**Bill Cole**

**Narrator**

**Amy Sullivan**

**Interviewer**

**April 2, 2017**

**At the Home of Amy Sullivan**

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Bill Cole -BC

Amy Sullivan -AS

**AS:** This is Amy Sullivan. I’m at my home in Minneapolis with William Cole. Bill Cole. It is April 2, 2017. Bill do you give me permission to record this interview?

**BC:** I do.

**AS:** Thank you. Let’s go back to what you were going to say about birds and childhood.

**BC:** We were just talking about; Amy has a stack of bird books here. I like birds, nature. We were talking about pets. Growing up I had all kinds of pets but never had a single dog which is kind of funny. I grew up in East Africa where my parents were missionaries. The mission forbade missionaries to have dogs because they were afraid of rabies. We had everything else under the sun. Different kinds of monkeys and baboons and antelopes and wild pigs and birds.

**AS:** Where in East Africa did you grow up?

**BC:** I was born in Ethiopia. I live there until I was fourteen. Then I moved to Southern Sudan. I was going to a boarding school in Kenya when my parents worked in Sudan. Different way of growing up.

**AS:** Do you want to talk about that a little more? When were you born? How old are you?

**BC:** I was born in 1962. That makes me fifty five. I was born in the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. My parents worked in many cases in very remote areas. We never owned a vehicle in Ethiopia. There weren’t roads; the only way in and out was by airplane or by foot or mule. No electricity, no running water. A very full life. A lot of adventure. I went to boarding school in the capital.

**AS:** At what age?

**BC:** I started when I was seven. My brothers started when they were six or maybe even five. We would spend four or five years in Africa and then come back to the states for a year or to Ireland. My dad is from Ireland. Then we’d come back and be on furlough. We’d go back and forth. Boarding school was an interesting experience. Not all bad, not all good.

**AS:** You were in boarding school in Kenya or in Ethiopia?

**BC:** When we lived in Ethiopia I went to boarding school in Ethiopia in the capital. We would travel back and forth on vacations to see my folks.

**AS:** But your parents would be kind of out in the bush?

**BC:** Yes.

**AS:** Did you have a home?

**BC:** In the bush, yes. My dad was a builder. He would go into a place and he’d build a clinic. My mom was a nurse and she ran the clinic. My dad would build school buildings and houses. He would hire Ethiopian teachers to teach and he’d administer the school and they’d move on to another place.

**AS:** What was the church affiliation?

**BC:** It’s an interdenominational Protestant organization. We had all denominations.

**AS:** What was it called?

**BC:** It was called Sudan Interior Mission. At the time now it’s called Serving in Mission.

**AS:** So it’s still going?

**BC:** It’s a pretty large organization, well known. They do a lot of development work as well as evangelical work.

**AS:** Where are your parents now?

**BC:** They’ve both passed.

**AS:** Did they continue to do this even into your adulthood?

**BC:** Oh yes. I lost my mom when I was sixteen. Then my dad remarried another missionary out there. The only reason why they came back was because of his health issues. He loved being there. That was his life. He loved wild places and wild people that lived in them.

**AS:** People kind of untouched by…

**BC:** He never really felt that comfortable. I don’t know how to put it. In formal urban settings. He’d freak out if he got into an elevator. He just didn’t like it.

**AS:** He was from Ireland? Tell me about him a little bit and your mom?

**BC:** He grew up in Northern Ireland. Went to school until about eighth grade equivalent. He did an apprenticeship under my grandfather. Then had a conversion experience and decided that he wanted to be a missionary in Africa. His father, my grandfather, said, “You’re out of here. I don’t want to see you again.” That stayed. My grandfather died a very bitter man unfortunately.

**AS:** Was it because of the religion that your dad professed? Was it all Protestant?

**BC:** It was Protestant. But my dad’s taking it seriously. I think my grandfather was upset that my dad wasn’t carrying on the family business. He was a joiner or carpenter. That was upsetting to him. My mom came from New England, from Boston. Her family was really from Nova Scotia. They moved down and she went out unmarried.

**AS:** She went into missionary work unmarried?

**BC:** Yes.

**AS:** They met later?

**BC:** Yes. So for my dad he was very adventurous and I could see him doing that. For a single young woman from a proper Boston upbringing to go and do this thing was just amazing to me. They met and married out there and had four kids. I’m the youngest of four boys. The things that my mom put up with. Before they were married my dad would take off. The mission would want to learn about places in Ethiopia, remote places. They said, his name was also Bill, “We’ll send Bill out and find out what’s going on out there.” My dad, he’d have a schedule. He’d say, “I’ll be back in January.” March would come around and he still wouldn’t be back. There’s no contact at all. You’re out there. Crazy, crazy experiences. Once they got married that settled down.

**AS:** She went with him?

**BC:** Yes and they were established in one place. She would run a clinic. I have a lot of admiration for my mom. She was an amazing person. Some of the things that she would do is just crazy. Sometimes there’d be tribal warfare going on. She would have to take care of people sometimes with no anesthetics.

**AS:** She’d basically be the only medical person.

**BC:** Right. My dad would help out where he could. The level of commitment that they had was amazing. Just incredible. The love they had for each other and this common purpose is just astounding. There’s one time where there was a tribal skirmish going on. Our station was neutral. No fighting at the station because all the wounded would be coming in. The fighting would flare up and the women and children would all come to our station. They would stay there and then the wounded would start coming in. And the tension.

**AS:** Because it would be women from both sides?

**BC:** Both sides, right. The wounded from both sides. Anytime that my dad wanted to leave the station, the home tribe, they were one of the warring tribes. They really respected and appreciated my parents being there but if we wanted to leave the station the chief said, “You can’t leave unless you have seven or eight young men around you, armed men, to make sure that you’re protected.” It was really touch and go sometimes.

**AS:** You said you moved to Sudan?

**BC:** We went from the kettle to the frying pan or something. That was a dangerous place too. It’s an interesting upbringing. In a lot ways I sensed a lot of freedom, being able to move around. But there’s also a lot of danger too. There’s a certain element of danger. I kind of like that. Everything’s an adventure there.

**AS:** You don’t have to go find out.

**BC:** Exactly.

**AS:** They exist simultaneously. What about high school? Your brothers, did you all go? How long were you educated in Africa?

**BC:** Almost all of us through high school. Then we all came back to the states for college.

**AS:** Is there a big range in your ages?

**BC:** Ten years. I came back when I was eighteen. I took a year off in high school and spent part of the time in Sudan with my dad. Then I came back and spent the rest of the time working to get enough money for college. When I was in eighth grade I was in the states and I had a paper route. I saved up five hundred dollars in eighth grade. That was a lot of money. I put it in a bank account in New York because I knew that I would need it someday. I came back to New York and picked up my five hundred bucks and I was on my way. I grabbed my Greyhound ticket and I was going.

**AS:** Back up and tell me how did your mom pass?

**BC:** It was a car accident in Sudan. We were both in the same car accident. It was a pretty rough experience but a pretty amazing experience too. We were in the back of a heavy pickup and it flipped over. My mom and I were in the back. She got thrown out. We both got thrown up. It landed on top of me.

**AS:** The truck?

**BC:** Yes. They tried to lift it off of me and they couldn’t. I was conscious the whole time which was even worse. I was in shock. There happened to be a bulldozer down the way. This was in a part of Sudan where there are no paved roads within hundreds of miles and maybe ten working bulldozers. It was just amazing this thing was there. It was able to lift it off of me. This is kind of an awful story. They pulled me out and they took me to this nearest village where there was a medical, what they called a dresser, a paraprofessional who happened to be drunk at the time. I didn’t know. My mom seemed to be doing okay at the time. She’s hurting and her side was injured. From my waist down I had been crushed. He had grabbed my legs and was moving my legs around. Just then these two Europeans came into this hut. Big, kind of balding but young European guy grabbed the dresser and just decked him. Just knocked him on his butt. He saw what he was doing. This guy was a doctor. He was working on a startup sugar cane plantation down there. He grabbed us and hauled us out to his facility. I had injured my hands and he was stitching it up and stitching up my head and stuff. Then the next day we flew up to Khartoum.

**AS:** Were your legs broken?

**BC:** My pelvis was crushed in four places. That’s what we knew at the time. We were in this place in Khartoum that wasn’t very good. That’s where my mom, I think she had a blood clot or something. It really was kind of awful. We’re both in the same room. I can’t move. I’m paralyzed essentially from the waist down. She expired right there. It was kind of brutal. It was tough. They flew me back to the states after that. My mom was buried in Khartoum. They flew me back to the states and they found out one of my vertebrae was cracked too. At that point I was able to start moving my legs around a little more. I didn’t have very much feeling in my left leg. The doctor was saying, “You’ll be very fortunate to walk unaided again. You’ll be here for at least a year.”

**AS:** That was in the US?

**BC:** I was able to leave in a couple of months. I was fortunate. I had a killer physical therapist, Patty. She was great. Then we moved back.

**AS:** I was just interested. Thanks for sharing that. That must have been hard though on everybody.

**BC:** It was hard. It was really hard for my dad.

**AS:** They were a team.

**BC:** It was hard on his and my relationship. I was coming home from school, from boarding school, and it would just be he and I. Maybe sometimes some other people. You’re dealing with those teenager years to begin with and there is all this tension. It was hard.

**AS:** Where did you go to college?

**BC:** I went to a small Christian school in Arkansas called the John Brown University. Have you heard of John Brown?

**AS:** I grew up in Tulsa.

**BC:** Did you? We’re close to Tulsa.

**AS:** John Brown University is in what town?

**BC:** Siloam Springs.

**AS:** I was going to guess somewhere around there.

**BC:** I chose that school because I knew people that I grew up with there. I had one cousin in the U.S. and all the rest of them were in Ireland. I had no connections here. It was a great experience. That’s where I met Laurie, my wife.

**AS:** Where is she from?

**BC:** She’s from Minnesota.

**AS:** Wow, and she ended up down in Arkansas.

**BC:** She wanted to head south and get warm.

**AS:** You guys met and then tell me about that and how you ended up here.

**BC:** I was smitten I guess. We met; we were friends for a long time. We did a lot of fun stuff together. We used to run together a lot. We’d go out and just have fun. Then we started dating. That was a great way to go about doing things. We got married on graduation day.

**AS:** You’re like twenty two, twenty three?

**BC:** Yes. Twenty three. All of our friends were there. Why go someplace else? We knew we wanted to get married. Why get married and have everybody come to us? We planned everything and it was so low-key. It was so fun. It was a really simple thing. Our families were all coming anyways. It was such a small school too. At graduation they call your name and you walk across the aisle. “Bill Cole is getting married this afternoon.” It was a great school experience.

**AS:** What did you major in?

**BC:** Biology. I love nature.

**AS:** When did you guys get married?

**BC:** We got married in ‘86. From there we went to Florida, Fort Meyers, and lived there for a year. I did an internship for a non-profit called the Educational Concerns for Hunger organization. They provide technical assistance to agriculture workers overseas. They have a seed bank. They redistribute seeds and collect information. We lived in a small trailer in Fort Meyers, it was great. From there we moved to the Bahamas and lived in the Bahamas for a year, a small island. There were like twelve people on the entire island, it was a research facility. From there we moved back up to Minnesota for the summer and then down to Alabama for graduate school. I did my graduate work in fisheries and aquaculture. Laurie did hers in library and information sciences. I went to school at Auburn. She did her coursework at the University of Alabama. If you know anything about those two schools people could not believe that we were married because there’s such a focus on football.

**AS:** As if that dictates all relationships.

**BC:** It does down there. It’s crazy. We finished up graduate school. We got to California for a year. I worked on a commercial fish farm out there, a tilapia farm. Then from there we moved to the Virgin Islands for seven years. Will, our son, our one and only son was born down there. He’s actually born here but then we moved. Then we left there when he was one and a half maybe. At that point we totally enjoyed living down there. It was a great place to be at that time. We wanted Will to have some roots someplace. We thought that was important. We moved back to the States, back to Alabama for a year. I was working for Auburn in the fisheries program. We moved up to Minnesota when Will was like two and a half. Then we’ve been here for nineteen years. Hopefully the math adds up.

**AS:** How does that feel after moving around? You moved a lot as a kid too.

**BC:** I have a hard time being in one place for too long. I’ve gotten more used to it. That said, we’ve always told Will that once he’s out of college that all bets are off. Once he’s out of high school all bets are off. We’ll go wherever we want to go. I’ve no qualms about picking up and moving at all. I love experiencing other places and other cultures and other people. Everything around it. That’s the spice of life for me.

**AS:** Talk about Will. Was his childhood pretty steady, pretty stable?

**BC:** Yes, I would think it pretty typical.

**AS:** I’m just guessing, I don’t mean to put words in your mouth.

**BC:** I think you’re right. A pretty typical suburban, middle class upbringing. Both parents working. He went to a daycare fairly early on. Developed friends from that daycare at an early school experience that he still has today. Really good friends. It’s really good that he still stays in touch with them. They really have a very close bond. That’s a really fun thing. That’s good. He went through the Minnetonka school system? He was very social, very active, and athletic. He loved sports; he loved running around and games. He was an avid reader. I remember him reading the Harry Potter books, he was really young. I remember reading to him when he was at a certain age. I remember him reading to me and me falling asleep. It was great. It was a lot of fun.

**AS:** When he was like ten or something?

**BC:** Yes. We did a lot of stuff together. We did martial arts together which was fun. It was a great father-son activity. We’d both get into it. We got our black belts. He continued on and I ended up teaching for quite awhile. He dropped out after his black belt. I don’t blame him. He achieved something that was really good. He said, “I just want to try other things.” “Fine, that’s great.” It was a great experience. He played football, basketball. He got into lacrosse. He was a very good lacrosse player up into high school. When he started using then he totally dropped out. It was sad. One of those things you give up.

**AS:** Do you want to talk about that? When you first started noticing stuff?

**BC:** I think Will being as social as he was and always wanting to be around people and be doing the “in” kind of thing. I think he started smoking weed when he was around fourteen. I think it started out occasional. It just fully progressed. It got to the point where in high school I think he was smoking almost daily, at least numerous times a week. He started using other drugs, opioids at around seventeen. From what he tells me the first time he ever tried them was one of his friends gave him some pills. His friends had this sports injury and had some extra pills that he gave to Will. Will took some and Will knew right then that was his drug of choice. That was what he was looking for. That was it. Other drugs, primarily benzos and Xanax. Those kinds of things. He started out with Vicodin and oxycodone and then I learned this a little bit later but he got into fentanyl. He was doing IV fentanyl a couple times in high school and then much more later on. It was kind of a downhill slide through high school. We tried to get him into outpatient up at Hazelden. I think at the time we just thought it was pot but it was heavy use.

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

**BC:** He was a junior. He continued to use and he got kicked out of the program. He tried some other counseling. He does have a history of anxiety issues. I will back up a little bit. When he was fourteen he was inpatient for anxiety at Riverview.

**AS:** Fairview?

**BC:** Fairview Riverside for a week. I don’t know if that was the best experience for him. I think he was introduced to the drug culture there. I think it was kind of traumatic on him too. I don’t know.

**AS:** The institutional part?

**BC:** Yes, the institutional part and being away from home and being stuck in this place where he couldn’t leave. I think that’s definitely influenced his story. Fast forwarding into high school, he entered his senior year using pot. I think that’s what we knew what he was doing at that time. His grades were always pretty good. He was always a good student. Then his behavior was starting to change more and more. I didn’t know I really didn’t know what was going on. The signs of opioid use, the nodding, the pinpoint pupils. I didn’t know at first. I knew he was doing something, some kind of drug. It was so insane to me. I remember telling him this, “Will, if I knew that you weren’t doing drugs I would take you to the hospital right now because of the way you’re acting. I know you’re doing drugs, I know the reason.” It’s so irrational, why don’t I take him to the hospital right now? It’s insane. It doesn’t make any sense. Somehow I justified it in my mind. We definitely sought treatment for him. Once we understood what it was then we sought care.

**AS:** You’re saying that the fact that you knew he was using drugs didn’t prompt you to take him to the hospital.

**BC:** To rush him to the hospital.

**AS:** Because you knew it was drugs. If it had been anything else you would have seen how crazy, what bad shape he was in.

**BC:** Yes, somehow it made it not okay but I thought I understood what was going on. It’s at that point, I didn’t rush him to the hospital but we said we’ve got to get really serious about it.

**AS:** Did he ever admit what he was using? At that point if you had said, “What are you doing?” Would he have…?

**BC:** I don’t recall when I first found out that he was doing opioids. It was sometimes later in his senior year. At that point he was crashing pretty hard. He was all set to start school at University of North Dakota. I’m trying to recall the treatment he had done. I think he’d done some other outpatient.

**AS:** He first went to treatment at Fairview when he was fourteen. Did he go into other outpatient?

**BC:** He did.

**AS:** Did it interrupt his schooling or was he able to go after school?

**BC:** It didn’t interrupt his schooling.

**AS:** Then the first inpatient after Fairview?

**BC:** It was after his graduation from high school.

**AS:** He got all the way through high school.

**BC:** He was almost through senior year and it got so bad we told him, “You’re not going to college. We can’t support you in the state you’re in. You cannot survive there. You need to get into treatment.” That’s when we first started battling insurance companies. Getting his initial inpatient was really difficult.

**AS:** How so? Why?

**BC:** We really felt like his life was in danger.

**AS:** I thought you were talking about insurance companies. That was difficult?

**BC:** That was too. This dealing with a situation and knowing how severe his addiction was and trying to get help for him and trying for Laurie and I to be on the same page was really challenging.

**AS:** Talk about that a little bit?

**BC:** I feel very fortunate to be married to Laurie. We both see things pretty eye to eye, most of the time. Dealing with a difficult issue like Will’s addiction can definitely put strain on one. Having the both of us has been really helpful. When I’ve felt strong and rooted and confident in a direction she might feel low. I can bring her up and vice versa. I’ll feel low and weak where she feels confident. I don’t know how single parents do it. It’s got to be extremely difficult. We do see things for the most part eye to eye. There’s been some tension for sure.

**AS:** Based on decisions about what to do or how to influence him or get him to do things?

**BC:** Exactly.

**AS:** When did you first learn that he was using opioids?

**BC:** The first shocker I guess, what was most memorable was finding Will passed out in his bathroom. He was out and had been smoking opiates, what we found out was fentanyl off of foil. His friends happened to be coming over around that time. His friends didn’t use opioids but they did use other drugs. They saw what was going on and they said, “Get him to the hospital.” We found some packets. One of the guys knew, “This is fentanyl. He’s been smoking it. He’s really messed up.”

**AS:** Was he using the patches? Fentanyl patches?

**BC:** No.

**AS:** Where was he getting this?

**BC:** It was a synthetic powder. I don’t know if I can talk about that. There’s an ongoing court case.

**AS:** That Will is involved in?

**BC:** Tangentially. I took him to the Mission detox and brought him there. They go, “We don’t want him here. He needs to go to the emergency room to get stabilized.” They thought he was overdosing. I guess he was.

**AS:** Were you able to revive him.

**BC:** Yes, and keep him awake. I was driving and kind of shaking him. I didn’t have a Narcan kit with me. We got him to; I forget what hospital in the emergency room. I don’t know if that’s the first time I found out about opioid use but that was a very memorable time when I found out that he was using fentanyl. We had just recently completed a Rule 25. To do that I chronicled everything in Will’s history. I should have brought that.

**AS:** You can share it with me later.

**BC:** It’s all kind of a blur. His first inpatient…

**AS:** He’s only nineteen right now. Right now you are in the middle of it. This is just since 2015? Would he have graduated high school then?

**BC:** Yes, 2015.

**AS:** There’s been no clearing in your brain for any kind of normal, I just feel like things are really jumbled in your brain right now because you’re still in the thick of it. Would you say that’s fair?

**BC:** Yes. We did have one three month stint where he was out in college in Southern California. He did stay clean, he said he did. I believe him otherwise I don’t think he could have been out there and been able to do what he did. Then he relapsed. He came back from college for Christmas.

**AS:** It was just last fall?

**BC:** Yes. I don’t know if you want to attempt to do it chronologically or just go with like when he came back from college.

**AS:** Let’s go from there. The other thing is how are you functioning as a dad at this point? That intrigues me. What are you facing that you hadn’t faced before as a parent? You were just describing driving to the hospital with him trying to keep him awake. Laurie wasn’t around?

**BC:** At that particular time she was on a little vacation with her friends. They were in Wisconsin. It was just me which was scary. I’ll describe what happened when he got back from college and I can tell you about how I was feeling. He came from college and both Laurie and I could sense that he wasn’t going back. I even asked, “Are you going back?” “We’ll see.” That’s strange he should be saying, “Yes, I’m going back.” He was definitely prelapsing. He was on Suboxone since 2014 I think. But he cheats. He doesn’t take it when he wants to get high. Then he saves it up and there’s value to it and you can sell it and get drugs. He had a really good Suboxone provider here in Minnesota, very responsible. He another one out in California which not very responsible at all. He was stocking up on the Suboxone and not using it but some point right before coming back for Christmas break. He came back and he started using pretty heavy. Then I found him again in his bathroom passed out. That’s when I realized that he was IV fentanyl. I grabbed him and had my Narcan kit with me. I didn’t administer it at the time. I took him up to the emergency room. The put him right on a Narcan drip. What they said was for heroin users they give them one shot. They had him on a drip for four hours or something. Just to keep him awake. He was not happy about this situation at all. Then he went into treatment again. I had a hard time getting him into treatment even after overdosing in January. He went to Beauterre to treatment there. He came back, relapsed and now he’s in Hazelden.

**AS:** Where’s Beauterre?

**BC:** It’s in Owatonna. It’s a good place. He’d been there twice. How I’m feeling, right now it’s just now that I’ve come to the really true realization that I can’t do anything for Will. As much as I try to get him into treatment that’s not helping him. It’s great that he’s there, don’t get me wrong. He’s there and he’s not using. Any day that he’s not using is a victory. I don’t think he can live at home. That’s a sad thing. It’s not my choice. It’s what it is.

**AS:** You haven’t had really a break since he got home in December from the chaos of addiction?

**BC:** Right. He was in Beauterre for thirty days. You’re still not away from it.

**AS:** You’re on because you’re visiting and you’re checking in. This is his sixth time in inpatient?

**BC:** Yes.

**AS:** Did he go willingly? Do you want to talk about what you said early when you first got here about what you had to say?

**BC:** A few times, probably three out of the sixth times, we’ve told him, “It’s either treatment or you’re out on your own.” That’s what it came down to this time too.

**AS:** Has he ever left?

**BC:** I think he maybe spent one night out. That was it. “I don’t want to do this.” It was really hard to get him to treatment this last time. I think it gets more and more difficult as I get older. I told him, “I’m either going to take you to treatment or I’m calling the Eden Prairie police to tell them you’re unwelcome here and you’re trespassing and I’ll press charges.” That’s ultimately what got him out. He was high at the time.

**AS:** When?

**BC:** When I took him to treatment. Then it was hard. I think that he felt like he was being abandoned. He said as much. That we didn’t care for him. I explained from my point of view that we cared deeply for him and that’s what we’re doing what we’re doing. He really needs to start caring for himself. We haven’t abandoned him. There’s nothing further from the truth. He’s really abandoned us, his family and everything that’s been good in his life. He’s abandoned it because of his love for this drug. It’s just all consuming. It is. One way to describe it is a love affair. You can’t get enough of it. Your whole being centers around it.

**AS:** Do you have any history of addiction in your family?

**BC:** Yes. My brother, one of my brothers, is a recovering alcoholic. He’s doing really well. He had some really dark times. We had to do an intervention. He got his life turned around. He suffered some losses that resulted in his addiction. On Laurie’s side there’s some addiction issues there and anxiety issues as well. I think there is a genetic component to it for Will.

**AS:** But it wasn’t something you and Laurie battled on your own?

**BC:** No.

**AS:** There was no problem in his childhood. It was his social group and access. You said none of his other friends were using opioids?

**BC:** Some of them were. I found out later. It’s really funny. Some of his closer friends, they smoked quite a bit of weed. They did an intervention for Will.

**AS:** Unknown to you guys?

**BC:** Yes. Just an informal, ad hoc kind of a spur of the moment thing. They sat him down and said, “What the hell are you doing?”

**AS:** When was this? His senior year?

**BC:** Yes, I think so. They were worried about him.

**AS:** That’s impressive.

**BC:** These kids that I thought were way out there.

**AS:** You couldn’t imagine them ever doing that?

**BC:** Right.

**AS:** We judge them.

**BC:** Exactly.

**AS:** We judge those bad friends right? And then it’s our own kid. What’s this been like for you as a parent and as a dad? His adolescence has been clouded by addiction. How about your friendships or being a parent in public spaces? Has that had an impact on you?

**BC:** Absolutely. There’s been times when I don’t want to see people that I know, that know Will. I don’t want to have to explain. I don’t want to have to hear about how their kids are doing so well in college. “How’s Will? Where’s Will?” I’ve gotten over that. I feel like I can really be happy for people and what their kids are doing, Will’s peers. I think that’s great. For the most part I’ve gotten over being able to talk about Will’s situation. I don’t go on necessarily broadcasting it but if somebody asks me, “What’s Will up to?” I’ll say, “He’s in treatment. He has…” What’s the proper term now?

**AS:** Substance use disorder.

**BC:** Yes. I’ll talk about that. I think it’s important to talk about that. If we’re not open about it then as a society we’re not going to get on the solution side of it if we’re just closed up. I think it’s important. At work there’s some people that know just because all of a sudden I’ll have to take a day because something is going on. It’s important that some of them know. It was really hard. I mentioned that he was a good lacrosse player. In junior high he had a lot of potential going into high school. He made the varsity team. He was a starter when he was a sophomore. That’s when he started really getting into pot and other drugs. I remember in his senior year he still made the team, barely. I remember going to games and just hated going to games. I hated it because they never played him. These other parents, there was this parent sport culture. It gives me the willies. They’re talking about their kids’ stats and stuff. They’re all up there and Will’s on the sidelines. Whereas a couple years before he’d been starting. He never got played. I remember getting really mad, and I usually not like this, I approached the coach and said, “What is up? Why aren’t you playing Will?” I thought the coach was being a jerk. I wasn’t one of those parents. He just said that Will wasn’t doing anything in practice or anything.

**AS:** You didn’t know that.

**BC:** Eventually it became obvious. I wanted to support him and wanted to be there but I just hated being there.

**AS:** It’s kind of right in your face.

**BC:** Exactly. It’s just a silly thing.

**AS:** It’s just an example of what it feels like to be in public. Did he ever have any issues with the law?

**BC:** No. One of his friends overdosed and died. There’s a pending lawsuit around that. Will’s caught up in that.

**AS:** Was Will with him when he purchased it?

**BC:** Yes.

**AS:** How did that death play out in your family? Can you talk about that? This is a young man from Minnetonka?

**BC:** From the area.

**AS:** If I recall, nineteen or twenty.

**BC:** What was shocking to me, what was so disheartening was that you would think that this would be a wakeup call. This was a good friend of Will’s. They had a strong friendship and he cared deeply about this person. I thought it would be a wakeup call for Will and it wasn’t. He and I went to the funeral.

**AS:** Was this like a year ago? A year and a half ago?

**BC:** A couple years ago. I don’t remember. It was just crazy. That he still didn’t want to seek help for himself. He stayed in touch with the family, with the mom which was really cool. He went to visit her when he was on break. I can’t imagine what they’re feeling, what she’s feeling. Especially towards Will because Will was a part of this thing. To let Will into their house and to accept him that’s pretty amazing. I think addicts think they’re immune to death and overdose. It’s so crazy what’s happening all around.

**AS:** It’s that part that I have trouble bridging. No matter how many times I hear stories and how much I try to empathize that fearlessness around death. To me it has to be that, it has to be fearlessness or something. They can’t be thinking they’re immune to dying when they’ve known so many people who have died. What is it? That’s the part I don’t understand.

**BC:** I don’t know. Maybe it’s something that the draw of getting high is worth the risk. It’s not rational. It’s not. It’s irrational.

**AS:** It reminds me of when Bob Levy was talking to our group about the nurse who stuck her hand in the sharps container and was risking every known human pathogen just to get to a little bit of dilaudid. That’s an example of the power. So what about death?

**BC:** There’s got to be something else that motivates them besides dying. That’s kind of what he was saying about pilots and doctors. They’re more worried about their license. One thing that’s been driving Will is college.

**AS:** He does want to?

**BC:** Absolutely. That’s what’s driving him. He’s all mad at us. “What about college? I’m supposed to start summer classes at Normandale.” That’s a good thing. It is something to work towards. It tears me up as a father, how do you not squelch that drive, take away that drive and get him to a length of sobriety that he needs in order to sustain going to school for a longer period of time. I don’t know if I have the answer for that. That’s one of the tensions I feel. Another tension that I feel, I’ve heard other parents of addicts talk about you eventually come to a point where you accept the fact that you could lose your child. To be brutally honest, I don’t know if I’ve come to that point yet. I can see that maybe, I don’t know if that’s a goal.

**AS:** If it’s a goal to realize that your kid might die?

**BC:** Yes. I don’t know. That sounds stupid.

**AS:** No, it doesn’t sound stupid.

**BC:** This is crazy to think about. In reality I’ve been losing Will since he was sixteen, seventeen slowly. I’ve been losing him. I feel extremely ripped off in this whole thing. Other people have got to experience Will when he’s been on a sustained period of sobriety. Even if it’s for a thirty day treatment, he’s been sober and his old self is starting to reemerge. When he was at college for three or four months other people got to experience that. I didn’t. I’m just ripped off. I don’t get to experience that. It’s a drag. I’ve watched another sad thing is watching his friends slowly drop away too.

**AS:** You mean losing his old friends because of his addiction?

**BC:** Yes. I’ve mentioned that he had some really good friends from when he was very young. A couple of them have really stuck with him which is really fun. Otherwise people just kind of drift away and do other things.

**AS:** You said earlier when we were talking before we started the recording that you thought you’d be a good bad example of a dad. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**BC:** I don’t know.

**AS:** What do you think you did that was bad?

**BC:** I guess really in a very general way not realizing the seriousness of where he was at.

**AS:** Two years ago or before?

**BC:** Maybe even a little bit before that. Not being a little bit harder on him, making him more accountable for his decisions. He got high and had been using whatever vehicles in order to enable him to be high. Not saying he can’t use the vehicle for another month. We did some of that but I think I would have been a little bit harder on him.

**AS:** Do you think that would have changed anything?

**BC:** I don’t know.

**AS:** I’m just being the devil’s advocate right now.

**BC:** Right now I just know it’s not very good. Maybe if I would have done something like that it could have been worse. I don’t know.

**AS:** What you’re really talking about is how we judge ourselves as parents and how we grade ourselves as if we are somehow implicated in the addiction or that it started. That we somehow had some control over it.

**BC:** That’s step one. I still struggle with step one to be quite honest with you. I do. I didn’t cause it; I don’t think I was a primary cause of it. I don’t know how all of that plays out. I definitely contributed to it.

**AS:** In what way?

**BC:** Not having good enough boundaries for him. The thing is I think you can’t raise kids in isolation. They are who they are. They’re going to gravitate towards certain activities.

**AS:** Do you think him being an only child had any impact on what you see as being a boundaries issue? Because he was the only child did you have in your family dynamic what was his role? You don’t have other kids so you don’t know what that is like but you were a sibling.

**BC:** It could very well have. I think that families that have more than one kid have to split their time up between those kids. As a result you’ve got four kids running around the house the parents go, “This is your boundary. You better understand it.” With one kid it’s a little bit softer. If that makes sense.

**AS:** I think that’s a good way to put it. You don’t have to be as strict. You can do more negotiating and coming to terms and dealing with each other.

**BC:** I think that’s right. I think my own upbringing kind of influences my approach as a father. Growing up in boarding school, very restrictive, especially the first boarding school I went to. Not only physically restrictive, there was a fence all the way around with barbed wire on top. Mostly for our protection. We’d sneak out and stuff. Also, all your time was occupied. There’s very little freedom. We were up early in the morning for Bible study, breakfast, school and we had rest hour right after lunch. We had to be in the dorm and lying on the bed and be quiet. Back to school and then sports and then supper and then study hall and then to bed. Saturday was glorious. Saturday was your day. One of the punishments was they’d take away your Saturday and make you stay in the dorm room on your bed and you had to be quiet all day. Besides they whipped you too.

**AS:** Did you get in trouble?

**BC:** Yes, I got into trouble a lot. There was this real restriction and control. I resent to this day. Critical thinking was not encouraged. Being able to explore things was not encouraged. This is the way you think and that’s it. Now as a parent I push away from that. Maybe I give Will more freedom than he really needed. I’m not judging myself this is just what I’m perceiving. I want Will to know why he believes what he believes. I want him to be his own person and be able to think critically. Maybe I drove him way too far the other way. We had boundaries. We were relatively strict with things. The thing about negotiating was interesting because there was some of that too. Will actually benefitted from that because he’s a real good negotiator.

**AS:** He’s been interacting with two adults which can be a really great way to be raised.

**BC:** He had friends.

**AS:** Right, I meant in his kind of formative relationships. Anything else? We didn’t talk about your struggles with insurance companies.

**BC:** I don’t know if I should name the insurance company.

**AS:** Go right ahead. I can strike it if I want to later.

**BC:** Blue Cross Blue Shield Minnesota. When we were dealing with Will’s treatment initially, that was tough. Even after overdosing. Trying to get in inpatient. I don’t know if it was the insurance or Hazelden. With Hazelden you don’t need to do all the insurance. We had a heck of a time trying to get him in inpatient.

**AS:** This time?

**BC:** No, his first time. That was a real struggle with the insurance. I remember we had to wait like two weeks or something. That seems like forever.

**AS:** It’s a horrible travesty. To me it’s one of the cruelest parts of our treatment system and the most dangerous.

**BC:** Your kids at risk.

**AS:** When they know they’re going to treatment they start using as much as they possibly can.

**BC:** Absolutely. To be fair since then we’ve had a good experience with them. They’ve been pretty quick. They do initial ten day coverage and then a little bit more. Not beyond thirty. That we’ve found.

**AS:** Not at Hazelden?

**BC:** No, Will was at one place Fountain Center in Albert Lea. It’s a Mayo Clinic place. He was there thirty days and the counselor down there was great. He said, “He needs more time. He needs to go into extended care. Your insurance won’t cover it so kick him out of the house, Rule 25.” We did that. Will got into extended care through that. There was another sixty days. He didn’t quite make it. Almost but then he bailed. The insurance has been good. They were fighting tooth and nail initially but they get on board pretty quick but it never lasts more than thirty days. Thirty days is not a long time.

**AS:** Did you do Rule 25 for him this time?

**BC:** No.

**AS:** This is coming out of your employer’s?

**BC:** Yes, I don’t know how it is with insurance. Do insurance companies get to a point where they say, “This is untreatable?”

**AS:** I don’t think they can anymore. I thought that was part of the ACA.

**BC:** Have you heard of insurance companies carrying more than thirty days?

**AS:** They will through Medicaid. Minnesota Care. They’ll do ninety. That’s if he was independent and on his own. That’s the state and they take opiate addiction really seriously as far as I know. That’s been my experience; it’s more than thirty days.

**BC:** We need to start thinking about that right now. His after care. Have you had any experience with Hazelden?

**AS:** I’m just going to stop this recording. Thank you Bill.

[End of Recording]