**Star Selleck**

**Narrator**

**Amy Sullivan**

**Interviewer**

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**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

Star Selleck -**SS**

Amy Sullivan -**AS**

**SS**:I’m Star Selleck. I give Amy permission to record this.

**AS**: Thank you. Could you start by talking a little bit about where you grew up and your younger years? Your education, career, and up until you became a parent?

**SS**: It is hard to do this fast.

**AS**: You don’t have to do it fast!

**SS**: I’ll try to give you the abbreviated version. My biological parents came over on a boat from Germany. My father was Russian and his family was all killed—the males were all killed in the war. He was released in a camp from Germany. My mother and my brother and sister were there. It was his dream to come to this country. He came to this country and had a hard life. Eventually the fact that he witnessed the murder of his father caught up with him and he ended up being diagnosed with schizophrenia.

At that time my mother couldn’t take care of all three of the children so two went to an orphanage and I went to a family at church. That family at the church only ever had me as their child and I was raised at a home where I got to see my natural parents and my brother and sister over the years. Once my father got released from the state hospital.

**AS**: Was that here in Minnesota?

**SS**: No, that was on the East Coast in the Boston area. I grew up for the most part in Rhode Island where the dad raised me, settled, and had a good job. They lived through the Depression, so they lived life very conservatively. We lived in a nice neighborhood. I grew up with four other girls in the neighborhood and we all hung out and played together all the time. I missed having brothers and sisters.

The first few years up until either grade I went to a private Christian school. It was a few towns away. Then in ninth grade I got to transfer to public school. I started first grade at five, so was ready to graduate when I was sixteen. I thought, “Hey, why don’t I go one step further?” I rode my bike to my local college and took the test to go to college. I came home and told my parents I got accepted. Could I please do second semester in college? My high school had said it was all right. They acquiesced and let me go. I got a 3.2 grade point average. Got my high school diploma and had my first semester of college out of the way.

I had a pretty good childhood. We lived near the ocean. Spent lots of time at the beach. Those girls in the neighborhood, we thought up the most creative games. We had free reign back in those days. Our parents would let us go and as long as we came home either before dark or before dinner we didn’t get in trouble or anything. They didn’t care where we could ride our bikes to or how we got there. It was just don’t go with any strangers and don’t take candy from any strangers. Other than that…we would ride our bikes to the ferry and take it over to Prudence Island and it was a tiny island and bring our lunch and ride home. We would ride to various swimming holes. We would ride our bikes lots of different places. Go eat stuff, and—

**AS**: Until you were how old did you girls hang out together?

**SS**: I was the oldest, so my entire life. Then even when we all left on breaks we would set up the annual Christmas party and draw names and get gifts. I still keep in touch with them.

**AS**: That is so great.

**SS**: We never lost—we don’t talk as often as we used to. I can still contact any of them. I still have a rough idea of what is going on in each and every one of their lives. I had friends at church, too. All in all I had a pretty good childhood. I went to camp at this place called Summit in Colorado. They also had a college. I was going to go back to the little college that I started at, but after going to this camp and meeting all these kids that were going to go to this little, tiny school in Oklahoma, I begged my parents to let me go to school in Oklahoma.

**AS**: Where in Oklahoma?

**SS**: Tulsa.

**AS**: That’s where I grew up!

**SS**: I think we might of had this conversation.

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

**SS**: Originally I went to a school that then had a major scandal. I started at American Christian College. Major scandal. Then I transferred to TU [University of Tulsa] and graduated from TU.

**AS**: We did talk about this!

**SS**: Where did you live in Tulsa?

**AS**: Not far from TU. I grew up at 15th and Pioria.

**SS**: I rented a house through our college on College Ave, which is no longer there I guess. Just down the street from the Arby’s.

**AS**: College Avenue is still there.

**SS**: Last time Priscilla said… I lived on College Ave. that ran right into campus. She said that has been eliminated entirely.

**AS**: Probably. TU, you probably wouldn’t recognize it today.

**SS**: No. She said our house is all gone. I haven’t been back there in a long, long time. She went back this year, my roommate. We are still good friends.

**AS**: You have everlasting friends in your life.

**SS**: I do. I remember when—except my husband. He only lasted for five years! He used to tell me when I would cry and we would leave somewhere he would say, “You never lose your friends. They are always still there. You always keep them. You just make new ones. You will just add to the collection you won’t take any away!” Ok. I will try and look at it that way. Although I will say he does stay here about a week a month. We still are good friends. He has his own girlfriend but we still get along.

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

**SS**: Nursing.

**AS**: And that has been your career?

**SS**: Yes. I did pediatric nursing my whole life. Now, running up and down the hospital floors has gotten harder on me now. Starting my generation with [unclear]. I take care—I am just part of a crew they have for her. I do that still for pay. I was MNA [Minnesota Nurses Association] so now I am semi-retired I guess. I can still do some things. Then I do my advocacy work, which rounds out my life.

**AS**: Did you meet your husband in Tulsa?

**SS**: I did.

**AS**: How did you end up here?

**SS**: I went to church in Tulsa with my two good girl friends. One I lived with and one I had lived with. The first time we chose to go to adult Sunday school class I met my husband. We got married in Tulsa and had my first child in Tulsa. Built my first house in Tulsa. He decided he wanted a better job in Florida. I had to leave my beautiful house behind and all my friends and everything. It was thirteen years I had lived there. It was heartbreaking for me. I left and went to Florida with him.

**AS**: Which son was born there?

**SS**: It was my daughter, Jessica.

**AS**: Sorry. Your oldest daughter.

**SS**: Then a year and a half later he moved me to North Carolina because the bank he worked for got bought out and we had to move to North Carolina. I had Ian in North Carolina. The year and a half we lived in North Carolina I had Ian there. Then we moved here. After we had been here a very short time I found out I was pregnant with Nick. Nick, my youngest was born and bred right into this house. He was born at Fairview Southdale, but not very far away.

**AS**: Did you work the whole time during those moves?

**SS**: I worked what they would call ‘casual’ when we were in Florida and in North Carolina. I would work roughly one or two days a week.

**AS**: That is a term in nursing? Casual schedule?

**SS**: Yes. You have more control over it too. If you don’t want to work one week you don’t necessarily have to. I did keep my hand in it, and worked in all those places.

The first summer we moved here—we moved here in May—and I didn’t go to work until August. I started at Children’s in Minneapolis in August ‘91. I had Jessica and Ian—they were four and nine months old when we moved here. Then Nick came. They were, I don’t know, twenty months apart? Not that far apart [laughter].

**AS**: Can you talk about your mothering style? The way you raised your kids?

**SS**: Well, since there was just me in my family of origin and I grew up in that era of not hovering and this particular neighborhood was not a highly hovering neighborhood—there were a lot of kids that came with the same era of my kids. They pretty much…it is kind of an isolated little place. They kind of ran the neighborhood. They were on their bikes all around and there is a little wooded area at the bottom of Oxford, which is a couple of streets over, that they thought was like really far away. There was a pond at the bottom. People have tried to float things and fallen in. The dogs would escape down there a few times. They would climb trees and do things there.

I did, other than the little ones that I was afraid I would lose or whatever, once you could ride a bike, and they were usually with other kids in the neighborhood, they would just—all of a sudden I would have a herd here and then there would be a herd at the other house and be down at the thing. Eventually someone would come home crying. “So and so hit me! Someone left me in a tree! Jessica did this!” Sometimes it was just “I fell off this or I fell of that. I wrecked my bike.”

We did have—my youngest Nick was two sitting in a diaper on the front steps cutting up the tissue paper with some safety scissors, which I didn’t care.

**AS**: Hospital safety scissors?

**SS**: Little kids’ scissors! [laughter] I had the back door open and had the front door open. I could kind of see him through the front door. I was talking on the phone and turned my back and he was gone. I came down the steps and out to the street because you got a pretty good view. He is gone. There are other kids around, people around, I’m asking, “Did anybody see where Nick went? Did anyone see where Nick went?” He was in nothing but a diaper. No one had seen him.

I was standing in the middle of the road my heart racing thinking, “Do I go call 911?” That is my next step. My neighbor that lived in that house—used to be a little house like this—she was one of my best friends. We would wave at each other while we were talking on the phone. She pulls up in her car beside me with Nick in the car. She goes, “I bet you’re wondering where he was!” I said, “Yes! I was ready to call 911!”

A few nights ago before that we could cut through the bank and walk across Vernon and there was a restaurant side and a shopping center over there. We had taken the family to dinner and then I had let Ian buy a cap gun at the drugstore. Nicholas decided he was going to go over there, get a cap gun. He cut through the bank and went just like we had done going to the restaurant. He knew where that cap gun was. She said, “I found him in the Jerry’s parking lot.” She said, “Nicky, does your mom know where you are?” “No!” “Why are you here?” “To get a cap gun!” She said, “I know this boy’s mother, I know she must be really worried about what happened to him.” She said thank goodness it was in the day. She said, “My name is Barb Trainer. I live across the street from her.” People were still skittish about letting him go with her.

Then she said—she was a Hershey representative, and all the kids went to her house for candy all the time. She said, “Oh, I know I should never do this,” but she said, “Nicky, if you come with me I’ll give you candy.” And then someone came up and said, “Barb what are you doing?” And she said since the person called her Barb the rest of the crowd kind of assumed, okay, she must be Barb. She probably explained she was a Hershey representative and that she gives all the kids in the neighborhood candy, and Nick was willing to go with her for the prospect of candy because he knew she was good on her word! They were always going to her house for candy. So she brought him home.

That’s not a good—I guess that is an example of my—I mean I was aware suddenly, quickly, that he was missing. But they had a pretty—

**AS**: It was a safe place.

**SS**: All in all, it was. I said to Nicky, “Were cars honking at you when you crossed Vernon?” “No, mommy, I was *running* across Vernon.”

**AS**: Oh, wow. Still a good story.

**SS**: Oh, there are so many stories of kids growing up. A lot of parents were a little more mellow about stuff. The bigger house over there in the white, she is a teacher and we’ve been friends over the years, and this would have been well after the event, she goes, “I had to crack up when I saw Ian and Carson driving that steam roller down the street!” And I’m like, “Doing what?!” She goes, “Oh, you didn’t hear about that?” “No!” She goes, “Ian and Carson got the steam roller that was parked in the alley. They left the keys in it. They decided to see if they could drive it. So they parked it in front of a friends’ house as a joke!” She looked out the window and saw them driving by in a steam roller.

**AS**: And never told you? [laughter]

**SS**: She just thought it was funny! They parked it, they got out, they left it. She said, “Don’t you know all those workmen who came and said ‘I swear I parked it right here!’”

**AS**: That sounds fun. Sounds like a fun place to grow up.

**SS**: One time I remember my husband and I, I’m not even sure, but he took the boys in the neighborhood and I took the girls in the neighborhood and we were going to take them to a movie, but we raced to see who could get to the movie theater first. Not side by side. “You take your route I’ll take my route and let’s see who gets there first!”

**AS**: In your cars?

**SS**: Yes. I loved children. We got the closest in time, but we didn’t do anything excessive.

**AS**: No. But it was fun.

**SS**: Yeah. Lots of birthday parties and various events. Kids all played sports. Played a lot of basketball around each others’ houses.

**AS**: Tell me about your kids as they are getting into their teenage years. They are kind of spread apart? The two boys were closer in age.

**SS**: Right. So Jessica is the first one. She just gets a little moody like girls get. She was what I would call a very self-regulated child. I guess to some extent I was, too. Maybe I thought everybody was. She didn’t need a curfew. She just really didn’t need a lot of boundaries. She set them tight enough for herself. I didn’t feel like I needed to get behind her and set more. She always asks me why I didn’t do that. I said, “You didn’t need them. You were never out later than concerned me. You were very concerned to stay away from bad things. You were, you know, almost a straight A student. I didn’t need to say anything about your homework. You had friends that I approved of.”

Although, come to see on her side, she saw her friends were a lot wealthier than we were. She was too embarrassed to bring any of them to our house. All of our kids thought we were poor, and would say that. I’m like, “You guys don’t even know what poor is. We might be poor for Edina, but you have a nice place to sleep, you’ve never gone hungry, you have a mom and dad that love you.” They just see get a new car on your 16th birthday, live in a mansion, have all the money in the world.

Jessica was the one because she was really bright so she hung out with the brightest of the bright and all their parents tended to be the richest of the rich! She just was embarrassed to bring anybody—except for the one house over. She was best friends with that girl, and a few houses down she was best friends with that girl. So those two were in our house because they were part of the neighborhood. She barely ever brought the school girls over. Although, in elementary years I had birthday parties and she had friends over in elementary years. It wasn’t until she hit middle school that she said the differences in finances.

No teacher ever had a problem with her. She never intentionally did anything wrong. She got a bus demerit once because she zipped a coat up over her face being silly. That obstructed her view and that was a bus demerit. That really troubled her, but oh well! Was always in the honor role and graduated high in her class in Edina. Went to Emory with two or three other kids from Edina went to Emory that year.

She was very easy. She didn’t drink, she didn’t do drugs in high school. I know she experimented in college, but that’s all it was was experimenting in college. She realized she couldn’t do what she wanted to do with her education and focus on that. I’m sure she drank at a few frat parties. She was usually the sober driver so it wasn’t [unclear].

**AS**: It makes sense as a mom.

**SS**: It sounded like pretty normal college behavior. Her grades were good. When she first got to Emory she called me up and she said, “Mom, there are people here that are really smart!” [laughter] “From all over the world!” I tried to reassure her, “Jessica, you’re smart too!” “I know but I have to study here, and they don’t!” [laughter] She did fine!

She was the one that got the TA position in the non-native speaking—to help with the non-native speakers that come to Mankato. She taught freshman English to the non-native speakers there while she was getting her master’s. That was a very sought after position because it also paid and gave you free school.

**AS**: What did she get her master’s in?

**SS**: English as a second language. But her undergrad was English and South Asian studies. And now she’ll get an education—

**AS**: There goes a little guy on a bike!

**SS**: Yeah they still ride around [laughter] And I remember Jessica couldn’t master a bike until about five. Ian hopped on a two-wheeler at three never having had training wheels. “Oh, my three-year-old can ride a two-wheeler? I’m in trouble now!” That was my first hint right there!

I would say fairly early age you will see, once they can ride—it kind of was a rule. If you could ride your two-wheeler without training wheels, you could—

**AS**: Did that go for Ian then when he was three?

**SS**: I tried to keep him—well the good thing is Jessica—if he was three, Jessica was eight, and Kelsey next door was nine. If he would hang with the eight and nine year old, I was okay. As long as they were going to stay in a clump because I knew I had reporters that would report back. I tried.

**AS**: Tell me about Ian.

**SS**: Ian. Ian, Ian, Ian. He was the antithesis of whatever I thought was going to happen in a child from the day he was born. Jessica would nurse and fall asleep. Ian would nurse and say, “Okay, I’m refreshed and energized. What should we do now?!” At just born! At two in the morning. I’m like, “You just sleep like one little nap a day and you are a newborn. This is very difficult!”

When I was tired I would go downstairs, lay on the couch, put him in his swing beside the couch. Got to be right there, but dozing when I could because he is five weeks and tearing at things. I remember asking his doctor early on, “Is he still hungry do you think? Should we try some cereal?” Nothing worked.

**AS**: To try to make him tired?

**SS**: Or full so he would sleep longer. Jessica sat quietly and played with toys. I found Ian getting around at four months old and methodology and getting himelf around. I put him in this little thing that had wheels on it out on our concrete patio in Charlotte. He ran that thing so fast at four and a half months old and he toppled and it was just a little lip that he would go over. He just ran around and kunk! Knocked over sideways. He hurt himself, and I was just like I can’t believe he made that thing go so fast that he could run it over like that.

Then, it was, you know, by the time he was eight, eight months old he was toddling around, holding onto the furniture. It wasn’t too long after that—that’s when we made the move. When we got here within a month or two he was walking. I know he pulled a chair up to the kitchen counter, climbed on the chair, climbed on the counter, pulled a knife out of the knife bucket and was like, “Look what I have accomplished.” I’m like, “Oh no. No, no, no. What am I going to do with this boy?”

Needless to say, out of the children he was a bit accident prone. As his pediatrician would say, “His brain is writing checks his body can’t cash.” He would fall off of things. It is a wonder… I was afraid I was going to get looked at for child abuse. I don’t think he was—no, I was pregnant with Nick. He wasn’t two years old. He took the Little Tikes car—we had a deck out here—he took the Little Tikes car and pointed it straight at the steps. He wanted to see what it was like to go down the steps. So he went out the windshield flat and face first into the driveway. He had to go in to get his head examined, but he had two huge black eyes.

Shortly after that—he was in the process of potty training. Shortly after that I had Nicholas. While he had two, big black eyes he had chicken pox. He had big wet stains on his pants and he has his hands in his pockets and I remember his face with chicken pox and black eyes. I was still at the hospital, or maybe I took Nick home, but the two boys had to stay apart for four or five days because I couldn’t bring a new baby into the chicken pox. The parents that raised me were in town with their RV, so my mother watched Nick in the RV and would just let me know when he needed to eat. And I would sleep with him out there. Nick came a month early. I would sleep out there with him at night. Steve left to go back to work, so two days he would sleep out there with the other kids while I slept out there with Nick.

Ian was very physically coordinated and verbally gifted. You don’t usually expect the two to come together. He was very charming. Made a lot of friends. Challenged a lot of friends; not in a confrontational way, but I remember getting called to the elementary school about Ian. He would get in trouble for the oddest things in elementary school. He got in trouble because he started a club on the playground that involved doing an obstacle course before you could join. All the boys wanted to be a part of this club and one boy fell and hurt his back doing the obstacle course, therefore Ian was in trouble because he had designed something that caused someone to get hurt, and so he got in trouble for that.

He and another boy at some point in time put a bunch of smelly lunch stuff in a milk carton in the bathroom, and there was a question about whether or not someone peed in it or not and so there was trouble involved there. One time he did a backflip off the front step of the bus into the grass and he got in trouble for that for being a bus hazard.

Then in later elementary school I remember he got in trouble because he punched another kid on the bus. He came in all fuming and I said, “Tell me the story.” He said, “He came up to me with his leather mittens and just started slapping me across the face. So I kind of pushed him away with my fists.” I said, “Who was this?” And he told me and the father called me that night upset that he had punched his son and I said, “Well did he tell you that he was slapping him across the face with those leather gloves?” “No! No, he did not!” He said, “Let me call you back!”

It progressed. At some dance in middle school a girl was upset because Ian didn’t like her or something accused him of snapping her thong, so he got sent home from the dance. He got in trouble for punching a boy in school there. I said, “Tell me the whole story.” He said, “Me and Morgan,” who is a good friend, “Morgan said, ‘hit me in the shoulder as hard as you can.’” So Ian hauled off and hit him in the shoulder, and Ian broke his hand. These two fingers here. And Morgan said, “Didn’t hurt! Didn’t hurt at all!” But Ian was in intense agony and eventually someone sent him to the office and they said—

**AS**: What happened?

**SS**: They find out from people, “Well, we heard you punched Morgan.” He said, “Well, he told me to.” They said, “That doesn’t matter, Ian. Anytime you punch anybody it is an instant one day suspension from school.”

One day they were snowboarding for the day. He calls towards the end of the day and says, “When you come pick me up from snowboarding we need to go to the hospital. I broke my finger.” I said, “Well, how do you do that?” He said, “I heard it snap.” I said, “What time was that?” “Probalby about noon.” I said, “Why didn’t you call me sooner?” “I wasn’t going to waste a good day of snowboarding because I broke my finger!” [laughter] And sure enough he had broken his finger.

He was, for the most part, loved by his peers. When it came to the adults they either really took a liking to him or really took a dislike to him. There was not much middle ground. He got sent to the principal’s office in middle school for writing—do you remember Survivor? He folded up a little piece of paper and wrote: Vote Mrs. K off the island [laughter]. That was a send home. I don’t know if—

**AS**: He had a good sense of humor.

**SS**: Awesome sense of humor. And he wasn’t afraid of anybody. I don’t know. I gues she got it from me. His dad is not like that. I guess he got that part from me. He got his dad’s athletic ability and my sense of, “They are just people.” He truly loved people, too. He loved people. He was very emotionally wise. The first kid I had that could see right through me. He would say, “I know why you are saying that. Because…” And he would have my ulterior motive nailed. I would be like, “Shoot! This isn’t supposed to happen!” I remember he was ten, and one day he came in and he goes, “Mom! Guess what I figured out! You can’t make me do *anything*!”

**AS**: Oh no.

**SS**: Shoot! You can’t make me!

**AS**: At ten! He recognized his own free will.

**SS**: He would always stand up for the underdog. Always. That didn’t sit well with the teachers, but it probably made him friends. There was this one really smart boy. He’s a smart boy. He had a bottle of water and he was drinking his water. The teacher was saying, “Maybe you shouldn’t be drinking so much water because you will end up having to go to the bathroom.” I don’t know. Later on in the class the kid said he had to go to the bathroom. She was like, “I told you not to drink so much water. You can’t go to the bathroom.” “Mrs. So-and-so, I don’t think that is the way it works in life. You know, if you told somebody that there was a well on the property and not to go near the well because you might fall in the well, but the person fell in the well, you wouldn’t say just stay in the well because you are in there because they told you not to walk near it. You would get them out! I don’t think you get to tell somebody they can’t go to the bathroom.” I don’t remember exactly how that wound up, but I remember hearing the story from probably more than Ian! That boy went on to be a famous doctor.

Some teacher told that boy he was stupid, and he stood up for him too and said, “He’s like the smartest boy in school!” He must have had issues when he was young. Those are just glimpses into…

So, then Ian tried Peewee basketball, he liked that. Gymnastics, worked his way up to the boys team, and competed in the state. They were trying to put him in line for Junior Olympics, and he was going to have to be in the gym twenty-four hours a week. My husband was all set that he was going to be an Olympic gymnast. Ian said, “I’m done. I’m done. I may do it for fun again sometime, but I’m done. There are so many more sports out there that I haven’t gotten to try. I am not going to say this is my only sport.” He was like ten or eleven. “I am not going to just play one sport.” And gymnastics had made it clear it is this or—you can’t play any other sports because there’s no time. So he quit. Steve was broken hearted.

I think Ian played basketball that year. Then he found lacrosse, and he loved lacrosse. He played lacrosse for Edina. He found paintball and snowboarding and he was very good at all of them. Won some big contests. Went on to play semi-pro paintball where he would travel the country—in middle school he would get asked to go on, like to California. He just did a lot at an early age I guess.

**AS**: How about high school?

**SS**: Well, Ian first met trouble I would say right around seventh grade.

**AS**: Okay, so backing up from high school. You mean trouble with—

**SS**: Drugs and stuff. Some of the friends he met that summer had older brothers, too, I think that had access. I know they tried smoking pot and I know cigarettes came in around then. I remember they were going to have a sleepover here. The first night I found pot. I sent everybody home and told everybody’s parents why I sent them home. And then he just went deeper undercover. I had never had any experience, known anybody that had done anything like this. I had never crossed any of this with Jessica. I didn’t know any other kids that were having this issue. I was way over my head. I really didn’t know what to do.

Since Nick and Ian were like Frick and Frack—they were one year apart in school and they shared a lot of friends. Nick thought he had to do just about whatever Ian was doing. He got in on the act too. He was still doing okay in school.

I’ll tell you when his life really changed. The boy that had asked him to punch him in the arm as hard as he could shot himself in the face with a shotgun and killed himself.

**AS**: Oh no. How old was he?

**SS**: He was fifteen. That really affected him. I remember telling him, “You’ve got a test tomorrow.” And he goes, “I’ve got a test tomorrow. Does that matter in the scheme of things? I just lost my good friend.” All of his group of friends felt that loss. They ran a group for those boys, but sometimes they would leave Ian out and he would think, “Okay, they care about the rest of them, and they care about me.” I believe he probably—I don’t know. When I look back on it I think that was a big changing time in his life.

When he went to high school I know he started to get involved because he knew everybody, got invited to—everybody kind of wanted him to be at everything because he was a lot of fun. He was sort of electric. He was the life of the party. The girls all liked him, he got along with the guys that mattered in school.

My husband was gone a lot, and I really was pretty lost is the honest truth. My mother was dying. I took care of my father until right around when he died—9/11—so that was 2001. That was the year Ian was eleven. I sent him to my friends in Georgia for a while and she homeschooled everybody for just a few weeks until I helped my dad die. A few years after that, in his early, mid-teen years, our basement flooded, my mother was dying, Steve had sort of checked out. I was really overwhelmed in my life. I would count on Steve to be here with the kids, and then sometimes he’d just leave.

**AS**: Like on a weeknight, or weekends, or go out of town?

**SS**: He was—I’m trying—I think it was short trips then.

[pause in recording]

**SS**: Sometimes he would leave overnight while I was out of town. Ian got his license at sixteen. I was at one mom’s and he was going to go to their parents for Thanksgiving. Ian called me, “Mom, we are driving to Pennsylvania, me and Nick. I am in Chicago and I stopped to get my girlfriend a sweatshirt and now I can’t find the car. What should I do?”

**AS**: Where you at work?

**SS**: I was at my mother’s in New Hampshire.

[pause to turn off fan]

**SS**: So he calls me and I’m like, “Oh no. Dad let you drive to Pennsylvania all by yourself?” “Yeah.” I call, “Steve! What are you thinking?” He decided he wanted to fly the plane a day early. He has a private plane. He was going to fly himself and the boys that was the plan. He decided to leave a day early and the boys didn’t want to so he let them drive. Sixteen and fourteen.

**AS**: So would you say you two were not on the same page around parenting teenagers?

**SS**: No, no. Not at all. That was one time. He eventually found the car and he made it to Pennsylvania, and he made it home.

**AS**: Was it stolen or had he just lost track of it?

**SS**: He just lost track of it. Then one time he took the boys and a friend out sailing on a boat he inherited from his brother. They bought alcohol to take out on the boat on purpose. I remember going down in the basement and there was a bottle of alcohol in Ian’s room. I said, “Well, I’ll be taking this.” He goes, “Well, I don’t know why you’d do that. Your husband bought that for me.” I said, “Really?” I went upstairs and I said, “Steve…” He said, “I didn’t buy it for him. I bought it to take out on the boat.” I feel like you’re sabotaging everything I’m trying to do here. I explained, read him the [unclear] as to why it wasn’t a good idea and how we aren’t trying to be friends with them.

He would do all sorts of stuff where he would just let Ian be the man. He needed to bring the car home from the airport when Ian was thirteen. Granted, he took to stuff like that like a duck to water. He let Ian follow him home on the back roads with a stick shift. Ian was driving the stick shift. Then, a couple of days later, it is funny but a couple days later I get a call from the neighbors going, “Your thirteen year old child is driving the car around the neighborhood.” I’m at work. I’m like, “IAN! You know better.” When I came home I told Ian, “You know better.” “You guys are just plain stupid. You should never get in a car with a thirteen year old driver. You are putting your life in your hands to do that!” He goes, “Well, dad let me drive home from the airport.”

**AS**: And that’s when you found out?

**SS**: Yes. And all that kind of stuff I found. I found his *Playboy* or something that his father has hidden away somewhere. It was happening. I could never stay on top of what was going on with Ian. They tried to keep it pretty low, underground, although I know things went on here that I didn’t—I probably didn’t know everything.

Then he found his passion—after he tried every sport. Did well at every sport. He found his passion was music. And we got in more trouble. Police would come by our house more for that. On a nice summer night. Put the band on the deck at 10:02 [p.m.] the police would always be at our house. They would come say, “Ian, you can’t be out here after ten o’clock.” It was 10:02 they would be on our doorstep with a noise complaint.

Then they would get in trouble, accidental trouble again. Nick wasn’t as bad as Ian, but he’d get in trouble accidentally. He was riding his skateboard home from a friend’s house on a Sunday night in the summer at eleven o’clock at night at fifteen [years old]. He says, “I got pulled over and they said, ‘you’re out past curfew!” And Nick said, “It is twelve o’clock on the weekends.” The cop goes, “The weekend is Friday and Saturday. Sunday is not the weekend.” [laughter]

Ian became really good friends with the hockey team his senior year. If I am going to be perfectly honest, let’s see, when Ian was a junior his girlfriend got pregnant, too. But, her family didn’t want anyone to ever know or anyone to ever talk about it. We offered to take the baby, raise the baby, whatever. So his one and only baby that I would have ever had left. So I hope they are together. Anyway, that’s the trouble of the beginning of high school.

At the end of ninth grade he really found his passion for music. He dibble-dabbled all along but he started to really excel in ninth grade. I got him really good private music teacher that would come to the house and taught him all the ins and outs of music theory. He ate it up. He loved it.

Started out tenth grade optimistically and went to the first school social event. Took a girl to homecoming, but he had a hard time really buckling down to do the kind of work you need to do for Edina High School. A mom who is moving to Florida with one of his best friends and she was going to homeschool. She wanted Ian to come, too, so that her son wouldn’t be alone. She would homeschool them both and live at the beach. I agreed because I knew her really well. I agreed and thought maybe it would be a better environment overall. Then, those two boys got into a fight over the same girl, and Ian didn’t go. I had already taken him out of school. School had kind of told me he couldn’t come back in that year. That was very confusing. I signed him up for an online thing and that was useless. There was no way to get him to do any of that work online. We wasted a semester of school.

We come to the beginning of junior year. He’s got—no that can’t be right. Yeah. That is right. The beginning of junior year things start out good. I went and I sat down with the school psychologist and I said, “He is asking for extra help. Nick has an IEP. He has this resource room. It really helps him do better at school. I really need—here are all the evaluation things. I really need this for Ian.” Well, it is much harder to make this happen when you get to high school. “We had decided that he doesn’t meet the criteria.” I’m like, “Look, he needs this.” I pointed out the criteria to them and they said, “We are sorry but we are not going to approve him. Sign here.” I wrote, “I will not sign this. I believe that signing this is supporting that my son will fail. I really think he needs this help and I am angry that you won’t approve it!” Exclamation point! I turned it back in.

By the end of junior year he had failed out. I was frustrated, but right about that same time he had gone on the senior trip with one of his best friends. He had gotten, I told that mother before she agreed to let him go with her on that trip—he would get invited to everyone’s vacation—until this time he was always a lot of fun to have on vacation. He was just a fun person. This was his senior trip. It was Mexico, so there was a lot of drinking involved. He went wild. I told that mother, “Are you sure?” I said, “You know, he can be a handful. I’m not sure you want the responsibility.”

**AS**: You tried to talk her out of it.

**SS**: She was like, “No, I know Ian well.” I was like, “You don’t.” But, anyway. Of course the girl was his girlfriend that had gotten pregnant too was on that trip because her mother was chaperoning her older brothers. They were all friends. So then they were re-looking into each other. He was a basket case on that trip. When he came back her son and him that were best friends, he distanced himself from Ian, and I think that was the first time Ian has ever had anybody distance themselves from him. He didn’t understand what had happened. He had no clue as to why his best friend suddenly wanted nothing to do with him. That really set him into a depression. He probably was self medicating with something. Jessica and I found him sitting out on the back steps crying one night. We knew he had needed help for a while. We said, “Ian, are you ready to get help?” And he said “Yes.” Jessica and I drove him to the STOP Program at Fairview Riverside in the middle of the night one night. We didn’t stop to wake up Steve. Nothing. We just left.

**AS**: What is the STOP program?

**SS**: I don’t know what that stands for but it’s where you can take minors for admission for chemical use. It is a five or six day program.

**AS**: Is it part of their chemical dependency and dual diagnosis—

**SS**: Yes. STOP is for the minors.

**AS**: Yeah.

**SS**: Okay. By the time he has sobered up and realized what a mess he has gotten himself into he wants out of there and is mad. At that point I decided I’m not backing down. Jessica was rooting me on. We got him a place at Hazelden. Unfortunately, though, it was the most awful ride of my life. You have to drive your child. That was the absolute worst. That was the hell ride, wasn’t it? I said if I had known it was going to be like this I would have gotten Steve and Jessica. I would have stayed home. I did not need to—

**AS**: Did he just unleash on you?

**SS**: Yes. On all of us. It was awful. We broke one rule, you aren’t supposed to eat. We did stop to eat and it was—not that it would make or break anything, we just thought we would have a meal before we went to Hazelden. He still went in July 4th.

**AS**: What year was this?

**SS**: It would have been the summer before his senior year. He would have been class of 2009, so this would have been 2008. No, that’s not right. He died in 2009 this was two years—it must have been summer of 2007.

Then I get the calls from Hazelden. First of all, that first call I get is one of Ian’s roommates. He had helped him see that he was gay and then that guy fell in love with Ian. They had to separate them but they wanted me to know that that had happened. Then I got the call that you had to wear a shirt for basketball because they didn’t want the girls to see them without a shirt on. Ian had taken his shirt off so they told him to put his shirt back on, but he had it around his neck.

**AS**: In true rebel form.

**SS**: The next day he cut big holes in his shirt and they said, “Ian, you know what the theory behind this is. If you do anything like that again, you’re going to get kicked out.”

**AS**: Was that the ticket?

**SS**: No!

**AS**: He stayed in?

**SS**: Yeah. They recommended long term—a program out in Utah or Wyoming or somewhere that I wish maybe I had given a try because all the kids that went away to those one year programs are still alive. Not that they’re done using necessarily, at all, but some of them have been totally—some of them went to what I would consider strictly recreational use. They might drink, they might smoke a joint, but that is the extent of it.

**AS**: But they are not using heroin.

**SS**: No. And Ian was not using heroin at that point either. Ian was—any kind of pills. Not even necessarily pain pills. Like Ambien or Xanax. He liked psychedelics, mushrooms, but he wasn’t using heroin. I don’t think he even ever tried it at that point. He got out of Hazelden and agreed—we reached a compromise. He wouldn’t go away but he would go to Sobriety High. It was a sobriety high school in Edina. He started his senior year at Sobriety High. The Discovery Channel was doing a special called Cocaine Nation where they basically accused Ian of using coke and he never did. Of course, he’s got friends all over the country.

**AS**: You mean the way they presented it on the show? That he used cocaine?

**SS**: That he relapsed and used cocaine. Which, he never had really participated in at all that I’m aware of. If he ever did it was a sample. It was never his issue. He got calls from all over the country about that. I still have it. I have a copy of the show.

**AS**: He got calls from people…

**SS**: Friends! He’s got friends all over the country. “Saw you on Cocaine Nation? I didn’t know you had any problems with Cocaine! Ian was like, “I don’t!” He got accused of something by a girl there and thrown out somehow. That is still a little fuzzy. Nobody was ever very clear with me on how that happened or what happened with that. I thought, “Now what do I do with you?” Because he really wasn’t exhibiting any signs of any heavy usage at that time. So, he went to Eden Prairie Alternative.

Somewhere in there he had started a band. He had a little band he was playing around town and he was really getting into his music. They weren’t at my house a lot, they were at another lady’s house a lot. I know there was probably alcohol involved, but I guess I wasn’t really thinking and I would put it back—it is hard to know what to let go and what not to let go.

**AS**: Yeah. I know. I totally understand.

**SS**: Their band was playing little gigs. Anyway, he didn’t finish school. He was still short a few classes to graduate. So then a decision had to be made how to get those done. So, now we are up to summer of 2009. He picked back up and he always had this one friend that was over that he played paintball with and they played hockey together. He was about five years older. He was very mad with Ian whenever he used any substances. They had a big falling out after that. He started hanging out at his house a lot that summer. I was very relieved. I thought, “He’s hanging out with this sober friend. This is a good thing.” He was teaching him how to work on cars and guy things. Things where he was sleeping over a lot. He was going to finish up school in the fall.

The band fell apart and I never really got to the bottom of that. The sober friend and Ian and another guy, a friend, on spring break, they all hopped in Ian’s little Saab and they drove through the Rocky Mountains to Vegas, down to southern California. They surfed, went back through Vegas because the food was so cheap, did this massive, fast road trip and came home. Then, the family where they were always at to do band practice, invited Ian to go on a cruise with them. They thought the world of him. He wasn’t home thirty days because he was on that cruise with that family. Had a really good time. That all went well. I told him this time I said, “Ian, do not be excessive. This is probably what got you into trouble.” They said he was well behaved and didn’t give them any trouble.

When he got home from that was the end of April. He was still hanging out with the guy that he took the road trip. They went to the Grand Canyon. They did lots of stuff. He was playing tennis, swimming, and working out at the club. Then he called me—no, then one night an old friend came over for dinner and Ian was acting weird. I said, “You’re altered.” He said, “Why do you say that?” “I can just tell. You are altered. Something’s off. What are you doing?” He wasn’t straightforward with me. I just said, “You are off.” I said to his friend, “Curtis, don’t let him talk you into doing things. This isn’t good for either one of you. You guys need to fess up and tell me what is going on.”

I had to call another boy that was the drummer of the band’s mother and tell her that he had come into my house at two in the morning drunk, retrieving a piece of musical equipment, but it stirred up the whole house, him just kind of walking in at two in the morning. I tell her, “He can’t just walk in the house at two in the morning drunk.” In the process she said something about, “Well, I heard on the street that Ian is doing heroin.” I’m like, “Really? Well thank you for passing that on.” Ian at this time was working at the UPS store across the street. I had talked to her before he was altered, that’s what it was. So then I said to them, “Word on the street is you’re using heroin. Is that true?” Didn’t get anything.

But, the next day, because Ian and I had a very close relationship. I don’t mean—we had our fights, we had our disagreements, but he was very demonstratively affectionate with me. He would tell everybody how much he cared about his mother. I got so many—like his roommate at Hazelden and all of his friends who said, “He loved you so much.” He would lay on my bed and just talk to me for hours. None of my other kids were that interactive. The next day he came to me and said, “She’s right.” I didn’t want to overreact, I didn’t want to do anything stupid. But he said, “I want you to know that I already decided that it’s not a good thing to do and that I’m done with it. I’m not going to do it anymore.” I knew nothing at this point. Zero knowledge in this. I’m way out of my league. Still in shock. He said, “I’ll give you everything. I’m done. It’s not where I want to go with my life. It’s not doing anything good for my life. I just kind of wanted to see what it’s like, and it’s not something I want in my life.” I said, “Do you want to go back to Hazelden?” He said, “No.” I said, “If you feel like you need to will you let me know? I can make that happen. Let me know.” I remember saying, “If I told you it was Hazelden or the street what would you pick?” He goes, “Hazelden.” I remember thinking, “Why don’t you just go back?”

Anyway, that was right around Labor Day. He went to school that week. He went back to Eden Prairie Alternative and started to finish his classes. His birthday was the 10th of September. The four of us, Steve, Nick, Jess, and me went to Benihana’s for his birthday. Next day was the 11th. He had gotten his paycheck and he was walking up the hill from the bank and he cashed his birthday money and my neighbor who lived one house over’s birthday was also on the 11th. We were going out early at 4:30 to celebrate her birthday. He came up the hill and I said, “Hi!” He said, “How much should I save out for going to dinner with Nate tonight?” That was an old friend that wanted to go out and celebrate Ian’s birthday. I said, “Take about 40 bucks” and that should cover both places they would go. He was supposed to be heading out with Nate at 6:30 I think. I was thinking, “Okay, I know he is going to be some place and doing something. We came home at 7:30 and his car was still in the driveway. He had a habit of falling asleep. Sleeping through things. I mean, not even prior to any heroin use. It was just Ian. He would just wake up and be late for whatever it was and be in a panic. I came in the house yelling, “Ian! Do you know what time it is?” He was lying on the kitchen floor by the door. I went into the emergency code mode, being a nurse. I taught CPR, did all the things that you teach in CPR class. Gave him his breaths, called 911, and then it all kind of blew up from there. Steve was at his girlfriend’s house. What makes it worse is—

**AS**: Had you and Steve separated at this point?

**SS**: Steve and I divorced December before that. That was December—he didn’t move out until June, but he had had a girlfriend for the whole previous year. He didn’t officially move out until June. Then he had come up for his birthday and was still there the next day. Must have stayed overnight. I said, “I’m going out tonight. Will you stay until I get home?” His girlfriend lives in Mankato an hour away. “Would you stay until I get home? So I would know someone was here. Or at least, would you stay until Ian leaves to go out to dinner with Nate?” He said, “No.”

He left and when I called him he thought I was just trying to get him to come back for no reason. I remember yelling in the phone, “They think Ian is dead can you please come up here?” The police took the phone away and said, “We don’t have any answers yet.” They pretty well did. “But you should probably come.” He was at least kind to me over that. He stayed for the next week.

**AS**: Was Ian dead when you found him?

**SS**: Most likely. I didn’t find a pulse. I had missed him by minutes because was pink and warm. I still, one of these days I am going to go get the medical—not the medical examiner's report because it’s not helpful, but I am going to get the EMT report.

**AS**: What would that tell you? Why do you want that report?

**SS**: I was just curious whether it would have estimated how long he was gone. My story partially starts with when I called 911 the first responder was a policeman who had known Ian since he was very young. They had chatted lots. They knew each other. They would sit and talk, which was very hard on that officer to walk in and see Ian. I looked at him and I said, “He needs Narcan.” He looked at me and said, “Star, I don’t carry Narcan. I can’t do that.”

**AS**: The police officer arrived first before the EMT?

**SS**: He recognized my address and he was at the Holiday. He was here in a second. That police officer. It happened at 7:30, which is apparently Edina’s change of shift and a lot of them were at the Holiday so they came fairly quickly after that. The EMT’s were not very far behind. My sense of time perception after that was useless.

**AS**: I know the feeling.

**SS**: Apparently one of my dogs tried to grab his arm when he came in so the neighbor girl who had been out to eat with us grabbed my dogs and took them over, they were two golden retrievers they would never hurt anybody but they were probably desperately trying to defend the house from this onslaught, and protect Ian. The rest of that night is a blur and sort of inconsequential at this point.

[pause]

There is a part of the story that is missing. Tons of kids. Word spread all over the place. Ian was a very loved young man. Six months later I get a call from the third guy on that trip to the Grand Canyon and all of that. He goes, “You don’t know the whole story. I’ve tried to get Nate to tell you the whole story but he won’t so I’m going to tell you because I think you deserve it. That summer Nate’s mortgage was underwater and he was very depressed…”

**AS**: Is Nate the older guy? The one who is five years older?

**SS**: Yes, and had been sober.

**AS**: He was on the trips?

**SS**: Yes. This is the third guy on the trip. He goes, “Nate was really depressed. I’m not proud of it but I got involved. I tried heroin. Nate decided he would try it to see if it would help with how depressed he was feeling.” This other guy’s name is Lance. Lance said, “You’ve got to promise me you’ll never let Ian know because this would be the death of Ian. Ian cannot see anything like this. He has that personality that he just can’t.” With Ian being there so much eventually he found the paraphernalia and put two and two together and figured out was going on said, “You guys are treating me like a baby, that’s not fair.” Eventually Nate could never say no to Ian and let him do it. This is what they tell me. This is the best of what I know. That would have been late that summer. I believe almost any time that they did it, which was just more recreational, was over at Nate’s house.

Nate finally talked to me. He said, “Ian would always want to push it a little further, a little further and I was always telling him that’s enough, that’s enough.” Here I think he gets this birthday money and his paycheck and I don’t know why—he went out and bought that night himself. But as to why he’d do it right before going out to dinner with Nate? I read the texts between the two of them. It was apparent that they were trying to support each other in having stopped and how crappy they were feeling and so on and so forth.

Nate must have really had something to do with it because he was pallbearer at Ian’s funeral but he didn’t tell me. I still to this day never told Nate’s mother the whole truth. She is a nice lady and I question it would do any good.

**AS**: Do you know if Nate is sober now?

**SS**: Nate and Lance are both sober now. Nate got married a few years ago. They enjoy lots of outdoor activities, which is hard to handle a bit. Lance had to go on methadone. He said coming off the methadone was terrible but he did it. Nate was able to do it cold turkey. So, that’s the beginning of my dealing with addiction. The beginning. Because then you got the fallout of the child that was the brother—that was the closest. Parenting doesn’t stop with the one kid. My mother’s still dying, Steve’s gone, Nick’s flying of the rails.

**AS**: In addiction? Nick?

**SS**: Yeah. I didn’t see it as—Nick wasn’t doing heroin. He was partying. I didn’t really know how to separate the two out. Ian was way more—except for the heroin—he was way more cards on the table. Nick was way more sneaky, so I didn’t know half of what was going on with him until it was passed. He was very zip lipped out what had happened in his life. Hearing I am back at my mother’s, Ian hasn’t been gone that long. My mother started to really go down hill. I get a phone call from the Edina police department. “We had an emergency call to your house tonight.” Steve was here with Nick. “There was a report of someone stopping breathing.” He just stopped. Didn’t say anything else. I about died. He goes, “A young man was transferred to Fairview Southdale and he’s fine.” I said, “It wasn’t Nick?” He said, “No, but you needed to know. What is going on here?” And he lit into me. I said, “Well, to the best of my knowledge, my ex-husband was at the house tonight and was responsible for the party. I’m in New Hampshire with my mother.” “Can we have his number?” “Absolutely.”

So he came up and those guys, they ordered one of those designer drugs off the internet and had taken it. One of them is called R23 or R2 something. Whatever. The kid that had gotten into trouble I guess I think lithium that didn’t mix well with it. Everybody else was okay, but it affected him. They had to start CPR—the kids started CPR on him. Nick had to make the decision to call 911. The first thing they did was come in and yell at them all. This plays into my advocacy too. They just got angry at them, they found pot, they charged Nick with possession of pot, they were insulting and whatever, and the minors that were there were taken—I think Nick was eighteen so these were seventeen and eighteen year olds. The minors were taken to the police station to be picked up by their parents. Adults were left here. Nick got charged with possession of pot and an open house party.

So, I go, “Steve! You said you’d be there! It was a weekend night! Those are the most important nights to be there!”

**AS**: And you just lost a son.

**SS**: I told him I’d just be in Mankato. I’m like that’s just where you were the other time too. I could never count on him. He was just not reliable. I tried so hard to make that marriage work. Anyway, that boy was fine. Down the road he ended up becoming a heroin addict. And he is battling it right now. I believe he is sober at the moment, but he has battled it hard. He has a lot of mental health issues.

My mother—I was back and forth a lot.

**AS**: How were you holding up at this time?

**SS**: Barely. Plus, I had a job.

**AS**: Your son just died, your mother is dying, you just had a divorce…

**SS**: My other son is in his senior year of high school, trying to graduate. Jessica had graduated Emory and was living in New York with her fiance at the time. Then her roommate died thirty days before Ian. I had flown to New York to go to her roommate’s funeral with Jessica. Thirty days later we had to make sure her fiancee was home and call and tell her Ian died. Then the two of them flew out the next morning. I don’t know. I was in survival mode. Trying to keep a job [laughter]

Nick is—then he got mono really bad. Then they were trying to have him get an F in a class because of absences. I’m like, “Really, really? Who wants to stand in front of me and tell me that Nick, who lost his brother the 4th day of school, got severe mono, you are going to give him an F in the class because he missed too much school?” I went before them and they voted that he could not get the F. After, Nick and Ian both suffered through that rule. The third year after that they made it…

**AS**: You could get an F for missing too much of one class? Regardless of how well you were doing in it? Wow.

**SS**: Then I guess it got enough push back. A year after Nick they did away with it. That’s one of the biggest reasons Ian ended up having to be at school was because of absences and being forced to take an F. I say, half of his teachers really wanted to work with him and said he could do a project on the side, you know, his American History teacher said, write an awesome essay about the Civil War or—anyway, I will say the Edina public school principal came, after Ian died, and he did say we really dropped the ball on Ian.

**AS**: Wow.

**SS**: Must have read my note.

**AS**: Must have gone back through the file.

**SS**: Because I said he is going to crash and burn. If you guys don’t help him, he’s going to crash and burn. I’m here to be his advocate and I’m mad at all of you basically. I was trying to—they all really tried to pull for Nick at least. Too much story.

**AS**: No, no, no. I was just adjusting my glasses.

**SS**: So, Nick, he’s doing his best to hold it together during high school. He hung out with his friends he had always hung out with forever, maybe socialized a little less. Wasn’t particularly wild, and graduated. Which I am highly thankful that he graduated. After he graduated he was going to go to Normandale [Community College] and he just kind of—he graduated in 2010. My mother got sicker, he got left alone more because Steve didn’t come up much and I had to leave.

Jessica was around more because after Ian died her engagement—she couldn’t. She ran off the rails for a little bit and did some wild and crazy things. Not with drugs. I told her she should just come home and get her feet on the ground. She moved home. She was fed up that Nick wasn’t really headed anywhere, doing anything. She and I were having a hard time being two head women in the same house. My mother was closer to death, things are complicated there, Steve was all la-di-da and in love. Trying to keep the job, going back and forth to New Hampshire. Eventually my mother died in September of 2010. She died the year after Ian. It was just that year in between. I couldn’t get the house sold immediately, so I had the people that were taking care of her live in the house. I flew back out the next spring to get the house ready and sold the house and moved everything out.

Somewhere in there Nick decided to go through his heavy duty party era. Then he was having problems with a girl that he was in love with. He made suicidal threats. I had him placed. I had arrangements that nobody was to pick him up. Nobody was to pick him up. That girlfriend picked him up. I said, “Well, you can’t come here.” The agreement was he was going to go to treatment because he was having issues too, not with heroin but with other things. They went to her father’s house who was an abusive freak. Nick says I don’t know if he pulled a gun at her or something and they showed up at my house at 3 o’clock in the morning. So what do you do then? You let them in.

Then, they stayed with me but the partying started to get out of control. I thought, “I can’t deal with this.” I told Nick—she left him, then he was really bad. I had to place him again. Then he came home, and now I am starting to become a little knowledgeable. I said, “Here is the situation. You can live here but you have to be in therapy and you have to have a job.” He complied with those things and things were doing better. I’m trying to think what the trigger was. I could tell that he had a lot of mental health struggles. He had been to psychiatrists.

He started at Normandale. His first English assingment was writing about his family and he ended up writing about Ian dying, and it was about the third anniversary of Ian’s death and he starts spinning out of control. Luckily I’ve got little connections, but one of Nick’s friends from elementary school told his mother there was a post on Facebook I don’t feel comfortable about. That Nick is downing a bottle of vodka and taking 6 Xanaxs and saying, “F it if I die tonight.” So his mother, “Star, this is Mary Lou. Don’t say where you heard this from, but there is a post on Facebook. I am sending you the screenshot.” I called the police without even telling Nicholas and I had him placed again. They took him to Fairview Southdale this time. That doctor said, “Your mom has placed you. This is the third time. It is obvious that you have struggles. You can decide to go to rehab or I will place you some more. You need some help.” “I think it is time for me to go to rehab, mom.” He said, “Could it just be somewhere warm?” And I said, “Absolutely.” It was January. So I sent him to Palm Springs, Michael’s house. With the big bad boys. It was an eye opener for him I guess. I mean—but he retained much of what he learned from there.

He came back and he physically couldn’t make it to meetings. I’ve come to realize over the years that he has intense social anxiety. I don’t know whether it started—I think he had it even before Ian died, but after Ian died it got really bad.

**AS**: Well he had Ian, right?

**SS**: Right, the larger than life…

**AS**: To be the social—to be the leader. He could be in the background. He wasn’t by himself.

**SS**: Quite a few of his girlfriends were hand me downs. [laughter]

**AS**: Of Ian’s?

**SS**: Yes. So, I thought as long as he keeps a good relationship with his therapist and he goes. He had a crappy job. I made him get a job after school failed. That’s when I said you got to have a job and stay with your therapist. He got a full-time job. It was a crappy job but he was a hard worker. That took almost all the party out of him. It is amazing what a full-time job, how much party that will take out of you. I am really realizing that. At least he did keep the job and go to therapy.

He did take to heart a lot of the things I think from treatment. They sent him home with pretty heavy duty meds. He said, “They make me feel terrible.” That is where we reached the agreement. He said, “I would like to do a ninety day agreement with you. I would like to get myself off these meds and see if I can’t maintain with pot the same way that these meds are.” And they were nasty meds. I said, “All right. I’ll give you ninety days.” I mean really, I have less fear of that than of the other stuff he was taking. They are potent things he was taking. He has done really well with finding herbal things to—

**AS**: Does he get it medically?

**SS**: You can’t get it medically in Minnesota until July 1st. It has been legal for a certain number of things. Now on July 1st it has some added benefits. Except anxiety is still not one. You can in other legal states. When it comes down to that fine of a line as a mother are you really going to say, I’m not afraid when Nick smokes at night if he is going to wake up tomorrow morning. I wouldn’t necessarily feel that good if he had pills in his possession that he could—you can’t abuse pot to the point of death. He could take his medications to the point of death. That is the way I look at it.

**AS**: Because you had suicide issues with him before.

**SS**: Yes. Yes. That’s why I felt this was the better option for us.

**AS**: How is that for you as a mom?

**SS**: It is a little conflicting but it is getting less and less so. Society seems to be changing and especially my friends with children that are addicted. Most of them are all, “If they can survive with pot and not go back to anything else it wouldn’t hurt me.”

**AS**: Right. Because you aren’t dealing with death.

**SS**: And it’s not like alcohol. It’s not like an alcoholic. It’s not like you are abusing your body so bad your organs are going to shut down. Anyway, Nick works very hard. He got a better job. He shows up, he has kept it for over two years. He has benefits, vacation, a 401 k, his own business on the side where he makes e-fluid for people that use electronic cigarettes. It is really good. He is like, “The FDA gets into my business whatever I’m doing. Now the FDA wants to regulate what you put in the e-cigs. Just because the tobacco companies are upset and they want—they are feeling the pinch so they want to put us private guys out of business so they get all the business. It has nothing to do with the safety for consumers.”

He has chronic back pain and he has found a controversial herb that helps with that chronic back pain, it is legal in Minnesota, but now they are trying to make it illegal in other states. He thinks that that’s creeping in—he thinks big pharmaceuticals are creeping in on that too! He says it is kind of like an herbal form of suboxone. But it will relieve his back pain when it gets really bad. He is a Bernie Sanders fan, he is very upset about—

**AS**: A lot of things right now!

**SS**: Yeah but this is the first time I have ever heard him sit and listen to the debates. He has outside passions. He has got friends that are screwing up. He sees people that are—he is trying to talk to people about, you know—

**AS**: Addiction?

**SS**: Yes. He’ll come talk to me because for a while he was drinking. Not everyday, not horrible, but enough to bother me. He is an adult, so I was just watching it for a little bit. Then he said, “I tried drinking for a while. It does nothing more than lock you down into the basement. Nope, not going to go that way.” I said, “Well, I was thinking that in mind, but I figured it wouldn’t do me as much good to tell you than for you to figure that out for yourself.” He goes, “Mom, I did figure that out.” So, you know, it is around every now and then he’ll decide to have one but it’s not like—

**AS**: How old is he now?

**SS**: Twenty-four.

**AS**: Tell me about the Narcan before we get too exhausted. Tell me how you got involved in advocacy.

**SS**: I went and was just looking at that when you came in. In my memories on Facebook today was the TPT—the local public broadcasting did a thing on heroin.

**AS**: How long ago?

[pause]

**SS**: Four years ago today I went to do this Heroin at Home program. Here’s how it all started.

**AS**: Send me that, too. If you would, please. Oh you met Maria [unclear].

**SS**: Her son died one year after Ian. How did I meet her? Half of Ian’s friends, or a portion of Ian’s friends and Tony’s friends crossed over. Her son and my son’s friends were friends. I don’t know if I met her just because Tony died. I think that is how I met her. Or maybe she was at that. Anyway, somehow I met Maria. Maria had a guy from Fox News looking to do a story on someone who had lost a child to heroin. She asked if she could give them my number. They came out and they did a story. It was a very touching story on heroin slipping into the suburbs. Then she connected me with Mary Kay [Barstrow] who headed up the opioid coalition. And she is the one that invited me to this. Heroin at Home. I went down and I had met a few more people at that. Then I got referred to Lexi, and met with Lexi. That is when we started formulating the plan for going to the capital. For Steve’s Law. There were four of us meeting at the Dunn Brothers coffee

**AS**: Right. And I got in on those emails. I never could quite make it to those.

**SS**: We met reguarly and then we went to the capital. It wasn’t that long ago. My memory was the law passing and pictures of us at the capital.

**AS**: Yeah that was two years ago, last spring, like in March.

**SS**: That was probably one of the most memorable projects I ever worked on in my entire life. Just to throw this into my story: I lost Steve at the beginning of 2009, I lost Ian in the middle of 2009, I lost my mom in 2010, and I lost my job in 2011 because the last trip to my mother’s they just decided I had missed too much work. Even though I filed all the appropriate, union approved paperwork, I didn’t ever not show up, I got all my absences approved. I walked into work one day and they turned to me like I had come in on drugs.

**AS**: I’m sorry.

**SS**: We fought it. I said, “Isn’t that something where you would get a warning or a verbal warning and then a written warning prior to termination? I didn’t injure anybody or hurt anybody. Have I ever had any complaints? Have I ever been counseled ever in twenty-one or two years of employment here?” They were like, “Fight it if you want!” I did and we reached a settlement. And I retired. It was a lot. During the time while we were fighting that, I almost lost my house, I learned where the food shelf was for me and Nick. Nick was probably struggling. There were times when I thought, “I don’t know if I can handle this anymore.” I started with a therapist, sometimes twice a week.

**AS**: And you got through it. You are a strong woman.

**SS**: Sometimes I ask, “Why such a challenging life?” But then I also say, “I have been blessed to know the most awesome people.” I guess with difficulty comes reward. The Narcan started because of that police officer saying, “I don’t have Narcan.” That was the big push for me. And I really, even more, I saw how they were trying to treat Nick, the more I have become. I have had to come off some medications myself that are really horrible to come off of. They are really [unclear].

**AS**: When you say how they treated Nick what do you mean specifically?

**SS**: They had him on drugs that you had to sign releases, that it could cause it permanent damage for taking them.

**AS**: These are just anti depressants and stuff? Or other…

**SS**: Yes. Did you know that there are some of them that can cause you lifelong side effects?

**AS**: Like lithium?

**SS**: Like Zyprexa. And those booster ones. It can cause tardive dyskinesia where you just can’t sit still. It can even be when you will be like yelling out and—

**AS**: Turrets type stuff? No, I didn’t know that. You start the advocacy work and what is that doing?

**SS**: I see—

**AS**: Both of your sons you are doing this for.

**SS**: Yes. And I know how bad it hurt and continues to hurt to have lost Ian. And I didn’t want any other mothers to have to go through that. I wonder if that police officer had had the antidote or if I had had the antidote would Ian have had a chance? He might have had a chance. I mention that in the most recent—did you see the most recent news story I did?

**AS**: No, I don’t think so.

**SS**: Kare 11 did a special.

**AS**: Oh, yeah I saw those KARE 11 stories.

**SS**: At the end they said, “So you think if that policeman had had Narcan that night?” And I said, “Well at least he would have had a chance.”

A cool thing: one of the boys that is on Suboxone but doing okay, I gave him a kit to have because I know he is around a lot of people. He sent me a note back one day, saying, “That kit that I got from Star Selleck and I used it on somebody and I saved their life. They are in treatment now. Just wanted to let you know.”

**AS**: You go around—tell me what you have done.

**SS**: With what Steve Rummler has, the Steve Rummler Hope Foundation. I became what they called a ‘train the trainer.’ Like, the doctor that is currently overseeing the medical part, Dr. Satterly. I sat under his teaching so that he could teach everything he wanted taught in a class so then I am deemed able to teach class for Steve Rummler. When asked, I will teach a class for them. I usually have been able to keep small amounts of naloxone here at the house. However, now the drug companies decided they gave out all these samples. Now they’ve like quadrupled the price of it and won’t give more samples out. During the time where we had those extras, if there was a panic, an emergency—a parent that was just finding out—I mean I had people come to my house, all different times, just hurting mothers, not people I was scared of, that I would teach them and send them onto mom’s groups. I have two state Facebook groups that I participate in, and I’ve had trainings for both of those. I used to do it for the Addict’s Mom but that kind of fell apart. But they know about the other groups, most of them do.

**AS**: Your training is to train people how to use naloxone in a situation where there is an overdose, right? How many people do you think you have trained? Do you have any guess?

**SS**: Mine’s not as much in numbers than it is in emergency. I have done—

**AS**: You mean helping people in an emergency?

**SS**: Doing emergency training for panicked parents at all hours of the day and night.

**AS**: Oh, more informal, word of mouth.

**SS**: Emergently available. I did do St. Paul Sober Living, Pride Institute. These are people that asked us to come in and do the training. The Pride Institute—the rehab is, too? Whatever it is, I went there to teach their staff. Same with St. Paul Sober Living staff. I’ve done a couple at the Lunds and Byerlys open to the public. I have done one with a group of women in Duluth, mom’s in Duluth. I have done one with moms down here and ones at my house.

**AS**: Just wherever and whenever.

**SS**: I have given out kits to people that I thought were in highly vulnerable situations. Like that one boy who took the time to write back. Most people the word gets out that if you are in a jam, or they hear somebody asking they will say, “Star Selleck, can you help this person?” So they will show up in my little thing—

**AS**: On Facebook?

**SS**: Yes. And I will make contact with the individual.

**AS**: Thank you.

**SS**: I just don’t want to keep—it feels like too little too late.

**AS**: How do you feel as a mom now?

**SS**: [laughter] I realize how ignorant I was at the time that Ian started. I didn’t realize how serious it was. I looked and thought it was more that because he was that personality type, he was going to have a lot harder time. He had to try everything. I remember talking to him about drugs and pot and alcohol when he was young because you had to talk to Ian about everything way ahead of everybody else. He said, “Mom, did you ever try pot?” At let’s just say eight or nine. I thought, “Ian is the type of kid you cannot lie to because he will figure out a way.” I said, “You know Ian, I did try it in college. Then I realized the type of major I had and what I was going to do in life, that I couldn’t really keep that up. I couldn’t be serious about studying or doing anything with my life and do that, too. So, yeah, I tried it. I actually, a couple of times, ended up in a dangerous situation where I could have died. It’s a good thing I didn’t. My roommate and I drove the wrong way down a one way street. So, I’m trying to pass on to you mistakes that I made because I don’t want the same mistakes to happen to you. Because you just never know what could happen.” He said to me at this young age, “I don’t think that is the way it works. I think each generation has to work it out for themselves.” I thought, “Nobody gets a child like Ian to parent.” He just stopped me cold there.

I had to look these all up for Channel 11. Here’s the wedding with Jessica. This was one of our very first meetings when we were getting the whole Steve’s Law thing off the ground.

[pause and look at photos]

It never got to the point where he ruined other people’s lives. I don’t have to see him rot in jail. He didn’t kill anybody else’s kid. There are things worse than death that I can think of to live with. That sounds weird, but it’s true. It would haunt me day and night to know if he were going to get locked up for good.

**AS**: Or if he had drove and killed someone

**SS**: Or if he had sold an overdose to someone. Not that he wasn’t dealing that I’m aware of but he could have.

**AS**: We know what the road is.

**SS**: Now, in retrospect, I can see how it could have wound up worse than it did with him ravaging or damaging other lives too. And a lot of kids use Ian for a reference point. A lot of kids have told me Ian taught them so many valuable lessons, not by his overdose, but by the way he lived life. To look out for the underdog. To always look for the joy in life. To always listen to your friends’ problems. To always be there for other people no matter what. To never think that anybody is more important than you, and to never think you aren’t important enough to fit in with anybody else. He could talk to college professors and he could talk to the guy that was homeless on [Lake] Calhoun and they would both enjoy his company.

**AS**: Do you think he learned that from you in some way?

**SS**: No one ever asked me that before. I mean, probably. Out of the family, probably.

**AS**: You are easy to talk to. You seem like you would talk to anyone.

**SS**: You’re right. I don’t say this to my kids, but Ian was the kid I related to the easiest. He’s the one I understood the most. It was very difficult to lose him. The others, like I say, not that way. Nick has a big heart. I see his big heart. I see him growing more that way. He’s very kind, he tries to help people that need help. He says after the third or fourth time when they do stupid stuff I have to learn to distance myself because I want to go someplace. I don’t want to be dragged down with people who don’t want anything good for themselves. I am being choosy about the top five friends. They have to want something out of life.

**AS**: He’s maturing.

**SS**: He is. He’s growing up. So, am I going to have a cow over the pot? Nah. Would I rather him do that than drink a lot? Yeah.

**AS**: And you’re not his savior.

**SS**: And I’m not going to sit there in judgement. In reality, if I had to compare alcohol and pot I think pot is probably less dangerous than alcohol.

**AS**: Yeah. You are letting your child live his own life.

**SS**: Even though he lives in my house. But we have a respectful relationship. Open and honest relationship. There aren’t any secrets that I’m aware of. There could be. I’m not stupid enough to think—but he makes it up on his own to work. You said she got As on heroin. But I really don’t think he is on heroin.

**AS**: There is no comparison. No no.

**SS**: Right, but now I’m sitting here thinking could I be majorly fooled? I don’t think so. That was not ever Nicholas’s drug of choice.

**AS**: I can’t imagine after losing his brother that would—that seems—

**SS**: He had a Xanax addiction.

**AS**: He does or did?

**SS**: Did.

**AS**: Thank you, my dear, for so much time.