

Mothers Grave Ep6 Billy and Evelyn Transcript

[00:00:00] **Dana:** Hey, and welcome to, I Swear on My Mother's Grave. My name is Dana Black and I'm glad you pressed play. I'm glad you're here. So someone recently said this about the podcast and I wanted to read it because... sure, great, yeah, it feels great to have nice things set about your show, but it also feels spot on, and instead of me always telling you what the show's about or how you might feel, I thought I would just share what someone else said.

[00:00:41] This person said, "you might expect a podcast about death and loss to be sad and morbid, but that is not this podcast. You might expect a public therapy session, but that is not quite what's going on here either. Dana's curious about humans, curious about parent-child relationships, and curious about how we navigate major and minor life events.

[00:01:01] Every time I listen, I find myself thinking about my parents, my grandparents, and so many others who I've lost, but who have shaped me. And I think it's a really good thing to think about those people." So yeah, thanks to whoever wrote that, wink, wink. But thank you, just a beautiful description and I really wanted to share it with all of you.

[00:01:22] So thanks for being here and welcome to my first ever episode with siblings . I'm so excited. Maybe cause I'm an only child. I don't know. But I am talking to two amazing siblings, Billy and Evelyn, and I love these two people. I knew Billy when he lived in Chicago many years ago. We lived in the same apartment building.

[00:01:43] Shout out Clarendon Reside on Living, if you know Chicago, you know these, this company. Uh, but we actually, we, we lived in the same apartment building, but when we met at the coffee shop next door, we became true friends one night around 2007 while we were drinking on the rooftop of our building that night, Billy told me about the death of his mother, a woman who was not his biological mother, but who he called mom regardless, because she was just mom and she came into his life at a very young age.

[00:02:15] On this rooftop night, I had not lost my mother yet. It would be about nine years before I would understand that type of loss, the finality of it, but I held space for Billy on the roof. I poured him another drink and asked questions and listened and knew in my heart that I would never understand his loss.

[00:02:32] Not in the same way. Billy and his sister Evelyn are half siblings, and they grew up in Texas. Their mother was raised, a missionary kid, became a beloved math teacher, loved to travel and had a cackle that could cut through the room. She also birthed a mini version of herself in her daughter Evelyn, and was taken from this life way too soon and eclipsed way too often during her lifetime and beyond.

[00:02:57] This is Billy and Evelyn.

[00:03:08] So I'm gonna lead with this. It's a couple things. I'm nervous.

[00:03:14] **Evelyn:** Oh.

[00:03:14] **Dana:** So I'm gonna say that.

[00:03:15] **Evelyn:** Okay.

[00:03:15] **Dana:** I'm just gonna say that I'm nervous for this.

[00:03:17] **Evelyn:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:03:17] **Dana:** You're my first sibling show. I just wanted you to know that.

[00:03:19] **Evelyn:** Okay.

[00:03:20] **Billy:** Okay.

[00:03:20] **Dana:** Ever.

[00:03:21] **Evelyn:** Okay.

[00:03:21] **Billy:** Oh boy.

[00:03:22] **Dana:** I'm nervous for that, but I'm nervous about like the heaviness.

[00:03:25] Right.

[00:03:25] **Evelyn:** Right. Yep.

[00:03:27] **Dana:** I don't wanna surprise the listener, but also there's something about, I don't know if we even need to get there yet. I'd love to start. And just, I

don't know anything about your mom. And it's your stepmom. Am I correct? So I'm clear Billy?

[00:03:39] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:03:40] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Billy's stepmom. Yeah.

[00:03:42] **Dana:** And you're biological mom.

[00:03:43] And we can get to this. Yeah.

[00:03:44] **Billy:** Yeah. But she's, I mean, I never called her stepmom.

[00:03:47] **Dana:** Got it. She was a mom too.

[00:03:48] **Evelyn:** She was mom.

[00:03:48] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:03:49] **Billy:** She was mom. Because I met her when I was four.

[00:03:52] **Dana:** Oh, wow.

[00:03:53] **Billy:** then they got married when I was five.

[00:03:55] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:03:56] **Billy:** And then Evelyn came along and

[00:03:58] **Evelyn:** ruined, ruined everything. Ruined.

[00:04:01] **Billy:** Ruined everything.

[00:04:03] **Evelyn:** Could it be worth, Billy, you talking about...

[00:04:05] **Billy:** pre?

[00:04:07] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Like your sort of early years and meeting mom and taking her on as mom and then, I don't know, like your experience with her as your mom.

[00:04:20] **Billy:** Yeah, I can do that.

[00:04:21] **Dana:** What if you were like, no...? Nope.

[00:04:23] **Evelyn:** I know. I'd be like, what the fuck? Get over it. (cross laughter) Just do it. It's a good fucking idea.

[00:04:30] What's your problem? Oh my God, what's your problem?

[00:04:33] **Dana:** So much love. But remember we're already doing it. This show is about joy. This show is about vulnerability. It's about laughing. It's about all the things. So you say this is a place to say you can see whatever you want.

[00:04:44] **Billy:** Yeah, no, you can always give you too much information.

[00:04:47] **Evelyn:** Oh yeah.

[00:04:47] **Billy:** We're just trying to be...

[00:04:48] **Dana:** yeah, I'm good with that is what I'm, just come as you are.

[00:04:52] **Billy:** I mean, dad got custody of me in the 1970's, which A) was unheard of B)... I have to frame this in that a whole bunch of knowledge I've gotten after the deaths of mom and mom being Helen, the mom we shared. So that's unfortunate.

[00:05:14] I would have to say that one of the things that's come out of the incident is that my sister and I promised each other, no, no family secrets. No tucking away information because we discovered things after and it was like, come on, why? So anywho, he was a teacher at Skyline High School. He taught architectural drafting and a person moved next door to him.

[00:05:42] **Dana:** Where'd you grow up?

[00:05:42] **Billy:** Oh, sorry. Dallas Dallas grew up in Garland, but he taught in Dallas, DISD, and a teacher that taught math moved in next door to him and that was Helen. And they had a door that opened between them and they would eat lunch at the same time and have conversations on the daily. Our mom was a missionary kid. Her parents were missionaries in Guatemala for decades

[00:06:13] **Dana:** so she spoke Spanish in...

[00:06:15] **Billy:** Yeah, totally. She lived in Guatemala

[00:06:16] **Dana:** si!

[00:06:16] **Billy:** Up until she was... wow.

[00:06:19] **Dana:** That's all I spoke a lot of French. I like, dunno why I took French. That's the point of that.

[00:06:23] **Evelyn:** Yeah. I don't know. French is pretty sexy. Yeah.

[00:06:25] **Billy:** Because cussing in French is like wiping your ass with silk, that's why.

[00:06:29] **Dana:** Yes. But in no restaurant I've ever worked is it like, oh my French is coming in handy. You know what I mean? No bummer.

[00:06:35] **Billy:** No.

[00:06:35] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:06:36] **Billy:** So dad was not a missionary kid and had had been married and divorced and had this kid and so he really didn't think that he had a chance at a relationship with her. But I mean as time went on, like feelings were mutual.

[00:06:56] And then she went to teach in Guatemala for a while and so I remember, hearing about this person and knowing that whenever dad talked about her or wrote her like he was happy.

[00:07:15] **Dana:** And How old were you again?

[00:07:16] **Billy:** Man, I guess I was like 4 at this time.

[00:07:19] **Evelyn:** You might have been 3 when started dating. Yeah.

[00:07:24] **Dana:** What did he think about her missionary work?

[00:07:25] Your dad?

[00:07:26] **Billy:** He was fine with, I mean, did he?

[00:07:29] Yeah. But...

[00:07:31] **Evelyn:** Yeah, no, he was fine with it because he was a new Christian at the time.

[00:07:37] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:07:38] **Evelyn:** So after Billy's bio mom.

[00:07:41] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:07:42] **Evelyn:** Kathy left and they did the divorce and everything. Dad was like in a real down place in his life. For a long time we didn't know it was because that was the end of his 4th marriage.

[00:07:58] We didn't know that. We didn't learn that.

[00:08:00] **Billy:** We didn't know that.

[00:08:01] **Evelyn:** We learned that I was 20 something when I learned that. But anyway.

[00:08:04] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:08:04] **Evelyn:** So he was clearly, he was like, marriage never works. I'm always getting married and losing marriages. Now I have a kid, my 4th wife has left me. And so he became a Christian through the efforts and I think genuine love and care of some friends that he had, right?

[00:08:23] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:08:23] **Evelyn:** So he became a Christian. He had this big conversion experience and he felt like, now I'm on the road. The path.

[00:08:30] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:08:31] **Evelyn:** The right way

[00:08:32] **Dana:** ...and love will find me the right way and commitment.

[00:08:34] **Evelyn:** And here comes mom and oh my gosh, she's a former missionary kid. Are you kidding? She has got Christianity like on lockdown, like she knows how to do all that.

[00:08:44] So I think he was fine with it, but also found it intimidating cuz mom was intimidating. She was also super pretty. And...

[00:08:53] **Dana:** how, how was she beautiful physically? Her smile, her personality...

[00:08:58] **Billy:** All.

[00:08:58] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:08:59] **Billy:** Picture her 1970s polyester...

[00:09:02] **Evelyn:** Hair.

[00:09:02] **Billy:** ...suit, long straight, blonde hair.

[00:09:05] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Except sometimes it was wavy and big.

[00:09:08] **Billy:** Yeah. Except sometimes it was wavy and big. Yeah.

[00:09:10] **Dana:** And she'd never been married, Helen?

[00:09:12] **Billy:** No.

[00:09:12] **Dana:** Had never. OK. .

[00:09:15] **Evelyn:** She had given up on that.

[00:09:16] **Billy:** She had given up cause she was in her 30's.

[00:09:19] **Dana:** Oh. She, it is never gonna happen for me. I'm an ol-

[00:09:22] **Evelyn:** it's never happening.

[00:09:23] **Dana:** an old maid, I'll go to Guatemala and give my love to God. To God.

[00:09:27] **Evelyn:** God, yes. And these orphan children or whoever.

[00:09:30] **Dana:** And these orphan children. Exactly. Yeah.

[00:09:32] **Evelyn:** I don't think they were actually orphans, but...

[00:09:33] **Billy:** no, they were over. Yeah.

[00:09:35] **Dana:** But it wasn't like, yeah, she wasn't Catholic so it wasn't a nun, nunnery

[00:09:38] **Billy:** Yeah, no, but this was the 1970's and so if you weren't married by a particular time, it was like, what? What up?

[00:09:44] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Especially sort of in her conservative, very Christian...

[00:09:48] **Billy:** yeah.

[00:09:49] **Evelyn:** ...community that...

[00:09:50] **Dana:** she grew up in Texas?

[00:09:51] **Evelyn:** No. So she grew up in between Guatemala, El Salvador. But then she came to North Carolina as a young teenager to go to missionary kid boarding school.

[00:10:04] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:10:04] **Billy:** Cause that's what they did.

[00:10:05] **Evelyn:** And she did that through high school. Then she moved to Texas and attended

[00:10:10] **Billy:** North Texas State

[00:10:11] **Evelyn:** North Texas state for college.

[00:10:14] She did all that on her own. So she was very independent.

[00:10:18] **Billy:** Had a 65 Mustang stick shift. White leather interior.

[00:10:22] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:10:22] **Dana:** Ooooh.

[00:10:23] **Evelyn:** She loved that car.

[00:10:25] **Billy:** I love that.

[00:10:26] **Evelyn:** I love that car.

[00:10:27] **Dana:** So Billy, so you're young, you're like four years old. She's in Guatemala. Your dad's in love. He's writing letters I'm assuming or whatever.

[00:10:32] **Billy:** She comes back.

[00:10:33] **Dana:** Okay.

[00:10:33] **Billy:** She comes back and she's teaching at Skyline as well, and, and then they have a date that I get to go to. Uh, and that's when I first met her and she fixed dinner for us at her apartment. Fun fact Ev, I tried to, uh, put as much gross broccoli in my mouth and sneak it to the bathroom so I could flush it down the toilet.

[00:10:55] And got caught.

[00:10:57] **Dana:** By her?

[00:10:58] **Billy:** By dad. And dad's gonna, dad was gonna spank me there and then, and she was like, no, please don't do that. I was like, I like this mom.

[00:11:06] **Evelyn:** I like her.

[00:11:07] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:11:08] What did I love that you're on there, like first official date too, you know? And she's like (cross-talk), like, I'll go, I'll go for this.

[00:11:14] **Billy:** Mm-hmm.

[00:11:15] **Dana:** I'll go for this guy.

[00:11:15] Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[00:11:17] **Billy:** Well to be fair. I was freaking cute.

[00:11:20] **Dana:** Long blonde hair.

[00:11:21] **Evelyn:** Listen, I'm convinced, Billy, that mom got together with dad because of you.

[00:11:26] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:11:26] **Evelyn:** Because he, Billy was so cute. He was the cutest thing you've ever seen. And here was a child and I think mom's heart, like her mother heart was like... (imitates explosion)

[00:11:39] **Dana:** yeah,

[00:11:40] **Evelyn:** here's a, here's a little boy who doesn't have a present mom. And so she was like, heart eyes.

[00:11:46] **Billy:** Yeah. I was bait. I was also the ring bearer. So, There we go. They got married when I was 5.

[00:11:52] **Dana:** Okay. And you were in the wedding?

[00:11:54] **Billy:** I was in the wedding. Grandma made sure I was closing my eyes while praying, but neither was she. So there's that.

[00:12:00] **Dana:** This is your dad's mom or your mom's mom?

[00:12:03] **Billy:** No, my dad's mom.

[00:12:05] **Dana:** Dad's mom.

[00:12:05] **Billy:** Great Grandma O'Neil German.

[00:12:08] **Dana:** Oh.

[00:12:08] **Billy:** They got married when I was 5, and so there were things that I learned later on that made sense. But basically, so she came into our lives and it was amazing. And you know, she had the whole, she had the Guatemalan

background. Her parents had retired and they lived in Dallas, so that was another thing.

[00:12:27] My grandparents on my dad's side lived an hour away, and we went there for everything, but they were an hour away. Mom's parents were in Dallas and so I went there quite a lot and they were 2 of the most hilarious, loving, non-standard Christians that I knew. They could joke about things that I was just like, oh my gosh, that would never happen in our church, but they went to our church.

[00:12:58] It was nice. Missionaries are a different breed of people and that was very lovely. What mom did practically is I think she took every credit card away from dad and got us out of, got him out of debt. And so dad was not in a great place in that respect. And mom and I would sit at the kitchen counter, I would sit at the kitchen counter and mom would plan the week out for food, for meals, and she would let me help decide, you know, when do you want mushrooms and spaghetti. And it's like, well, every day. Well, no, they have to be different. But, and then she would calculate and we'd have a little bet going to the grocery store how much it would cost and she'd have it down to the, to pennies.

[00:13:47] **Dana:** Mm.

[00:13:48] **Billy:** And that's, that was just something that was desperately needed... we needed some freaking structure. Yeah. Mom is the reason why I ended up being a classical pianist. Mom's the reason why I didn't feel any shame in backing out of trying out for percussion and ended up with the oboe. What's an oboe? I don't fucking know, but I'm gonna try out for it.

[00:14:12] **Dana:** Cause she, cause she supported you? Cause she pushed you cause she said...

[00:14:16] **Billy:** No.

[00:14:16] **Dana:** ...let's try it. What?

[00:14:17] **Billy:** No, because she was, she was game that was part of her background was, she was adventurous at her core. To be frank, like dad in a lot of areas was just this rigid structure that just dirk, dirk, dirk, dirk (noises). My biological mom was not that at all, and I've got a lot of those fucking brain cells.

[00:14:40] And so, it took having the existence of another person, at least semi understanding, some of me. And that was great. So like with the oboe thing, like

you had to go to the middle school. She was the one that went with me to the middle school for that audition. I was very shy until high school and I looked back and they were like 13 people trying out for drums.

[00:15:02] I'm like, no. So I like looked on the chart and the band director said, here's what I have, here's what I need. And it was like, oboe, I've got one and I need one. I'm like, what's that? And but again, she was like, you know, do it, I didn't know what it was either.

[00:15:16] **Dana:** Did she play an instrument?

[00:15:17] **Billy:** Piano.

[00:15:18] **Dana:** Piano. Got it. Oh, classically trained pianist. Yeah. You said she had been trained and she...

[00:15:23] **Billy:** She had been trained, and then I got trained.

[00:15:25] I, I took piano for probably 20 years and all that jazz. She is also the one that pushed me to go on my second tour with, or was it the first Ev?

[00:15:39] **Evelyn:** I mean it was both, but the second time you needed, I think a special push and she, yeah, she, I think wrote out, she just wrote go, I think on a piece of paper she was like, here's a sign.

[00:15:52] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:15:53] **Evelyn:** Get it.

[00:15:53] **Billy:** Go!.

[00:15:54] **Evelyn:** Here's a sign. Go. Here's a sign. Yeah, go. Here's a sign. Go. And she like stuck it in your room or she...

[00:15:59] **Billy:** put, yeah, put it, put it on my board. Yeah, on your board.

[00:16:01] **Evelyn:** Wow.

[00:16:01] And this was with a group called the Continental Singers.

[00:16:06] **Billy:** Don't look it up. Don't do it.

[00:16:08] **Evelyn:** people who grew up in a similar conservative evangelical circle as we did, will possibly know what that was. But at any rate, I'm still glad you did that cause that...

[00:16:20] Oh, absolutely!

[00:16:21] You traveled

[00:16:22] **Billy:** and then that put me on the second tour.

[00:16:24] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:16:26] **Billy:** Yeah, going to Chicago for school again, she was...

[00:16:29] **Evelyn:** school not so great, but

[00:16:32] **Billy:** Settle. Settle.

[00:16:33] **Evelyn:** School was challenge for our friend here. Oh, I just have to give him a little shit.

[00:16:42] (cross talk singing " sibling time")

[00:16:48] **Billy:** My gosh.

[00:16:48] **Dana:** Well, when were you, when were you born? Was he already gone at school? No. No

[00:16:54] **Evelyn:** yeah, I grade, I'm about 20 years younger than him. Thank you Dana. Thank you for noticing my skin care regimen.

[00:17:00] **Dana:** I was like, wait a second. Like come on, someone help me here.

[00:17:04] **Billy:** So I prayed for this one.

[00:17:06] **Evelyn:** You did. He is sorry. He's so sorry.

[00:17:08] **Dana:** For real? You really did?

[00:17:09] You asked him did really? You asked for a sibling.

[00:17:12] **Billy:** I wanted a sister with blonde hair and blue eyes. Who was funny. Guess what the fuck I got?

[00:17:20] **Evelyn:** It may,

[00:17:20] **Dana:** but she not have blue eyes cause?

[00:17:21] **Evelyn:** I do.

[00:17:22] **Dana:** She's I All those things. Yeah. Wow.

[00:17:24] **Evelyn:** You're welcome.

[00:17:25] **Billy:** On top of that..

[00:17:28] **Dana:** So how old were you when she was born?

[00:17:30] **Evelyn:** He was 7.

[00:17:31] **Dana:** Oh yeah.

[00:17:32] **Billy:** And she was gonna be, she, they were prepping me. They were so sad because during the pregnancy and up until the day she was born, they were like, she's a boy.

[00:17:41] It's a boy, it's a boy. And I'm like, Nope, I prayed to this. I'm not gonna have to share my toys. Cause that was the other thing. I didn't wanna share the toys

[00:17:49] **Evelyn:** as we, as we were very gendered at the time in the 1970s. Very gendered.

[00:17:53] **Dana:** Yeah. Very gendered.

[00:17:54] **Billy:** Yeah. Um, but yeah, I didn't wanna, I didn't want a brother. I wanted a sister's, a girl.

[00:18:00] **Dana:** Did she really want a child?

[00:18:01] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:18:03] **Billy:** Oh good lord.

[00:18:04] **Dana:** Yes. Yes

[00:18:04] **Evelyn:** She did. She wanted more than just, than just the 2 of us, I believe.

[00:18:09] **Billy:** Yeah, she did.

[00:18:10] **Evelyn:** But Dad was like, no, we're done. Dana. She did natural childbirth. In a time when everybody was getting, still, a lot of people were getting put under. Right. Just to, yeah. Quietly deliver the baby... she wanted.

[00:18:24] **Dana:** Did she do it at home or...

[00:18:25] **Evelyn:** no, she was at the

[00:18:26] **Dana:** ...hospital. Was at the ho ...didn't do drugs...

[00:18:29] **Evelyn:** no drugs, no.

[00:18:30] **Dana:** Wow.

[00:18:31] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:18:31] **Evelyn:** And then she breastfed when that was still also something for the super crunchy hippie people, and she was not crunchy hippie, but she just felt really strongly about that and other people would not have made that choice.

[00:18:46] So she was really, I don't know. She, I feel like she was pretty intuitive in that way, where she trusted, like she knew things that she wanted to try and she stuck to her guns if she wanted something. Yes. You know what I mean? Yes, yes. If it was important to her.

[00:19:01] **Dana:** Was her mom like that.

[00:19:03] **Evelyn:** Her mom was...

[00:19:03] **Billy:** oh, grandmother?

[00:19:04] **Evelyn:** Grandmother was spunky man. Yeah. Was her mother side. Can I tell name?

[00:19:09] **Dana:** Her name just grandmother? I love that.

[00:19:11] **Evelyn:** Grandmother. Yeah. Yes, please. That's what we called her. Side story about grandmother. This was Olive. Olive is Helen's mom. Okay. So grandmother, she and grandpa went back to Guatemala. They were a, their 60's, probably 60's or 70's.

[00:19:26] Actually, it's entirely possible they were even 80 something, but, they were older. Think of that. They were older. They went back, I think, for a visit cause they had been retired at that point. And they're driving down the road and they get carjacked. And grandmother's like, all right, this cash is going in my bra.

[00:19:46] And so she like shoves.

[00:19:49] **Dana:** Oh my God.

[00:19:49] **Evelyn:** All the cash...

[00:19:50] What

[00:19:50] **Dana:** they had like a gun put. Like what?

[00:19:52] **Evelyn:** Like yes. They stopped the car. They like, yeah, it was, yeah. Yeah. And so she was like, I'm gonna put this cash in my bra. And she shoves it down in her bra and the car is taken and grandmother and grandpa are there on the side of the road. But she saved their money. All the money.

[00:20:09] **Dana:** My God.

[00:20:11] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:20:12] **Evelyn:** It's amazing. She's no way. They're not getting away with this.

[00:20:15] **Dana:** Yeah. She's like, what would Jesus do? What? Stick the money right down the bra. On the bra.

[00:20:19] **Evelyn:** The bra. That's what are bras for what bra? Yeah. So that's grandmother.

[00:20:24] **Dana:** That's the kind of family she was raised around.

[00:20:26] **Billy:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, yeah.

[00:20:28] **Dana:** And brave. I mean, that's a brave thing. It's a risky, but it's brave and it's spunky...

[00:20:33] **Evelyn:** spunky, super smart, whip smart lady. And I'd say, extremely brave. And also think about they're going out into the back jungles of Guatemala at a time when...

[00:20:46] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:20:46] **Evelyn:** They didn't know what was out there.

[00:20:47] You know?

[00:20:48] **Dana:** No cell phones, you know?

[00:20:49] **Evelyn:** Right, right.

[00:20:50] **Billy:** No, yeah.

[00:20:52] **Dana:** An Airbnb in Guatemala they can stay in.

[00:20:54] **Evelyn:** And then she's having, yeah, you really disconnected and she here, she's having four children and grandmother was the quiet one of the two in the relationship. So Grandpa was boisterous, loud...

[00:21:06] **Billy:** Gregarious, had pen pals across the planet.

[00:21:11] **Evelyn:** He always had a joke to tell, right?

[00:21:14] And grandmother was quiet and serious, but she was so fun when you got to know her. She was just the funnest person ever. And she and I were really close. I really loved hanging out with grandmother and mom was very much like her. And so like you could immediately on the surface say, oh, Helen's very responsible.

[00:21:35] And she's very serious and she is conscientious and always does the right thing. And you would be missing out on her like boisterous laugh. Yeah. Her adventurous side. She loved to travel and she traveled by herself. She loved that more than anything. She would drive herself places in her car that she loved.

[00:21:53] I think she just sometimes needed a little permission or the security and safety of people who knew her in order to open up

[00:22:02] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:22:03] **Evelyn:** And I know that she wanted to encourage both Billy and I in, in seeking wherever we wanted to go. Yeah. But she was also really good at structure. Like Billy's saying, she gave them sort of the stability that, it's weird Dana, because talking about it, it's dad, dad needed that structure.

[00:22:25] And yet at the same time we're also describing dad as the most rigid, Yeah, and cons-

[00:22:32] **Dana:** And that's not?

[00:22:33] **Evelyn:** It's not quite, he was like rigid in that, in a sort of a military way maybe, is what I'm thinking. Mm-hmm. , he gets up every day at the same time. Always had the same thing for breakfast. He always took a bike ride at X time.

[00:22:45] He always, he was very good at training, right? He was really good at sport.

[00:22:49] **Dana:** He taught systems or he taught like this drafting.

[00:22:52] **Evelyn:** Right,

[00:22:52] **Dana:** and like there's a...

[00:22:53] **Billy:** yeah. Yes.

[00:22:54] **Evelyn:** There's a way there's to do that.

[00:22:55] **Dana:** There's a way. Yeah. Yeah. What was their marriage like? Mm-hmm. . Can you give an overview of how it started? Maybe how, or growing up you observe, what was it like?

[00:23:03] **Evelyn:** I thought it was good, but it was good. I thought it was good.

[00:23:07] **Billy:** We both thought it was good.

[00:23:08] **Evelyn:** Billy, you have a story from when, I don't know how old you were, but when dad, I think he inappropriately said something to you about if it wasn't for X, possibly me. Oh, I would go or I would leave her or something. I don't what? When was that?

[00:23:25] Yeah, just a casual comment. Just a casual comment to your child.

[00:23:28] **Billy:** This is back to the whole secrets in the fucking family shit.

[00:23:31] **Evelyn:** Dumb secrets are dumb friends. Don't do it.

[00:23:35] **Billy:** Yeah, let me just say that it shouldn't take the death of a, an individual for children to have conversations with long loss relatives in order to start finding out the truth.

[00:23:48] **Dana:** Say that again. Can you say that? Say it again. Around you. It's what it's called when I say it again. What You said.

[00:23:54] **Billy:** It should not take the death of a parent for children to find out from long loss relatives the truth about certain situations. Right? It should not. I

[00:24:06] **Evelyn:** I understand age appropriate

[00:24:07] **Dana:** and don't need finances. And you don't just mean

[00:24:09] **Evelyn:** No, we mean family shit.

[00:24:10] **Billy:** Right? So Dad decided that when his children turned 20, they can learn the truth, which part of it was true, but it wasn't the whole truth at all. So I'm 20 and he's like, "Hey, I need to talk to you. Let's go in the backyard," Which sucked for me because at some point in my life I decided I didn't, I... whatever. I had one life at home, one life at church, and one life at school. And by life I mean personality and known information, et cetera. I was a different person on each of these girls.

[00:24:44] **Dana:** Where was school again ?

[00:24:48] **Billy:** And I Oh...

[00:24:49] **Evelyn:** you were out of high school? Sorry. Yeah, Richland, it's

[00:24:53] **Billy:** South Garland High School and Richland Community College, home of the Thunder Ducks.

[00:24:58] **Dana:** In Texas.

[00:24:59] **Evelyn:** In texas.

[00:25:00] **Billy:** In Texas.

[00:25:00] **Evelyn:** Dallas area. Dallas metro area.

[00:25:03] **Billy:** Yeah. And I had those facades, significantly boundaried. And so when either one of my parents would say, we need to have a talk, I'm like, fuck what I'd forget. What detail did I miss this time? So he takes me out back and he is like, listen you, you've grown up with Kathy was my first wife.

[00:25:26] I'm like, "Uhhuh." He's like, "false." Cool. Okay. So she was number 2. No, she was number 4 and Helen is number 5. And I just, I stay with Helen because of Evelyn.

[00:25:44] **Evelyn:** Every time I hear this, it blows my mind. Just makes me sad.

[00:25:48] **Billy:** That's...

[00:25:50] **Dana:** yeah.

[00:25:50] **Billy:** ...good.

[00:25:52] **Dana:** So you're 20 at this point? You are? 13. 13. I'm 20.

[00:25:55] **Evelyn:** I would be 13.

[00:25:56] **Billy:** And please understand.

[00:25:57] Yeah. Yeah. Ev was 13. I'm 20. I was, I hadn't traveled yet. I hadn't seen the world yet. I was still very good Lord. I, again, I didn't really pull my head fully outta my ass until I was 34. 30

[00:26:13] **Evelyn:** I would say later. But , and I'm not trying to be mean

[00:26:16] **Billy:** 36. I know. 37. Yeah. 37? Yeah, maybe. Yeah, 38. I just, I was a real space cadet.

[00:26:26] I wasn't very context aware about the world around me. I had no street values, so there wasn't really much that I could say about that back to my dad at the time. Except, okay.

[00:26:39] **Evelyn:** Thanks for telling me what?

[00:26:41] **Billy:** Who... do I have other siblings.

[00:26:44] **Dana:** Right?

[00:26:44] **Billy:** No.

[00:26:45] **Dana:** And did he say why he wanted to leave your, to leave Helen? Did he say, why did he say there's no love here?

[00:26:53] **Billy:** If he did, I don't. I, if he did, I don't remember it. But what I knew at the time, I mean, they just, dad went to work to teach and mom had her home office and then they came home and then they made decent roommates.

[00:27:12] **Dana:** No physical touching. You didn't see a lot of hugging, or...

[00:27:16] **Billy:** no, they did. They did. But there was definitely, so it wasn't until later that mom had to work through this stuff from her past.

[00:27:25] **Evelyn:** What was that? What are you referencing?

[00:27:27] **Billy:** Where she had the separation stuff from when she had to go to boarding school?

[00:27:32] **Evelyn:** Oh no, Billy, I think she was dealing with that her whole entire life, and I don't think she ever named it. Oh, no, no, no. This is, if you've heard of it, it's me diagnosing her with attachment disorder.

[00:27:41] Yeah.

[00:27:42] **Billy:** Oh, proof.

[00:27:42] **Evelyn:** Seriously.

[00:27:42] **Dana:** But they put her in boarding school and she dealt with that.

[00:27:45] **Evelyn:** At the age of four. So this is how missionaries did it at the time, in the 1930s and 1940s and 1950s. 1950s. So she stayed with her parents until age 4, and then starting around 4 or 5, you got shipped off for 9 months out of the year to a missionary kid boarding school.

[00:28:08] So it was for other missionary kids. And you were there and you were without your parents, all of a sudden, maybe your siblings, if you had any, were there. And hers, hers were there. But think about how little you are and just, it just was, to me, it feels like a recipe for raising disordered children.

[00:28:31] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:28:31] **Evelyn:** And then...

[00:28:32] **Dana:** so interesting too. You leave your child to go help other's.

[00:28:35] **Evelyn:** I know, I know.

[00:28:36] **Dana:** That's fascinating.

[00:28:38] **Evelyn:** It's weird.

[00:28:38] **Dana:** Fascinating to me.

[00:28:39] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Yeah. It's crazy. Yeah.

[00:28:41] **Billy:** This is weird mentality at the time.

[00:28:43] **Evelyn:** And so throughout the year they were, they were assigned, the kids were assigned. Every week you have to write your parents at home.

[00:28:51] And so they would get letters back and forth, but you're not seeing your parents. There's no FaceTime, there's nothing. And then you go back to

them at the end of the school year, you leave the school and you go back to your parents for the summer and who are these people? And all of a sudden she's being disciplined.

[00:29:09] So then you deal with your parents for 3 months, and then by the end of that, you can't wait to go back to school and you do that. That was her life.

[00:29:17] **Billy:** 4 through 11 and then put away,

[00:29:20] **Evelyn:** sent to the united states at the age of 12/13. Oh. Something like that, I think.

[00:29:26] **Dana:** Oh, wow.

[00:29:26] **Billy:** Okay.

[00:29:26] **Evelyn:** Yeah. And so I think her Independence streak came from the fact that she had to be, but I think she deeply desired intimacy.

[00:29:34] Did she have close friendships? Yeah, she did. She had a couple of close friendships that I knew of, but she was very loyal to her husband.

[00:29:44] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:29:45] **Evelyn:** And so no one, none of her girlfriends ever knew of any unhappiness that she might have had or harbored on her own.

[00:29:54] **Dana:** Or financial shame...

[00:29:55] **Evelyn:** or financial shame or difficulty. Yeah. I was gonna speak about mom and dad's news. May I do that? Dad's former spouses.

[00:30:08] **Dana:** Oh, okay.

[00:30:09] **Evelyn:** Yes, please. Okay, so Billy learned about mom's, uh, predecessors.

[00:30:16] **Dana:** At 20

[00:30:17] **Evelyn:** When he was 20. Yes.

[00:30:18] **Dana:** At 20 years old.

[00:30:19] **Evelyn:** And so you might be wondering how does Hele-, a former missionary kid and all around responsible and all of this, all the attributes that she had, how does she decide, yeah, I'm gonna marry this dude who has been married 4 times before.

[00:30:36] How does she, how does she do that? Well, the answer is she doesn't know that he's been married 4 times before. She believes...

[00:30:45] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:30:46] **Evelyn:** ...like everyone that Billy

[00:30:48] **Dana:** Just, Kathy? Just Kathy.

[00:30:49] **Evelyn:** It was just Kathy. And then she finds out after they've been married for a year or 2, something like that. I wanna say it was about a year or so.

[00:30:59] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:30:59] **Evelyn:** And they were at a family function. And did Aunt Ida say something?

[00:31:05] **Billy:** and, Aunt Aunt Ida went introduced, said "Helen, I've got, I have someone I need to introduce you to." And Helen, mom came over and Ida was like, this is such and such. This is dad's, this is Bill. Billy Ed's second, second wife. Because that was the trick is that mom was like, I thought, right.

[00:31:27] I was the second wife.

[00:31:27] **Dana:** I was, your dad didn't know at a barbecue or a function in town.

[00:31:31] **Evelyn:** This might come up.

[00:31:32] **Dana:** This might happen.

[00:31:33] **Evelyn:** I think he just really hoped it wouldn't,

[00:31:35] **Dana:** it's not like Right. These women weren't in different states. He was just hoping it wouldn't come up the tell.

[00:31:39] **Billy:** Yeah, sure, sure thing. Who knows?

[00:31:43] No, we don't ask that question. I

[00:31:44] **Evelyn:** don't know. I wish I could learn that.

[00:31:45] **Dana:** So she found out two years in, found out 2 years in.

[00:31:48] **Evelyn:** A couple years in, and then Dana.

[00:31:50] **Dana:** And do you know how she responded to that?

[00:31:52] **Evelyn:** Uh, I think she was devastated. I personally think she was absolutely devastated.

[00:31:56] **Billy:** Absolutely.

[00:31:56] **Evelyn:** And, and then she was stuck because guess who doesn't believe in divorce?

[00:32:02] Helen. Yeah. And Helen's whole family and a lot of Right. And and most Christians, many Christians do. Right, right. So then, What is there for her to do? She is to now, she has to stay here with this man who omitted some crucial information.

[00:32:18] **Dana:** Mm-hmm. what else is he hiding? Right? Like, what else is he hiding? What else is he not telling me?

[00:32:23] **Evelyn:** Right. Yeah. Yeah. I think she was devastated about that for the rest of her life. I don't, I personally don't think she ever recovered from it.

[00:32:29] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:30] **Evelyn:** and

[00:32:31] **Billy:** No, she had to find space to put it behind her.

[00:32:33] **Evelyn:** I, it was really distressing when I found out, because I was watching mom as we were, as dad. She was sort of making Dad tell me all of this and I was watching her and I was like, mom is not okay.

[00:32:51] **Billy:** No.

[00:32:51] **Evelyn:** Yeah. I found...

[00:32:53] **Billy:** When was that?

[00:32:54] **Evelyn:** I was, I was 21. And so you'll see that Dad did not follow Protocol. No. And tell me on own and it was an accident.

[00:33:04] **Dana:** And you didn't go tell your sister hold on. But then you didn't tell your sister that.

[00:33:07] **Evelyn:** No, he didn't.

[00:33:07] **Dana:** Cause you obviously learned many years before he wasn't supposed to. No. It wasn't your story to tell.

[00:33:11] **Billy:** Well, really? I was gonna, I was gonna tell my adorable... look.

[00:33:14] **Dana:** Listen, I know, I'm, yeah. I'm just fascinated.

[00:33:17] **Billy:** I'm a shit case compared to my sister. Yeah. So my sister was the golden child, and 13, this adorable, blonde haired, blue eyed, talented kid that I was just like, anybody touches I will fuck you up.

[00:33:28] **Dana:** I'm not gonna taint this story. Yeah.

[00:33:30] **Billy:** I'm not gonna do, yeah. I'm not gonna lay that on her.

[00:33:33] **Dana:** Well, and also that's taking your dad, it's your dad's job. So if you take that away, like he, it's his responsibility or in theory or...

[00:33:41] **Evelyn:** (cross talk) Yeah. I was 21. You were 21? I was 21. And I was home on a break from college and dad was going through some old photos.

[00:33:53] Which, I love old photos. I love old...

[00:33:57] **Dana:** Same.

[00:33:57] **Evelyn:** ...I just gimme all the old photos and gimme the stories.

[00:34:00] **Dana:** The black and white, the little ones, what's this? What's this? And you turn 'em over and there's words on them and you're, what do they mean? And what, who is this person?

[00:34:08] **Evelyn:** I, I love it. I love it. Yeah. So I sat down.

[00:34:11] **Dana:** My mom has commentary sometimes,

[00:34:13] **Billy:** like it's really dangerous in our family.

[00:34:15] **Evelyn:** That's true.

[00:34:16] **Dana:** Yeah. No, my mom has opinions about the person. I'm like, why is there like sass on the back of these pictures? Sometimes it's, oh, she has an opinion about this person. Yeah.

[00:34:24] **Evelyn:** That's delightful. We just, we just usually get names if that on the back. I love your mom's....

[00:34:28] **Dana:** yeah. Sometimes I get...

[00:34:29] **Evelyn:** I love that. I love that.

[00:34:30] **Dana:** I get tone.

[00:34:33] **Evelyn:** That's delightful

[00:34:34] **Dana:** in the later years. In the later years. Yeah.

[00:34:35] **Evelyn:** I sit down with him cuz I love looking at pictures and so I'm going through them. And some of them were from his time in the military, so he was actually part of the Korean War.

[00:34:45] Uh, he was over in, he served in Korea. And I pick up a photo and it's him like in his military uniform, whatever that was. Was he what? Army? He was Army. His army. He was just an army guy. He's army, so he's in his uniform

and his left hand is resting on, on the back of a chair. It's like a portrait, if that makes sense.

[00:35:08] So he's standing behind a chair and his left hand is resting there and he's looking at the camera and on his ring finger Is a band. A band. Yeah. And I'm like, Korean War Now he's, this is 1950 something. Wait a minute. Billy was born in 1970. Uh, when was, when did he marry? Yeah, he, yeah. Does he like Hillary?

[00:35:30] Is he married to Kathy? I know that all that time. What? No, it wouldn't have been because Cathy was so much younger than him. She was 16 or 17 years, like younger than him. So it literally wouldn't have been possible. Okay. So I was like, dad, what's this ring that you're wearing on your finger? Cause who's curious?

[00:35:49] Evelyn's curious all the time. I love asking questions. And he was like, oh, you know, he doesn't know what to do. And mom is walking through the room and she's like, and it's about time you told her Bill. And I was like, what? Okay, what are y'all talking about? What is this? What is happening right now?

[00:36:08] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:36:08] **Evelyn:** And, and she said, I think we better go to the living. And I was like, what the fuck? We always gotta move somewhere. You can't just sit here until,

[00:36:16] **Dana:** meet me on the porch, billy come to the porch, come to the living room.

[00:36:19] **Evelyn:** We gotta go to the living room. Yeah. So we adjourn to the living room and dad says, okay, it's time. I told you that your mom isn't my second wife. So then he confesses this and y'all, it was like he was confessing to some horrible crime, is how much shame he was clearly sh carrying over it. And mom is sitting there stone faced and I think, oh, I think this was an enormous conflict that never got resolved for them, which I can't blame her.

[00:36:57] I would. I, can you imagine that level of betrayal, like right at the beginning of your marriage? Oh my stars, now we have to, now I'm gonna have a kid with this guy and No, no, everything's fine. Everything's fine. And you've got no one. Yeah, you've got no one to talk to about it, et cetera. Anyway, so he tells me, blah, blah, blah, 4 wives.

[00:37:16] So I asked the same question questions as Billy did. I was like, do I have other siblings that I don't know about? And he said, no, no other siblings. And I was like, okay, why am I just now learning this? What is wrong with you? He's like, it's just so many divorces and that's very bad, and whatever sort of nonsense.

[00:37:35] And I was like, you have nothing to be ashamed of. People get divorced, it didn't work. You're here now. Be here. What's wrong with you? And also dad, at our church, we had something called Divorce Care. It was a group for. Christians who were going through a divorce, which is very painful, right? Divorce is painful anyway, but for Christians, sometimes I think it's worse because there's so much stigma.

[00:37:58] And I was like, dad, you could be teaching at Divorce Care in divorce. You could be like showing other people, a participant, participant, facilitator, facilitator, to show other people that life doesn't end after divorce. Look at what you can do with yourself, and you don't have to be defined by this. All this garbage.

[00:38:17] And he was like, thank you. And I was like, okay. I don't know what's wrong with y'all. What's wrong with you people?

[00:38:23] **Billy:** Because the both of them had already set it up. It'd already been set up in the community.

[00:38:27] **Evelyn:** Yes. That mom was dad's second wife. They can't go back on that now.

[00:38:31] Yeah. Yeah.

[00:38:32] **Dana:** So did you have a private conversation with your mom after that?

[00:38:35] Evelyn then. Did you ever just speak with your mom? No. Or go out, go to brunch? She go to coffee. You go into a bedroom one night and say, talk to me.

[00:38:42] **Evelyn:** Right.

[00:38:43] **Dana:** What's going on? How do you feel about all this? You never, that never happened.

[00:38:46] **Evelyn:** No, it never happened. Sometimes it was hard to get her to talk about how she really felt about stuff, especially stuff regarding dad and like the, one of the last conversations I ever had with her before everything blew up and things ended the way they did is she came up to Nashville to visit me.

[00:39:05] This was just days before she died and I really, I wanted to have those real conversations. I think I asked, how are you and dad doing? And she was like, oh, we're fine. You know, just, I really want us to travel. She really wanted to take him to Ireland, which was part of his family's heritage and history.

[00:39:28] And funny enough, dad, I think he liked travel well enough, but he wasn't a big, he didn't travel big. He didn't make big plans. And mom was the go around the world person. Yeah. And so if it was gonna happen, she wanted to, she was gonna make it happen. And so that was meaningful to her because it was important to dad.

[00:39:51] And so she wanted this to happen. And so she was, she talked about, you know, he's training a lot for, he was training for a particular bike race at the time, and she's just, he's just training all the time and we don't really get to spend a lot of time together. So I'm looking forward to hopefully trying to do that and planning for this trip that they, she wanted to take them on.

[00:40:15] And, um, so that's what I got from them. From her was, and they talked on the phone every night. And lo and behold, dad's like, yeah, I love you too. He doesn't. He doesn't love her anymore. Right. He's boinking somebody else...

[00:40:30] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:40:30] **Evelyn:** ...and plotting her demise. It just, I think she was loyal to a fault in that way.

[00:40:37] And I mean, my guess is it's, it was too painful to deal with her real feelings about it. It's....God...

[00:40:46] **Dana:** Do you remember your last, Billy, do you remember your last moment with her? Or like, do you remember a last conversation?

[00:40:51] **Billy:** I, I gotta give a little context. So I hit a particular age, I think it was 7, and I started, no, maybe it was like 12. I don't know. I, I remember I went to this point at the Sheridan House Ev

[00:41:06] **Evelyn:** mm-hmm.

[00:41:06] **Billy:** and then it kept going for years. My mom and I had the perfect combo of being oil and water for each other. Uh, sparks and stones. I mean, I could just. Give us two minutes and we could get into an argument and without freaking trying, and I didn't have anybody older and definitely not dad to try to help me, figure out how to open up, open my mouth up better. I love you, Ev.

[00:41:38] **Evelyn:** Well, I love that description though. I mean, yeah. Yeah. You didn't have anyone equipping you with different tools for communication.

[00:41:46] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:41:46] **Evelyn:** And she also, she didn't have that. She was like, but this is how it's not working. And so she would try harder with you, you know?

[00:41:55] **Billy:** But I cannot lie, aside from the wife I have now and the sister you're looking at, mom was the only other individual who loved me to the degree that I've ever been loved. I just, she fucking made it through my stupid years. And then we just, for a long time, unfortunately, we just had habits, bad habits of addressing each other and bad habits of coming at each other.

[00:42:19] And it really wasn't until that last year that finally, like I distinctly recall, I had a conversation with her and I got off the phone. I'm like, oh my God, we didn't fight.

[00:42:31] **Dana:** Whew.

[00:42:31] **Billy:** And fortunately, fortunately, unfortunately, that was my last phone call with her. Is that

[00:42:37] **Dana:** mm-hmm.

[00:42:37] **Billy:** We had a conversation and it was nice.

[00:42:40] And we And

[00:42:41] **Dana:** what did it feel like? What did it do you re, did you laugh on the call? Did you, do you remember what you were talking about?

[00:42:47] **Billy:** We were able to be kind with each other.

[00:42:48] **Dana:** And it Basic, boring, logistic. Yeah.

[00:42:51] **Billy:** Oh, it had to do with the fact that my marriage sucked.

[00:42:55] **Evelyn:** That's, yeah. Your first, yeah. You were in your first marriage.

[00:43:02] **Billy:** I did that.

[00:43:02] **Dana:** So you're on the phone with your mom and you were talking about this, telling her about...

[00:43:06] **Billy:** yeah, we, because she was like, you're not, she mom knew when one of us wasn't happy. She knew when things weren't going great for us. She was very kind in those moments.

[00:43:18] **Evelyn:** Mm-hmm.

[00:43:19] **Billy:** because what she desperately wanted for each of us was to find our path and to be happy.

[00:43:25] That is as plain and simple as it is, and fortunately or not, I did a lot of things to please my parents late into my life, and I finally felt okay to say, I'm not, I think I screwed up. And mom was like, yeah, I'm sorry.

[00:43:45] **Evelyn:** I agree.

[00:43:47] **Dana:** Wow. Yeah, I agree. Yeah.

[00:43:49] **Evelyn:** But there wasn't, I don't think she was like, yeah, you dumb ass, right?

[00:43:54] She was like, she was like, yeah,

[00:43:56] **Dana:** yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:43:57] **Evelyn:** So let's get you out. I remember the previous Christmas and

[00:44:00] **Dana:** maybe she couldn't, yeah, she. To it for herself. Yeah. It just sounds like she can do for herself, wanting the best for you to and wanting you to find love and she couldn't do it for herself.

[00:44:08] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:44:08] But the previous Christmas she very briefly and mentioned something about, I think the possibility of you and Angie not staying together and she wished that would, that you would do that.

[00:44:21] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:44:22] **Evelyn:** Right.

[00:44:22] **Billy:** I wasn't, I mean, again, I did not understand my own boundaries. Right. Until I was 30 freaking 7 ish

[00:44:33] Please understand, I've just been on a long space cadet program.

[00:44:37] **Dana:** Hey, just popping in here, as Dana to talk to you one on one, just us. Uh, so I debated about how to approach talking about their mother's death, the big reveal. I wasn't totally sure how to warn you all or tell you ahead of time what was coming.

[00:44:53] Without that clouding the entire conversation. I thought about putting it in the show notes or in my intro. But ultimately, I wanted you to hear about their gorgeous mother, Helen, without any preconceived notions, without the morbid, sensational, or traumatic story of how she died clouding over the first half of this episode. I just wanted you to get to know Helen and Helen's two awesome, funny, smart, generous, kind kids.

[00:45:22] I know that trigger and content warnings are important, and so this is yours, mid episode. This conversation's about to take a turn, and we're gonna discuss domestic violence and death. So I wanna encourage you to tap out if you need to please take care of you. But I also want you to know that these two children are still gonna keep talking about their love for their mother, about what her death has taught them about their own marriages, their own divorces, their romantic partners about raising kids and keeping secrets.

[00:45:56] This conversation is going to take a turn. But Helen still deserves to be honored and known. So back to our conversation. So we're gonna take this turn together.

[00:46:09] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:46:09] **Dana:** We're gonna all three turn this story together, right?

[00:46:13] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:46:13] **Dana:** I'm gonna let you lead it. I'm interested though, as we go forward in how you now as adults, when you have to say the words of how she died.

[00:46:22] **Evelyn:** Mm-hmm. Right.

[00:46:23] **Dana:** Yours is so weighted and it's so heavy. So then I'm curious how that has changed for you over the years, how you speak about it. And I'll let you guys take this turn for me.

[00:46:34] **Evelyn:** I...

[00:46:34] **Dana:** and for helen.

[00:46:35] **Evelyn:** Yeah. I think for me it's been well always, been difficult. And I think it's fair to say it'll, for many reasons and no reason, it'll be always more difficult for me than it is for Billy.

[00:46:51] And I don't, there's no negative connotation. There's no judgment in that statement. It just is. Right?

[00:46:57] **Billy:** Yep. So you guys were so much clo, you guys have the ability to be closer.

[00:47:01] **Evelyn:** We did. We communicated the same way.

[00:47:04] **Billy:** Yeah. And you traveled together and

[00:47:06] **Evelyn:** of, and I am her mini me. I mean, I really am in many ways.

[00:47:11] Yeah. Yeah. So in the early days I could, I almost couldn't speak it. And if I had to, it would, it was just, it was devastating and very stressful. Like I feel it here in my chest come up. And now when I...

[00:47:26] **Dana:** right now?

[00:47:26] **Evelyn:** Some, sometimes thinking about especially how it used to feel. And it's just like you take a deep breath. Right.

[00:47:34] **Dana:** Would you just say she died?

[00:47:36] **Evelyn:** Yes. A lot of times actually. Would you just say she that? Yeah, I still say that. Yeah. Depends, depends on the context who you're talking to. Exactly. But coworker, a couple years back, I've been at my current job for about three years, and so a couple years back it some, it came up enough that I felt like I could introduce this topic to him and I was like, "Hey, just so you know, quite a few years ago, my, my dad actually murdered my mom," and he was like, "oh, whoa, what?"

[00:48:09] And I said, "yes. Yeah, my dad murdered my mother. They were still married." And he was like, hold up, Ev. I got, can I ask questions? I was like, yeah, you can totally ask questions. And I said, I don't mind talking about it, but I also like, I really, and I really don't mind talking about it if I know, or feel reasonably sure that the person I'm talking to is also gonna be able to it with me. You know, I'm not interested in.

[00:48:36] **Dana:** I can't.

[00:48:36] **Evelyn:** Yeah, I think you probably...

[00:48:38] **Dana:** I just can't imagine

[00:48:39] **Evelyn:** ...though, too, Dana, right.

[00:48:40] **Dana:** There's so much pity that comes at you when you say your mom has died anyway. Yeah. So then you have people who are uncomfortable and they don't know what to say.

[00:48:46] **Evelyn:** No.

[00:48:46] **Dana:** And I remember the day that Billy told me what you just said.

[00:48:50] I also, and my mom was still alive. Yeah. I didn't know how to respond.

[00:48:54] **Evelyn:** No.

[00:48:54] **Dana:** Besides saying I have so many question. Am I allowed to have them?

[00:48:58] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:48:58] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:48:58] **Dana:** And yet the weight of what I'm being told feels so much heavier than just a normal death.

[00:49:02] **Evelyn:** Right.

[00:49:02] **Dana:** And then you're like, sad for his dad. Oh my God. Or losing your, you're losing a father.

[00:49:06] So there's all this stuff.

[00:49:08] **Evelyn:** It's a lot. My God. Yeah. It's just so much.

[00:49:10] It's a lot.

[00:49:10] **Dana:** You're, and then you have to be like, people have the space to hold, right? Yeah. Drinking on a rooftop. And I was like, tell me more about your, about your, that that mom, what?

[00:49:17] **Billy:** It was our first big, long conversation with on the rooftop.

[00:49:20] **Dana:** It was like years 10 ago, 10, 12 years ago.

[00:49:22] Wow. Anyway, sorry I'm, I didn't put you off, but I,

[00:49:25] **Evelyn:** no, this is a conversation. Yeah.

[00:49:27] **Dana:** Yeah. I can imagine that people don't know how to hold, I don't know how to hold that space. That's very hard. It is very hard. Let's give them the grace too.

[00:49:33] **Evelyn:** Absolutely.

[00:49:33] **Dana:** To know like, that is hard.

[00:49:34] **Evelyn:** They have to be prepared to walk them through it, if that makes sense.

[00:49:39] And I, yeah, and I don't, I think it's because I really, I want to show people that it's okay to about this and that's shitty.

[00:49:50] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:49:50] **Evelyn:** And it's sort of mind blowing a little bit. And I know that I'm about to lead them into something that is really awful and not fun. But if you wanna know me, you need to know this thing about me.

[00:50:03] **Billy:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:50:03] **Evelyn:** You need to have context for things that I say or why I don't like when people joke about murdering someone. Why I don't like jokes about guns or gun violence, or why I don't like people to say, Ugh, just kill me now if I'm still here in 20 years. I'm like, you motherfucker.

[00:50:23] **Dana:** Oh my gosh.

[00:50:24] **Evelyn:** You, how dare you.

[00:50:26] **Dana:** And an obsession with real crime.

[00:50:28] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Yes. Right.

[00:50:28] **Dana:** The sensationalism around real life stories about crime. Yeah. And murdering women.

[00:50:33] **Evelyn:** And murdering women. Yes, yes. All of these things. So yeah. So now that's, I just try to

[00:50:38] keep it simple.

[00:50:39] **Dana:** And are you resentful that this is part of. Is this part of your, so this is part of your identity.

[00:50:44] So then are you resentful that it is a part of your identity that you said, if you want know me right, you now have to know, know this. It's part of me.

[00:50:52] **Evelyn:** Yeah. No, I'm not. I probably used to be, but I had to accept it.

[00:50:57] **Billy:** Yeah, it might have gone through that phase.

[00:50:59] **Evelyn:** I probably did, but I mean, and it's not fair. Like I can tell you right now.

[00:51:03] Yeah, no, this is really shitty and it's not fair. And there are definitely days where I'm like, Goddammit, I really wish this was not my story.

[00:51:11] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:51:12] **Evelyn:** Our story, any of us related to this. Also, I just wish, like, she didn't even make it to 60 y'all. That's not fair. She was like a vital, healthy woman. So it's just not, you know, it's not fair.

[00:51:26] 59 and he robbed her a month before her 60th birthday of getting to see that.

[00:51:32] **Billy:** The more you learn about the context, it just, I get angry again.

[00:51:35] **Evelyn:** Mm-hmm.

[00:51:35] **Billy:** Because it's like, They were married for 27 years. They, he had been married and divorced before. Like dude, like that was my sister, that was Ev and I's first question, what the fuck?

[00:51:46] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:51:47] **Billy:** Why not another divorce? Why this direction? Because, and what's the sole thing is Ev, do you remember she had broken her wrist?

[00:51:55] **Evelyn:** I do.

[00:51:55] **Billy:** She, she'd got, and she had it healed and had just had that taken off

[00:52:01] **Evelyn:** and then broke the other one.

[00:52:03] **Billy:** A week or two later she broke the other one exactly the same way.

[00:52:07] **Evelyn:** I do remember. It was awful.

[00:52:08] **Billy:** And this is, this is right before the whole mess. And I was like, dude, like that's what I was like getting mad at God. I'm like, if you get break bones, like fucking break mine. I'm the dumb ass. Stop hurting this nice lady over here who has managed to... I to this day. Again, she never stopped loving me and never stopped trying to meet me on that level of acceptance and love.

[00:52:38] **Evelyn:** She never gave up on wanting y'all to have a more congenial relationship.

[00:52:46] **Billy:** Right.

[00:52:46] **Evelyn:** She wanted that. She was always gonna go after you in that way.

[00:52:50] **Billy:** And it's so, dude, you decided to like just rip the life from this person who was doing, she was teaching Spanish at a...

[00:52:58] **Evelyn:** elementary school.

[00:52:59] **Billy:** Yeah, at an elementary school. And kids, of course, the kids loved it because she's a freaking good teacher.

[00:53:06] **Evelyn:** She's patient.

[00:53:08] **Dana:** He was seeing someone else correct?

[00:53:10] **Evelyn:** For like a, for like a month, Dana month,

[00:53:13] **Dana:** that that wasn't, it wasn't like, I'm leaving this person, I'm going to go be like this, this person. That wasn't the story.

[00:53:19] **Evelyn:** He hoped. He held out, hope that they could then really pursue the relationship if Helen was out of the picture and if he got divorced. The answer to why he couldn't get another divorce, Billy duh, is because he would be the bad guy. So if he was doing the divorcing, the leaving, then the whole community, he, the bad guy that they were part of.

[00:53:43] **Dana:** Oh,

[00:53:44] **Evelyn:** would

[00:53:44] **Dana:** my God.

[00:53:44] **Evelyn:** They would shun him because they were still very, he was an elder at the church. Not at the time, but he had been, they were very involved in their church and they had their friend groups and everything there. So what was he supposed to do? Like have everybody break up with him because he wanted to divorce mom?

[00:54:02] No. However, if he's the widower, where does all the sympathy go? It goes to him and then he's free to date whoever he wants to.

[00:54:13] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:54:14] **Dana:** And he believes to get away with it or that, yeah.

[00:54:17] **Evelyn:** Let me just...

[00:54:17] **Dana:** Right. No one would ever know.

[00:54:19] **Evelyn:** I'm gonna mute my mic and have a primal scream. One moment.

[00:54:22] **Billy:** So I, yeah. So it just

[00:54:26] **Evelyn:** is so infuriating.

[00:54:27] It's so infuriating to think about. And here's this woman who, to me, the very week that he killed her said, I just want us to spend more time together. I can't wait till we get to go to Ireland.

[00:54:40] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:54:40] **Evelyn:** Motherfucker. What? I just, there's just no words. And I am so sad that she was stuck in a marriage where she was not wanted for who she was because I think that's where it got to, first of all, that she was deceived...

[00:55:00] **Billy:** mm-hmm.

[00:55:00] **Evelyn:** ...into marrying him.

[00:55:01] **Dana:** Mmm.

[00:55:02] **Evelyn:** And then that the man she was with, apparently just like a.) Couldn't keep his dick in his pants, but b.) Didn't see her. Did not see her and treasure her for who she was and who she was, was amazing. Nobody's perfect. None of us are claiming that. But she was an incredible human.

[00:55:23] **Dana:** So who called you two? Ugh. Who called?

[00:55:26] **Evelyn:** Who called you? Billy

[00:55:27] **Dana:** Was it a cop? I don't understand how

[00:55:29] **Evelyn:** this, oh fuck. Dad called you?

[00:55:32] **Billy:** Yeah.

[00:55:33] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Awesome.

[00:55:35] **Billy:** I thought it was a complication. He said something's happened with mom.

[00:55:38] **Evelyn:** Yep.

[00:55:39] **Billy:** And I thought it was a complic- cause remember she had so many drugs for the...

[00:55:43] **Evelyn:** yep. The wrist breaking.

[00:55:45] **Dana:** Her breaking her wrist. Mm-hmm.

[00:55:47] **Billy:** Yeah. He called me and said, somethin's happened with mom, you need to get home. And he wouldn't tell me what.

[00:55:53] **Evelyn:** After that conversation. I have a knowing that happens sometimes, and for me it's spiritual and it is connected to my spiritual life. Of course, that's shifted in how I experience that. But I had a knowing that mom had died and I just asked, I said, okay, if she died, I just need to know that she knew that she was loved as she died.

[00:56:24] And then I of course had no idea that it was her, the person she trusted most in the world and had handed her life over to, right. Who did the killing? She looked at him when he killed her. Right? She must have seen him.

So he came at her and shot her in the chest and in the head, and so I think I choose to believe that she received other communication at that time.

[00:56:49] That ushered her out of this life.

[00:56:52] **Dana:** Like what?

[00:56:53] **Evelyn:** I think she would've thought of her kids.

[00:56:57] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[00:56:57] **Evelyn:** And I think she would've received comfort from her God, from Christ. That's what I, that's what I have to believe, because otherwise it's too difficult. Right? It's, you look at your spouse, the person that, for fuck's sake, you're planning to go to Ireland with you've, you have supported their endeavors in every possible way.

[00:57:21] Their hobby takes them away from you. Hobby was cycling, takes them away from you and you support it. And you are like, yes, if you wanna train for this ride, you do that every moment you need to. Everything that dad did, she supported. And all she wanted was intimacy and to be known and seen and loved for who she was.

[00:57:43] He couldn't give that to her. And now he's standing there and he is got a gun and he is going to kill her. You know, like I just, it, I'm... I start to feel very stabby about it.

[00:57:55] **Billy:** There's a lot of angry disappointment. Mm-hmm. , because I would have to say, and I'm sorry, I'm not trying to interject or butt in Ev.

[00:58:03] **Evelyn:** Oh, please. Yeah, no, please go ahead.

[00:58:05] **Billy:** I would have to say the most disappointing thing is that as time has gone on and we have been living our lives, is that there are consistent moments in time where we're like, we wish we could share this.

[00:58:21] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:58:21] **Dana:** With her.

[00:58:22] **Evelyn:** Yep.

[00:58:22] **Billy:** Because there's. I have nothing to share with my dad except lots of bad things and fire and gas

[00:58:31] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[00:58:32] **Billy:** I'm with the woman now that she's aside from two other individuals. She's the only other female that came to our house and mom loved her. This is true because she was going on a trip to Papa New Guinea to do what mom had done in Huehuetenango in Guatemala. Mom loved her.

[00:58:53] **Evelyn:** I love that. Mom got the chance to meet Steph years and years ago. When you guys...

[00:58:58] **Dana:** Years ago. You know, my brain was like, hold on. Cause you knew each other before

[00:59:02] **Evelyn:** they dated riefly.

[00:59:02] **Dana:** So they dated in the past.

[00:59:04] **Evelyn:** And Steph came over to the house. She saw our weird family dynamics in action.

[00:59:08] **Dana:** This is Billy's current wife?

[00:59:08] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Billy's current wife.

[00:59:09] **Dana:** Yeah.

[00:59:09] **Evelyn:** They dated.

[00:59:10] **Dana:** Who he married after the death of his mom, but they dated years ago.

[00:59:13] Oh, way long. Rekindled. Rekindled.

[00:59:16] **Billy:** Yeah. We dated 30 years ago and kept in touch, and then we went on different light paths and reconnected 7 / 6 years ago. And then, yeah, so the, I think one of the things is that I enjoy is that I can turn to Steph and be like, you met my mom. You know who I'm talking about when I say I meant this person.

[00:59:39] But again, they're just been things that I've been able to accomplish. Mom loved technology. She was a...

[00:59:48] **Evelyn:** She did.

[00:59:50] **Billy:** She was a camouflaged little geek. You wanted to see joy and this person's face. You bought her a gadget that she didn't need...

[01:00:00] **Evelyn:** but that was new and magical in some way.

[01:00:03] **Billy:** It was new and magical and she didn't care. It was fantastic.

[01:00:07] **Dana:** And she'd play with it and figure it out.

[01:00:08] **Billy:** Oh yeah. Yeah. And I mean, when I built my first website, like I called her, And I had her get online. She was like, this is the neatest thing ever. And she had that wondrous, that child wonder about her with any like gadgets and stuff.

[01:00:22] **Evelyn:** And for me...

[01:00:23] **Dana:** Yeah. And your child like was not born right? When...

[01:00:26] **Evelyn:** yep.

[01:00:27] **Dana:** She was not born yet.

[01:00:28] **Evelyn:** That's my biggest disappointment. So she never met her. Yeah, he's, yeah. So he was born in

[01:00:33] **Dana:** He, he, he.

[01:00:33] **Evelyn:** Yeah, he was born in 2008.

[01:00:36] **Billy:** And this happened in 2004.

[01:00:38] **Evelyn:** This was in 2004 when she...

[01:00:40] **Dana:** so legacy you, Billy is raising three step kids. Four. Four step kids.

[01:00:45] Four. Four.

[01:00:45] **Evelyn:** Three girls and a boy.

[01:00:47] **Dana:** Evelyn has a son.

[01:00:48] **Evelyn:** Mm-hmm.

[01:00:48] **Dana:** And your son never met your mom. Your step kids have never met your mom.

[01:00:52] **Billy:** No.

[01:00:52] **Dana:** So how do you then talk about this horrible, horrific act while that happened, while still honoring and talking? How do you talk about your mom's life and how do you talk about your mom's death and do it in 4 min-?

[01:01:04] I'm kidding, but like, how do you do that? How do you...

[01:01:07] **Evelyn:** I'm, I'm really glad you asked that.

[01:01:09] **Dana:** No, but it's like, it's a big question.

[01:01:11] **Evelyn:** I can go, Billy, I have a meandering answer, if you don't mind. Okay.

[01:01:16] **Billy:** I don't mind.

[01:01:17] **Evelyn:** Okay. I don't know the (laughter) the answer is, I don't know. I actually, yeah, the, so when Isaac was very small, I was still in relationship with our dad and I took Isaac to the prison to meet his grandfather.

[01:01:33] That's right. Yeah. I know. I have so many thoughts and feelings about that.

[01:01:39] **Billy:** Alright

[01:01:41] **Evelyn:** Not regrets exactly, but I just just wish I hadn't tried so hard.

[01:01:45] **Dana:** Yeah.

[01:01:45] **Evelyn:** But it was what I needed to do at the time. It's what I needed to do. And as I continued to try and forge a relationship between my father and my son, and it was clear that I was doing all the work, I was like, why is this happening?

[01:02:02] I just had really wanted my child. To have a grandparent on my side.

[01:02:09] **Dana:** Why was that important to you at the time? Why did you think that was important?

[01:02:12] **Evelyn:** Cause I, I had grandparents and I loved...

[01:02:15] **Billy:** On both sides.

[01:02:16] **Evelyn:** Yeah. On both sides. And I really loved my relationship with my mom's parents, especially I, my dad's parents passed when I was still on the younger side.

[01:02:26] Yeah. I didn't have as much solid memories with them, but I just, at the, at that time in my life, it was too hard to face losing both of my parents. And so I was like, okay, I'm gonna put. The fact that dad killed mom, I'm gonna put that in this little box right here and I'm just gonna put that over here.

[01:02:52] I'm gonna put that away. Yep. We're gonna need to shove that a little further, a little further away, oh, it needs to go in the attic, but that's okay. That's okay. We can do that. That can, it can just be up in the attic and I can have a relationship with dad and I'll still have a parent and my child will have a grandparent.

[01:03:12] And this is, you know what, this is fine. This is fine. And it then It wasn't fine. It wasn't fine. I was experienced massive depression and anxiety and saw. I mean, just expended so much energy towards dad and um, mom got lost in the mix, right? Which is again, why we're trying to focus today on Mom and cause she always gets eclipsed, right?

[01:03:43] **Billy:** Yeah.

[01:03:44] **Evelyn:** Because of what dad did and the fallout afterward. And so anyway, I tried and tried with my child and my father for a while and then that finally became clear that I needed to stop doing that and we needed to break up with dad. So several years ago, finally successfully, fully broke up with dad. And now as Isaac has grown, there have been moments where maybe he's asked

a question or wondered about, why do I have grandparents with my dad, but why don't I have grandparents with you, mom, or whatever.

[01:04:25] And, um, I would just, in the most age, appropriate manner I could, I would say, or why does granddad live in prison? What is that? What is he doing there? And awesome. Yay. Thanks dad. It's the, it's always, we have a hashtag. Thanks, dad. Because yeah, so many things. You have no idea just what comes up, where we're like, oh fuck, thanks dad.

[01:04:51] So I explained that dad, my dad had done something very terrible and that he had gone to prison as a result and that. If Isaac ever asked about mom, my mom, I would say, she died before you were born, and someday I'll tell you more about that. And so he knows now what happened. He's clear on it and he knows and forgets.

[01:05:19] He's a 13 year old boy, after all knows and forgets why his granddad's not in his life. And oh, the fact that, oh, he does have a granddad who is still alive and mom doesn't talk to him. And I just reminded him of that the other day, actually, it came up and he was like, oh, oh yeah, yeah. I kind of forget about that.

[01:05:38] I'm like, I know. But again, all of this is about granddad. This is about dad. And I gotta tell you, Dana, it is the hardest thing, one of the hardest things in my life, to know how to talk about mom to my child because it is so loaded and, you, it is hard to talk about her without entering into what happened to her and always...

[01:06:09] **Billy:** Right.

[01:06:09] **Evelyn:** Always until the end of time. Those things are connected, right? Yes. And I, I have friends who lost a parent or a mom in a, I guess, sort of more normal way, and they have their own grief and their grief is very real, but there's not the extra weight of what happened to her. And so then I'm watching these friends and they're like, we, we looked at pictures of my mom today, of the kids' grandmother, and we talked about her and how amazing she was, and I just get paralyzed and I don't know.

[01:06:49] I don't know how to do that, and I feel like I'm basically doing the worst job ever of introducing my son to his awesome grandmother. Uh, he knows nothing about her, and I'm just being really honest with with you right now. He, I think he knows very little about her, and I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to start.

[01:07:10] I don't know. And I've talked about it in therapy, right? Like...

[01:07:16] **Dana:** have you talked to other people who have...

[01:07:17] **Evelyn:** ...and I just, it's

[01:07:18] **Dana:** Who have gone through this? Anybody else who's lost a mom this way?

[01:07:21] **Evelyn:** No, that's a good question.

[01:07:22] **Billy:** Yeah.

[01:07:23] **Evelyn:** No, I haven't, I don't know anyone.

[01:07:25] **Dana:** Yeah. I wonder if there's a, you know, like a support group or way to maybe, yeah.

[01:07:29] And I wonder if there's things that they're doing, I don't know. And how they move through and talk to their children, I don't know. But what is the fear? What is the fear that he's gonna ask you how she died? No. Cause he knows you can't. Okay, so then just saying how beautiful she was or showing the pictures, or you mean it's too hard for you to see them?

[01:07:50] Because I think outta context, they're not, he's not gonna go, oh, is this right before she was Right, right, right. He's gonna go, oh, what did she, or like, she looks pretty there. You guys look like you're having fun. Yeah.

[01:08:02] **Evelyn:** That's you mom. You're nine years old or whatever.

[01:08:04] Yeah. Yeah.

[01:08:04] **Dana:** That's you as a little baby.

[01:08:06] Or talking about her missionary work or her humor, her joy of love of technology. I just wonder what is the fear? Is it your fear of what's gonna come up for you?

[01:08:15] **Evelyn:** I think for me it might be, I think it still feels really heavy.

[01:08:20] **Billy:** Okay.

[01:08:20] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Yeah. For you, what is it?

[01:08:24] **Billy:** Anger.

[01:08:24] **Evelyn:** Mm-hmm.

[01:08:25] **Billy:** I have more anger now than I did in the past.

[01:08:28] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Actually you do.

[01:08:30] **Billy:** Uh, I didn't get kids on my own until I was 46. I got kids and I got a solid human of a wife who fucking loves and accepts me. Where I'm at, knows where I came from, knows where I am...

[01:08:42] **Dana:** but now the anger comes up.

[01:08:44] **Billy:** It's almost gets harder for me to talk about because it just, I know what it is.

[01:08:50] **Evelyn:** Oh, what is it?

[01:08:50] **Billy:** The fact he's still alive?

[01:08:52] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Yeah. So dad is now 88 and he just keeps going. He's like the Energizer bunny. Right.

[01:09:01] **Billy:** But we know from. The Digby side. The mom could have lived at her eighties.

[01:09:06] **Evelyn:** Oh, we have longevity on both sides. Mom's parents were both 93, 94 when they passed away, and they were very active.

[01:09:13] **Dana:** Yeah. My grandmas 95. Yes. Yes. It's that.

[01:09:17] You're like, yes, genes. Yes.

[01:09:18] **Evelyn:** Right. Yes genes!

[01:09:19] **Dana:** And she could have had a longer, longer life.

[01:09:21] **Evelyn:** She could still be here. Active.

[01:09:23] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[01:09:24] **Evelyn:** and

[01:09:24] **Dana:** mm-hmm.

[01:09:25] **Evelyn:** Traveling to visit, traveling to Nashville to visit me, traveling to California to visit Billy and his new family. So supremely unfair and unjust.

[01:09:33] **Billy:** It would've been so awesome.

[01:09:35] **Evelyn:** Yeah. She would've been a really great grandma.

[01:09:37] **Billy:** Yeah. She would've been the first one I called. Guess who I just met.

[01:09:41] **Dana:** Yeah. Yeah. When that urge comes up, what do you do? Cause a lot of people talk about that urge to call their mom or their, yeah. What do you do when that, and sometimes it comes up for people 20 years later and they're like, that's weird.

[01:09:51] She's been gone a long time.

[01:09:52] **Evelyn:** A long time.

[01:09:53] **Dana:** Why did it come up again right now? So what do you do to when that urge comes?

[01:09:57] **Billy:** And prior to that, I'd love to say to whoever's listening, like, if you go through this and if you experience a death of a parent that you had a good relationship with, it's just gonna hit you random.

[01:10:08] **Evelyn:** Yeah.

[01:10:09] **Billy:** A smell.

[01:10:10] **Evelyn:** Oh my gosh.

[01:10:10] **Dana:** And you have to just go through it, go through

[01:10:12] you have

[01:10:13] **Evelyn:** to just get in there and do it. Yeah.

[01:10:14] **Dana:** Yeah.

[01:10:14] **Billy:** And just, uh, uh, the best thing I can say is just appreciate them for who they were in that moment and recognize that was a, a niceness...

[01:10:25] **Dana:** mm-hmm.

[01:10:26] **Billy:** ...that existed. So that's, that's all that I can do.

[01:10:30] **Evelyn:** I just talk to her. I just tell her stuff sometimes. Yeah.

[01:10:33] **Dana:** Do you? Out loud? Out loud.

[01:10:35] **Evelyn:** Uh, yeah. In the car usually is when I do things like that. Yeah. Yeah. She, I was gonna say Billy, that it just sort of hit me as you were talking, you were talking about you having the life that you do now.

[01:10:50] **Billy:** Yeah.

[01:10:51] **Evelyn:** And knowing yourself at this time and being supported and loved by Steph, a woman who just accepts you for exactly who you are and now getting these kiddos and getting that chance and then I thought about me and that I think her legacy, Billy is us.

[01:11:14] I think it's us and I think it's you finding your way and being loved and known, and it's me leaving a marriage that wasn't good for me at the end of, of the day, after doing my diligence, putting in so much hard work for years and years and, and then reaching a point where I could hear her saying, it's okay.

[01:11:41] I stayed. That didn't work. You should go. You should go. Yeah. Yep. And me knowing that I'm not disappointing her by leaving my marriage and getting a divorce and moving into a new phase of my life, I'm living fully. And that's what I wish that she'd had the chance to do.

[01:12:00] **Billy:** To see.

[01:12:00] **Evelyn:** Yeah. Yeah. I wish that she'd a .) Been able to see us do these things, but b.) I wish that she had the freedom and the permission to get out of the marriage if she'd wanted to.

[01:12:12] Obviously, I wouldn't be here if that had been the case. Yeah. So obviously I'm glad I'm here, but I also, I know that she stuck around in something that ultimately, I think it killed her spirit a long, long time before it killed her body.

[01:12:28] **Dana:** Mm.

[01:12:30] I'm gonna take a deep breath cause you're just both unbelievable. I always end these interviews and I ask the guests to tell me their mom's name and how they're feeling about her in this moment today, like what's coming up for you.

[01:12:42] But I actually think today in talking to you both, I'd like to know your mom's full name, but I'd like to know if you would tell me something about her that you think should be known that we haven't said. Because you said my mom's greatest desire and the thing that I wish she got the most was to be known.

[01:13:02] And so that's what I love. You can both say her name in tandem? No. Um, someone in, in front of the name and you Yeah, I can take the back end or you can both say it, say her name and your voice. I'd love to hear it. And okay. Something that you want us to know about Helen. And maybe what's coming up for you today if you want to throw it in.

[01:13:24] **Evelyn:** Okay. Billy, you wanna go? Are you thinking? What are you thinking? I was waiting on you. Do you need me to go first or are we doing this together? You ready? 1, 2, 3. . (Evelyn and Billy both say) Hellllleeeen... terrible. . Are we even related? Okay. 1, 2, 3. Hellen alice Digby O'Neil was mom's name.

[01:13:51] **Billy:** We'll, okay. O'Neill.

[01:13:52] **Evelyn:** Yes. I mean that was, she changed her name, Billy

[01:13:56] **Billy:** that's true. Helen alice Digby.

[01:13:58] **Evelyn:** Helen Alice Digby. And oh my gosh. Something I want people to know about her is she loved a funny movie, so she had the best laugh,

like a cackle, cackling laugh, that would bust out of nowhere and totally take you by surprise. It was her like letting go. And I remember hearing about her when she went to the movie theater and saw the original Pink Panther movie.

[01:14:34] **Dana:** Mm-hmm.

[01:14:35] **Evelyn:** with Peter Sellers.

[01:14:36] **Dana:** Wow.

[01:14:37] **Evelyn:** And she almost wet her pants laughing. Laughing so hard. So hard. Yes. She was just in a whole dither about how hard she was laughing, and she nearly peed herself. And...

[01:14:51] **Dana:** did your moms laugh, make you laugh sometimes?

[01:14:53] **Evelyn:** Oh yeah.

[01:14:54] **Dana:** My mom did that too. Yeah.

[01:14:55] **Evelyn:** I, it's like, I wish I could do it.

[01:14:57] I can hear it. She had a little delighted laugh if she got tickled by something really briefly, and it was like a "ha ha!" that kinda thing. Actually, that might have been, I did it and it sounded like, oh, that's really weird!

[01:15:10] **Dana:** Chills, chills, chill.

[01:15:13] **Billy:** That's you.

[01:15:15] **Dana:** Told

[01:15:16] **Billy:** ya.

[01:15:16] **Evelyn:** Oh, that's weird. Okay.

[01:15:18] **Billy:** Uhhuh.

[01:15:19] **Evelyn:** That was really fun. Okay. Yeah. Anyway, so she had a, she had a special laugh when she got really tickled. She'd get really tickled by stuff. Okay. Billy your turn.

[01:15:30] **Billy:** Oh boy. (long sigh)

[01:15:38] ev, you, you hit on a thing. What's up? She got eclipsed a lot. Yeah. It's where, how humans work. But when someone doesn't speak up a lot, then we just make a lot of assumptions and I don't think people understood or realized how much mom took to heart about a lot of things and about the people around her.

[01:16:05] And I think that one of the ways that she was able to express that was through teaching. And unfortunately, most of the people that got to see her in her, what I believe her element to be, were her students. And that was most evident to me for the funeral. How many parent, kids, parents, absolutely. Were mournful about her death because she left a mark on her students and fortunately yeah, we were her kids and she left her mark on us.

[01:16:48] Again, Ev and I are different. Could not consider Mom as my confidant for nearly every year because we just were, we weren't built that way. But with Dad, I wanted to stay out of trouble with Mom I wanted to make her proud.

[01:17:08] **Evelyn:** Oh my gosh, that just says a lot to me. That's it. Yeah. And I think she'd be really proud of us making the choices for ourselves that she wasn't free to make.

[01:17:24] **Billy:** Yeah.

[01:17:24] **Evelyn:** We've chosen different paths. I think that any of us would've thought, but I, for me, particularly, it is my decisions that I've made over the last few years and the choices that I've taken have been a direct result of not wanting to repeat the past and not yes, of going, I've seen that and that didn't work.

[01:17:52] Yep. We're gonna try something new. I'm gonna give myself permission to live the life that I need to live and to get mental health support, to give myself new tools with which to approach my relationships and my work and my child to ask for help when I needed it. And no secrets. No secrets. Y'all.

[01:18:29] **Dana:** There is something about the human condition where we are fascinated by the morbid by things or events that seem almost otherworldly. And the truth is that when Billy told me how his mother died on that rooftop in 2007, I asked a lot of questions about his dad. A lot. I asked about how it happened about his dad's life in prison and how Billy's essentially coping with losing two parents.

[01:18:56] I'm sure I asked about his mother at some point, of course, but like, what did I ask? How much did I wanna know about her? Her likes and dislikes, her laugh, her joy, her personality, her favorite music. I'm sure I didn't. I mean, I was in shock as many people are when they hear something so utterly devastating and violent happening to another human being.

[01:19:17] And I could only focus on the act itself, the ending of her life. It's not lost on me that this is also sort of how I viewed my mom's final years and death. And I'm not comparing their deaths. I hope you know that. But I was fixated on my mom's intense physical decline and change in her body for years.

[01:19:38] How her stomach became distended, her throat became thick, her face widening over the years and her body becoming bedridden. How she couldn't dress herself and at times couldn't make it to the bathroom. My mom couldn't even stand on her own. She was dealing with so much pain and her body was shutting down completely.

[01:19:58] And the vodka and wine, even if watered down, did not help. And I knew she was gonna die alone. And every time I came to visit, the sight of her decline was shocking almost to the point of tears. I remember one of my last visits, I walked into her bedroom and I covered my mouth right in front of her. I, I covered my mouth and I gasped when I walked into her room because she was almost unrecognizable.

[01:20:21] It was difficult to see her and gross at times. And uncomfortable and scary. Yeah, I felt really scared looking at my mom. That is the truth. The shock and trauma of watching my mom slowly die was morbid to me. It is hard to erase some of those images in my mind. And there is one photo from the last time she was in the hospital that I can't even erase from my phone, even though I should.

[01:20:49] And sometimes it pops up if I scroll back far enough. But I don't go back and look at it ever. And now because of this show and this podcast and the work I'm doing, I look at beautiful photos of my mother from her teen years. Photos of her looking gorgeous at black tie galas with my dad, photos of her teaching and commanding a room.

[01:21:10] Photos of us in Hawaii, drinking smoothies. Photos of her with my nana on her wedding day. I let her horrific illness and death eclipse all my good memories, all my good mental images in my mind. For so long, I looked up the definition of eclipse when I was reflecting on this episode. An eclipse is an obscuring of the light from one celestial body by the passage of another

between it, it's a loss of significance. I don't want the dark edges of my memory to always flash images of my mother's death to me. Now, more than ever, I wanna talk about what made her so extraordinary. Our mother's celestial bodies deserve to be seen in full, bright light in all their glory. I like to think that Helen and Joe Black are riding in that 1965 Mustang with white leather interior through France with their shiny blonde hair blowing in the breeze, talking about nerdy math and science stuff, and cackling.

[01:22:15] No men, no eclipsing, just pure light.

[01:22:42] The second season of, I swear in my Mother's grave podcast would never be possible without our editor, Amanda Roscoe Mayo, our music composer, Adam Ollendorff, our graphic designer and illustrator Meredith Montgomery, and our copywriter, Rachel Claff. Thanks as well to Tony Howell and Austin Heller for all their work on the website.

[01:23:00] And to Heather Bodie for her emotional, spiritual, social, and physical. Well, for for all the help. Thank you. And to all of you, thank you for listening, subscribing, reaching out, and just being a part of this community. I'm so grateful you're here. And if you haven't signed up for our newsletter, you can do so at our website, which is danablack.org.

[01:23:19] You can hear all about this incredible season and some upcoming live events we're curating just for you. I hope you'll come back. Come back, come back. Don't leave me like my dead mom. You know what I mean? Come back.

[01:23:33] **Evelyn:** Talk to you soon.

[01:25:01] **Dana:** Oh, I was gonna ask, how does it feel real quick, like doing this with your sibling? Does it feel good? Does it feel nerve? Do you feel nervous? Do you feel excited? Do you feel tension? I don't sense any tension, but what...

[01:25:12] **Evelyn:** No nerves.

[01:25:12] ...do

[01:25:12] **Dana:** you feel. Yeah.

[01:25:14] **Evelyn:** How do you feel, Billy?

[01:25:15] **Billy:** Yeah. Feel good.

[01:25:16] **Evelyn:** You feel great, don't you?

[01:25:17] Do you feel great?

[01:25:18] **Billy:** Yeah.

[01:25:18] **Evelyn:** Yeah. That's right. (Laughter) You love me, right? Yeah.