**Rae Eden Frank**

**Narrator**

**Amy Sullivan**

**Interviewer**

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**Maplewood, Minnesota**

Rae Eden Frank -**RF**

Amy Sullivan -**AS**

**AS**: Rae, would you state your name and tell me I have permission to record this?

**RF**: My name is Rae Eden Frank and I give Amy Sullivan permission to record this.

**AS**: Thank you. Do you want to start with where you were born and your childhood and whatever you want to share?

**RF**: I was born in Boston, Masachusettes. My family moved to Long Island, New York when I was an infant. We moved to the Twin Cities, Minneapolis, when I was six years old. I was in first grade. I had a pretty -- how would I describe my childhood? My parents -- my mother and father -- were married until I was nine. They got separated. I have one brother who is two years older. We, for the most part got along. The biggest trauma for me was when my parents got divorced. My father was still very active in our lives. He basicially wanted to be an active participant. There was a lot of grief and sorrow that she had -- she was not expecting the break up. She fought very hard to keep us for one hundred percent custody while he was fighting for joint custody. We were caught in this battle and that was pretty impactful in my childhood.

**AS**: What year were you born?

**RF**: I was born in 1969. We are probably about the same age. [laughs] There was no substantial chemical use in my imediate family. My father never drank. No one ever drank in my housefold, not even social drinking. My parents didn’t smoke. Chemicals were not a part of our family or our life.

**AS**: Was that due to a religious upbringing?

**RF**: I know my dad’s parents were heavy smokers so he could never stand the smell of cigarette smoke. He never drank. My mother tells stories and she tried drinking and she didn’t like how it felt so she didn’t do it. That’s just not what they did and that’s just not the people they are. Do you want to know about my chemical use? Do you have other questions about my childhood?

**AS**: Sure. Well, where did you go to school? Were you raised in any religion?

**RF**: My heritage is Jewish, but when we moved to Minnesota -- this is the story my mother tells -- she couldn’t find a synagogue that she liked so she started going to a Unitarian church, which she was familiar with because her mother had been a Unitarian. In Minnesota we started going to a Unitarian church and I was raised Unitarian. My father’s heritage is Jewish, but he’s not very religious.

**AS**: What did you parents do for a living?

**RF**: Well, you know my mother. I was thinking how long can I go before this comes up? You have interviewed her, I believe. It is really interesting to me because of the parallel.

**AS**: Who is your mother?

**RF**: I was like I’m going to be saying these things and then if you know that are you going to compare notes? But it is kind of fascinating.

**AS**: Who is your mother?

**RF**: Kathy Frank.

**AS**: Kathy Simon Frank? Oh, I love your mother.

**RF**: She’s very lovable. I didn’t want to tell you until you figured it out. Then I was like I’m saying all these things about my mother and you know my mother.

**AS**: Well, I don’t know those things about her at all! So, you and your mother must have figured this out?

**RF**: We figured this out about a week ago. She was talking about a friend of hers who is doing this research project and a story and blah blah. She was telling me about the project and I was like, I think she’s interviewing me next week! [laughs]

**AS**: What a small world. We are great. You just keep going. Your life is safe --

**RF**: I’m at a place in my life right now where I feel really comfortable talking about things. My mother and I have had some really hard conversations about what the dynamic was between the two of us growing up and my experiences as a child and my experience being parented by her.

**AS**: She is so open.

**RF**: Yeah. She was a stay at home mother until my parents divorced. Then, she worked at the University of Minnesota in the sociology department for many, many years. My father was a professor of math at the University of Minnesota. My stepfather who my mother married when I was eleven was a professor of electrical of engineering at the University of Minnesota. My stepmother, who my father married when I was thirteen, has always one way or another been in the family of social science department as an instructor. Very infused in the University of Minnesota!

I went to school. I lived in a neighborhood in southeast Minneapolis. We lived two houses down from the school. When I was in elementary school my brother and I would walk home for lunch and have lunch at home and we would walk back. When she started working, that was when I was in third grade, that changed because we couldn’t come home.

**AS**: Was that hard for you?

**RF**: That was, yeah.

**AS**: The whole divorce.

**RF**: The whole divorce, the whole being stuck in between these two parents.

**AS**: Did you end up getting to spend time with your dad?

**RF**: I did. It slowly crept up to half time. It was two nights a week, then it was three nights a week. When my mother announced that she was marrying my stepfather who I did not like at all -- I had great disdain for him when I was younger -- I told her that if she married him I was going to live halftime with my dad thinking that then she would say she wouldn’t marry him. That was really why I was saying it because I knew it was the most painful thing I could say. The most hurtful thing I could do to my mom was go live with my dad halftime. She just broke down crying and I was like, Well shoot, I guess I’ll go live with my dad halftime.

**AS**: You were eleven at that point?

**RF**: Yeah I was eleven at that point. He had rented a house in the same neighborhood. They both worked at the U -- well, she didn’t work at the U yet, but she then did. Or, by that time she did work at the U. He had always stayed close. He had rented a house and then he ultimately bought a house. They live two blocks away from each other. They now get along. We have family holidays now. It’s so interesting.

I went back and forth. First it was week to week. I hated it. I absolutely hated it. When I was fifteen I got really drunk and locked myself in the bathroom at McDonald’s in Uptown and ended up in what they called twenty-twenty, which was the detox unit on Franklin and Cedar Avenue. Then ended up in the children’s adolescent unit at Fairview Deaconess. Again, these places don’t really exist anymore.

**AS**: Fairview -- the one up by the U?

**RF**: It is now Fairview Riverside but it was Fairview Deaconess. They had what was known as the STOP Unit. Before that, when I was there, it was just called the adolescent evaluation unit. I was there for two weeks. When I got out of there I went back to my father’s house because that’s where my stuff was -- that’s where I was when I went in. The day that it was supposed to go back and forth was upset because I had been away for two weeks. So, then I just stayed at my dad’s and we started having all these family therapy sessions and they said, When do you want to go back to your mothers? And my mother was asking when I was going to go back to her house, and I was like I’m not. I was done going back and forth. I didn’t get along with my mom very well at that point. I got along with my father a lot better.

From fourteen to sixteen I lived fulltime with my father. I was hellbent to get out of my parent’s house -- I did not want to live with my parents at all, but they wouldn’t let me move out until I graduated from high school. I fast tracked high school and graduated when I was sixteen and moved out the summer -- I have a summer birthday, and that summer I turned seventeen. Then I moved out.

**AS**: Did they have emancipation?

**RF**: I don’t think they had to because I graduated from high school. I don’t know. There wasn’t anything illegal or anything.

**AS**: Tell me more. Where did you move and what were you doing?

**RF**: I moved to Uptown because that was the cool place to be. I was a punk rocker in high school, an eighties punk rocker. We would hang out in the Lake and Hennepin area. The McDonald’s was an open plaza and so we would have out at the McDonalds. We all had fake IDs and we would go to the Uptown bar and First Avenue and see bands and get drunk and do acid and smoke pot. Drug use and partying was just part of the punk rock music culture. It wasn’t independent, like just getting high. It was just part of the scene and the lifestyle that included getting really fucked up.

At that point I was using alcohol, pot, and psychedelics for the most part. I had friends that were slightly older who used heroin. They would inject heroin and use needles. I thought they were really, really cool. That was who I idolized; that was who I wanted to be. It is interesting because in some of the Narcotics Anonymous texts they talk about “We didn’t want to be addicts” and I’m like, I didn’t want the misery and the heartache and the trauma. But, those were the people that I idolized. They were the singers in the bands and they were just slightly older than me. They were the dark-siders and they shot heroin. That was appealing to me.

I grew up -- sorry I’m going back and forth. I hated life. My prayer every night before I went to bed was, Please God take me away and don’t let me wake up in the morning. Every morning I would wake up and just be like, Fuck, here I am again. There wasn’t severe abuse going on. There wasn’t abuse, there wasn’t neglect. We were a middle-class family, always had my needs taken care of, always fed, always clothed. I’ve never been hungry, I’ve never been cold. I have so many privileges and so much gratitude -- now I have gratitude.

I have so much privilege, but I had severe depression. I don’t even think I knew it was depression. I just hated life because I thought it was this terrible thing. All I saw was ugliness, destruction, war, hate. When I was very young I read these books by Torey Hayden who works with severely abused children. She is awesome and she is a child psychologist, works with severely abused children and I was reading her books at ten and eleven years old saying, See, people suck.

**AS**: What age were you when you started feeling like you didn’t want to wake up in the morning?

**RF**: I think it was eleven, twelve. Yeah I mean I was just like, My life sucks, the world sucks.

**AS**: Well, your parents split up when you were nine.

**RF**: Yeah. I didn’t really like people and I didn’t like what they were doing to the world. I didn’t like what people were doing to animals. I didn’t like what people did to each other. I just thought the world was a terrible, ugly place and I wanted to be taken out of it.

For me, using drugs was an escape. It was also a part of the punk rock culture -- we all hated life. The music was always like, Fuck you! The music was about how the world sucks. That was my whole essence of being.

**AS**: And I’m angry about it.

**RF**: And I’m angry. In college I joined the political student organization and did a lot of demonstrating and at some point I can talk about what my degree is in, too. I did find some outlets other than drugs, but for the most part it was just, Get me out of here.

**AS**: You were talking about the people you idolized that used heroin.

**RF**: Oh, yeah. I had moved out with a best friend of mine and, I don’t remember what happened, but once we started living together we just weren’t getting along well. I knew there was a room for rent in a house that some of these people that I thought were really cool lived. They shot heroin and they were the bomb. I asked this woman if I could rent the room and she said, Yes. I started living there. That’s where I first used heroin, but I didn’t get strung out at that point. I did not live there for very long. I think I went traveling that summer and so I moved. Circumstances of looking back and I’m like, Wow, I really dodged a bullet.

**AS**: What year is this?

**RF**: I am seventeen, maybe just turning eighteen. I graduated in 1986 so this is probably about 1987, now. 1988.

**AS**: Did you use heroin just a couple of times?

**RF**: I just used it a couple of times at that point.

**AS**: You didn’t feel like you had to have it?

**RF**: At that point, no. I didn’t get into the physical addiction part of it. Part of it was access to it. At that time, in the eighties, it was before a lot of the pills were available. In Minnesota at that point it was the white powder. It was very difficult -- there were basically one or two people that sold it and I didn’t have access to that person. I had to get it from my roommate who got it from someone else who got it from this one person. It was very hard to get.

**AS**: And there are no cell phones. [laughs]

**RF**: There are no cell phones. Right.

**AS**: It was a word of mouth circumstance.

**RF**: We had telephones, we had landlines. [laughs] We had those! It was very much like somebody who knew somebody who knew somebody. My basic understanding -- I never got that close to it -- that there were one or two people in Minneapolis that sold it and you had to go through people to get to that person. It was white powder, which I don’t even know if that’s on the streets now. I ended up traveling that summer and moving away. I moved to New Mexico.

**AS**: Where in New Mexico?

**RF**: Outside of Santa Fe. I was going to study with an herbal medicine woman. I hated the cold so I went there to get away from the cold. Not aware that the elevation makes it cold and snow! It was milder than here, but it was kind of funny because I was thinking New Mexico -- that’s the south, it must be hot. Not in Santa Fe.

At some point I had equated misery with drug use and I had stopped using. It was right after I had moved out of the house with these folks, so maybe that was part of it -- being so immersed in it, seeing all these people that were pretty strung out. There was some pretty serious health stuff going on. Some pretty severe dysfunction. At some point I was like, Okay, I’m miserable and I’m using drugs, and if I don’t use drugs that will help meeley the misery.

When I first moved down to New Mexico I was not using. I met a woman who I just fell madly in love with. She was just this mountain woman and she was everything that I wanted. She was counter culture, she had this similar ‘society sucks’ mindset, and she had managed to live outside of it. She was off the grid. I thought, this is the life. I’m off the grid and I’m not dependent on this society that I am totally opposed to. She was a very heavy drinker and pot smoker. I spent the next couple of years being a complete co-dependent. She was miserable and unhappy and had a way worse childhood than I had as far as abuse and stuff. I decided that my life goal was to prove to her that she was lovable and that the way she was going to find happiness was to stop drinking and to stop smoking pot and I was going to be the one to show her the way.

That wasn’t very successful. I became very miserable. We were now living in the mountains of California where it is just beautiful. It is also a very heavy pot growing community. At that point -- now it is the early nineties -- cocaine has come up from the cities into the mountains of California and it is just rampant. Methamphetamine was being made all over in the mountains. I started using meth and found that I -- I didn’t share this earlies, but part of growing up I was very shy and very quiet. I hated myself for that and I always wanted to be talkative and have things to say. I wanted to be able to engage with people. I just couldn’t because I was shy and I was quiet. Fast forward to about nineteen years old and I used methamphetamine for the first time and I loved it. I could talk, I was all energized. I don’t remember the first time I used needles, but I was very attracted to going back to the heroin crowd. There was a part of it for me -- I know you are kind of focused on the heroin --

**AS**: No, no.

**RF**: The injection part of it, there was the appeal of that; it was my route of choice for admission -- was needles. I started shooting meth, started selling meth.

**AS**: Are you still with this woman?

**RF**: I’m still with this woman. Things are absolutely terrible. She is smoking crack, I’m shooting meth. Things got really bad, really fast. Her and I have a terrible breakup. I start living with this man who has a frame shop in this small town in northern California. I knew him because I sold drugs to him. I’m thinking that he’s got a business, he’s got a straight life, I’m going to start living with him. I don’t know how much of this was conscious; part of it was. And, I was going to stop selling drugs. I don’t know if I was going to stop using drugs but I was going to stop selling drugs. I was going to be on the up and up. I think I was going to stop using.

I stopped selling and I couldn’t stop using. That was the first time I realized I was an addict. I love how this is, to kind of watch how the history goes back and forth. I told you about being in the adolescent evaluation unit when I was fifteen. I was diagnosed at that time at being borderline chemical dependent. That was 1985. They don’t use that diagnosis anymore, but that was what I was given in 1985. I was told that if I stopped using I would be fine, but if I did use it was a progressive disease. I didn’t get that I just got that I was borderline. I supposed to not use, I had to sign contracts with my parents that I wasn’t going to use.

**AS**: But something stuck in your head that you were borderline, you’re not an addict, you’re just on the edge no matter what you did. No matter how far you went.

**RF**: I’m not an addict, I’m borderline. Fast forward to the frame shop in California. I couldn’t stop using and this man who became the father of my oldest daughter, also a very heavy user, says to me, Do you think you’re an addict? I said, No, I’m not. I was diagnosed when I was fifteen as borderline.

**AS**: The frame shop guy?

**RF**: Yes. He just looked at me and said, You have gone across the border. You have crossed the border. I’m like, Wow, here’s this guy -- I don’t know if I thought he was an addict, I don’t know what I thought -- but that was the first time that it occurred to me that I was an addict no matter if I wanted to or if I was trying to. It just wasn’t happening. I got pregnant and that was when -- this is 1994, now -- I got really scared because I didn’t want to be pregnant and using. I didn’t necessarily even want to be pregnant. Because life sucked and life was horrible and it was already over populated because people sucked, my intention was never to bring another human being into this world. That was a terrible thing to do. I did like kids and I thought someday I’ll try to adopt.

When you have sex with women and you don’t need to use birth control, I don’t know if you want to know this, but then you start having sex with men and there’s this thing called birth control and I kind of forgot! [laughs] I’m pregnant and he really wants to have the baby and I’m like, Okay, I’ll have the baby. I’m twenty-four years old, strung out on meth, great. At that point I was like I need to stop using and I’m pregnant. There was a woman in that community and she had two young children. At some point, I don’t remember when, she was had shared that she was using but she had stopped during those nine months of pregnancy because those nine months may be nine months of her life but it was the entire foundation of her kid’s life. That had really stuck with me. I could not stop using. That was a second ‘Ah Ha’ moment. I have a problem. I am an addict. I’m judging this woman because I think she is a junkie, and yet she was able to stop using when she was pregnant and I cannot stop using. We moved.

**AS**: What do they call that? The geographical --

**RF**: The geographical. We loaded up the frame shop. We left a lot of stuff, got a U-haul, loaded up the frame shop, loaded up our stuff, and moved to Seattle, Washington.

**AS**: What were you going to do there?

**RF**: I had no idea. I had a friend who lived there and we stayed with her. She is someone I knew from college. She was one of my protest friends who does not use. She was not an addict. Turns out her roommate was a heroin addict. We move in with her. We find this out about her roommate but I didn’t start using at that point; that comes later. We learn of this picture frame shop for sale. We buy this picture frame shop. It is already an established, up and going frame shop, so now we have another business again. Within a couple of weeks we find meth again and we are both shooting meth again.

I have my daughter and she is basically full term. She was due around April fourth and she was born on March, 26 1995. She was four pounds, six ounces. They said that even though she was basically full term, over a third of her placenta was dead from the meth. She was otherwise fine developmentally. She was little but she had all of her eyes, ears, all of her senses, and all of her functions. I immediately tested positive -- I don’t know how all the processes work, if I told them or what -- because I had been getting prenatal care. I know at one point they had wanted to drug test me and I had kind of talked the doctor out of it or something.

**AS**: Do you think they suspected because her growth was so small?

**RF**: I think what happened was we were in the hospital and I was having contractions and they found that the umbilical cord was being crushed, and they were recommending a C-section. I thought they are going to start doing medical interventions, they are going to start giving me anesthesia, or whatever they give you, and here I am I have meth in my system and I need to tell somebody. That’s what happened and I did tell the doctor.

They brought in CPS [child protection services] and the case was opened. I don’t know if this is because it is 1995, I don’t know if it is because -- I do believe a portion is because I am white and my daughter’s father is white, and we own a business, and we had an apartment. There were cultural things and we didn’t fit the stereotype. Even though a case was opened, we were required to go and give UAs to pee. I was court ordered to treatment, but I started going and I stopped. We had to go pee, but I was unobserved so we started peeing in bottles and putting it in the fridge and bringing it with us. I don’t remember if they were testing the father as well or just me, but for sure me.

At that point was when I started doing heroin again. I don’t remember why we went from heroin to meth at that point, but it was Seattle in the 1990s and meth was very accessible and heroin was also very accessible. It was black tar heroin, which was different from what I had used in Minneapolis, but it was very accessible and comparatively cheap, I guess. We started using heroin when my daughter was about six weeks old. Again, IV. Even in the eighties the whole overdose thing -- I know you are interested in the overdose thing -- that has really been an epidemic from what I see from the 2000s. We would shoot up a lot. I don’t know if it was the pure heroin. People did overdose but very few people overdosed and died.

**AS**: In the nineties.

**RF**: In the nineties. The eighties and nineties. If they did it was a mixture of alcohol and other things.

**AS**: So maybe it wasn’t as pure? That’s what I have heard.

**RF**: Or it was just heroin and not mixed with all the other stuff. Fentanyl I know is what is happening now. People would be like, Let’s see how much we can shoot up! The quantities were large amounts. I was around people who would nod out, but I was not around people that totally stopped breathing. The big thing then was Hepatitis C. At that point it was non-A and non-B. They hadn’t even identified it as Hep C at that point. Needled exchanges were springing up. I had learned from a friend of mine in Seattle about how not to share needles, cookers, and cottons. There is a lot of that kind of education going on, but not so much about the overdose that is going on now.

I then went on a run for almost two years of heroin. The physical addiction part was just -- I mean when you talk about your daughter and how the overdose happened and she continued to use it is so insane but I understand it completely. That is how insidious it is. Addiction in general, but also specifically heroin use. That physical component of the use is just overwhelming. Detoxing from it is the most horrible thing I have ever done in my life. I am actually glad I am talking about it because it reminds me that I never want to go through it again. It was a nightmare.

When my daughter was about a year old I remember I put myself in treatment. A couple of things happened. I didn’t want to raise a child as a using addict. There were pieces of me that were still sane. I was like I love this child and I did want to give her a chance and a life. What kind of life was I going to give her while I was using? I tried to quit a couple of times and absolutely could not. I did the detox thing and went through hell for three days and then get out and start using again because I was so miserable. I tried to get on methadone but the waiting list was really long. I then got into a mother daughter treatment program. It was three days of detox and was absolutely miserable, but I then went into an inpatient treatment program and I was just so sick. I remember for six weeks I didn’t sleep. I would wake up every hour on the hour. It was miserable. It had helped to care for my daughter but it was just exhausting. They recommended me for a six month program. I was from Minnesota, which at that point the standard treatment was the twenty-eight day model. I wrote my own treatment plan and I said, You are recommending me for six months and that’s absolutely insane. I will stay for sixty days because that is double the twenty-eight day program. That is twice as long. They were telling me that I had to stay the six months but on that sixtieth day --

**AS**: This is a place that was recommending six months and your daughter could live there so there was surround care? I’m assuming this was a nice place?

**RF**: Yeah. I was kind of in a house --

**AS**: You’re not leaving because it’s substandard care. You were just leaving because you didn’t want to do six months.

**RF**: Exactly.

**AS**: I just wanted to understand that.

RF: I was getting a lot out of the program and bonding with some of the other women. I knew what I needed and I only needed sixty days.

**AS**: Are you still with her father at this point?

**RF**: I’m still with her father. He is still using, although I think at that point he was on methadone. I don’t remember what I was telling them. I do remember physically I had been so sick and the only thing that kept me in there was each day saying, I do not want to go through day one, two, three, four again. Like I was saying this on day five. I don’t want to do that again. I was so physically horrible. Saying that to myself: how I didn’t want to go back again. Each day I stay clean and don’t use heroin I’m one day further from that.

Day sixty I leave and go do meth. I was thinking about not using heroin again. I wasn’t going to go through that detox again. I leave the program -- this is over twenty years ago now -- I went and used meth with my daughter’s father. We were still together. We are off and running on meth again. I was still thinking that I didn’t want to raise my daughter while using. We decided to move again. We sell the frame shop. Some of these things I’m like, How did we manage this? But we did.

**AS**: To pay bills? Live a life? Is that what you mean?

**RF**: Yeah, and how things fell into place. We knew this person was a businessman and he bought the business from us.

**AS**: Because you were so strung out you don’t remember it?

**RF**: I don’t remember the intricacies of how it happened and also when I look back I think about the chances of all those things happening and all the things falling into place the way they did.

We sold the business and we moved back to northern California, but a different place. My daughter’s father’s father was a -- I don’t know if you know about the Anananda community? They follow Ananda I think is his name. It is an Eastern based philosohy of yoga, meditation, vegetarian eating. They have a community in Nevada City, Californina. My daughter’s father’s father lived in Fresno, but was a member of this community of Ananda. We find out there is a retreat house and we can go there and do work exchange. We drive to this beautiful, moutainous place, and they put us up in a yurt and they are all vegetarians. We live in a yurt and are doing work exchange. Then, we find another place to live right outside this Anananda community. I am going there to meditate and do yoga in the community center and it is beautiful. Then we find meth.

**AS**: How long did that take?

**RF**: Weeks.

**AS**: Several weeks in?

**RF**: Yeah.

**AS**: When you say you found meth, what do you mean? Explain that to a non-meth user. How you could just find it at a yoga center.

**RF**: [laughs] Some of it is that there is something about people that use drugs and that radar kind of thing. There is something else I just kind of believe that the energy you put out is the energy you get. Some of that new-age stuff I really believe. I was still emitting that energy and attracting to me, not consciously thinking I want to do this thing, I wanted to get away from this thing, but I was still drawn to it.

My daughter’s father was looking for a job and we were told -- this is all in the same area -- there was a guy, he wasn’t apart of the Anananda community, but he had a sawmilll and he was looking for people to mill the wood. He got a job there, and the owner of the sawmill smoked meth. Here you have somebody who is just trying to be clean and not really and he finds out this guy smokes meth. It was small, it wasn’t a big business. The two of them were working together and he catches on that he does meth. They start talking and then I’m like, Oh yeah, I’m there too. They were smoking meth but then I started shooting it because that’s just what I did. That went on for another year.

Finally, during that period of time I was just getting more and more desperate. Things were falling apart between the two of us and we were not parenting well. We were fighting constantly and I was miserable. I remember saying to this woman, I really want my daughter to grow up and be happy and healthy. She said to me, The most important, number one thing you can do to ensure that happens is for you to be happy and healthy. It was one of those so simple and so deep profound moments of my life. I was like, This isn’t the way it is going to happen.

My stepmother knew I was miserable and she said, Why don’t you come back to Minneapolis and visit? Some plan was formulated that my daughter and I were going to come back to the Twin Cities and I couldn’t figure out how to pack. Simple daily things I couldn’t figure out how to do. My mother ended up flying out. The nearest airport to the place I was was Sacremento. My mother bought us roundtrip tickets, she flew to Sacramento, drove for three hours to the mountains, picked us up, drove back to Sacramento, and flew to the Twin Cities. That was January 18, 1998.

**AS**: Why do you remember that date?

**RF**: January 18, 1998. That is the last day that I injected or used drugs of any form. That is the date that recovery in earnest started. My clean date I call January 19th. The day after. The last day I used drugs was when my mom was driving down the driveway to come pick us up. I did not come back out here to get clean. I was miserable and here was this imitation. My intention was to come out here and spend some time with my family and then come back to California. I had a round trip ticket. I didn’t have a ton of stuff because we lived in a yurt. I came with a suitcase and that was it.

**AS**: How long were you planning to visit?

**RF**: I don’t know. [laughs] Opportunities kept presenting themselves. I kept saying I was going to go back after I did this. I didn’t have a driver’s license anymore because I had let it expire and so I was going to get my driver’s license then I was going to go back. Then a friend of mine was teaching this play therapy class and she asked me if me and my daughter wanted to participate in this class and I said, Sure. So then I was going to take this play therapy class and then I was going to go back. At a certain point I was just like I’m not going back.

I started attending Narcotics Anonymous right away.

**AS**: You didn’t go back into treatment?

**RF**: I didn’t go back into treatment. I was living with my mother and my stepfather in the house I had moved out of when I was fourteen and had never moved back into.

**AS**: How old are you at this point?

**RF**: I am twenty-nine at this point.

**AS**: It has been half of your life since the time you had been there.

**RF**: I come back to mom’s house and she nursed us back to health. She financially provided for us while I got on my feet, I went back to school.

**AS**: Had you started college before you moved to Santa Fe?

**RF**: I had started college. I was in a program called the Program for Individualized Learning at the U of M. It doesn’t exist anymore.

**AS**: A lot of schools had something like that.

**RF**: I could design my own major. I had designed it around political activism and community organizing and things that I loved to do anyways. I was getting some kind of credit for this herbal medicine internship. I could do projects and get credit for them. When I was in California I had worked on this reggae festival. I was the handicapped support crew person. I had done a project around accessibility at large venues or something. I had to find professors at the U of M who would work with me on it, but I had always managed to do that.

As all of this is going on I am doing a project here and a project there. At some point I completely had stopped going at all. I come back to Minnesota. I had finished the core of what I needed to for the Program for Individualized Learning, but I had to do a senior project. I really didn’t know what I wanted to do. I then found the Alcohol and Drug Counseling Education program which is a two year program at the University of Minnesota. They had another program called the Inner-College program, which I think they still have, where you could take minors from two different colleges. My stuff was basically from the college of liberal arts and the alcohol and drug studies was from family and social science. I could take two of those things and put them together and have a degree. That’s what I did.

I dove right into school, I dove into NA, the alcohol and drug counseling education program, and I got my degree in 2000 I think.

**AS**: What was the turning point for you? You said things in California were going poorly. You got this invitation. Had you reached out at all? Did your family back here know that you were in really bad shape or was it kind of a surprise?

**RF**: They knew. I don’t know if they knew how bad, but they knew.

**AS**: By the time your mom came to get you, you were ready to be done. Did something precipitate that? Was it falling out with him?

**RF**: That was an event. It is always like how people talk about what their ‘bottom’ is.

**AS**: I just mean that it seems like they came and got you and then you started going to NA. [laughs] If that is your story that is totally fine, but I was just wondering if there was some other precipitating things. You had moved before to try to stop, so I’m just wondering what it was about this move. Maybe I interrupted you earlier when you were trying to say something.

**RF**: Part of it was I think I had isolated myself from the community in northern California. Even though my community there, the family there, the saw mill family became my family, they had kids and we spent time together. I had isolated myself from them and I really had nobody. I was in this yurt all day with my daughter and had totally isolated myself. Him and I were not getting along. I had had this conversation with this woman about being happy. Just all these little things that kind of added up.

Although I didn’t make a conscious decision that I was going to come back here to be clean it kind of fell into place. Also, being at my mom’s house where there was no alcohol and drugs. Of course, as I told you before, I could have easily found it, but something just changed. Something had changed when I had got on that plane. Part of it was the desire to use was lifted, which is unexplainable because up until that point, part of how I defined addiction was that I couldn’t stop using and I had this compulsion and obsession. If anytime I had tried not to use I was just so overwhelmed that I had gone back to using. Somewhere between traveling from California to Minnesota that obsession was lifted. When I arrived in Minnesota I didn’t have that drive. I think if I had I wouldn’t have stayed clean. That miracle had happened despite any intention that I had.

I got internships. I worked at mothers and daughters programs because that was my own personal interest. I worked at a methadone program. Then I started learning about harm reduction. I had always been interested in needle exchanges because another part of my story is that I don’t have HIV or Hepatitis C. I didn’t contract those diseases through all of that using. PArt of that I attribute to the education I got in Seattle from the injection drug users there who were very much about educating each other through peer to peer education. I had always had a very favorable view on needle exchange and harm reduction.

When I came back to Minnesota and I started connecting with some of my old friends many of them were dead through either overdose or suicide. One hundred percent of those people, like those roommates I talked about that I had injected with in 1984, had Hepatitis C. Again, I really dodged a bullet here. A couple of them had HIV, but one hundred percent of them have Hep C. I found out about a needle exchange that was hiring. It was called Woman with a Point. Later we changed our name to Access Works. I started working there in 2000. Yeah, because the internships I did while I was in school were with the methadone clinic and the women’s program. My first job was as an HIV tester and Woman with a Point. It was a federally funded program to do HIV testing in the drug using community. I worked there until 2007 and I went from being an HIV tester to a program manager to the executive director.

**AS**: Is this with Access Works?

**RF**: This is with Access Works. From 2003 to 2007 I was the executive director. During that time we started an overdose prevention program. Fentanyl had hit the streets. There were these pockets of overdoses happening. Mostly they would be tied back to a single source. We started doing things with alerts like if there was bad dope we would have bad dope alerts. We had a users group so people could share information. It wasn’t a safe injection place it was just an information thing. We exchanged needles. We gave clean needles, syringes, education, HIV testing, Hepatitis C testing, counseling.

We got a grant from the Collmer Foundation to do overdose prevention. I had leraned about Narcan and there was a program in Chicago called the Chicago Recovery Alliance that was giving Narcan to people on the streets along with their syringe exchange. I contacted the director there and developed an overdose prevention program based on that program where we teach rescue breating and CPR. Once people had been through this training that we gave we would give them a prescritpion for Narcan. At that point I had found a doctor who was willing to write prescriptions. We couldn’t get the Narcan and give it to people, but we could give them a prescription and they could go to the pharmacy and they would fill it. I think that’s how we started.

**AS**: Who was the doctor?

**RF**: I can get back to you on that. I don’t remember how I got connected to him. I think I was just talking to people and networking. I also connected with doctors at the University of Minnesota that were looking for community based experiences. We started a wound care clinic because another thing that was happening were huge abscesses and people being afraid to go to the doctors. We had medical insurance come on site and do wound care.

**AS**: That became part of what Access Works did?

**RF**: Yeah.

**AS**: Where were you located?

**RF**: Eleven West Fifteenth Street in Minneapolis. Right off of Fifteenth and Nicolette.

Minnesota Aids Project also had a needle exchange. I don’t know exactly the history of that. I think they started around the same time in the nineties. We were basically the only ones doing overdose prevention in that time.

**AS**: Do you remember when Women with a Point started?

**RF**: Maybe ‘95, ‘96. The founder of that, Sue Purchase, would probably love to talk to you. She is delightful.

**AS**: I would love to talk to her.

**RF**: I think she lives out in Colorado now. She is still actively doing work with women drug users. She has a program now called the Morpheus Project. It does needle exchange and I think overdose prevention. She’s got a ton of historical stuff with heroin use in the Twin Cities and establishing needle exchange and stuff.

**AS**: I want to know about the stigma about abcesses. People were getting these and not getting treated for them because they were afraid to go to the hospital to be drug tested. What was their fear?

**RF**: One of the fears was how they were treated. Another fear was being disrespected. They were also not given pain medicine because they were heroin addicts. That kind of thing. We would see people oozing, just really horrific wounds caused from injections.

**AS**: You found medical students from the U of M who would come and treat wounds off site?

**RF**: It was at Access Works. That only lasted one semester. Then we developed a relationship with the Uptown Community clinic.

**AS**: Was it called NIP?

**RF**: On twenty-fourth and Hennepin?

**AS**: Yeah, right across from the Walgreens. It just closed down.

**RF**: Did it close?

**AS**: Yeah, because of the Affordable Care Act.

**RF**: Really?

**AS**: They had so many outstanding bills. It is completely closed down.

**RF**: I think of her name, too, but whoever was the medical doctor there started something where they would see people when they dropped in or at certain times, I can’t remember, but we had some type of direct relationship with them where we would send our clients to them for wound care.

**AS**: Did this include antibiotics?

**RF**: Yes. Packing, teaching how to pack and repack wounds.

**AS**: Was that anything that ever happened to you?

**RF**: No. My daughter’s father got some serious abscesses and he had to have both of his biceps taken out. I didn’t ever have to do anything like that.

**AS**: You listened to the advice.

**RF**: Part of that is that people that get abscesses from muscling -- when people can’t find veins anymore, so they muscle -- I didn’t do that. Oftentimes people go into the vein and then miss it. The drug residue goes elsewhere. I didn’t ever have any of that.

**AS**: You’re the executive director of the program until 2007. Does it still exist?

**RF**: It does not exist anymore. A series of events happened. I look back and I think if I had made different choices things might have happened differently. I got the opportunity to be the executive director of Foundation. I was like, Oh, I’m the executive director! And I loved it. I wasn’t paid a whole lot because it was a tiny organization, but I was the executive director. I got this position with Sobriety High Foundation. It is twice the salary and I decided I wanted to go for it.

**AS**: What is that?

**RF**: It is a foundation that -- it doesn’t exist anymore either; I leave this trail. [laughs] It was a foundation that ran three or four sobriety high schools. One in Edina, one in Maplewood, and I can’t remember the other one. They ran sober high schools, which still exist, it just doesn’t exist in this manifestation. Pease Academy, Insight in White Bear Lake. There are a number of them. It was really just a big fundraising arm, it was kind of a clunky thing. It was a fundraising arm for these schools. I had gone from being involved with the communities, developing these programs and I didn’t realize how much I loved that. I was also really an effective fundraiser. I was really good at networking and finding resources and grant writing. I had built a strong foundation of a lot of the family foundations in the twin cities that supported us with the needle exhchange. We had the Department of Health grant, the CDC grant, we had the Hennepin County grant. I thought a bigger, better, more money, whatever. I can be the director of this foundation. The 2008 the crash happens and no one is giving money anymore. I was this brand new executive director trying to fundraise in the most horrible time. It wasn’t happening.

The same thing happened to the new director of Access Works. She did not have the ties that I had. I tried to pass things onto her, but her personality was such that -- it ended up being that her personality -- people would say, Oh, *she* took it down?

**AS**: People would say that about the new director at Access Works?

**RF**: She was in the same position as me as this new director and agency. You don’t have the footing, you don’t have the history, it is 2008 and the market has crashed, no one is giving money, foundations are closing, money is drying up. They ended up in 2008 or 2009 shutting their doors.

**AS**: Right in the middle of a crisis. Right when it was needed.

**RF**: Minnesota Aids Project was still doing the needle exchange. It might be interesting to talk to someone there because I don’t know any of their overdose prevention stuff. Here we are with the Narcan doing the overdose training, distributing Narcan right then in 2009 and the doors shut.

No one I know really picked up the overdose stuff that I can see until the Steve Rumler Foundation.

**AS**: That was in 2012, 2013.

**RF**: They have done amazing stuff bringing it through legislation.

**AS**: Are we still missing this other piece that Access Works provided? Are we still missing user groups? Counseling? Alerts? I’ve seen the Rumler Foundation try to do alerts about bad heroin, but when they come onto my Facebook page I think there is likely a gap between the Rummler Hope Foundation pager that you were dealing with at Access Works.

**RF**: We were definitely the face of the epidemic as far as Native Americans, Hispanic, African American, people of all economic backgrounds.

**AS**: Do you know where the records are from Access Works? Who would have them? Just the paperwork, your notes from board meetings, your fliers.

**RF**: We could ask Sue because she might know. I can send an email to one of the board members. She contacted me a few years ago to talk about something else. I might have some flash drives. I don’t have any of the paperwork but we had a whole access database system where we tracked things.

**AS**: This is not what I expected and is making me very excited. Just because these organizations were arising in a crisis for care for people. It is just interesting to me as an important part of the history because so far all you would know if you knew anything about this in this area in the last five or six years all you know about is Steve Rummler. Unless you happen to know people in methadone clinics who are giving Narcan.

**RF**: I don’t know if you have talked to people at Valhalla Place yet.

**AS**: Yeah, Chuck.

**RF**: Adams?

**AS**: I haven’t interviewed him yet. He works for somewhere else now. I think he works for White Earth. They are doing Narcan now. It is out there, but this organization, especially Women with a Point --

**RF**: When we first started we had outreach workers on the streets. Even the stuff that Minnesta Aids Project, I don’t know if they are still doing the van. The person behind that the mainline, he died a number of years ago. His name is escaping me.

**AS**: What was main line?

**RF**: It still is what Minnesota Aids Project calls the needle exchange program.

**AS**: So, in 2009 you are at the Sobriety High Foundation.

**RF**: I leave Access Works and go to Sobriety High Foundation. Access Works closes and I leave Sobriety High after one year. I’m not sure if it was during that year, I’m not sure of the date Access Works closed, but I left in october of 2007. I was the director of Sobriety High Foundation until October of 2008. Not a good fit for a variety of reasons. One was that I was in this fundraising position and I cannot raise funds. Another was that I knocked heads with some of the board chairs. It just was not a good fit. I learned that I liked that program development piece so much more than just the solid fundraising. I left there in October in 2008 having no idea what I was going to do. It was pretty scary.

This is a whole other thing, we may have to meet again! The other thing that was going on in 2008 was that my now thirteen year old daughter, the trouble started when she was eleven. Things got really unmanageable. She started cutting. I know there were things that I was feeling ready to move away from the needle exchange, which coincided with my daughter starting to use. I felt like my whole life was around using. Even though I loved working at Access Works and loved the participants they were still using addicts. I was in recovery and I was a mom and my daughter was starting to use.

I go to Sobriety High Foundation, which is now still in the same field but now these are supposedly people in recovery or whatever. I end up putting her in treatment and there was a lot of in and out.

**AS**: She was in treatment as a young teenager, then.

**RF**: Yeah.

**AS**: And that is based on your experience. You saw it. You could see it.

**RF**: Oh, I saw. It was kind of funny because there were times when I would be with my mother and she probably never knew that I was using because there were times with Brianna that it was so obvious. I would just be like you are so high! And my mother was still totally oblivious to it. I was like, No wonder you didn’t know! I can see it.

**AS**: By thirteen she’s in treatment?

**RF**: By thirteen she’s in treatment. Not only is the economy crumbling, but it is totally chaotic with her. All this advice. I never went to Nar Anon partly because I was in NA and I had that as my foundation and my step work and my sponsor. With all these other things in recovery and change with all these people and places and if you don’t like it walk away. I couldn’t not parent my daughter. I couldn’t kick her out. I had to be immersed and deal with it.

This chaos is going on. I leave that position. I’m unemployed for six months. It was actually one of the greatest times. At this point I have another daughter who was born in recovery. She’s fifteen. I was with her father and it was a planned pregnancy. Totally different story. She is a totally different human being. I am applying for jobs like crazy, don’t find anything, no one is hiring. I am going on all these informational interviews which is another great thing I did. I was also able to be present for my daughter at that time that was helpful. There was a little reprieve and I was able to be around a lot. I think she was in eighth grade at that point.

My next job was as a licenser for treatment centers with the Department for Human Services. Now I am back, well, I guess I never really left the field. Now I have. I finally left the field. [laughs]

**AS**: You have? What do you do here?

**RF**: I am a planning specialist. I work in public health. The reason I got this job was because it was public health and I have so much public health background. The division I am in is in environmental health and I do policy planning around solid waste and recycling. [laughs] Not doing chemical dependency stuff anymore.

**AS**: You became a licenser for treatment centers --

**RF**: In March of 2009 I start working for the Department of Human Services licensing treatment centers. I got assigned all of the methadone clinics because I wanted to help make the law, Rule Thirty-one work for methadone clinics because it doesn’t work. In the Rule Thirty-one it says your treatment goal has to be the cessation of treatment. That doesn’t work for methadone because methadone can be this long --

**AS**: Yeah, that’s the whole point.

**RF**: There have been some changes made in statute that happens around some of these -- I don’t remember the exact language now it has been so long -- but there have been some changes to the methadone rules. There is more flexibility. We weren’t citing every single program for a violation.

**AS**: Does Rule Thirty-one give them federal funds?

**RF**: Rule Thirty-one does not give the federal funds. That’s through Rule Twenty-five. The Rule Thirty-one was a real specific thing that said that you had to have a treatment plan, you had to have treatment goals.

**AS**: Okay, so it is about how they run?

**RF**: Yeah. I am a licenser for these programs and my daughter is continuing to get worse. Finally, she goes to Andale, I think that is the girl’s program in Eden Prairie. I am a licenser and I am licensing programs and now I have a daughter that is in a treatment program. She didn’t ever use heroin that I know of. She was using meth, psychedelics, and alcohol. She was just going off the deep end. As far as I know she has never injected. As far as I know she has never used heroin. As far as I know she has overdosed.

**AS**: Is she sober today?

**RF**: She is not sober. She drinks socially. I don’t know what -- you know? She is young. She is twenty-one now and she has a son. I have a three year old grandson. She is doing really well as far as her relationships. She has graduated college, she has a degree from Hamline, she has her real estate license. She loves parenting, she loves her son and she has been really present for him. She did stop using for quite a long, substantial period of time. At some point she decided to start drinking again. Sometimes she drinks. I don’t know and sometimes I try to pay attention: Are you where you say you are going to be?

**AS**: Right, the bigger things.

**RF**: It was in that period that she was in treatment. I saw this job in Ramsey County as a health educator. I put an application in. When I was interviewing for the position I was thinking that this was a pretty big deal. I have worked in this field for so long and in so many different capacities: a counselor, a director, a licensed. And I’m in recovery and my children are using. It was refreshing to have a professional life that was outside all of this. I have been at this job for five years.

**AS**: You are a health educator?

**RF**: I was a health educator and now I’m a planning specialist.

**AS**: For recycling? You’ve got to explain this! Or, you can tell me in an email.

**RF**: Part of this job is to get the information out to communities so that we recycle more. There is a state mandate that we have to recycle seventy-five percent of our solid waste by 2020. We are developing policies to try to get us to that. I don’t have to raise money anymore. I don’t have to supervise staff.

**AS**: Tell me what it was like for you to be going through recovery and having a daughter going off the deep end into substances? How was that emotionally and psychologically?

**RF**: It pissed me off. I thought it was really unfair. I had done all of this work on this road to recovery, to be surrounding myself with all these positive people and good quality of life. Following a spiritual path. Now I have to deal with all this shit and it has to be in my house again. I was really, very angry.

**AS**: How did you manage that with your daughter?

**RF**: I don’t think I managed it very well. I was working in harm reduction so I could have great compassion for all these people that I worked with --

**AS**: And then come home and freak out with her.

**RF**: Part of it was not so much the use, but the result of that use was that she was so incredibly disrespectful and such a little monster. That would just set me off. How dare she speak to me like that in my house? There became a lot of power struggles. If I could go back and do that part of my life differently with more compassion then I maybe would. It was very contentious. I didn’t know how to help her.

**AS**: Isn’t that odd? Isn’t that a peculiar thing? It makes addiction just one possible element of a teenager’s struggle. Even with your history and awareness of what was going on it didn’t change how difficult or painful it was for you. You worked a progam. Is that righ?

**RF**: Yeah. I still have a sponsor and I sponsor other women.

**AS**: When it is your child --

**RF**: Yeah, because there is one part of wanting so much for her not to have to go through my experience herself. I already went through this; you don’t have to go through this and then seeing that she does have to go through what she has to go through. Very conflicting feelings about how young a person should be to go into treatment and whether that is beneficial or detrimental. When she was really young to try to keep her safe I didn’t see any other options. I was working full time and was a single mother again with another younger daughter that I was trying to protect from the stuff going on with my older daughter. She was in Fairview Riverside twice. She did outpatient which didn’t work very well at Anthony Lewis. Then ultimately I took her to Onbelay. I think it is part of the Anthony Lewis centers. Their girls inpatient program. She really loves to write and she got really engaged. Kind of like me there is a part of her that is really into that self growth and self exploration while maintaining some level of destructive behavior.

**AS**: What about your younger daughter?

**RF**: She is a gem. [laughs] I’m not comparing them at all! No, I love them both.

**AS**: Oh, yeah, of course. You don’t have to tell me. I have two and my youngest is completely different. Not a ripple of trouble ever.

**RF**: My fifteen year old -- and I think of myself at fifteen and my eldest at fifteen and she is engaged in school, she does sports, she dances. Her biggest thing now that I think I have to put on a leash is piercing. She got her ears double pierced and now she got her nose pierced for her fifteenth birthday and now she wants her belly button pierced. I’m like, Oh, no I’ve unleashed this piercing monster! That’s her thing. Could be worse. She is pleasant, she is not rude or disrespectful.

**AS**: What does she think about substances that you know?

**RF**: She knows that in other countries drinking is more a part of the way you grow up. She’ll say that she wants to try alcohol and we have conversations around what that means and the legal age and why the law is twenty-one and whether or not that makes sense or not and that her father is also an addict in recovery. I had nineteen years in January and he had twenty-one years in January. We met in recovery and he has been in long term recovery. We have conversations. She saw what it did to her older sister. I don’t know that she’ll never use because she has curiosities about what it means. She is curious about stuff.

**AS**: But you talk about it.

**RF**: We talk about it, yeah.

**AS**: Anything else you can think of?

**RF**: No. I am also in touch with some of those people that I thought were so cool and I idolized. Some of them are clean and some aren’t but I could ask them. Some are in their late forties or early fifties. They would have that perspective. They were really entrenched in the heroin use in the eighties in the Twin Cites and the punk scene. I can get you in touch with Sue.

**AS**: That would be great. Thank you, Rae.

**RF**: Thank you.