a point by then where you’re frustration with his drug use. Your own reaction seems understandable, but you didn’t know what he was on.

**LB**: I didn’t know at that time.

**AS**: He wouldn’t tell you.

**LB**: No. I had no idea what was going on. I thought he was going to die.

**AS**: Right because you had asked him what he was on.

**LB**: He said he wasn’t on anything.

**AS**: He had fallen on the fire. Is this the same night?

**LB**: He just kept saying he wanted to be dead. He had said that many times before but we didn’t take it serious because he kind of always said that. You know how you get immune to it almost? You shouldn’t, but… Anyway, they did drop his charges somewhat. They did a plea bargain and this went on for months. He was in jail for months. We couldn’t see him. We were victims so we couldn’t see him. We did at first because they screwed up. Once they realized we were the victims we couldn’t go see him at the jail. His ex-girlfriend went there everyday and I think was a poor influence. He would call her and then I would talk to him, which wasn’t legal but I didn’t care. I’m talking to him. Throw me in jail. He was just so depressed. They took him off adavan. He was on adavan for anxiety before that because he had panic attacks real bad since he was young. It probably wasn’t the best drug to put him on because it is very addictive. They took him cold turkey in jail, took him off that. That is part of why he went so berserk in jail and got thrown in the hole umpteen times. He was in there Candyhow County has DOC people out there they take from prisons. They mixed the whole population he was in. His cellmate was a sexual offender plus he had committed a murder. This is what he was dealing with.

**AS**: And he is an addict.

**LB**: He’s not really a criminal. He ended up a criminal because of it but no, he hadn’t committed a murder. He didn’t do a crime against people, really, it was himself. I was just beside myself the whole time he was in there. I shut it out of my mind because I had to go to work. I was just distraught. Everyday I was just sick. I would go to bed and ball myself to sleep. My husband was feeling a lot of guilt and then sometimes I would just get angry and “Well maybe he deserves to be sitting in there and maybe we should have been …” You know, you just go back and forth with it. Maybe I should have been tougher. Maybe I had made him finish school and then we wouldn’t be in this situation. I went over that so much in my mind. I guess I just talk openly about it to people because I didn’t care. I was like, “Yeah, my son has an addiction problem.” That is when I joined Moms of Addiction.

**AS**: The Addict’s Mom?

**LB**: Yes.

**AS**: The Addict’s Mom on Facebook?

**LB**: Yes. I saw it on somebody else’s website, or on their Facebook. I thought, “Ok I am going to look into this” and it was very helpful. I put quite a bit of things up there about what I was fighting.

**AS**: When was this?

**LB**: This was last fall. In October.

**AS**: Not that…

**LB**: Beginning of November, yes. Of 2015.

**AS**: What other support did you get?

**LB**: Well, his probation officer is really a pretty good guy. I talked to him about the fact that he needed help, that jail and prison wasn’t going to do him any good. He would probably just reoffend and he needed help. He was a really good person. I believed in him.

Then, this advocate from the attorney county attorney’s office. She was very helpful too, honestly. And the advocate from the women’s shelter, which I had worked at at one point. They were both helpful to me. I kept saying, “I really don’t feel a victim in this whole situation.” I just kept trying to push that.

Eventually I met with a prosecuting attorney. I said, “I want a meeting with him because I want to explain this whole thing to him.” I just jumped in there and fought for this kid. “He needs help. Prison is not going to do him any good. Can’t you see this? You can save yourself some money by doing something different with him. He needs treatment. Yes, he has been through treatment once but one time probably isn’t good. He needs more.”

They did do a plea bargain then. I got to be pretty, you know, the prosecuting attorney was actually pretty caring after all.

**AS**: You think that was probably due to your influence?

**LB**: Definitely. They were going to throw the boat at him. He is 22 years old. I’m thinking, well he wasn’t even 22 yet then. I did everything and it consumed my life outside of my job. I had to go do my job working with mentally ill people. That was stressful. I was just wound tight. I was running from place to place on the phone constantly trying to find a treatment center that didn’t do the 12-step. I didn’t think that was real successful for him.

Then they did a CD evaluation and recommended inpatient treatment again. I wanted to find a good treatment center this time. I found Villa National in … I called his PO and said I found this treatment center. The lady that did the CD eval, I played phone tag with her I don’t know how many times. I couldn’t get a hold of her. She wouldn’t call me back. Finally I went in there and I said, “Look, I found a treatment center I really want him to go to.” “Well, we usually do this. We usually recommend…” I said, “That’s not going to work for him. He needs something other than 12-step.” He was getting out of jail soon and I wanted to get this situated so he could go right from jail to treatment. I thought if he comes home it’s not going to work.

It didn’t happen. He got out of jail.

**AS**: Why didn’t it happen?

**LB**: Because we couldn’t get it set up fast enough. People weren’t…

**AS**: People were too slow?

**LB**: The process was too slow. Villan was good but they couldn’t get his MA to go through. He got MA, they couldn’t get it to go through, call them up, “No, he doesn’t have it.” Over and over. Call the county. I went through that whole process. “Yeah, they should have it.” This went on for three weeks. He is at home and I’m thinking any minute he is just going to say, “Screw this.”

**AS**: He is going to bolt.

**LB**: Right. He is going to leave or just start using and say, “I don’t care.” Because he had been sober. He was in jail for five months. Four months. Yeah. He just went into treatment this spring. Early spring. Late February, early March. November, December, January, February. He was in about four and a half months in jail.

Then, another three weeks before he got into Vinland. They came and got him, brought him down there, and eventually it worked. He did very well there. He actually kind of liked it there because it was a different approach. It was just a nightmare trying to get it set up. I couldn’t think of anything else.

It came between my husband and I. My husband had an affair during this time. We’ve been married for 30 some years. Suddenly, my older son came and told me he said, “Dad is seeing somebody.” I feel apart. I totally fell apart. I couldn’t take it. I was like, “Are you kidding me?” I had no inkling.

**AS**: You were kind of distracted.

**LB**: Yeah. I think he just… I don’t know. I don’t know what happened. Then he told me, “Yeah, I don’t really, I think we have been married a long time and sometimes don’t you feel like you need a change?” And this was all during this time. My world fell apart. We were best friends. He was my best friend. We did everything together. We went through thick and thin with all the kids. It was horrible. I had to go to work and pretend like it was ok.

Finally, one day my supervisor came to my job site for a staffing or whatever and I just fell apart to her [laughter]. Totally fell apart. I said, “I’m a mess. I don’t know if I can even do this job.” She said, “You are doing fine.” She was very supportive, which I didn’t expect. I would burst into tears at the dumbest places. I just couldn’t do it.

**AS**: I cannot imagine.

**LB**: I kept thinking, “Other people go through worse things than this. Get it together. Hold it together. Some people their kids kill themselves and they have to deal with that. My kid is alive.” I kind of felt guilt like “Oh god, pull it together.” And I would see all these other people and their kids had committed suicide or overdosed and I just felt for them. I just thought I don’t know how I can even do this anymore. I was close to giving everything up and saying, “I can’t do this anymore.” You get to that point but something keeps you going. It kept me going, I don’t know what. I guess I had hope. I would pray and pray and pray. I was a Christian but I wasn’t real sold on the whole idea totally. I thought what is my other option? I don’t have any other option. That is what people say. It has got to be god. I had nothing to lose here. I prayed and prayed and prayed.

Jordan did well in treatment. He got into lifting weights, he got into meditation and yoga because that was part of their activities there. It was more realistic. They had groups all the time where he could talk and talk and talk. He really liked his counselor. It was a beautiful place. I went down there every weekend to visit him and eventually came on home passes and I would bring him home and bring him back and bring him back. I didn’t care what it took. It was awesome because I felt like he really connected with himself. We would go down by the lake and have long talks down there. It was the first time in years that we had really connected.

Anyway, they wouldn’t do longer than 30 days because he had already been in treatment once and the county didn’t pay for longer. I’m thinking 60 days at least. Once he caught wind of that, “Nope, I’m getting out in 30 days. I’m ready, I’m good. I’m good.” He got out and he came home and he was very motivated to get a job. I got to get a regular schedule in my life like I had there. I need to get a membership at an exercise place to work out. I love that. Everyday I do it.

I couldn’t afford to sign him up right away. We had lost our business last summer that kind of went downhill. We didn’t have hardly any income other than mine. My husband get social security but that wasn’t enough. Then Jordan needed all this stuff all the time. Cigarettes and clothes. It was just constant. Treats and, “Bring me this, bring me that.”We didn’t have much income so I couldn’t get him his gym membership and he was like “Oh, whatever.” It was so stressful trying to… I was nervous about him being home.

His girlfriend had just totally done him in. She turned into an I don’t know what. She had mental illness issues big time. Her and I were close and she just turned on you. Just turned on you. That is what she did to him. She wanted him back but she was living with a new guy. “I’m not coming back to you if you are living with him” “Well we’ll just hang out then.” I said, “Jordan, don’t go for that. I know you love…” “I love her! I love her and I love my dog.” After he got out he realized that wasn't good for him. She’s a bitch anyway. Just get rid of her. I said, “Well, it’s probably a good choice. If she’s not doing you any good. She’s messing you up. Telling you she cares but she’s with somebody else.

I took him all over to apply for jobs. First of all, he called and asked this girl out that worked at the jail when he was in jail. And I thought, “Oh good, here we go, another relationship.” I said, “What did they recommend in treatment? Don’t get involved and work on yourself for a while here.” “I know mom, but you aren’t me.” He starts going out with the girl from the jail and he moved in with her after a week. He moved in with her. He has been out of treatment for two weeks. She had a little boy and I know she had tons of problems. Nice gal, but just…

**AS**: Is this just this spring?

**LB**: It has been a couple of months. He got out in May. I could see some of the patterns starting with him again. He wasn’t handling his anxiety and he was on all these different meds and they changed them all around and they put him on not suboxone but a different one with the opiates that would keep him from craving it.

**AS**: Methadone?

**LB**: No, a different one.

**AS**: Vivitrol? Epinephrine?

**LB**: Yeah the vivitrol I think.

**AS**: A shot?

**LB**: No, he takes a pill. I can’t think of the name of it now but it was one I recommended and he started on it there and he said it really helped because he wasn’t thinking about using. He wasn’t thinking about drinking. He said I am just focused now. I feel better. I got on a different antidepressant and that seems to be working better for him. His anxiety was still there. They took him off the ativan and wouldn’t want to go back on it. He wished for that because he felt better on it.

He is living with Taylor and her little boy and he loves the little boy. He loves kids. He stayed there and then he decided he had to get a job because we didn’t have work for him in our business because our business… we were forced out of our business in town. We got evicted and we couldn’t pay the rent there. We moved everything out to our farm which was unorganized and we couldn’t do what we were doing because we didn’t have any sales. Everything was downhill. He said, “I need to get a job somewhere and keep myself busy.” So he did. He got a job, went to about 20 places interviewing and got a job eventually with Jesse Trouble doing basement foundations which was a horrible, hard job to do but he stuck in it. I kept feeling sorry for him thinking, “I got to pull him out of this. It is too hard for him. He has to get up at 5 in the morning and drive to Litchfield.”

**AS**: Poor baby!

**LB**: I feel so bad! He doesn’t have any money. I would scrape up a little for cigarettes for him thinking I want you to quit but whatever. At least you’re not drinking and using drugs. I can’t take everything away from him.

He worked and he was very reliable. He talked about maybe being a supervisor eventually but he only got 11 dollars an hour. I mean oh god, that is terrible for the work you do. Then Craig got into this thing recently where they repair semi trailers out at our place. At first it was slow but now it really picked up. Now they have a chance to make some pretty good money doing it. This guy also sponsored my son in racing. Everything kind of looked up. In the meantime we were losing our home. It was in foreclosure. The sale was set for June 7th. It has passed now. We did come up with the money. We didn’t know how. It was like some people came forward that we didn’t hardly know and they helped us. It was like an angel stepped into our life. We weren’t planning. We’ve got six months to move out and we have been there for 30 something years. It was a total disaster. This spring was a total, in some ways, he went to treatment, did good, then he got out and things were just stressful. We were losing our house. He was in limbo I felt with his use. Now, we did get the house saved. We owe tons of money to people to pay them back. I don’t know how we are going to do that.

Anyway, Jordan… him and Taylor were not doing well. The new girlfriend. She went out with some old boyfriend. He found out about it. She thought he was seeing Caitlin again, the first girlfriend and he really wasn’t. Anyway, he didn’t have any income because he quit his job. He finally couldn’t take the job anymore. My husband talked him into coming back to work for him. I was leery, I thought, “There’s not a lot of order around here. They’re kind of unorganized and it is dad and it is easy to say I’m sleeping in today.”

That’s exactly what happened. He just started sleeping all day. He wouldn’t get up. I’m thinking, “Oh god. Don’t tell me he is back into pills or something again.” I thought, “He can’t because he is testing randomly for his probation requirements.” I would look up warrants everyday because I don’t really know at this point what is going on with him.

**AS**: He is still living with…?

**LB**: He is living with us now. He moved out. She kicked him out and said he is crazy, she can’t live with him. He did come out a couple weeks ago on a Sunday and I said, “Jordan, what is wrong?” He came in the house. “I don’t have any effing money. I’m sick of living like this. I’m not doing this. I drive a piece of crap car. I had everything at one time. I sold drugs and I had money. I am so tempted to go back to selling drugs again.” I said, “Jordan, you have that choice. But do you want to sit in prison? You say I’ll just do my prison term and get it over with. Do you realize that once you got in there it is worse than jail and you would regret your decision?” “I know I would but I don’t care at this point. I’m so sick of everything. I don’t want to be sober all my life. I would rather be drinking and using drugs because I felt a lot better. This is crap. I’m not living like this for five years I’m on probation. I can’t do it. I can’t do it.” They almost set him up to fail. They give him five months probation but it seems like eternity at that age. It is a long time.

I am living in limbo now with him. He is at our house, Taylor won’t let him come back even though he’s got half his stuff there she won’t let him come back and get it. He is going to have to figure that out he is trying to be nice so he can get his stuff back. He wants to see the little boy again because he misses him. In the meantime his ex-girlfriend took his dog. She came out one night when she had found out he had a girlfriend and she came out one night and just took the dog from me. Just came to our house and grabbed this big german shepherd that we loved. We took care of her all these years because they couldn’t have her in town and took her. Jordan was just upset. He loved that dog so much. Now he is starting to see her a little bit again so he can see the dog.

A couple nights ago Craig came in and said, “He’s got to be using again because he is acting so strange. He sleeps all day and he is talking stupid and he is getting all anxious and worked up and mad like he used to and I don’t know where it is headed. That is basically where we are at right now with it. We don’t know really. I had a talk with him yesterday and I tried to stay calm and not question him constantly because sometimes he will give information if I don’t ask him.

**AS**: If you just surround…

**LB**: Yeah. He did say Taylor doesn’t want him back. I heard him call her and she said, “No, you can’t come back. You are crazy.” He had some outburst with her crying. He was at our house one day because they were going to cook out because she is kind of demanding. “We need to do fun things on the weekends. You can’t work every weekend.” Well, sometimes that’s what you have to do. She didn’t, of course, she is kinda idealistic. She wanted him to pay the rent. I think she kind of took him in because she thought he had some money coming in. I don’t know.

This is where we are at. He is living… he sleeps pretty much everyday. He wants money and I say, “Jordan, you need to work. You only out in a couple hours all week. We can’t pay you for what you haven’t worked. We want to help you but you need to help yourself somewhat here. You need to start going to meetings again. Don’t you want to…” I’m through all that crap. I’m not doing any of that stuff. As soon as I am off probation I am going to start using again. I like my life better like that.

**AS**: In five years he is going to do that?

**LB**: He thinks he might get off sooner although I don’t think so. Because they already took that away from him. Whatever that is called. He is walking the fence right now. Some days I think, well, I read some of the stuff people post: Let them go, you can’t… And I understand that part of it but it is my kid. I love him to death, he’s got so much potential. He is a loving, sweet person inside. He is the closest to me. He was my baby. He was sweet. He had episodes but, you know? I can’t imagine seeing him in prison. I keep thinking that in my mind. I want to … his PO and his dad… I better try to stay out of it.

Everybody has got their own opinions. I saw this thing the other day. “Give your child what they need, not what they deserve.” It is like yeah, that is where I am at. I am a terrible caretaker. I know I am.

**AS**: You mean you are terrible in that you care take and you’re saying that that is terrible?

**LB**: People tell me it is terrible. My daughter yelled at me the other day. She is almost an RN now. She has turned her life way around. She is very successful. She knows all the answers. “Mom, you’ve always been like this.” More or less saying that I wasn’t a very good mom because I took care of everybody too much. She fails to remember what I had to go through with her and if I hadn’t hung in there with her I don’t know what would have been. She got into drugs too when she was young. Somehow overcame them on her own.

**AS**: But you were there for her.

**LB**: I was there. I pulled her out of a drug house one night after work. I have been there for all the kids like that.

**AS**: You have been there for all your kids but now you’re thinking of yourself as not a good mother?

**LB**: I feel like I have been, not that I have failed, but I feel like I should have this, I should have done that. I don’t dwell on that because I know I can’t change it. I have to move forward and do what is good for me. But then again see my husband is not like he used to be. He’s not a caring… we don’t have a very good relationship ever since he has had this affair. It just took something out of it. I tried to overcome it. I got into therapy. He keeps telling me how strong I am and that I can get through all of this without falling apart, but I feel like sometimes I am falling apart inside because I can’t remember things. I can’t focus like I used to. I just have this in the back of my mind all the time. I am worried with Jordan now. I am worried about everybody. I am worried about all the kids. I have a 46 year old living in my apartment above the shop that is a chronic alcoholic.

**AS**: That is your oldest?

**LB**: He is my oldest. People say kick him out. Tell him to get out of there. We would have to foot the bill if we kicked him out. It’s not an option. I can’t stand it. I’m getting so I can’t stand him. He’s my kid and I can’t stand him. I love him and I feel bad for him but I can’t stand his behaviors. Taking care of everybody. That is what I am doing. I don’t see an end to it really. I don’t know where the end is ever going to… until I die probably. I’m going to be 65 soon. I think, “Geez! This isn’t what I had planned for at 65. I just thought things would be more settled or something. I don’t know why I thought that.”

**AS**: What is Seth doing?

**LB**: Seth was working for a company. He was working with my husband in this business. Seth kind of took over the financial end of it. He is very good with that. Although, some of the decisions… he made my husband and him… this business kind of tore the family apart.

**AS**: What was the business?

**LB**: At first they did work in food processing plants. They traveled all over putting piping and machines in and equipment. It traveled all over the country doing that. We sold out and then we started a local business in Willmar called Candy Coatings. They did sandblasting, painting, and powder coating and that kind of stuff. That led into… my husband has been in and out of many businesses. He is very good coming up with something. But he is not good at keeping records, following through. Anyway, Seth took that over and I think he is good at it but he would spend money on things he thought was important and Craig didn’t agree.

**AS**: It pulled them apart. Is Seth sober that you know?

**LB**: No. He is a social drinker. I don’t know really. One time I thought he was more than that but I think he is straightening out. He has seemed to identify what is good for him and what isn’t. He is growing up a little bit. He is 27 and his adult brain is starting to function and his frontal lobe or whatever is kicking in! [laughter]

He has tried to help us figure out what to do financially. He races stock cars and he’s very good. He has won some huge races. He is famous out in west central Minnesota. I am just so proud of him with that. Jordan has always felt second to Seth. He has always felt he is not as good, he is big, he should have been in football. He is like a football player. He is huge. That kept him from snocross racing.

**AS**: He didn’t find his own way.

**LB**: No, he didn’t. Then, my husband always told him, “We want to get you into racing too. We will build a car for you.” We have never been able to afford it. Jordan has had to work for things more so than Seth. Seth kinda got things handed to him. He was older and he got spoiled. He is a real achiever. Jordan isn’t as much. He’s very intelligent but he just doesn’t have that spark to… plus he has some mental health issues that Seth doesn’t have.

**AS**: Have you ever had him diagnosed?

**LB**: Yes. We sent him to St. Cloud. When he was in treatment he went up to St. Cloud, I can’t think of the name of the place now, where they diagnosed him. He went and did a lot of testing. Yes. It came back with him having defiance disorder, which doesn’t mean a whole heck of a lot. I have a little bit of background in psychology, not that I remember all of it. It was like a blanket coverage, typical things that I kind of already knew. We didn’t find anything alarming or… Yes. He has anxiety and depression and he has always had that. As a kid even. He just wasn’t diagnosed back then. He has always had a lot of anxiety even as a little kid he did. Seth will just brush things off and go think by himself. Jordan will act out and scream and holler.

**AS**: Do you have any good mother friends?

**LB**: Just through work. A couple ladies that I work with. One has gone through a little of this stuff. I think she has a real mental disorder too. It is hard. I have to overlook that a little bit to share with her. I mean, she knows what is going on. She is nice. She is very nice. I don’t put her down for that.

Not really. I have lost contact with some of my friends partly because I feel like for one thing I had kids later. People my age their kids are all grown and gone. I have six grandkids with my older kids. The younger ones, I was the old mom in school. [laughs] With Jordan, I was 42 when I had him. It seems like people my age or people that I was friends with have moved on in their life. They are retired, they are going on trips. They aren’t mothering anymore. If they did have problems they are off dealing with them on their own. I am still dealing with my youngest.

My therapist says I am the one that always feels like I have to take care of everything. What is going on with this today? Are you getting that trailer done today? I am constantly having to be on top of everything. I think that comes from the jobs I have done too. I have always been at the top trying to lead everybody. I try and do that with my family and that doesn’t work. It drives me crazy. I have to let go of some of that.

I think that was part of the reason I wanted to do this. “Oh, I get a chance to talk about my problems.” Nobody wants to hear them!

**AS**: Hopefully your therapist does.

**LB**: Well, he does, yes. He does. He is good. He is old. He is like in his late 70s. I have known him for a long time and he kind of runs this whole place. He had a lot of therapists and stuff. I think he is getting Alzheimer's. He forgets what we have talked about. He will start something…

**AS**: You might need to find someone else.

**LB**: That is where things are at. I may have missed a few things along the way.

**AS**: How is Gabriel? He was the one who was three times…

**LB**: Yes. He had a kidney disease we discovered when he was 14. He started drinking probably in his early 20s. My oldest didn't do that when they were young. They started doing it when they were later. Their dad is a chronic alcoholic. He turned himself around eventually. Their grandpa was. Gabriel has a lot of health issues. He had two heart attacks already. He is only 45. He turned 45 in May. Like I said, they were borderline. Both the oldest boys went through special ed back when they didn’t mainstream kids. They kept them in a room all day no matter how bad they were. They didn’t really get what they needed in school I don’t think.

**AS**: For the IEP.

**LB**: Yes. I think that really affected them a lot in thinking that we aren’t really good enough. We aren’t very smart. Yet, they are, they are very intelligent. It’s not that. They just have a hard time applying themselves to things.

Gabe was married and got divorced. He has three kids. That was terrible. They had money, they had fitness centers, and they went broke and lost everything. He just went through all kinds of stuff too. He has all these health issues. His hips are collapsing. He weighs almost 400 pounds now. He used to be real fit. His whole life has collapsed around in. I stepped in and took care of that because I had to. He needed help. Nobody was really there for him. It is so hard to get anything from the community anymore. As far as social services. We fought and fought for disability. Finally got him disability. He worked at a job for many years, … Manufacturing. They got rid of him because of his health issues. It wasn’t really even legal I don’t think. We just didn’t have the money to fight it. We didn’t have the money to get an attorney. We didn’t call for assistance with it. Just had to let go of it and say, “Let’s get disability then so you have something to live on.”

**AS**: You have been through some stuff. You really have.

**LB**: Well, yeah, you kind of wonder why some people don’t go through all of this. Then you kinda start thinking maybe I brought a lot of it on myself because of the way I am so caretaking. But what do you do? Ignore it when it is your kid? It doesn’t matter how old they are. I still, now I am taking him down. He went through treatment like three times. He almost died twice from alcohol. I was with him detoxing in the hospital. They had to detox him in the hospital because his heart and his liver and everything was bad. He wasn’t functioning well at all. They had to really watch him.

**AS**: How old was he then?

**LB**: That was two years ago.

**AS**: So that was recent?

**LB**: Yeah. He is not drinking now. He went through treatment three times like I said. I think he is still sober. We hope he is. He seems to be. Now, he was going to get a weight loss surgery because they can’t operate on his hips until he loses some weight. They thought it was going to be too hard on his body. They recommended weight loss surgery. We went down to Abbott. Got that all set up and then he started drinking again so he couldn’t go through with it. He was so bad he would just lay on the ground. We would try to get him up. His son starting racing. My grandson. He had a first race. He was laying out in the yard. We should have brought him to the hospital. He was probably near death. I don’t know how many times we have gone through that with him. I think he is sover. We are going on the 8th again to redo all the stuff for the weight loss surgery. I am taking him down there on the 8th. We had an appointment the other day and then his car quit. I didn’t have tabs on my car and I had forgotten about it so I didn’t want to take a chance of driving a car down there so we will take his car. His son had taken it and didn’t tell him the battery was dead. It was a big mess. We had to cancel and reschedule.

**AS**: Do you think he will do this surgery then?

**LB**: Yeah. He wants to. He just hates himself the way he is. He is self conscious. He doesn’t feel well. He can’t get around. He can’t climb steps. It has just taken so much away from him.

**AS**: Where does he live?

**LB**: He lives in Hutchinson. He lives in an apartment that I got him. I had to get him housing and get him assistance because he just couldn’t do it on his own. There was nobody to help him really.

My daughter has taken over some of it. She is a nurse. She took over his medication and stuff because I said I can’t do all this. I am trying to work. I am trying to deal with my own family. Put out my own fires. I can’t physically or mentally do all this. She took that over. Still helping him with his meds. Then she did end up having to take over his finances too because he wasn’t doing a good job of it. He was just giving money away. He is real vulnerable too in some sense.

**AS**: Is there anything else?

**LB**: No, I can’t really… I feel like ever since I had… I don’t know. I feel like my life has been kind of a disaster ever since I was in high school. [laughter] It is just one thing after another. I keep thinking, “Do I bring this on or are these things that just happen to me?”

Being a parent has been a chronic… something thrown at me everyday it seems like.

**AS**: Which is interesting thinking about your mother.

**LB**: We are almost the same probably. I don’t know.

**AS**: I don’t know, no, I just mean she just gave her children away.

**LB**: I am going to do a DNA test to see if I have any matches anywhere. If anything would show up. If anybody has tried that.

**AS**: To see if your father?

**LB**: It is like 100 bucks but I am going to save up and do it. Try to find my father. He is probably not alive but maybe my brothers. She said I have two brothers. One would be 10 years younger than me and one would be a year younger. I don’t know if she made that up because she was a storyteller too.

**AS**: I don’t know why you would make that up.

**LB**: Why would you? No one else in the family ever heard that from her. She never said that to anybody else. Nobody knew she was pregnant.

**AS**: They wouldn’t have found you if she hadn’t brought you back.

**LB**: No. No. She had hidden that from everybody.

**AS**: So she has a record of being able to do that.

**LB**: Yes. Yes. And she tried to play grandma to my kids but I was just like no. Yeah she was real frugal. She had a lot of money but she was real frugal. She would give them all a pair of socks for christmas and I got those at Goodwill and I only got them for 50 cents.

**AS**: Oh great grandma!

LB: Thanks! Just what we wanted. A pair of argyle socks or something. Just goofy. Yet, there are so many similarities we have. She loved collecting and antiques and I am so into that. We have some similarities. And art. She was an artist and I kind of took that up when I was younger. I don’t do it now. Funny how life can…

Then my cousin who I grew up with as a brother, all the parents have passed away now. They are all gone it is just my brother and I and we have a couple cousins in the family. Not many left. We have a strange relationship too. He never married, never had kids. He bought my parent’s home. He is still there. Has a dog and a cat and he had retired when he was really young. He was living in Miami for many years. He worked at immigration and had a very powerful job with that and made a lot of money. He moved up here and worked for Todd County for a while in the court system. Now he retired for good. He decided he wanted to go back for a while and he did. He was real tight. He didn’t want to help with the house thing. It is like, “Really? I would if I had the money. I would help you.” I didn’t say that to him because I can’t talk to him like that. I’m not real close to him.

**AS**: Right. But you asked. Which takes a lot of courage.

**LB**: Yes. He did help us one time a while back. We never paid him back a thousand bucks. Because we just never could do it. I was like I can’t ask him again. It is just one of those things. You just have to...

**AS**: You just keep on.

**LB**: It’s like, well, it’s kinda sad but you move on. We are what we are. We aren’t going to be real close probably ever. Because I was the warrior in the family. I was the one that did smoke and drink and he read books and sat in his room. Didn’t go anywhere. Went to college and I pumped out kids left and right and drank and partied. Good grief. I didn’t fit in that family very well. [laughter] My dad was a politician. A barber and a hairdresser then he was the mayor of our city. We lived in a suburb of the cities.

**AS**: Which was that?

**LB**: Lexington. He was on the metropolitan council. He was very political and it drove me nuts. I was never into that. I was a hippie back in the 60s. Hung out at love ins at Powderhorn Park. It was fun.

**AS**: Thank you. This has been really interesting.

**LB**: I hope there is something that will be helpful. It was fun to get together with you anyway. This was kind of a treat for me to get away and do some … sometimes. It feels that way anyway. There probably are people out there that can help but you don’t really know how to find them sometimes.

**AS**: My question is why do we continue to critique and judge our mothering? We are either mothering too much, as you think you are, or not mothering enough. What do you think about that?

**LB**: I think it is women in general. I think we are raised that way. I think it is put into our mind from an early age that the mom is the feeling part of the family and the caring part of the family. The dad is more the breadwinner. They don’t talk as much. They aren’t quite as feel-y as the moms.

**AS**: But why wouldn’t they be the ones responsible for all the troubles? Why isn’t there that sense of how “Oh I failed my son.”

**LB**: My husband does feel that way.

**AS**: He does.

**LB**: He does. He does a lot. He knows that he probably spoiled him and gave him too much and didn’t tend to the issues as they arose and instead was just waiting. He doesn’t like confrontation. I think he does feel bad about some of that.

**AS**: Maybe they just might not want to speak about it very often. There is not the cultural expectation of caregiving.

**LB**: Right. I agree that is a big part of it.

**AS**: I wonder if that is going to change a little bit.

**LB**: I wonder.

**AS**: I see dads doing more.

**LB**: Oh, yes. Much more than when I was a kid. Dad would come home and mom would have the table set, mom would clean up. That is ok if that is what you want to do. It’s not bad but things have changed. In some ways I think it was good because I think the family dynamics were a little bit closer back then than they are now in some ways. I don’t agree with everything. But I think families are really not together like they used to be. At least I have experienced that myself. We are encouraging kids to be so independent and involved in this and involved in that and do this. They’ve got to go to college. I don’t agree with that either. Kids have different interests. In that respect I think I did ok. Even trying to homeschool. Even if it failed. Seth went on to get his GED and he is fine. He went to college for a little bit and didn’t like it. They hate school. They like to have hands on jobs. That’s fine. Whatever works. I feel like I wish I had done a little more with myself. I mean I got a degree in psychology and communication. I worked in jobs and it helped but… I never really made any money doing anything with that.

**AS**: What is it that you do exactly?

**LB**: Right now I work at… I took this just as part time because I wasn’t working at all when our business was succeeding. It is called Chyrsalis in Willmar. It is a friend of mine owns it. It is mentally ill, mentally handicapped adults. Right now I am just working with two women part time in their own apartment. I go there a couple hours a day. It is ok. It is some money. It is a job. At lesat I am doing something.

**AS**: And it is part time?

**LB**: Yeah. she would like me to do more.

**AS**: You have a lot on your plate.

**LB**: There is a lot going on. Defintiely.

**AS**: At least for that kind of work. IF you were to do other work maybe it shouldn’t be caretaking.

**LB**: And I had a si… program. I worked at the women’s shelter as an advocate. I went to court with a lot of women. I worked at a facility for teenage girls for 12 years. Just a lot. I worked at the crisis center. I worked with a boys group. Sexually abused boys. I had that group for a long time. I guess that is what I felt comfortable doing. I loved doing that. But it does take a toll after a while. You know that I am sure. You kinda just get where you lose yourself in it almost. I can do this sure. I can help them yup. I can help them yup. What is your problem. And then it is like what am I going to do for myself. Where did I go?

**AS**: Thank you.