**Chandra Kelvie**

**Narrator**

**Amy Sullivan**

**Interviewer**

**April 28, 2017**

**St. Louis Park, Minnesota**

Chandra Kelvie -**CK**

Amy Sullivan -**AS**

**AS**: This is Amy Sullivan and I am in a Starbucks in St. Louis Park with Chandra Kelvie. Do you give me permission to record this interview?

**CK:** Yes, I do.

**AS:** Do you want to talk about where and when you were born?

**CK:** I was born November 30, 1976 in Minneapolis. I want to say I was born at St. Mary’s, but I don’t think it exists anymore. I have a sister, but we don’t share the same dad. I have a brother and sister who we have the same mom but different dads. Then I have a brother who we have the same dad but different moms.

**AS:** Are you the oldest?

**CK:** I am the youngest.

**AS:** Where did you grow up?

**CK:** I grew up in South Minneapolis. My dad had a house on Fifteenth and Lake Street and my mom moved around a lot. I moved back and forth between them both until I got a little older and then I was with my dad.

**AS:** What were the circumstances that led to you living with your dad?

**CK:** My dad just wanted me to have a stable place. I think my mom tried but it was just really hard with three kids. I felt that my dad could financially support me better than my mom. I don’t know if this will be in the book, but I have never confronted my mom about it, but her boyfriend was really mean to me. I was treated differently because I was biracial and my siblings weren’t.

**AS:** What is your background?

**CK:** I am Hispanic. My dad was Hispanic.

**AS:** Was he mean to you physically?

**CK:** Yeah. He would hang me out of a second story window by my feet and let me go and then catch me again. He would lock me in the porch and say I was sleeping with the porch monkeys. I didn’t know what any of that meant. I haven’t talked to my mom about it, whether she knew it was going on or not. I just feel like I’d rather not know because I am close with my mom now. I never told my dad because I was afraid he would hurt him because he was a violent person.

**AS:** That’s a lot to hold onto.

**CK:** My dad dated his first cousin for ten years. I had no idea. When I was young I just thought it was his girlfriend. I didn’t put the dynamics together until I was a little older. I just thought we were just going to family events. I didn’t know.

**AS:** That is complicated.

**CK:** It is a lot now that I’m older. It was always the, “Don’t talk about it” in our family type of thing.

**AS:** On both sides?

**CK:** I’m not that close to my mom’s side of the family, but on my dad’s side for sure. We just don’t talk about it. Nobody talks about it.

**AS:** How old were you when you moved in with your dad? You’re dad must have know things were going on that weren’t good.

**CK:** I don’t know if he did. If he did know what was going on I really think he would be in jail.

**AS:** Is that guy still around? Is he still with your mom?

**CK:** No. My mom met somebody when I was around ten and he’s a really good guy. I’ve never even heard him raise his voice. I think my mom drank a lot then, too. When I look back my dad was doing drugs back then and I just didn’t know the signs. I didn’t know what was going on.

**AS:** When you were small. You have memory of that. So you moved in with your dad when?

**CK:** I went back and forth until we moved to Andover when I was around eleven. I would go to my mom’s and visit but I lived with my dad.

**AS:** How was your middle school and high school time?

**CK:** It was fine. I was pregnant in middle school, so I had to leave middle school.

**AS:** Do you want to talk about that?

**CK:** Nobody ever talked to me about sex or anything so I had no idea what I was doing. I got pregnant the first time I had sex. I got pulled out of school to go to the Teen Parent program in Anoka. I went to school there. I should back up. My dad was livid, obviously, and he wanted me to give it up for adoption. I was young and scared and I didn’t know what to do. We went to this adoption agency and went through everything and met with families and stuff. When I talked to the doctor before I had her she said if I say that I don’t want to give her up in front of the nurses and the doctors my dad can’t make me do it. I did that.

**AS:** She let you know about your power.

**CK:** Yeah. I did that and it was rough. It was hard.

**AS:** You got pregnant at fourteen then?

**CK:** Yeah. I think I was pregnant just when I turned fourteen and I had her when I was fifteen.

**AS:** Talk about that a little more. What happened when she was born? What did you do?

**CK:** I got my own place. I got emancipated.

**AS:** What happened in the hospital?

**CK:** I had her and right after I had her I looked at my dad and the nurse already knew I was going to do it. I just said, “I don’t want to give her up for adoption. I’m not okay with it.” He left and took her dad’s shoes. I don’t know why but for whatever reason. I stayed with him for a little bit and finished a little more schooling. She went to school with me because in the Teen Parent program you went to school and then you worked in the day care for an hour or an hour and a half a day and then you went to your other classes. All the girls in this school were pregnant and we all switched off. There were some other staff there too.

**AS:** How many of you were there?

**CK:** I want to say there were maybe fifteen.

**AS:** Did they come from one high school?

**CK:** No, it was from all over.

**AS:** When was she born?

**CK:** March 27, 1992. I ended up getting my own apartment on Twenty-ninth and Lake Street and I went to South High School. My mom helped watch her while I worked two different jobs. At that age you could only work so many hours legally.

**AS:** You worked and you went to school full-time and you have a newborn?

**CK:** Yeah. I ended up not finishing school. I went back to finish school, but it was too hard. I had to support myself.

**AS:** I can’t imagine. Did you ever get connected with WIC [Women, Infants, and Children Program] or any of those assistance programs?

**CK:** I was on WIC. She was allergic to formula and she had to have goat’s milk or something and I remember back then that it was twenty-eight dollars a can. I did end up getting on WIC. In my entire life I think I have been on welfare for six months. I was determined. Everybody told me my life was over. There was no encouragement there. None. My life was over instead of being like, “this will be a different path” and encouraging me.

I remember being young I never felt stable because I was bounced around and back and forth so much. I didn’t want that for my kids. It made me feel like I never had a home really. I did get what’s called Homes Park Village. They are subsidized townhomes and I did end up moving there which helped me a lot. And then I met my youngest daughter’s dad and we ended up getting married and bought a house. We ended up getting divorced, but we were together for sixteen, seventeen years.

**AS:** What did you do then? When did you go back to school?

**CK:** I think Ashley was two.

**AS:** That is your second daughter. What is your first daughter’s name?

**CK:** My first daughter is Ashley and my second daughter is Asia. When Ashley was two I ended up going to get my GED and then went to Lakewind Dental Academy, which was on Lake Street at the time near Lake Calhoun. I went there to get my dental assisting license. I didn’t like it. I finished all the bookwork and paperwork and I opened someone’s mouth and I couldn’t do it. I ended up getting a job where they made dentures and stuff and I worked there for a few years. I ended up getting my job at Regis and I have been there for fifteen years. I work in the corporate office.

**AS:** What do you do?

**CK:** I am an education coordinator. I work for the Super Cuts brand. There is an umbrella, so we own ninety percent of the hair industry. Super Cuts is mainly franchise owned, so I work with the franchisees. Before a stylist can get on the floor they go through a weeklong training so I schedule those.

**AS:** Do you have another job?

**CK:** I do I work at Abbott [Northwestern Hospital].

**AS:** What do you do there?

**CK:** I schedule the nurses. You schedule the hospital every four hours so you have to get the floor staffed every four hours based on their needs. You have the scheduled staff, but people call in.

**AS:** Are you full time?

**CK:** I am a point seven.

**AS:** How much do you work for Regis?

**CK:** I work for Regis full time.

**AS:** So you basically have two full time jobs.

**CK:** Yes.

**AS:** You have worked hard your whole life.

**CK:** When I got divorced was when I had to pick up the other job because I couldn’t make it without it.

**AS:** When did you notice your dad’s addiction issues?

**CK:** I noticed my dad’s addiction issues before Ashley was born. Probably around when I was twelve. He would walk around the house like a zombie. I didn’t know exactly what was going on but then I realized it because he would send me to go get his drugs because he couldn’t drive high. We lived in Andover and I would drive. I think I was about thirteen or fourteen then. Go to the houses and get his drugs and then bring him home. I did it because I was scared.

**AS:** How long of a drive?

**CK:** To Minneapolis from Andover. I don’t know if you know where that is.

**AS:** Where did you go in Minneapolis?

**CK:** Do you know where the Sears Tower is? It was right there.

**AS:** You drove in your dad’s car to get him drugs. They just knew you were coming?

**CK:** Yes. I remember being so scared when I would walk in the halls. We would get it and it looked like a can of hairspray or something. We would unscrew the bottom of it.

**AS:** And you would hand over the cash?

**CK:** Yeah. I never looked in it. It was like a little envelope and one time I did look in it because I was curious.

**AS:** What was it?

**CK:** That time it was white.

**AS:** It was heroin? Was that his main thing?

**CK:** Yes it was, but he would get high off anything if he couldn’t get that.

**AS:** How many times do you remember going for him?

**CK:** Through the years, several. I don’t even remember.

**AS:** It was frequent though. It wasn’t just one time.

**CK:** Yeah. Eventually I ended up getting my license so I could drive and then I felt like I had to do it because what if he got in an accident or hurt somebody? You know what I mean? In my head it was like I was doing the right thing

**AS:** Even though you could have gotten in terrible trouble.

**CK:** Yeah. None of that crossed my mind. Never. It never crossed my mind because I guess I never thought that the cops could raid this place or the cops could--none of that ever crossed my mind at the time.

**AS:** Where are your older siblings at this point? Do you have contact with them?

**CK:** Yeah, but they were completely separate with my dad. They were with my mom.

**AS:** All your other siblings are not his children? You're his only child?

**CK:** My brother. My brother was with his mom and he has addiction problems, too. He was never raised by my dad has seen him, but not a lot through his life.

**AS:** So your main priority was protecting your dad and other people from him getting in a car?

**CK:** I think in my mind honestly it was more protecting him than anybody else. Yeah. Then I remember I moved back home. I got my place until fifteen and I moved back home when I was--he moved because he was living in a woman and he moved into a trailer and I think I was there for about a year.

**AS:** You lived in the trailer with him and your baby?

**CK:** Yes. I would just stay there because I was scared he was going to die. I was so young. I was scared he was going to overdose and be by himself. And so I stayed, I would watch him--the minute I would even talk to him on the phone I would know he was high. I knew instantly. Then I remember I tried to commit suicide once. I just wanted him to wake up. I didn't really want to hurt myself, but I just wanted him to see he was hurting me, and I didn't understand why I wasn't more important than this drug. He came to the hospital.

**AS:** Where did you try to do that? Do you mind talking about it?

**CK:** No, I don't mind. We lived in Oakdale at the time when he moved into the trailer park. It was called Glandfall.

**AS:** You did that where you were living with him? What happened? Did you take something?

**CK:** I took these pills called trazodone. I took like twenty of them.

**AS:** Which he had?

**CK:** I don't remember how--I don't remember where they came from, but I remember taking them. My girlfriend knew something was wrong and she called the police and they pumped my stomach. Now when I'm older I think, "Why didn't social services step in at any point?" They had to have known he was high when he came to the hospital.

**AS:** You were fifteen?

**CK:** No, I was probably—I have to remember because the way I deal with things is I just don't think about it. I had to have been sixteen.

**AS:** Because you had had that year and then you moved back with him. Do you remember ever talking about what was upsetting you?

**CK:** I was very--yeah and he would say he wants to clean; he wants to do better. He went to treatment several times and every time he would get out he would relapse.

**AS:** Was he ever on medically assisted treatment that you knew of? Was he ever on methadone?

**CK:** Not that I know of. He tried to hide it for so long because he was a Minneapolis firefighter.

**AS:** Can you talk about his life? What you know about your dad's life and his parents?

**CK:** I know that my grandpa was very abusive to him.

**AS:** Where did your dad grow up?

**CK:** In north Minneapolis, I believe. He used to tell me about stories of how my grandpa would kind of shave his head, physically abusive to him. My grandma—the Mexican side lost custody of him so my grandpa Jack—I think it was boiled down to who had more money.

**AS:** Was grandpa Jack white?

**CK:** Yeah. So they had more money, so my grandma Margaret ended up raising my dad. It was Jack's mom. She was my great grandma. I loved her. She was my grandma. My dad was her favorite, and she knew my dad was sick. She always used to tell me, "He's sick."

**AS:** When you were little?

**CK:** When I was older.

**AS:** So she seemed to have some compassion with that.

**CK:** Yeah.

**AS:** Did you ever know your grandma on the Mexican side?

**CK:** I did. I did but when he was dating his cousin she wouldn't—I didn't get why we would never go over there. We would see her at Christmas or when they would all get together, but it would never be where I would go over there and visit with her. I didn't understand until I was older why—that she didn't agree with it.

**AS:** She had a point. [laughs]

**CK:** She did. [laughs]

**AS:** What else do you know about your dad's life? His career? His schooling?

**CK:** He didn't finish school. I remember when he passed away I tried to get his school records

because I was curious and he didn't make it out of elementary school. When he started in the fire department he was grandfathered in, and my grandmother was able to read the test to him because he couldn't read or write. I remember he would be able to take tests home and I would read them to him and he would answer the questions. I mean he could do basics, but he really couldn't spell.

**AS:** He missed out on a lot of school.

**CK:** Yeah. He was very lucky to get the job with the city. I believe my grandma Margaret told me she took his GED test for him. I don't know how. Back in the day it must not have been how it is now. I have no idea.

**AS:** So he did get a GED?

**CK:** Yeah, but she took the test for him. I don't know how—I've always wondered, "How'd you do that?" Did they let him take it home? I don't know. I would be curious. It was so long ago who knows how it was.

**AS:** This would have been in the seventies? Do you know when he started working in the fire department?

**CK:** I don't know the year, but I know he was there for seventeen years. I think he passed away probably four years—I can't even, I don't even know the time frame after he retired early.

**AS:** How old were you when he was retired early?

**CK:** I was in my twenties, maybe thirties. No, I was in my late twenties.

**AS:** Can you talk about your life once you got a little older and you started—

**CK:** I didn't let my kids see him. I just didn't want them to have to see what I would have to see. I would get calls from him like, "I'm hungry," or "Can you come get me?" and I would always go. I would leave the kids with my husband and I would go and I would always help and it took me a long time to realize I'm not helping him. I'm not. I'm enabling him.

**AS:** Because you would get him food and bring him what he needs.

**CK:** Yeah. And then someone was like, "That just gives him to use his money for drugs because he knows you're going to bring that stuff to him." I think when I finally moved out of the trailer is I took a nap in his bed and I woke up and there was a needle sticking in my leg. I had to get tested for everything for seven years. I don't know if it was, I can't remember—he used to, I don't know if there was anything in the needle at the time. Probably not. There wasn't anything left over. [laughs]

**AS:** And that was it for you?

**CK:** Yeah, I was done.

**AS:** And you were eighteen or so?

**CK:** I was probably seventeen. Sixteen, seventeen.

**AS:** So that lasted about a year?

**CK:** Yeah, and I just thought, "I can't do this." You know? It was just—it was every time he called I would be like, "What now?" It was never a happy feeling when he would call.

**AS:** Your whole life pretty much.

**CK:** Yeah. He was in another jail.

**AS:** And he would be able to go back to his job?

**CK:** I guess this was after he—I don't know when he—I'm serious I just completely...After he got let go was when he was in and out of jail. I believe when he was working a few years before he was let go they did raid the fire department and found stuff in his locker. I think it is actually online because I remember printing it and reading it.

**AS:** So for you this is like putting piece together about what you experienced, but you never had all the information.

**CK:** Just when I look back now at all of the weird stuff that would happen would make sense. I knew very young he was using. And I didn't—until my twenties was when I realized this is how he was going to die. I remember when I got the call when he—he had a drug induced stroke because he would shoot up and he had a stroke in his brain stem. A week, maybe a week and a half prior to that he had this terrible headache where he was—he had never called me like he was in pain and I took him to Region's hospital in St. Paul and they were like, "We're just going to give him some—it was either Percocet or Vicodin—two of them because he was labeled as a seeker is what they called him. I was like, "Are you going to do any cat scans or anything? Are you going to do anything?" And they didn't because they just looked at him as a drug user.

**AS:** What was going on in his brain?

**CK:** He was having many strokes because basically the nerves in his brain were misfiring and that was what was causing the headaches, but he was shooting up and he had MRSA [methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus] and it went into his blood stream and somehow in his brain—before that he was hallucinating, he would start hallucinating. I donated his brain to science, the coroner asked me to, but then when I got to the hospital when he had the big stroke he was coherent and he was like, "Do you know her?" And he was like, I mean, he couldn't talk. He lay down and that was the last time he was conscious because he had it in his main brain stem. He was alive for three days before they took him off life support. They said he was never going to—and he has told me he doesn't want to live like that.

**AS:** Can you talk and unpack that story a little more about the treatment at the hospital when you took him for the headache?

**CK:** I was angry. I called them after he died. I called the patient representative and I told him, I said, "I feel like..." I don't know if anything could have been done, but I feel like he wasn't treated fairly because he was a drug addict, and it's crazy because I remember calling the hospital and being like, "Someone needs to help him. He is not capable of taking care of himself. He's hurting himself, he's hallucinating," and they were like, "There's nothing we can do unless he walks in here on his own."

**AS:** This was before?

**CK:** This was way before this incident happened, but I would remember being so frustrated. No one would help and he is an adult, you can't make him get help. I just wanted—he was hurting himself. I remember thinking, "This is ridiculous. He is hurting himself." I remember in the hospital when he died I had to sign a waiver because they had to put him in this machine—it's like a big tube—because they wanted to see what was going on in his brain.

**AS:** After he died?

**CK:** No, this is before. This was like the first day. The MRI thing. I had to sign a waiver because he was an addict. They put tape on his arms right here and right here. When he went in all the needles that were broken in his arms and his hands burned up to the surface of his skin. Because it is a giant magnet. They knew—I didn't know that was going to happen, but they knew. I'm assuming they had seen it before, but they made me sign a waiver that if there's any metal in his body—that explains why they put tape on his arms and his hands. I felt guilty. I felt guilty for a long time because I remember when I got the call I was like, thought to myself, "Let this be it. Let this be the end."

**AS:** I can't imagine thinking anything else after what you had been through.

**CK:** Yeah. Because he had been hallucinating so bad up to that point. He was at my uncle's at Stacy, Minnesota and he broke into a fire house. Out there they don't stay in there. When there's a call they go. He stole the fire truck and went to my uncle's with full lights, everything. It is a funny story because I can't imagine what my uncle was going through, but he had the full lights on and walked in there fully geared up and put a flash light in my uncle's face and said, "There's a bomb in the house." He thought people were—the CIA was following him. He really was hallucinating.

**AS:** And even at this point that's not grounds for mental health—

**CK:** No, they wouldn't help. Not if he doesn't walk in there on his own. I think that was a couple, maybe six months before he died.

**AS:** Was he using meth do you think?

**CK:** No, he was using cocaine and heroin. He was doing speedballs. There were always burnt spoons and cotton balls. Alcohol—I didn't know what the alcohol was for.

**AS:** When we talked on the phone I think you talked about what it was like walking into his place.

**CK:** After he passed away. It was sad because he didn't have much. He was an addict so he—

**AS:** Had you been there recently?

**CK:** I had been there a couple of times. He was at a house—he rented a duplex and he rented the top floor to I think he was a former captain of the fire department, Larry. He rented it from Larry and I think Larry felt bad for him and knew he had some issues. It was hard because I had to warn people and be like, "You can't just dig around and go in pockets and lift things up because there's going to be needles." He would hide them everywhere and I think when he was high he would hide them or put them places and forget where they were. Used ones. That's when I found out about the needle exchange. I didn't know what to do with them. I was like, "I can't just throw these out," because I knew he had hepatitis. I was like, "I don't feel right because what if someone gets stuck with these, what if..." I don't know. I didn't know.

**AS:** So after he passed you collected them all?

**CK:** Yeah. I called the hospital and they're the ones that told me about the needle exchange. Access Works. I think it's on Nicollet. It's almost downtown and you would never know it was there. I remember walking in and there were couches and there were people sitting on there, and I remember walking in and bursting into tears. I just did not know—I had no idea what I was—it just was really sad to me. The people that were there were getting clean needles. And I just thought, you know, it just broke my heart.

**AS:** Because your dad didn't overdose?

**CK:** No, no. He died of his drug complications due to his drug abuse.

**AS:** How were they with you? What happened?

**CK:** I didn't stick around. I do remember that she asked me if I was okay. I just said, "Yes, I'm okay." I just explained that these were used needles and they were my dad's. She was like, "Do you need to talk to anybody?" And I just wanted to get out of there and I just wanted to leave. It wasn't a scary place. It wasn't anything like that. It just—I just didn't know this type of stuff existed.

**AS:** And your dad didn't either.

**CK:** I don't know where he would get his needles. I don't know how. I never figured that out. How he would get access to them.

**AS:** Did you ever go through his cell phone?

**CK:** Did he have a cell phone? Yeah, he did. I never went through his stuff because at that point he was just gone. I remember when I was younger though he was a good dad when he was sober. I remember being on the boat. Those were the happiest times when he was sober. I always think about those times.

**AS:** There was a nice picture, I think he was on a boat. Did you pick that out? For his obituary.

**CK:** Yeah.

**AS:** Do you remember the story about him delivering the baby?

**CK:** I do when they talked about it at the—because the fire department came to the funeral.

**AS:** Because he got some kind of award?

**CK:** Yeah, but he was also in the *Star Tribune*. He rescued a young girl from a fire. I always thought it would be really cool to see her. [laughs] You have to be an EMT for a little bit before you're a fire fighter. She went into labor and he delivered the baby in the ambulance.

**AS:** So he had EMT training?

**CK:** Yeah, and he couldn't read. It was just weird to me.

**AS:** You think of all those things as being literacy dependent, and yet, if you can retain stuff—

**CK:** And that's how he was. He had been doing that for a long time. He could fix anything. He was a roofer for a while. That was his side thing. He would roof for Donner Construction. He could make anything, fix anything.

**AS:** He was let go of the fire department because of his drug use? Had they worked with him in

the past to get him to treatmen?

**CK:** Yeah. Yeah. I don't know exactly what they did. I don't know how many times they actually put him into treatment because it was never discussed with me. He would never tell me—

**AS:** Would he go away?

**CK:** No, it was always outpatient. He was at inpatient at Unity for—this was towards the end after he had lost his job. He worked with the fire department for so long that they retired him early so that it didn't look like anything so he got half of his pension. They did try to help him.

**AS:** And there was a point where—did he show up to work high?

**CK:** You know, I don't know if he did that. I think he would just get randomly tested. When you are a fire fighter you work one day on, one day off, one day on, one day off, then you got ten days off. Then you would work one day on, one day off. So, I mean you had a lot of time off. They would work twenty-four hour shifts, so he would work one twenty-four hour shift and then have twenty-four hours off. I remember when they came to the funeral one guy spoke and he said that my dad was always the first one in and the last one out.

**AS:** He was brave. Kind of fearless.

**CK:** Or it was the adrenaline rush, or I don't know. When they said that I was like, "Was that what he..." And he told me about the first time he tried heroin. He said it was a high that he never had had before. He said he never got high like that after, no matter how high he would get it was never like that first time.

**AS:** That memory of the first time. Wow. Yeah I've heard that.

**CK:** Yeah. Have you?

**AS:** Yeah, people describe it as this incredible hug, just this incredible warmth. A feeling of complete peace and calm. No worries, no nothing.

**CK:** I've always been too scared.

**AS:** Yeah, so talk about that. Your own relationship with it, with substances.

**CK:** I just think I was too scared because I had seen him so many years hurt himself. What he would go through—I just was scared to try anything, anything. Even this I wouldn't take pain pills for. And they did try to give them to me. I was like, "No thank you." It's just that—because my sister struggles with—she's had some addiction problems with pain pills. I've seen it. I've seen plenty of friends that I've grown up, went to school with, have issues with it. It's just insane to me how many people have issues with it. There are a lot of people. That's considered fun for them to take pills.

**AS:** What about shooting heroin? Do you know people who do that or would admit to it?

**CK:** I don't know people that would admit to it, no. I know that they've done it, not—

**AS:** How old are you?

**CK:** I'm forty.

**AS:** Is your sister older?

**CK:** My sister is forty-two.

**AS:** That's mostly pills that you hear about?

**CK:** The heroin is more—they call it recreational. They don't do it all the time apparently. To me

there's no such thing. My dad used to say that when he first—he said he did it recreationally or did it to party.

**AS:** And then he couldn't control it. So do you drink socially?

**CK:** I do. I'll drink wine, but I feel like—

**AS:** Was your mom an alcoholic?

**CK:** She was. She hasn't drank in—probably since Ashley was young because she's a juvenile diabetic, too, and it made her very sick and she had to take her health—she had to change.

**AS:** And she was able to do that.

**CK:** She just stopped, but she would drink a lot I remember. It was like her and my aunts would get together and they would party. That's just what they did, I don't know. But it was a lot of drinking. That's where I don't know if her judgment was very good when she was dating the guy she was dating. I don't know.

**AS:** How about your girls? What are they like? When you look back on yourself as a mom?

**CK:** This is what my oldest tells me now—that I was way too strict on her, and I was. I was. I was really scared. I'm a little more lenient with my second one, but with my first it's always like, "Well why does she get to do that? I couldn't do that when I was young." It's always like that. But then I realized that I had to let her, my youngest, because I feel like my oldest was like, I feel like I sheltered her too much. She's very smart. She got a full, four year scholarship to the University of Madison, which was only one of ten girls. She didn't end up going. She went every summer, but she ended up going to school here because she had a baby at eighteen, which I thought I was dying when I heard because it was like, I tried to—I told them all how rough it was, I thought I was open.

**AS:** Did they know about sex?

**CK:** Oh yeah. I mean it was probably too much. They were probably like, "Just stop talking." My youngest is strong willed, I'll say. She's twenty-five and eighteen. She'll be nineteen in June.

**AS:** Did she finish college?

**CK:** Yeah, she works at the University of Minnesota. I'm not quite sure what she does there, but she just enrolled back into school.

**AS:** And you have a granddaughter or a grandson?

**CK:** I have both. I have a granddaughter and a grandson. My grandson is seven months old. My youngest graduated. I was a little nervous about that one. From high school. It was a tough road to get there. Not that she was just—mouthy. She just was very defiant. When I separated from her dad was when she really got—but she's starting to turn around. She just got a job at Wells Fargo. She's going to enroll in MCTC [Minneapolis Community and Technical College]. I don't care what she does, just something.

**AS:** Had they had substance abuse issues?

**CK:** Nope. I was open with them when they got older why they didn't have a relationship with my dad. I did let them know why. They don't know specifics as far as the stuff I've been through—they know some of it, but I just didn't want them to have to know their grandpa that way.

**AS:** So it was just better to not know him.

**CK:** I think so just because at the end it was so bad.

**AS:** They were pretty young because he died eight years ago?

**CK:** Has it been that long? Wow. It doesn't even seem that long. It was May. I think you're right, and I can't believe it's been that many years. I just put it so far in the back of my mind. It's probably not healthy to do that, but it just helps me because I don't want to sit and think about how he lived.

**AS:** The thing is too when we're ready, when we're strong enough, or motivated enough, something sparks it, then we do. Some of us do.

**CK:** I just think it was so hard because I looked up to him. He was a fire fighter, he was my dad, he protected me. I was a daddy's girl. I just didn't understand why wasn't I more important than that. Why can't you see you're hurting me? And that was really hard.

**AS:** And that's nearly impossible. Do you know that now?

**CK:** I do. I do.

**AS:** You know it intellectually, but you still feel that sadness.

**CK:** Yeah. Because you know he would steal from me. He would steal from everybody. It got that bad.

**AS:** In these last four years?

**CK:** Yeah.

**AS:** So as soon as he was retired there was nothing else for him?

**CK:** There was nothing. He tried a little bit. I can't remember how many times he went into treatment, but he would be good for a little bit, and then he would fall back. Then he would try to sober up a little bit. It didn't ever last very long.

**AS:** There's no long period that you remember of months and months?

**CK:** No. And I always wondered—he would get arrested and get out. I don't think he was ever caught with it, it was just paraphernalia. It would never be on him, like drugs. But I guess it's because he would do them.

**AS:** He would get off?

**CK:** Yeah.

**AS:** Because do you think they knew him as a firefighter?

**CK:** I don't know. I just think there was never any—he had paraphernalia on him and that was it. He would get off on it. He would do it again a few months later. Don't they like arrest people for being high and driving? I guess I never thought about the fire fighter thing.

**AS:** Oh yeah. I know people who have been arrested just sitting in their car not even driving.

**CK:** That's crazy.

**AS:** And kids who have gotten off when they have crashed on the side of the road. It seems pretty random who gets busted and who doesn't.

**CK:** I guess I never thought about that. I would just be like I don't know if it's because he was a user and that's why he would get out and say he would go to treatment. I don't know.

**AS:** Have you ever requested any of his records?

**CK:** I could get them, I haven't ever. No, no. I remember after he died the bill collectors—I'll never forget T-Mobile. [laughter]

**AS:** So he did have a cell phone!

**CK:** Yes! He did have a flip phone at the end. He did, but it was like they would call non-stop and I'd be like, "He's dead." And this would be a year later. And they were like, "There's no way to take him off this collection." And I was like, "You're not getting your money. He is deceased. Do you need me to send you something?" They were like, "It's not going to stop." I just thought, "How insensitive." For a year I got those calls. Then I remember my grandma thought—my grandma was really selfish. His mom. His mom who didn't raise him. I haven't—I've seen her maybe three times since the funeral because it was so—she made me pay her back for the flowers she put on his grave.

**AS:** Because you were the beneficiary—

**CK:** Of nothing! [laughter] I mean I don't know why people thought I was going to get this big payout because I knew he didn't have any money left. I was his beneficiary. He had, I remember the fire department called me and he had I think it was fifteen hundred dollars, and I said, "Can you send it to the funeral home to help pay for that." That was the great inheritance she thought I got. I really think she did. When we got the cards and everything she made me open them in front of her and the people that gave me money—I had to give her half. I specifically remember a check for six hundred dollars and she was like, "Now you know you wouldn't get this unless it was for me because these are people I know." And I was like, "So what are you saying?" And my girls were sitting there. I just thought, "You know, you'll have to answer to someone else bigger than me someday for what you're doing," in my mind and I gave it to her. I think I had to give my grandma over a thousand dollars for food and stuff she had contributed to the funeral. And that was really hard. I just don't know how to forgive it. I know people are like, "You have to forgive." And I don't know if I have that in me.

**AS:** Is she impoverished?

**CK:** No. She lives in Shorewood.

**AS:** She didn't raise him? She's the one that lost custody?

**CK:** No. Yeah. My grandma Margaret raised him. I didn't even have enough money to pay for his urn. They let me make payments until I was able to pay it off, and I never—I just really have never had a relationship with her like that. After the first cousin thing and I got older we had a relationship, but it was more like Christmas and holidays. After that I cut it because I feel like my other cousin she would have never done that to ever. When it's your grandma—I think about that with my grandkids. How can you feel okay with that? How can you feel like you are going to benefit from this somehow? I don't know. It was really hard. I know the family is like, "Well, that's your grandma." My aunt, my dad's sister is like, "I don't think she's malicious in what she does." I really think she is. I really think she knows what she's doing.

**AS:** It's hard to imagine a grandma being malicious, right, we don't want to think about the consequences of that.

**CK:** I really just feel like it was really heartless. I feel like, "You don't really care what I was going through." I'm sorry, just random things are coming to me. I remember my uncle had given my dad an air compressor and my dad had pawned it and it was in the pawnshop. My grandma——this is not even two days after my dad, after the funeral she's like, "Well, he pawned his compressor," and I'm like, "Grandma, I can't go get it, it's in his name." I had to call a police officer; I had to do all these things to get this air compressor because I was trying to do the right thing. My dad pawned it, who shouldn't have pawned it, I understand that. So, I went to get this air compressor and it was just a source of contention for me. It sat in my garage for over a year, and I was like, "You hounded me about this." They never picked it up, so I donated it when I moved. I was like, "It was that important to you," and I felt bad. I felt like, you know, this was my dad who did this stuff. I'm trying to just do something right; try to make it right somehow. I just was like, "You can't even let me mourn my dad without—I know how my dad was. I know what he did wrong." I just was trying to do the right thing, and then for it to sit in my garage for a year? I would get so mad every time I would see it.

**AS:** Where do you think you got your moral compass? Your sense of wanting to do right? You said there were things you loved about your dad.

**CK:** I remember there were times where—I don't know where I got it because when I was young I would watch my dad beat up his girlfriend really bad, and I remember thinking, "I'm never going to let someone do that to me." I remember that. I don't know where I got it. I don't know. I don't know if it was just—I just remember I never liked the way I felt as a young child. The situations I was in I always just felt scared or uncomfortable, you know.

**AS:** Do you feel better today?

**CK:** I do because I know it's me who I'm responsible for and my kids and I don't have to rely on someone else to take care of me. That's a good question. I guess I don't know. I think working around good people—I really learned a lot from the people I work with. There are three women who I work with who have all been there the same amount of time.

**AS:** Did you have good support from friends when your dad passed away? Do you have a support system?

**CK:** I don't. I don't really, so I've always just—I think that's one thing I could do better with my kids because when they're having a hard time I'm like, "You've got to just pick up. You don't have time to feel sad about this." And I do find myself doing that because I was like that. I remember when my dad died my ex-husband was like, "You've got to just pick up and keep going," and I remember that was probably the beginning of the end with him. He just would not let me mourn. I didn't have time—not that I would have ever fallen apart, but just can people around me just give me a moment to do nothing and just sit? And it was never like that, so now I see that I do that with my kids and I try to correct myself, but I do see that in myself, like, "No one is going to do this for you." Kind of a little insensitive I think, I mean, honestly that's how I feel. I know and I see it in me, and I try.

**AS:** It might read as insensitive, but it seems like you had to do it for survival to keep yourself going because a lot of bad things could have happened to you. You could be not the person that

you are right now sitting in front of me. Do you know what I mean?

**CK:** I do. It takes—you can go one way or the other, and I remember thinking that as a small kid: I'm not going to live like this when I'm older. This is not how I'm going to live. I'm not perfect.

**AS:** That came from inside you.

**CK:** Yeah. Like I said I'm not perfect, I just knew I wanted a stable place to live, I wanted a family, I wanted to just try to be normal whatever that means.

**AS:** Do you ever talk to your mom about your dad? You said you guys are close.

**CK:** We are. We have talked, yeah. He was abusive to her, too, physically. They were never together though, they were separated when I was a baby, so I've never seen them in the same room except for a courtroom. I remember when we were going to court for custody with my mom and my dad.

**AS:** Over you? You were there?

**CK:** Yeah. My dad—I remember we lived in these apartments, I don't know how old I was, I can't remember, I was really young. I don't remember the circumstances, but I remember my dad grabbing me and running, running down the street with me and I remember the cops throwing him on the ground. I remember I thought they were going to hurt him and I was so scared. Not that he was—I think he was just taking me from my mom. I don't know why, I don't know any of the circumstances behind it, but I remember watching the police do that to him. We lived in an apartment on Lake [Street] right by K-Mart. [laughter]

**AS:** That's still an intense place.

**CK:** Yeah. I remember it was in the summer and there were all kinds of people out watching. This was on the street. He took me from the apartment building. The courtroom I just remember they would ask me, "Who do you want to live with? Who do you want?" And I would say whatever anybody wanted to hear. It wasn't what I wanted because I didn't want to hurt anybody. I think about that now, like I was way too young for that. Way too young.

**AS:** I hope they have learned something. I'm just sorry for all the people who had to experience

that in the seventies and the eighties. I think the eighties was probably the peak of that.

**CK:** I think they have. Yeah. And they would ask me in front of both of them. Like, how? [laughter]

**AS:** So what is your take on addiction and people who struggle with it? What do you notice and what do you wish was different? Do you read about it or think about it very often?

**CK:** I do. I think people associate it with people who have had rough lives, but I don't think that is at all what it is. I think it's the people we hang around, the people we—as young kids—who we associate with, where if you're daring—I just feel like you can't pinpoint it to one reason why people—sometimes there's no reason and it's just curiosity. Some people aren't strong enough to overcome that curiosity. Some people are. Some people can do it one time, and that's it and be done with it and some people can't. I think it doesn't have any bearing on how you were raised.

**AS:** What do you wish would change about the way we deal with addiction from your perspective?

**CK:** I wish the medical field would care a little bit more. I really wish they would not treat them as not people or that they don't deserve health care or that they don't deserve to be treated kindly. I see it all—I even see it now. I see the way the nurses talk about it at my job, and I don't say anything.

**AS:** What do they say?

**CK:** They're like, "Oh, yeah, they're just here to get their fix and then they're back on the street again. But guess what? They're fixed up when they leave the door so they'll be in next week for their next..." you know? It's stuff like that. I know they're probably frustrated because I work at Abbott [Northwestern Hospital], which is in the middle of—you know? I see it all day long. I guess I'm not a healthcare provider, so I don't know how frustrating it is to have to deal with people like that, but I know what it's like to have to live with someone like that and know that they deserve to be treated the same way anyone else would, regardless of—not that they should be prescribed pills and leave, but, treat them—I just remember how my dad was treated when I went into regions. It was like—they just treated him like he wasn't a person. I remember like, "Can you please do something? Can you please scan his head?" Because my dad never complained about headaches or anything, and I was like, "Can you just do something? Anything?" And they were like, "There's nothing we can do. We gave him two—" I don't remember what it was, and sent him on his way. I was like, "You're not going to do anything?"

**AS:** And later he was back in there in the MRI?

**CK:** It was about a week and a half later. He was transported by ambulance to Unity Hospital and that's when he had the stroke. I never asked how—who called. I know it was his girlfriend, but I didn't know her very well. She was a user, too. Something must have happened, I don't know, and that's when I got a call saying, "Your dad's in the hospital. We think he may have had a stroke. Can you come down?" Then when I got there I remember the nurse saying, "Do you know her?" And his mouth was open and that was the last time he was conscious. I remember when the doctor pulled me into the room and said, "You have to make a decision." And I struggled with it because I struggle with religion. I don't know what I believe. I believe in something I just don't know what. I don't know what type of religion he was because he was trying to comfort people—the hospital chaplain. I'm just looking at everybody and I was just like, "This does not comfort me." I asked if I could speak to him alone and I just said, "I hear you saying he's going to go to a better place and you're praying, but what if you don't believe that? What if you don't know?" And I can't even remember how he explained it to me. He explained it somehow with being born and—

**AS:** Because he was trying to convince you that your dad should be taken off?

**CK:** No, he was trying to convince me that he was going to be okay. That he was going to be in a better place. I think that's how he was comforting everybody. I was just sitting there and I was like, "This isn't working for me." [laughs]

**AS:** You started to say that you never say anything to the nurses—what would happen if you did? What would you say?

**CK:** Sometimes I just want to be like, "You have no idea what it's like to be that person or a loved one of that person, you know?"

**AS:** Would you get in trouble for saying something like that?

**CK:** I don't know.

**AS:** One of the things that I keep coming up against is that the only way—and this isn't to put any guilt onto you—but the only way that we can break that stigma is by calling people out on it. It's the same with sexism and the same with racism. It's just the next thing we have to do or keep doing on a new topic.

**CK:** Yeah.

**AS:** I had that experience of my daughter being referred to as an ‘OD’, and it just pierced me in a way. And my sister who is a doctor—my daughter is completely unconscious, completely hooked up to everything you could imagine—my sister who had come, who is a family physician, came up from Texas and she saw me and she just went into the hall and was like—because this guy was a resident or something—"It would be really good if you didn't say that in front of family." And they do, it is part of the work, they can't think of everyone with all these feelings and all this. They are in a field where they're supposed to be helping people who are suffering, right?

**CK:** Yeah. The nurses at Unity were very, very nice to me.

**AS:** They have a different approach at Unity. They do.

**CK:** Yeah, I felt like they did. I felt like they had compassion for what he was going through, for what everyone was going through at the time. I didn't feel like they treated him just like he didn't matter. There is one other thing. I remember when he was dying they gave him morphine and my grandma had a really hard time with me okaying him to have morphine. Yeah. She said, "He doesn't need that." I said, "Grandma, he's probably in there withdrawing on top of going through all of this and he is trying to fight this." This is my thought. And she didn't want him to have

morphine and it was like, "I don't care what you think at this point."

**AS:** Could it matter at that point?

**CK:** Right, it didn't. But these were the challenges I had in the hospital. I remember them telling me, "He's not going to make it," and my grandma, for almost two days, the family thought that he was going to come out of it because he would twitch, but they told me when you twitch, when they do pain tests on him you don't go in, you try to get away from the pain and he would twitch in—his hands would twitch in. I remember I told her I didn't want all kinds of people at the hospital. I just wanted to deal with this as him, me, you, and my aunt, and the whole family was up there. I was so angry. I didn't leave the room—they were in the waiting room—I didn't leave his side. For three days I sat there. I had to wear gloves because he had MRSA. I just didn't like it because I was like, "My dad is not going to want people to see him like this." His fever was like one hundred and six, and it was just bad. Antibiotics did nothing. After he had the stroke he was done. I don't know why it took three days for them to finally say—because I remember the nurses telling me very early, "It's in his main bloodstream. He's not coming out of this." They didn't say it like that, but they were very nice about it. I just said, "I want to know, honestly, I want to know the truth," because I needed to prepare. I needed to know what I was doing. I knew his wishes—we had talked about what he wanted. He didn't want to be kept on life support. I mean probably all kinds of other stuff will come to mind, but it's just that I've never really sat and talked about it.

**AS:** I'm just so honored that you sat and talked to a total stranger about it.

**CK:** It feels good to talk about it.

**AS:** Good. Well, you're really a remarkable person to have gone through what you did and to hold on the way you have and to get through that. You must have come into this world pretty darn strong. You're not a newbie! You've got some power in you. That's a powerful story. I'm really sorry that you lost your dad. I'm sorry about all of it.

**CK:** Thank you. I think he's—there's a museum, I don't know if it's still there, I should look—it's of fire fighters. He's in there. I'll have to look it up and see if I can find it.

**AS:** Look it up and share that with me. I would appreciate knowing more.

**CK:** And the fire department gave me all of the awards he won for things he had done. And the picture of the girl in the *Star Tribune*. It has her name on it, but I just—I should share that with you.

**AS:** Yeah, I would love to see that.

**CK**: I think it was in Minneapolis. It looked like she was Native American, I can't—I don't know.

**AS:** Thank you, Chandra.

**CK:** You're welcome.