

## **Episode 99: Bill got a dreaded phone call**

Sometimes, you see a phone call coming in and you just know that something bad has happened.

I remember back several years ago, when my dad was still alive. He was in pretty poor health. He could still walk around, sort of, but it was with a walker, and it was very slowly. I'm the oldest of three sons, and of the three, I live the closest. It's only about a 5 or 6 minute drive for me to get to my parents' place, so if something happened, I'd be the one to get that call. Lots of times my phone would ring, and it would be my mom calling, quite upset and worried, because my dad had fallen and she couldn't get him up.

And you know, when a call comes in the middle of the night, it's almost never going to be good news. We've had a few of those as well.

For my guest today, Bill, life was good. He and his wife had two children – David, in high school, and Kristin, who had just graduated from college and was about to start a career.

But then, Bill got a phone call. It was from a woman who identified herself as a police detective.

The phone call was about Bill's daughter.

---

### **Scott**

For those listening to this, I'd like to have an idea of who Kristin was and what she was like. Can you just tell us about your daughter, Kristin?

### **Bill**

She was 21 years old when she died - I hate to start at that spot. The first thing I think of is that she's not physically with us. What kind of a person was she in life? She was very smart. She was extremely creative. She loves to write. She loves to make things. She likes to do photography. She loves to write poetry. She would write little stories and things like that. She wasn't the type of person who would write a poem in high school or college, and then come running to us and say, "Hey, look what I wrote!" she would write it. Sometimes, you would just kind of find it later. She wrote something in high school and you would find it in the yearbook. So, sometimes, you would kind of trip upon these things. She was fun. She had a really nice sense of humor. She really freshens and brightens up people's lives. Unfortunately, you'd find out how many people loved her after this had happened. She loved her family. She was loyal to her friends. She rode horses. She played the flute. She went to college on a scholarship. While she was there, she won a job at General Mills - she had not quite gotten to the point of starting there. She's very cute and very attractive. She's the full package, Scott. She was one of those people that, if I walked into a room that she was in, I'd say, "Wow! She really makes a statement!" And she was my daughter too.

### **Scott**

When this happened, you were a family of 4, with your wife Michelle, your two kids, Kristin and David. Can you give us kind of an overview of what was going on in your lives at that time? How old were the kids?

**Bill**

At that time, Kristin was 21 and David was 17. They were always very good together. There was barely ever a hint of sibling rivalry. They were so great together and would have a lot of fun with each other especially during vacations. At that particular time, my son was finishing his junior year and had just gotten his junior high school ring. He was the most valuable player on his JV tennis team. So we're celebrating that. There, she is right at the end of college and graduating soon. She's going to start at General Mills in July. We were a family of 4. We had spent so much time emotionally and, in some cases, financially on these two children, and it was really paying off now, we are really seeing it. It's like all those things that you tried to accomplish were coming true. Then, I got a call one evening. Kristin was going to college at St. Joseph University, just outside of Philadelphia. She was in food marketing, and she had won a job with General Mills. So, she was up there. We live just outside of Baltimore.

On the day of her graduation, we took a couple of cars because, after the graduation, my wife was going to get together with Kristin and go to the Atlantic Ocean or Ocean City, Maryland. We have a small house down there, so they were going to go there. My wife is a schoolteacher. She was out of school at that point. They were going there for, kind of, a long weekend. My son was still in high school, and I was working. Anyway, we took two cars up there and we went to the graduation. I remember when I first saw her, she was outside her apartment. It was just, kind of, like, a beautifully lit scene in a movie where it's morning. She's going to graduate in a few hours. When I pulled up in front of her apartment, I wasn't sure if it was her. She had this beautiful dress on at that point. She had to put on the graduation gown, the mortarboard, and everything. I can't put it into words, but she's a person who never looked more radiant, happy, and so proud of what she had done. She was so ready.

Then, we kind of joined together and went over to the whole graduation part of it, which was under a great big white tent. We had to sit there for hours - it was May 14. Although it was only in the low 80s degrees Fahrenheit, it felt like the mid-to-high 90s degrees Fahrenheit - it was a really intense day. She graduated and came out for that. After that ceremony, she met with her best friend at the time, who's a young woman named Samantha, and she also met her boyfriend. Now, she's 21 years old and he's 27 or 28 years old. So, that was kind of a new thing, but she introduced us. When I met him - I focused on him because I was focusing on her - I shook his hand, then these precise words ran through my mind: "Wow, I'd never want to tangle with this guy." So here, I was just meeting him and picturing myself duking it out with this guy.

**Scott**

Not a good first impression.

**Bill**

No, no. I probably only had that feeling a few times in my life. That's not a common thing for me to meet somebody at that place. I may say, "Wow, that guy's strong, or tall, or dresses nicely, or whatever it is." However, I pictured myself being in some kind of a confrontation with this guy. So that was a premonition I should have followed up somehow, I guess.

**Scott**

Yeah. It's so easy to dismiss that and think, "I don't even know this guy. Why would I think that?"

**Bill**

Oh, yeah, I'd be the first person to discount my feelings in a case like that. I wasn't focused on what was wrong with him, but what was wrong with me. So, I kind of dismissed it, waited around

in the parking lot, said 'Hi' to Samantha, then Christine's other friend, Felicity - her best friend from high school who came up with this. We still keep in touch with both Samantha and Felicity. Even now, I'm still very close with them. We took a lot of digital pictures - all different combinations of Kristin and this guy. Then, he actually had a new digital camera. He took a picture of the 4 of us - my wife and I, Kristin, and David. In the following week, he and I sent emails to each other because we were exchanging the pictures I took and the pictures he took. But that was, kind of, just the graduation day. There was some tension going on between Kristin and this guy, but I had no idea what it was. I said to my wife and Kristin, "Look. If he wants to come with us after this to go get something to eat - McCormick and Schmick or someplace like that - maybe have him come." But Kristin didn't want to do that. So, I was actually okay with that. I'd rather it be the 4 of us to just be the core group.

### **Scott**

That time is about her anyway. You're celebrating her accomplishment.

### **Bill**

Yeah. She was in Philadelphia, so it wasn't like we were seeing her constantly. So, it was a real catch-up time. Michelle was going to continue on with Kristin to Ocean City, Maryland. Then, David and I would, kind of, say goodnight with hugs, kisses and all. We were heading back to the Baltimore area and, kind of, going back to what we were used to. A couple of days after the graduation, Kristin had left me this one voicemail - just talking and going on and on - about a camera which she had also received but didn't really use that day. She was using it and downloading pictures. It was new for her to have a digital camera, so that was her favorite graduation present. She took a lot of pictures over the next 3 weeks or so. The key to this is: exactly 20 days after that graduation day - on a rainy Friday, on June 3, 2005 - I was with my parents that evening at a restaurant in the Baltimore area. My wife and son were closer to Washington at a graduation party for some friend's son who just graduated from high school.

After I left my parents at this restaurant, we said 'Good night' and went home. Then, I got a call from a detective who handled the call very professionally. She needed to tell me something but could not tell me over the phone. I didn't believe her, so I asked, "What's this all about? Who are you?" Well, they've already been to the house but no one was there. They had to tell me something in-person. That was a lot to swallow while driving along in the rain with the wipers going, so I pulled off, got this detective's number, and said "I need to call you back." I called my wife who was at this graduation party and told her what was going on. She asked me, "Is this about Kristin?" And I said, "What on earth? Why would this be about Kristin? These are local policemen, detectives and all." I wound up meeting them at a giant grocery store near home. I didn't want to meet them at my front door because I can't be sure who it is going to be in a situation like that. That's kind of when I was handed a parent's worst nightmare.

This main detective was a woman. She wanted me to sit in her car and tell me this thing that she couldn't tell me over the phone, but I said, "No, let's do it here by the automatic doors, with my back up against a Gatorade container, right by the big windows with all the sale signs and stuff at the grocery store. Just tell it to me here." She said, "Your daughter Kristin was murdered today by her boyfriend." That sets us off on a whole new trajectory in life, never to recognize most parts of our lives again from that point. So, it was really on me. Once I got the gist of that - which I understood immediately - I just pictured my life from that point on all the things that we were counting on that would just never happen - her birthdays, the Christmas holidays, get-togethers, her getting married to some great guy and having kids, etc. I just felt like I was watching a circuit box with the switches being snapped off.

Then, while I was back in my own car driving home, which was a short distance, my wife who's still at this party called me back and said, "Well, what did you find out from this detective?" Somehow, I didn't give her any details. She said that they're coming home right now, and I said, "Well, yeah. You probably should." My son and my wife came to the house. I called my parents whom I had just seen at the restaurant, asked them to come to the house, and found a way to say, "I'll tell you what's going on when you get there." Then, I got them seated in the living room. That's when I had to, kind of, send their lives off to the same place - mine had been for about 45-60 minutes.

**Scott**

I can't imagine being tasked with telling the family that news.

**Bill**

Yeah. I've looked back on that many, many times, Scott. I really think I was really chosen for that job. The fact that my wife and son were not home and the detective somehow managed to contact me - I still don't know to this day how they got my cell phone number - I have no doubt it was put on me to pass the word to everybody else. I'm not complaining at all - I was the right person to carry that. I mean, I've carried the story from June 3 until now. There I was, kind of, on a cool June 3 evening, in the rain. Knowing that I'll be facing a whole different life when that sun comes up tomorrow - and it came up strong. It was a hot, hot, June 4 Saturday morning. Somehow, we had the clarity to start pushing through all kinds of phone calls, whether it'd be telling people what's going on or making appointments for funeral homes and cemeteries. We were in the car and - the 3 of us, Michelle, David, and I - just being in complete disbelief, stress, pressure, horror, anger, and shock. We just saw her 21 days ago! On top of that, we were seriously praying for guidance: "Don't let me forget something. Don't let me miss something. Somebody out there, please tell me what to do." We just had thoughts coming into our minds to act upon.

**Scott**

It's not like you had any practice in how to do all of this.

**Bill**

Yeah. We didn't have any cemetery plots ready to go. At that very same time, my parents had their plots in the military section of this one cemetery - they were all paid for - and all you have to do now is pass away or something... I mean, not everybody's ready to die - definitely, not my daughter who just graduated from college... Those first days, we're just all about getting ready for the funeral, this flow of people calling, showing up, and bringing food - more people brought more food. Every time you open the door, it was a ham or something.

**Scott**

That's what people know how to do, right?

**Bill**

Yeah, God bless them. I mean, they were doing everything they could to help bring comfort. I'm not complaining, but it became, like, "Well, where will we put that? Why am I thinking about that?" In the meantime - it's not like somebody had a heart attack, died, and was brought here to the funeral home - in this case, my daughter's body is in the Philadelphia area held as evidence to track down the guy who did it and to connect what he actually, literally, did to the person because he got to be very careful. I mean, he stabbed her to death. What he did was pretty

obvious, but they want to be sure this doesn't go sideways in case he turns this into a different story. The medical examiner who examined her is the same person who examined him, by the way, which is kind of interesting. On June 3, he attacked her around 3.00 AM in the morning, but he presented himself at a hospital around 9.00 AM claiming that he was in a fight with his girlfriend. He was there because he had a number of injuries himself. Now, from the point of view of the medical examiner and detectives working on the case, he did all of this to himself. He wanted to make it look like she attacked him, and he did it out of self-defense. That was what he was pushing for. That's why it took 3.00 AM until 9.00 AM for him to get to a hospital - because he was trying to work on his story. He was inflicting injuries on himself with a knife at the same time.

We went to 3 different funeral homes first. The first two, frankly, looked and smelled - funeral homes do have that, kind of, I guess, lilacs or something in there. It has that kind of heavy smell. I mean, you could be blindfolded and, most of the time, know that you're in a funeral home. They were just so dreary. Now, the circumstances were dreary, of course, but this just made it worse. The salespeople were just either cold or handled it just like another job number on a job jacket or something - they just didn't give you anything. When we got to the third one, it was completely different. The place, at least, felt neutral or positive. The guy who was the funeral director there handled all of our needs - he totally got it. I mean, he understood the circumstances, showed us the different rooms, and told us, "You're going to need a big room because somebody of that age will have high school and college friends here. If they're in Philadelphia, they'll come down." And they did. They had a book where people were signing in, and I guess the book ran out after 500 names, families, or whatever were filled in. We stood in the wake for over 4 hours - I think we went into the 5th hour - until, finally, at one point, they said, "We have to close this place."

### **Scott**

That's the kind of person that you want to work with.

### **Bill**

He was great. I guess it just comes with practice and also the type of person handling it. He knew how to do some hand-holding. When the sun came up that day, we went to these other funeral homes, we went to this guy, and we talked about things. One of the most bizarre things is this flight of steps downstairs to the casket showroom. I mean, that's really what it was like - a new car showroom, for caskets. My wife had said, "Well, I don't think Kristin would like a white one. I don't think she would want one of these dark ones or a dark wooden one." I remember thinking that it's so bizarre to have a conversation about what kind of casket my daughter would like. That first day was really, like, playing pinball because I was making or getting calls from the apartment complex where it happened, and speaking with law enforcement officers who were trying to pick through some pieces. They were very forthcoming. They were helpful. I called and told relatives, co-workers, friends, and very soon after that were the newspaper reporters. I think this tends to happen to dads more than anybody else in the family - we just want as many details as possible of what led up to this and what actually happened, where's this guy now, and what is his story. Maybe, you just wanted it to make sense at some point, but you're just kind of, "No, it really can't make sense." As the days went by, I was actually surprised at how well we were handling it because we were all going at it very, very hard, but we never really felt exhausted. I mean, we've been there every day for, maybe, 10-11 hours since Sunday or Monday night, and the funeral didn't happen until Thursday. We kept our minds pretty clear. We seem to have this sense of, "Now, we need to do this. Oh, we need to call this person. We need to phrase it this way." All these things kept going on. The other thing that I just wanted to insert

for a second is something we didn't really notice until sometime later when we were talking about it with a friend. We had a lot of strange occurrences that week. We had as many as 9 light bulbs that blew out in the house from the time and day she was killed, for the next seven days. I kept thinking, "I gotta go get another light bulb and put it in that lamp over there." Then, a few hours later, we would go into some other room and the light would blow out. It was ridiculous. There was, like, some electrical thing going, and 3 of our four cars wouldn't start for a day. Then, the next day they'd start. So, there was a lot going on.

### **Scott**

After the funeral is over, you're just back to living life and you actually have to go back to work.

### **Bill**

Yeah, I did. Yeah. So I was out of there, I guess, really, in just two full weeks. It doesn't sound very long, but I think it was actually pretty long. I was out of there for a couple of weeks. When I came back, there was one person who said to me that a lot of people there thought I'd never come back to work. I guessed they thought that I'd be so shattered by what took place and I'd be dysfunctional. I guessed they presumed the rest of my life. That was eye-opening. I said, "Well, I can't say I'm fine, but it never occurred to me that I'm going to quit the business." I was in advertising as a creative guy. So, you don't really know me very well if you think that. This was a big tragedy, but I still have a lot of life ahead of me. I just have this other major side project that my mind is working on which, in that case, is dealing with the loss of your older child. When some people lost a child and had to bury them, it's horrible and they have to figure out their own path on how to get through grieving, time-passing, denials, anger, and all the things you go through. In our case, it wasn't like that at all. It was, "Well, we still have to, at least, get this guy into prison as much as we can." We didn't have any playbook in our hands when she was killed. I didn't know what would happen next that led to a preliminary hearing, formal arraignment, all of these other phone calls, twists and turns.

### **Scott**

Fortunately, you had someone who was very experienced and very invested in your case to take that through the whole process. We're not going to cover all the details of the court case and everything that's in your book, which I'll talk about shortly. You mentioned that you've had some pretty vivid dreams that included Kristin. What kind of effect did that have on you?

### **Bill**

For me, no matter what I'm dreaming about, they're always very real. I mean, I'm really there not thinking, "Oh, I'm sleeping and having the story playing along." I'm really there - I'm really in that place that's very 3 dimensional and very colorful. In this one instance, I was at what you would probably call a county fairground which was kind of eerie. The county fair seems to be taking place all day. Now it's the evening - maybe we're talking at 10 or 11 o'clock in the evening - but there's no one else around. There are bare bulbs strung in different places, maybe from building to building, or poles, or something like that, with a little breeze going and crickets and things. There's a little bit of dust blowing around your feet. I see this young woman walking towards me, kind of, flowing with a white summer dress, and it's Kristin. She comes up and we're didn't say anything very much because it's, kind of, understood. "Wow, it's so great under the circumstances to see you" is what I was trying to put out to her, and she gets it.

I slowly but surely realized what was going on, that this is a dream. Even though it's wonderful - I looked at her and her blonde hair was blowing, her dress is kind of moving, and we're there together - as soon as I realize that it's a dream, it starts to fade and she becomes transparent. It

was just wonderful. It felt so real to me, like it really did happen. It almost felt like she came and visited me at night, in my own place where I was sleeping. When it's kind of over, she kind of smiled, turned, and walked off from where she came from. It was wonderful. I mean, it was a great feeling - spending time with someone you cared so much about and knowing that she was okay. Honestly, that was a big part of it. When you lose somebody like that, no matter where they are, whether they're whether she's in this room with me right now talking to you, which is possible in some way she could be, you want to know that they're not uncomfortable, they're not in pain. I really do believe that she is okay and that dream really, kind of, assured me of that.

I don't know how many dreams I've had about her. I've had some other ones that were, kind of, quick - she was there and she was very 3 dimensional. When she visited my wife and me at a motel or someplace and spent time with us, there's not a whole lot of dialogue, but there's still a really strong connection. A year and a half ago, I was in some kind of marketplace - it was pretty amazing. It was sunny, the wind was blowing, there were lot of people hustling and bustling around. In the midst of it, I see somebody - like in an Indiana Jones movie or something where all of these people are crossing the camera, but you see one particular person coming right to you - who looks a lot like Kristin. When she got to me, it was Kristin. It wasn't the teenager Kristin. It wasn't the 21-year-old Kristin. It was a representation of Kristin if she had lived. She's like the 36 or 37 years old Kristin. It was amazing. I mean, it's like some screenwriter rewrote her storyline, that she didn't die that night, that she had been saved by a fast-acting detective in the Philadelphia area. Now, this is all created in my mind. In the Philadelphia area, there was a team of doctors - who were always on standby for people who were near death, who had died and slightly came back - who saved her but she was in such rough shape from what this guy had done to her that it had taken all this time for her to rehab to the point where she could physically and emotionally return to life with people around. It was amazing. At the end of the dream, all I wanted to do was to get her back and reintroduce her to her mother and David. I mean, that was seriously as real as me sitting talking to you right now.

**Scott**

Sometimes, I think vivid dreams can be almost cruel when it comes to something that we want so badly, but then we have to wake up and it's not there anymore. When you're talking about that, it reminded me of the lyrics to a Tom Petty song. I don't know if you've heard of this, but one of the lines is, "God, it's so painful when something that's so close is still so far out of reach."

**Bill**

Wow, yeah. You can almost touch it. There's no doubt that this is a big and tough tease.

**Scott**

I want to hear the story of the locket. Can you take us through what happened in

**Bill**

The locket story - if somebody were to go to my website, or if somebody were to get the book, they'll see immediately how I liberally use a golden locket as the main visual. When you see the book, you'll see the words, "When dating hurts." You'll see the locket there and you won't get it - you couldn't possibly get it - until you read the book. Of course, you'll get it now just by listening to the story. So what happens is this: if you go to the night of Kristin's wake - some people call it a visitation, but it's the opportunity to come and see the family and offer condolences, say a few words, and do things like that - that night, there were hundreds of people that me, my wife, my

son, and my grandparents received. She was made very presentable in an open casket situation, so people could see her that night - it was not a closed casket.

One of my daughter's high school teacher's name is Patricia. Unbeknownst to any of us, Patricia came there that night from home. Instead of standing in a receiving line, she actually came to the back of the funeral home and somehow came in. somebody let her in. She was kind of on a mission to seek out my wife, Michelle's closest friend because she wanted to share something with her. Patricia then caught up with Donna who is one of my wife's very close friends. She wanted to tell her a story of something that had happened to her. Patricia had lost two daughters 4 years earlier. This is just a horrible thing. She lost her two daughters at the same time when - their car which was at the University of Maryland - a storm or hurricane was kind of rolling in. Sometimes, hurricanes have tornadoes in the middle of them. The car that these two young women were in - one was a senior, I think the other was either a freshman or sophomore - was literally picked up while driving, and flung over an 8-storey dormitory onto a highway down below. Obviously, both of them were instantly killed. So, she lost both of her daughters.

Friends and family had the presence of mind to present her with a locket on each one of the girl's birthdays as they came along. So, she had these 2 precious lockets and the lockets had pictures of the girls in them. In each case, one locket would have a picture and hair of the daughter who was killed. She had a gold one and a silver one. She came with these two lockets and she showed them to Donna, Michelle's friend, and said, "I know that tomorrow is the funeral and burial, so I needed to get here because it's either tonight or never. If you want to have a locket created, this is the only opportunity for you to snip some hair, save it, and then get a locket made." Once she delivered that, Pat was out of there. That was that for her - that's the way that went.

Donna waited till the end of the evening when people were busy looking at other things, then she snipped some of Kristin's hair, put it in an envelope, put it in her handbag, and held on to it. A month later, she went to a jeweler - his name is Kevin Welsh. She told him about this story of her friend's daughter, Kristin - about how she was attacked one night while breaking up with her boyfriend and was stabbed to death. As he was listening to the story, he became particularly emotional about this abusive relationship and this girl who got killed. In the meantime, Donna didn't know that Kevin was dating someone. He was kind of ending the relationship with this person. He is a 41-year-old guy, he never married, he's a handsome guy. It turned out that he's also in an abusive relationship - the woman that he was dating was abusive and threatening to him. At one time, before Donna showed up that day, he said, "I'll tell you one thing. If you ever break up with me, I'll probably stab you to death." When he heard about the story from Donna - he eventually made the locket as she wanted - he's like, "Oh my god. This girl's story is here to warn me about what can happen to me." So, he thought of Kristin as his 'angel protector' - that's what he referred to her as - trying to warn him, "You better be careful because what happened to me may happen to you." He's trying to deal with his girlfriend and she has already threatened him. Sometimes, they'd get together and be okay. However, there's just something off about her and it seems to be getting worse. She is texting and calling him pretty much incessantly. He's trying to figure out what to do because if he breaks up with her, she's going to show up at some point and get to him. So, he's pretty doggone worried.

He goes ahead and works on the locket. He's got photos of Kristin and her mother Michelle. He goes to put one on each side of the locket as it opens. In the middle, there's a little glass oval window where he puts Kristin's hair. So, he's kind of working on it for about two months. He's got plenty of time until Kristin's birthday coming along on August 24 of that year.

He kept getting these phone calls and text messages. He kept getting harassed by this woman. He doesn't want to change his phone number because it's his personal and business phone number, but he's at the point where he has no choice because this woman won't stop although he kept telling her, "We're kind of done here. I don't know if we can go on seeing each other or any of that stuff." He keeps trying to be out of town and miss her and everything else.

Anyway, he got the locket done. It's almost August 24. He told Donna, "It is finished." She said, "I'll come over and pick it up, or my husband will pick it up. One of us will pick it up." He said, "Look, let's do this. I need to drive towards your house anyway. I also need to stop at a Verizon store because I need to do something there." She goes, "Well, look, I'll have Brad just meet you there." So, they met at noon at the Verizon store. He handed the locket over to Brad, the husband. He loves the locket and everything. He left to bring it to Donna.

Kevin Welsh went into the Verizon store and found out that if you want to change your phone number, you don't do it in the store - you just call this number and they'll take care of it. He goes, "Oh, great!" He drove back to his jewelry store, sat down, called Verizon, and went through it. They say, "Okay. We can do that right here." So, he got his number changed and wrote down his new number. After a month has passed - I don't want to go into all the technical parts of it - I was curious - having Kristin's physical cell phone in my possession - about any last voicemail messages or anything that was on there. I did manage to download any voicemail messages and record them all just for posterity. Once I did that, my wife and I realized we no longer needed this line - we don't need her phone number. So way back in June, we had her number retired, so to speak. I had asked them at the time, "When they retire a number, what actually happens?" They said, "As soon as we get off the phone, that number is shut down, retired, or suspended for two months, so to speak. But then, roughly 2 months from now, it'll kind of come back out. Someone else will get it." So, it's like, "Okay, well. That's fine."

Anyway, I was able to discover that Kristin's number was retired or suspended in late June of 2005, and came back out in late August of 2005. When Kevin Welsh got his number changed, purely and coincidentally, he wound up with Kristin's phone number. Here's the guy who has this abusive relationship going on, needs to get his number changed, and of all the numbers that could possibly go back out that day around that time, the guy - who had such a connection to this girl who was murdered by her boyfriend - wound up with her number. I don't even know if you'd call it a coincidence. I mean, it's just what it was.

### **Scott**

How did you realize - or eventually come to realize - that he got her number?

### **Bill**

Yeah, that's a really good question. Let me do the chronology quickly. She was killed in June. Donna went to Kevin Welsh at the jewelry store to get the locket done in July of 2005. In August of 2005, the locket was given to Donna who, then, gave it to Michelle on Kris's birthday - August 24. A month after that, there's something called a formal arraignment - my wife and I were in Philadelphia for that. That's when they brought in the murderer, told him, "Here's literally what you're charged with: first-degree murder, third-degree murder, possession of an instrument, crime of killing somebody, and different things like that." There were two voicemails on my phone - they were both from Kristin. When we were leaving, one of the things I did was I would listen to them from time to time.

I was able to see some phone numbers that seemed very different between 2005 and now. In those days, by hitting a series of buttons, you could get the information as to when the call happened, how long the call was, who it was from, and different things like that. I'd listened to Christine's messages. I'd also hit the buttons that would tell me when these were just to reinforce So I sort of already know, but this one time I hit it, instead of saying that the call was made from Kristin's phone. It said the call was made from a phone owned by a guy named Kevin Welsh. I didn't know who that was. You can call back whoever left the voicemail. So, I called back and got his voicemail message, "This is Kevin Welsh. Sorry, I'm not here right now." Things like that. I left a message and I said, "My name is Bill Mitchell. My daughter's name is Kristin. I know you don't know me, but you might know my daughter. I'm wondering if, somehow, she may have left a message from your phone. Please call me back. If you get a chance."

As we were driving back from the courthouse in the Philadelphia area to Baltimore, my phone started ringing. In 2005, you could assign a ringtone to specific people - a siren, birds chirping, or anything. When my phone started ringing, it was giving Kristin's ringtone, as if Kristin was calling me. I was driving the car at that time and my wife was saying, "Why aren't you answering the phone?" I said, "Because that's Kristin's ringtone. If I answered that phone, it could have been Kristin on the other end. I didn't know what was going to happen. It could be some cruel trick."

All of a sudden, I heard this deep-sounding voice from a guy named Kevin Welsh. I was like, "What is this?" So he described who he was. He said that he was a jeweler in the Baltimore area and told me where his shop was. Then, I realized, "Wait a minute. I think I've been to your shop one time based upon a recommendation from Donna. Did you make a locket for a young woman who was killed? Did you make a locket for Donna?" He said, "Yeah, I just gave it to her 3-4 weeks ago." I said, "Oh my God. Somehow, you got my daughter's cell phone number." We had shockwaves gone through our system. I couldn't believe it. I didn't even know the story of the girlfriend at that time. When we finally caught up with him, we found out about the 'girlfriend' situation which was why he changed the number and everything. He got Kristin's phone number. He and I are friends for life. I call him brother Kevin, and I'm brother Bill to him. When I call Kevin - I still see him and talk to him a lot, he participated in a lot of parts of our life - it actually still says 'Kristin' next to the phone number. I never changed it to Kevin, but I know it's Kevin's number. It's pretty incredible.

### **Scott**

It is completely incredible. Well, you mentioned Kristin's voicemail that you had kept and listened to - that's one of the ways you stayed connected with, in some way.

### **Kristin**

Hey, guys. Kristin here. I got your message. It is a transforming experience on Wednesday morning. I'm at the new apartment. It's beautiful here. There's a lot of stuff that he put away. There's a lot of stuff to be done. I did get your message last night. Obviously, things are a little hectic. I was really tired from trying to put stuff away and whatnot. Moving is quite an adventure, but the movers are great. Everything went really really well - nothing got broken. They packed and wrapped everything with paper and boxes, which is crazy. They did a really good job. Can you call back? I love you. I guess you're at work. I'll talk to you soon.

### **Scott**

What goes through your mind when you listen to that voicemail message?

**Bill**

It's a connection to better times. Obviously, it's a connection to the living Kristin. It's a connection to her whole life from August 24, 1983, when she was born and all through her life. I mean, I just see all those pictures all lined up, all those moments, and all those different things. I never felt bad listening to them. I feel good listening to them. She's talking about being in this new apartment of hers and she was just very happy. She was about ready to start her job and she still had lots of friends. We didn't know or appreciate that she was having all kinds of difficulty with this overly-controlling and dominant boyfriend - she didn't tell us about that. Her friends were aware of it but we didn't know. For the most part, I feel very good. I mean, my wife had a number of voicemail messages on her phone. She was very good at listening to them, getting the gist, and then kind of taking them off because, in those days, you kind of had limited storage. So, I might get rid of every other one - I had, but I didn't get rid of those, and I eventually recorded them, of course, so that they would never get away.

**Scott**

Right now, you've got him forever, right?

**Bill**

Sure.

**Scott**

Kristin's brother, David, is 4 years younger, right? This happened when he was just a young teenager. I know he and Kristin had a very special and close relationship. For a lot of kids, it seems like this could be something that would just break them for life. However, David doesn't feel the pain of losing his sister, but his perspective on this is really inspiring. I want to take a minute here and hear from David. We should tell people you've written a book about this whole experience, which is about to be an audiobook. As a matter of fact, by the time this episode gets released, it may be out in audiobook form.

**Bill**

Yes. It should be.

**Scott**

What we're about to hear is the chapter that David wrote on how he responded to what happened.

**David**

I'm David, Kristin's brother. On the morning of June 4, 2005 - the day after I found out that my sister had been suddenly torn from our lives in an unthinkable manner - I experienced a moment of personal revelation that was critical in shaping my outlook on both my family's tragedy and on life itself. I decided to share it in this book in the hopes that it may help others who are coping with their own personal crises and tragedies, in whatever form they may come.

My parents were in the funeral director's office attempting to iron out the details of the wake funeral and burial. The news was still fresh. Our emotions were still raw and unpredictable. Our grasp on the reality of the situation was shaky. In the meeting, the funeral director asked us, "Do you think she would prefer a casket made of wood or metal?" I don't mean this as a criticism of the funeral director - he was truly a compassionate professional and did an excellent job for us - but subjectively, at that moment, the question felt utterly absurd and unanswerable to me. It was like your house had just burned down and the cleanup crew was asking if you prefer that they

send a red truck or a blue truck to haul away the wreckage. I think the contrast of what seemed like such a trivial decision against the backdrop of a life-altering new reality really struck a chord in me. The emotional feeling from the collapse of my house of cards was imminent.

I walked out of the room, left the building, and landed on a concrete bench outside. The emotional release that followed was intense, and it was complete. I cried for my sister. I cried for my family. I struggled through involuntary gasps for air in-between outpourings of sorrow and pain. I don't know if this went on for 1, 5, or 10 minutes, but a new horrifying thought gradually crept over me. I wasn't worried about Kristin. I believe she still existed, but just in a different way now. The pain she endured at the very end was over, but what about my parents and me? For the first time, I began to realize that this is a turning point in our lives - things would never be the same. Was this the end of any semblance of a happy, fulfilling life? Was this the beginning of a dark new reality or life would be nothing but a sad, empty, deformed version of what it once was - a life that my parents would have to live for another 30-40 years, that I would have to live from the age of 17 until the end of my miserable life?

As soon as those thoughts filled my head with a future of misery and hopelessness, they were met with equal and opposing force by a new thought that formed. It was my decision whether or not this event would bring about such a future. The darkness and hopelessness are not certainties. They are only certain if I settle for the nearest and most obvious interpretation I could grasp of the event - namely, this is the beginning of the end. At that moment, I decided not to settle for that. It was up to me to interpret what this event would mean for my life, going forward. Furthermore, it was up to me to decide if I would be controlled by it, or if I would find a way to become stronger as a result of it. Maybe, I could even go a step further and find a way to harness its power, kind of, like jujitsu, become a better person, and live a more intentional life than I otherwise would have. I don't know if those thoughts came to me from Kristin from a higher power or from a lucky firing of neurons at just the right time in my brain, but they've been critical in shaping the trajectory of my life since then.

That day actually only occurred to me now as I write this. What seemed like an absurd trivial decision that I couldn't comprehend in the funeral director's office directly led to making, perhaps, the most important decision of my life in only a few moments later. We live in a world rife with judgment, narratives, and other noises. Maybe, it's not so different than it's ever been in human history. I tend to think that the deluge of entertainment media and the life-enveloping nature of social media has made it much more difficult for us to think for ourselves and interpret the world independently. We're surrounded by simple narratives that are too easy to adopt for assessing our own lives. Bob got a new car - smiley plus celebration emojis. Patty broke up with her boyfriend - sad plus crying emoji. It's all too easy to view life through the lens which you think the rest of the world see - like, something terrible happened to me, so my life must be terrible now. Resist that interpretation. I don't pretend to think that every person facing a tragedy or a crisis can avoid pain and suffering. My family and I have suffered greatly. That being said, if you're one of these people, I urge you to believe that you have the authority to decide what it means in your life - to simply decide if it will destroy you or not. That decision can have a powerful impact on the long-term severity of your suffering and the degree to which you can find happiness and fulfillment again one day. It did for me.

### **Scott**

David seems to have wisdom - that was beyond his years - to have a great outlook on that.

### **Bill**

When David was even a little kid - I mean, like, 3-5 years old - he was what some people refer to as an old spirit, if you've ever heard about that before. When you've got somebody who is 3 years old, who is having these deep conversations with a priest about God-- I mean, I have pictures of him - when he was, maybe, I think, 10-11 years old - sitting in a hammock with a minister after one of my cousins was married. They're there in this swinging hammock. They must have been there for the better part of an hour. This man had been a believer, then he kind of became a minister of some description, and then he became like a high priest or minister - I'm not sure what they call them with that. So, David was just fascinated that this man had, kind of, moved from one thing to the next. I mean, they're having this great conversation. At one point, I walked up and said to this man, "I know David's been here a long time. Do you need a break or something like that?" He said "No, no, we're good" and, kind of, waved me off - like, "Get out of here. This is not about you."

He's always been a deep guy. When he was 17 years old, he looked at the situation and thought, "This can crush me. This may or may not change me in really detrimental ways. I have to make a decision that I won't get swallowed up in this." Four years after Kristin was killed, he and I talked about it. I said, "It felt like you distanced yourself from some of it." He said, "Well, you and mom were doing such a good job of grieving and handling it all. I was still 17-18 years old when it happened. Back then, I still wanted to be a high school junior and senior. I wanted to go to college and have a college life. I didn't want to carry that - I didn't want to be known as the brother of a murdered sister - all the time. I wanted to be me."

### **Scott**

Yeah, he needs to have his own identity for sure. So, your book is already out. As I said, the audiobook version might be out by now. We'll have links to that in the episode notes. You also have a podcast where you talk to people and try to bring awareness to something that a lot of people aren't even familiar with, which is dating violence. Some of the episodes are done with those who have actually survived this and are willing to tell their story. Can you talk a little bit about the podcast?

### **Bill**

What happened was this: I put the book out and that was a big lift. It took over four years to, kind of, piece it together and it only really got done in the last year, I believe. It kind of started out as short articles. At one point, somebody had the wisdom to say, "Why don't you stop writing these articles and just write the book?" So, I made a book that really consists of a bunch of short chapters. Any one of them could be considered an article, but they all kind of string together. The book tells our journey from the night of the call from the detective up until about the time the book came out.

One of the key things about the book is the book, at the end of it - meaning, like, the last 30 pages - it really goes into the warning signs of an unhealthy relationship, and the template that all abusers follow. I've never seen something like that before, but it gives all these insights into how to detect if this is going on, how to take action, how to be safe, how to live through it, and all of those types of things. Of course, we know that not everybody lives through it, like my daughter. Once I got the book out, quite frankly, I felt like I had shipped my best friend away on an airliner. It was like, "Oh, I kind of missed the challenge in putting all of it altogether." Then I thought about podcasts. I thought, "I can record a podcast this morning, edit it this afternoon, and upload it tonight. I'd like to take some of the characters in the book and bring them to life so that people can hear from them, which then led to bringing on domestic violence counselors, getting some of the law enforcement people who were involved in the case, getting mothers and

fathers of victims and survivors, and bringing actual survivors on. So I have male and female survivors on the podcast. I've got other people in the pipeline.

These people are just such real and great people. The survivors are so courageous. When I'm listening to these people, all I can do is breathe, sometimes, while listening to how horrifically they were handled by someone who claimed to love them at some point in time, how they work their way through it, how they found ways to cope, how they found ways to get out of that relationship and get behind them. My imagination would never have taken me to the places that a lot of these podcast episodes do. I would say that this podcast is a lot like yours, Scott. I mean, some of the stories that you have are just spellbinding and so compelling. I really have the greatest admiration for people who deal with domestic and dating violence for a living, but they don't get into it for the money. One thing I can guarantee is domestic violence counselors and professionals never get rich, but they're actively bettering, saving lives, and bringing comfort.

**Scott**

Yeah. Sometimes, the rewards of work are not just financial. Well, we're gonna have links to everything that we've talked about here - your book and your podcast. If anyone goes to your website, which is 'whendatinghurts.com', the links to everything are there as well. And you're right, I've done a few episodes that have kind of dealt with this subject.

**Bill**

Yes, you have, and you did it well. It was interesting listening to some of yours, because you would start down a path and present a problem. I was wondering how you'd handle it, and you really went right where I would have gone. So yeah, you really do understand this whole issue.

**Scott**

Thank you. I appreciate that.

**Bill**

I mean that sincerely.

**Scott**

Bill, thanks for coming on. Thanks for sharing your story and I hope your work continues because it's doing a lot of good.

**Bill**

Thank you. I found out a long time ago that the best way to help me or to help us is by helping other people. I wouldn't say I figured that out - I just kind of experienced that. So, get up and give a talk. I have a list of every speech and interview I've given on the website. You may feel a little bit tired from answering questions at all and you're just about to get out of there. Inevitably, someone will come up and say, "Thank you so much because I went through one of these." 'I've had people come up and say, "I heard you speak here 4 years ago. I just want to tell you that here's what I've done over the last 4 years since I heard you speak." Then, you hear these stories of how they were in rough shape or in a bad marriage. Now, the sun is out, the clouds are gone, they're happy, they're with someone else or they're remarried, or they're with nobody but they're happy. That's the big jackpot for me.

**Scott**

Bill and I didn't talk a lot about the court case, but he did go through all that in detail in his book. The man who killed Kristin was convicted and sent to prison, where he'll hopefully be for a very long time.

One of the things I really appreciate about Bill is that he has taken this horrible tragedy, and turned it into something very positive, and it's a cause that continues to be helpful for a lot of people. I think that's something that would make Kristin very happy. You can get links to Bill's website and podcast, as well as contact information for the National Domestic Violence Hotline and other great resources at [WhatWasThatLike.com/99](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/99).

And did you know that the podcast Facebook group is going to be shut down in just a few days? That's right, we've made the move – and our new place is [Community.WhatWasThatLike.com](http://Community.WhatWasThatLike.com). We already have a few hundred people over there and new listeners are joining every day. It's great because there are NO ads, no distractions, and – unlike Facebook groups – when something gets posted, ALL of the members of the group find out about it! We talk about podcast episodes and a bunch of other thought-provoking things, but never any politics – no way. So if you'd like to join, this is your invitation! You can sign up at [Community.WhatWasThatLike.com](http://Community.WhatWasThatLike.com) and I hope to see YOU there soon!

And here's something that might surprise you - quite a few of the stories you hear on this podcast actually come from people who listen to the show? It's true. And, it's becoming more common because of the audience getting bigger and bigger. So I wanted to let you know about a few of the stories I'm looking for specifically, just in case you've had something happen that might work for the podcast, or maybe you know of someone who's been through one of these situations.

I'm looking for someone who has fallen off a cruise ship while it was underway.  
Someone who had a small child kidnapped by a non-family member.  
A passenger who was on a train when it went over a cliff, OR a passenger in a car when it was hit by a train.  
Someone who was trapped in rubble for a day or two after an earthquake, then rescued.  
A prison employee who is (or was) in charge of executions.  
And, a non-firefighter who ran into a burning home or building, and rescued someone.

So if you or someone you know has been through one of those situations, or something else that would be similar to those, I'd love to hear about it. There's a page on my website where you can do this – just go to [WhatWasThatLike.com](http://WhatWasThatLike.com) and click on Submit Your Story.

And the cool thing is, even if your story might not be a good fit for a whole episode, it might still work as a Listener Story. Each episode now ends with this segment called Listener Stories, and these aren't interviews, they're just one person telling about something that happened to them. It might be funny, or sad, or amazing, or maybe just interesting. It's just you telling a story in 3-5 minutes. If you have something like that, call it in to the podcast Voice Mail line – 727-386-9468.

And with that, here we are at this week's Listener Story from Nancy, about her first experience with having to call 911. Stay safe! And I'll see you again in 2 weeks.

---

**(Nancy May listener story)**

This is a story of my first experience calling 911. It was frightening. It was a beautiful day in New England. The colors of fall had just started to turn to a gentle shade of gold throughout the backfield of my parents' home up in Massachusetts. It was a day when the idea of making cookies just sparked into my head and it was something that I actually love doing. The night before, Mom had made a beautiful broiled steak for dinner. It was one of her favorite go-to recipes. I guess in those days, the boiler was, sort of, like, the microwave today in our household. It is fast and easy to use to produce a decent meal. As habit prevailed, nobody typically took out the broiler to actually clean the pan because it was a job that all of us hated. So, that night, the pan stayed in the oven. The next day, as I had finished making all the dough for the cookies, I turned on the oven to preheat it to a nice warm temperature of about 375°F. Within minutes, I noticed a smell that was just not quite right. As I turned around and looked into the window of the oven, I saw an amber glow which is definitely something unexpected when you're preheating the oven for cookies.

Panic struck and I knew that those were flames shooting up inside the oven. It was something that I didn't expect that day. Within seconds I had called mom and said, "Please help me! Something's wrong! Call 911!" She came running into the kitchen and immediately dialed our local emergency fire department. Our 911 team was a local volunteer group which is very typical of New England rural communities. The dispatcher was good enough to explain what to do and what not to do. We followed her instructions to a tee and waited outside for the fire department to arrive. When they came, we followed them into the kitchen and flames had started to come out of the back of the oven. Within seconds, they had quickly put out the fire and calmed us down.

Honestly, our nerves were rattled as we sat in the cool air on the back step of the kitchen door, just thinking what might have happened. Our dogs were in hand, our hearts were calmed, and our fears were put at ease. Thankfully, the oven remained intact and in good shape, as did the rest of our house. Thank you 911 team in Rochester, Massachusetts! You taught me a lot that day. Mom, you always taught me to always clean the broiler when I'm done with it.

PS. the cookies were great.

Hello, this is Nancy May the author of "How to Survive 911 Medical Emergencies: Step-by-Step Before, During, After!" This book is available on amazon.com. In addition, I'm the host of the podcast 'Doing It Best with Eldercare Success' where we bring more joy and love in the times that we spend taking care of our elderly parents or perhaps a frail spouse or loved one. So, come on over to 'Doing It Best with Eldercare Success' or search for 'Eldercare Success' on any of the major podcast platforms including Spotify, Apple, iTunes, and Castbox. Thanks, we'll see you soon!