

HearSay with Cathy Lewis

WHRV's lunch hour call-in talk show

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Today's Guest:

Bill Sizemore - co-author of "A Far, Far Better Thing"

The 1985 Haysom slayings were brutal, and the murder case is one of the most famous in Virginia. In the book "A Far, Far Better Thing," co-authors Bill Sizemore and Jens Soering (alleged perpetrator) tell the story of Soering's involvement in the violent crimes. Join us for an interview with Bill Sizemore on 89.5 WHRV-FM!



CATHY LEWIS:

Today, I am so glad to have Bill Sizemore in the studio with us today. Bill is a career journalist and by a career of 43 years I think he's planned on making a living out of it. He has retired from the day-to-day of journalism devoting his life to writing books and his grandchildren and that sounds like a great pursuit.

What a book he has written! It's called "*A Far, Far Better Thing: Did a Fatal Attraction Lead to a Wrongful Conviction?*" and it's about one of the most famous murder cases in Virginia. It happened way back in 1985 out in the Western part of the state, so here we didn't get too much attention to it, but the man arrested in the case maintains his innocence today and Bill Sizemore argues there's a reason to believe that he is not correctly behind bars.

Bill Sizemore, thanks for being back with us today.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Thanks so much for having me.

CATHY LEWIS:

It's always a great hour when you join us, so....

BILL SIZEMORE:

Pleasure to be here.

CATHY LEWIS:

We have - and by we, I mean you - have an amazing story to roll out here. And by the way, the documentary about this case is coming to the Naro cinema on Wednesday, we'll have details about this as well and Bill will be there.

So, let's begin to spin out this story, Bill, because it's 1985, you're a reporter at the Virginian-Pilot and this case happens out in the Western part of the state, outside of the Pilot's coverage area, but you think there's really something to it, so let's lay the beginnings of the case out. When did you first hear about it?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Well, I heard about it at the time, which was 1985. I didn't actually do any writing about the case until 2007.

CATHY LEWIS:

Oh, I didn't realize that. I thought you worked on it then as well. Oh, interesting. 'Cos it was outside the area.

BILL SIZEMORE:

It was way out, near Lynchburg. It was huge out there, absolutely huge. Nobody in that part of the state had seen anything like it. This couple, a retired couple, Derek and Nancy Haysom, they lived in their retirement home in a

neighborhood called Boonsboro, which is outside Lynchburg in Bedford County. They were found in their home slashed and stabbed to death. Gruesome, gruesome crime scene. Derek Haysom was found with some three dozen stab wounds. Both of them were nearly decapitated.

As I say, nobody out there had ever seen anything like it. It was reminiscent of the Charles Manson murders, which had occurred just a few years before and, in fact, one of the theories that was floated at the time was that this was some kind of Satanic cult work.

CATHY LEWIS:

And who were they in that community?

BILL SIZEMORE:

They were a prominent couple. Nancy Haysom came from an old Virginia family. She actually was related to Lady Astor. Her husband Derek was a retired Canadian steel executive. For months, the police were stumped. They had no viable suspects. Finally, they turned their attention to the Haysom's daughter, Elizabeth.

CATHY LEWIS:

Only child?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Well. She was their only child. They had both been married before, so she had some half-siblings. They also, the detectives also took an interest in her boyfriend, Jens Soering. The two of them were honor students, scholarship students, at the University of Virginia.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, what was it that led them to then turn their attention there?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Well, they pretty much...

CATHY LEWIS:

....ruled everything else out?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yeah. They ruled everything else out. They – I guess it was about four months or so after the murders that they called in Elizabeth and Jens for questioning.

CATHY LEWIS:

And Jens is a German national.

BILL SIZEMORE:

He is a German citizen, he was the son of a German diplomat.

Once they had been questioned, very soon after that, they skipped the country. They fled to Europe. They spent six months on the run through Europe and Asia. Finally...

CATHY LEWIS:

Not charged, but they had just been questioned.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Not charged.

CATHY LEWIS:

But that's suspicious.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes. Very suspicious. Finally, they were arrested in London for check fraud. That's how they had been supporting themselves on the run, you know, writing bad checks. The London police then searched their flat, their apartment and found reams and reams of writings, letters, diaries. The two of them were both compulsive writers and, as the police sifted through these writings, they found some suspicious passages and they linked up with the police in Bedford County and ultimately, these two were charged with murder.

CATHY LEWIS:

Did the Bedford County police know that they were in London or was it when Scotland Yard discovered this check writing operation they got in touch with them?

BILL SIZEMORE:

They got in touch with the Bedford Sheriff's detectives. And one of them then came over to London and participated in the interrogations. Elizabeth agreed to waive extradition, come back to Virginia and plead guilty as an accessory before the fact.

CATHY LEWIS:

Hm. Now why would she do that?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Her story was that she had put Jens up to these murders. That is was her idea, but he carried out the deed. And she agreed to testify against him. Jens, on the other hand, fought extradition, because the prosecution was seeking the death penalty. As long as that was the case, Britain refused to extradite him. So finally, the prosecution dropped the death penalty and Britain then agreed to extradite him. So, in 1990 he was put on trial.

CATHY LEWIS:

Can I just ask one question about that? Part of this, you write, is that he – presumably mistakenly – thought he had diplomatic immunity, because his father was a German diplomat.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes, he did. That was one of several tragic errors that he made. The other tragic error that he made was he confessed to the crime. Over four days of interrogation in London without an attorney present he finally confessed. When he went on trial in 1990, he recanted that confession. He said: I was lying, I confessed falsely to save my girlfriend from the electric chair.

You need a little background here. Jens – this was his first serious girlfriend. He had had a very sheltered life. Elizabeth, on the other hand, was two years older, far more experienced in many ways, including sexually, and he was just head over heels for her, just obsessed with her.

The reason the book that we wrote is called *“A Far, Far Better Thing”* is that’s a quote from Charles Dickens. At the end of *“A Tale of Two Cities”*, the hero of the book says, he takes the place of another man on the guillotine, because he’s in love with the man’s wife and he gives up his life for her happiness and he says: It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done before. Jens and Elizabeth had read this book and, you know at the university, and he took that as his inspiration. In any event, at his trial he said: That’s not true, I was lying. As it turned out, that was pretty much the only evidence that the prosecution had. There was no reliable physical evidence linking him to the crime scene. The confession was pretty much all they had. But it turned out that that was enough. He was convicted on two counts of murder and sentenced to two life terms.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, was this a jury trial?

BILL SIZEMORE:

It was a jury trial.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, presumably the jury did not buy the argument that, hey, I was head over heels, not thinking with my brain, and I confessed to this to save my girlfriend. They’re like, I don’t buy that.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Right. Although I should add that it was not an easy decision for that jury. For a while, they were deadlocked and after the verdict was rendered, one of the jurors gave an interview to a local newspaper in which he said they were deadlocked six to six and what broke the tie was what was really the only piece of physical evidence that the prosecution had, a bloody sock print, a foot clad in a sock had left a footprint in the blood at the crime scene and the prosecution called in a witness who was not certified as an expert witness because that was not his area of expertise. He was a retired FBI employee. He was an expert in tyre tracks, not footprints. But he was nevertheless allowed to testify and he created a transparent overlay, he took footprints of Jens and overlaid one of those on this bloody sock print and they appeared to line up and the prosecutor showed it to the jury and said: Hey look! It fits like a glove!

CATHY LEWIS:

Boy, where have we heard that?!

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes! So, this juror said that was what broke the deadlock. That sock print.

CATHY LEWIS:

But otherwise it was deadlocked?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes.

CATHY LEWIS:

Wow!

BILL SIZEMORE:

Years later, when Jens' appeals were working their way through courts, his attorney brought in two actual experts, footprint experts, who completely debunked that evidence. They said it's junk science. In fact, that footprint was really closer to Elizabeth's foot size than to Jens'.

CATHY LEWIS:

Wow!

Bill Sizemore, our guest today. Boy, this is a compelling story. It is told wonderfully well in *"A Far, Far Better Thing: Did a Fatal Attraction Lead to a Wrongful Conviction"*. By the way, you can learn more about Bill and his books at www.billsizemorebooks.com.

Ok, so Jens extradited, the diplomatic immunity thing, how did that work its way in or was that something he was mistaken about?

BILL SIZEMORE:

He was mistaken. If his father had been stationed in the German Embassy in Washington D.C., that might have come into play. But that was not the case. He was a consular official. At the time of the crime, he was stationed at the Consulate in Atlanta, Georgia. He was later transferred to Detroit by the time of the trial, but immunity did not come into play.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, he's convicted by what was originally a hung jury until they get this other evidence on the footprint. Taken directly to prison or?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes. That's where he's been for the past almost 32 years now. He was 18 at the time of the crime, he's now 51. He's spent most of his life in the Virginia prison system.

CATHY LEWIS:

And we should know as well he has spent most of his life vigorously, vigorously pressing for his innocence and proclaiming his innocence.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, he starts this early on. He is not giving up. I mean, we will talk through the process that he's gone through, but he is very insistent that he did not do this. And meanwhile Elizabeth is where? Serving?

BILL SIZEMORE:

She is serving a 90-year term. She is in Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women. She has kept a much lower profile than Jens. I tried to interview her, both for the piece I wrote for the Virginian-Pilot back in 2007 and for this book, but she did not respond. She's given very few media interviews.

CATHY LEWIS:

Very interesting.

So, he's proclaiming his innocence all along, but where does it start to pick up traction? You're working in the Pilot newsroom and what was it that attracted you to this story?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Just the unique nature of this case. And the fact that there were such serious lingering questions about his guilt. At the time I wrote about it for the Pilot, I spent several weeks – I interviewed everybody who would talk to me, Jens and many of the other principals in the case. I looked at all the evidence, I read the trial transcripts and I came away from it with really serious doubts about Jens' guilt.

But then, fast forward to 2016 when I was working on this book, I re-investigated the case, I re-interviewed Jens and the other principals in the case and I came away absolutely convinced that he is innocent. And I say that partly on the basis of evidence that has come to light since his trial. A great deal of this evidence plays a role in the movie, which is – as you mentioned coming up at the Naro on Wednesday night, it's the movie called "*Killing for Love*" – it started out as a German made documentary back in 2016. At the time, it was called "*The Promise*". It's been renamed by the U.S. distributors.

One of the producers is, like me, a print journalist. She's an editor of one of the largest newspapers in Germany. I believe she was the first German journalist to bring this story to a German audience. It's become quite a *cause célèbre* over there. And being the good investigative reporter she is, she turned up all kinds of additional evidence in this case that I didn't even know about.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, before we get to the evidence, by the way we are 28 minutes past the hour, you can join us at 440-2665, 1-800-9402240.

Just before we get to the evidence, what is Jens' story to what happened? I know he says he did it for love, what does he say about the events of that night and Elizabeth and all the rest of it?

BILL SIZEMORE:

His story is basically the mirror-image of Elizabeth's. The two of them went up to Washington D.C. for the weekend. A weekend getaway. And about midway through the weekend, according to Jens, Elizabeth says to him, and incidentally I should point out that she had already confessed to him that she was a heavy drug user, heroin, cocaine etc., she says to Jens, I have arranged with my drug dealer to pick up a shipment of drugs in D.C. and take it to him. And I need to do that now.

CATHY LEWIS:

Because she's settling some sort of debt with the drug dealer.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Exactly. She says: But I want you to stay here and be my alibi in case, 'cos I don't want my parents to know about this, that I'm involved in drugs etc. So you stay here, go to a couple of movies, buy tickets and you'll be my alibi.

So, that's what he did. Hours later she comes back to the hotel room and says: I have killed my parents. They're gonna put me in the electric chair. You've got to help me, you've got to save me.

And it was at that point, that he said: I'll do it. I'll do it for you. You're the woman I love, I will take the blame.

Her story is exactly the opposite. She says she stayed in Washington while Jens drove to Bedford and killed her parents.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, what would have been, I'm just thinking what if you're the attorneys in this case, what would have been Jens' motivation to kill her parents?

BILL SIZEMORE:

That's a very good question. The motive was always murky.

The prosecution's storyline was that Elizabeth's parents disapproved of the relationship and wanted her to break it off. But the problem with that is, there was no evidence of that presented at the trial. No witness took the stand and testified to that.

Jens, as far as I can tell, had absolutely no reason to kill these people. He had met them only once for he and Elizabeth had gone to lunch with them once.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, did have a pretty strong potential motive for murder. She told a number of people at the time, including Jens and the detectives who interviewed her and a couple of psychiatrists who examined her, that her mother had sexually abused her as an adolescent. Much more recently, in one of her rare media interviews in 2016 with the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Elizabeth revisited that and said: I was sexually abused by my mother for eight years and that was the motive.

But the jury never heard this back at Jens' trial. In fact, the prosecution went to great pains to debunk that motive. The prosecutor grilled Elizabeth on the stand about this allegation and, ultimately, under persistent questioning, she ended up denying it and saying: No, I didn't really mean that. I wasn't abused.

But clearly, sexual abuse, potentially, can be a very powerful motive for murder.

CATHY LEWIS:

Wow!

Bill Sizemore joining us. We are 27 minutes before the hour. It's an amazing story we're rolling out today and Bill rolls out wonderfully in the book, *"A Far, Far Better Thing: Did a Fatal Attraction Lead to a Wrongful Conviction?"* The screening of the aforementioned documentary is coming up Wednesday night at the Naro and Bill will be introducing the film and moderating a Q&A which he is enormously qualified to do given the degree of time of energy he spent on this project.

We're at 440-2665, 1-800-9402240.

So, after the conviction we really have nothing but the stories of the two of them, very little evidence, the stories of the two of them as to what happened, they're both incarcerated. Where does the evidence come in? This post-trial evidence?

BILL SIZEMORE:

The most compelling post-trial evidence, I believe, is the DNA.

Now in 1990, at the time of Jens' trial, DNA science was still in its infancy, it wasn't used in criminal trials. But several dozen blood samples from the crime scene were preserved by the state bureau of forensic science. And years later in the 2000s, those blood samples were DNA tested. And the results are crucial to this case.

I'll backup for a moment: At the time of the trial, all they were able to do was designate these blood samples by blood type. A few of them were type O, which was Jens' blood type. Neither of the victims had that blood type. So the prosecutor in his closing argument to the jury made a great deal of this. He said: You've got type O blood at the scene. Jens Soring has type O blood. Therefore, he must have been there.

The problem with that is the DNA analysis that was done subsequently definitively excluded Jens as the source of that blood. And furthermore it indicates that there were not one, but two unidentified male sources of that blood, which buttresses the defense theory of the case, which is that Elizabeth committed the murders with one or more male accomplices. Now, who might those accomplices have been, we don't know.

CATHY LEWIS:

But we do know definitively this DNA says it wasn't that guy!

BILL SIZEMORE:

Exactly. We know it was not Jens.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, again I'm not an attorney as all my attorney friends are quick to remind me, but it seems like if you've got the DNA evidence that it's not him, wouldn't that be enough to say: Whoa, we need to back this up and take another look at this case?

BILL SIZEMORE:

I believe so and so do many other people. I should point out that I'm only one of many people who have come to this conclusion. Among the others are a fella named Chuck Reid who was the initial lead investigator in this case. He was a deputy with the Bedford County Sheriff's Department. He, over the years, has become as convinced as I am that Jens is innocent. Another person who has come to the same conclusion is a woman named Gail Marshall, who for years was Jens' appeals attorney. She is a former Deputy State Attorney General. More recently, the current Sheriff of Albemarle County, Sheriff Chip Harding, has conducted an exhaustive investigation of this case and now is firmly convinced that Jens is innocent. He has joined me for a couple of film showings of "*Killing for Love*" and he has ...

CATHY LEWIS:

So, these are current law enforcement people and legal attorneys who believe that he innocent. He got two consecutive life terms.

He did ask the Supreme Court for a new trial in '92. Was this before or after the DNA stuff?

BILL SIZEMORE:

That was before.

CATHY LEWIS:

Before? OK. And so the Supreme Court says: I don't think so.

And then he publishes this autobiography as part of this continuing effort to demonstrate his innocence. What year was the DNA introduced or the DNA connection made?

BILL SIZEMORE:

The DNA analysis was done in 2009.

CATHY LEWIS:

Wow! So he has already appealed for parole by that point four times and denied every time.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes. And most recently, just last week, he was turned down yet again for parole for the thirteenth time.

There are only two ways he is ever going to get out of prison: Parole or a pardon from the governor.

He has petitioned the governor for a pardon. His petition was submitted during the McAuliffe administration, Governor McAuliffe elected not to act on it. So, he has left it to his successor, Governor Northam. I should also mention, going back a few years, the closest Jens has ever come to freedom – and he came pretty darn close – was during the administration of now Senator Tim Kaine. In his closing weeks as governor, Tim Kaine agreed to repatriate Jens to Germany under an international treaty that allows incarcerated foreign nationals to be transferred to their home country. The practical effect of this would have been, Jens would have gotten out in a couple of years, because criminal sentences in Germany are much, much lighter than those in the United States.

CATHY LEWIS:

And one presumes they could have also said: Hey, the DNA looks like you didn't do this anyway. So they could have done a different thing anyway, right?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Right. And so it looked as if Jens was going to get out. But when Bob McDonnell, Tim Kaine's successor, took office, his very first act as governor was to reverse Tim Kaine's decision.

CATHY LEWIS:

What was the reason for that, do you know?

BILL SIZEMORE:

I don't think he gave a specific reason. I think he just said he was not convinced of Jens' innocence and believed that he should serve his sentence in Virginia.

CATHY LEWIS:

And the Department of Justice declined to support the repatriation after that?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Right. Because they didn't want to do it without the governor's approval.

CATHY LEWIS:

Got it. So, he's denied a sixth, a seventh and an eighth time and then this issue actually becomes kind of an international deal, because the Germans raise this case during President Obama's visit to Berlin. So, there's a whole lot international business around this as well.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Actually, Chancellor Angela Merkel brought this up on three separate occasions with President Obama during his administration.

CATHY LEWIS:

What would have been his options, do you know?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Whose options?

CATHY LEWIS:

I'm sorry. The President's options. Because, you know, it looks like he and Angela Merkel got along very well, so what would have been his options at that level?

BILL SIZEMORE:

I'm not sure. I suppose it might have been theoretically possible for him to overrule his Attorney General Eric Holder on this, although I'm not certain. But, in any event, he left the matter to Mr Holder and he, Holder, declined to act on it, because of Governor McDonnell's opposition.

CATHY LEWIS:

Wow! So, he's denied parole a tenth and eleventh time and Governor McAuliffe also declines his repatriation.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes, he did. Yes, he did.

CATHY LEWIS:

Did he give a reason for that?

BILL SIZEMORE:

I don't know that he did. I don't recall. You know, once a case like this gets to the level of a governor, it invariably takes on political overtones. You know, any governor is a politician, first and foremost. And Terry McAuliffe has made no secret of his desire to be President. He's all but declared for President in 2020. And it may well be that he made the calculation that he didn't want the political baggage of having ...

CATHY LEWIS:

... he didn't want an ad campaign that says: You freed this German murderer.

BILL SIZEMORE:

You're soft on crime.

And there's evidence that that could have easily happened, because Tim Kaine, after he left the governorship, ran for Senate. And his opposition, sure enough, brought this up and said he's soft on crime. He tried to let this murderer out of prison. It came up again in 2016 when Tim Kaine was running as Hillary Clinton's running mate. The Republicans brought it up once again and said: You're soft on crime.

So, as I say, it becomes a political decision at that point.

CATHY LEWIS:

What is he like? I mean, he has – how old was he when he went into prison?

BILL SIZEMORE:

When he went into prison, I guess he was in his early 20s. The crime occurred when he was 18.

CATHY LEWIS:

He went in his in early 20s. Now he is 51. What is he like? Obviously, he has a great commitment to securing his release and writing books that have been published. He did his first autobiography online and subsequent ones have been published.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Including translations he's written 10 books in prison, which is incredible!

CATHY LEWIS:

Wow!

BILL SIZEMORE:

He doesn't even have access to the internet as a prisoner. He is a brilliant guy! I have spent hours with him and – as I was writing the book – I just couldn't wrap my brain around the idea that this guy could have been a killer. Especially someone who could have committed this kind of crime, which was so clearly a crime of passion. He is this bookish nerd. He just comes across as someone who couldn't hurt a fly. At one point, one of his appeals attorneys engaged a private investigator to look into the case and he concluded the same thing. Jens Soering does not have the personality of someone who could commit a crime like this. If he had wanted to kill these people, the detective concluded, he would have used a gun. He wouldn't have done it this way. He wouldn't have slashed and stabbed them to death.

CATHY LEWIS:

You've got to be pretty committed to - I mean, not that you wouldn't be committed with a gun - I'm just saying I've talked with surgeons who are saying to use a knife on someone, that's a commitment.

BILL SIZEMORE:

And you've got to be filled with rage.

CATHY LEWIS:

Yes.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Absolutely filled with rage. I don't think that Jens Soering was capable of that.

CATHY LEWIS:

What is he like as a – you said he's bookish. Is there anything else in his life in prison other than – is there anything else he is interested in? I wonder how that many years in prison, especially before really the "best years of his life" have been spent behind bars. It would be easy, I think, if you thought you were falsely accused and the evidence seemed to perpetually suggest this, it would be easy to be very bitter about that.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes. And he is bitter. I mean, I think that's a reasonable characterization.

CATHY LEWIS:

Absolutely, yeah.

BILL SIZEMORE:

However, he has also been a model prisoner. He has not had a single institutional infraction in 32 years of incarceration. He has held several prison jobs, he has been a volunteer, mentor to fellow inmates...

CATHY LEWIS:

Is his family able to visit him at all? Do people come and see him?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Well. Once upon a time yes. His mother ultimately died of alcoholism, for which Jens blames himself. His father, for many years, was a stalwart supporter. He helped pay his defense bills, he came to visit him on a regular basis, but ultimately a few years ago, the two of them had a falling out and his father has basically cut off all contact with him, as has his brother. So, in essence, he has no family left that he is in touch with.

CATHY LEWIS:

So, if Governor Northam were to pardon him, presumably he would go back to Germany. Is that what he wants to do?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yes, that's what he wants to do and that could very well be a condition of the pardon, that he would have to return to Germany. Germany, the government of Germany, has made it clear that they would welcome him back. As I mentioned, the Chancellor Angela Merkel has weighed in on his behalf as have many other German officials. More than 100 members of the Bundestag, the German parliament, signed a letter supporting Jens' release.

CATHY LEWIS:

You know, I presume there are many, many prisoners who are in prison who claim that they are there falsely. Now, I'm guessing prisons are filled with people like that. What do you think makes this case so different? It seems to me there are a number of elements, but what do you think it is that's really captured your interest and the interest of filmmakers and the interest of the Bundestag and the Chancellor?

BILL SIZEMORE:

Well. First off I would take issue with the idea that there are a whole lot of people in prison who claim that they are innocent. I think that's a myth. Over my career as a journalist, I've come into contact with plenty of criminals and many of them, if you really put the question to them straight up, they'll say: Yeah, I did it.

CATHY LEWIS:

Really? That's fascinating.

BILL SIZEMORE:

But clearly there are some that are innocent. There have been various attempts to quantify that. But it basically comes down to guesswork. But certainly, I mean I've read estimates that there are in the thousands of people nationwide, who are sitting in prison, who are innocent.

CATHY LEWIS:

And, of course, DNA is the thing that brings so many people back to ask for these cases to be reconsidered.

Buster is on the line from Norfolk. Hi Buster, you're on the air.

BUSTER:

Hey, how you're doing? I never have heard of this story and I really appreciate what your guest is doing for this guy, to help out getting somebody off who seems like that would be very beneficial - with being a model prisoner. I actually plead guilty to a charge in 1998. My wife at the time had sold drugs to somebody and because we had a very young child and I did not want to see her go to prison, I plead guilty to a charge and, luckily, I was able to not have to do any serious jail time. There was evidence that was misplaced or lost, but I was looking at about 80 years and was able to get out of that with a 10-year suspended sentence and, you know, I'm now a felon, I can't vote, she ended up leaving me shortly after all this happened, it's affected my life in such a horrible way. And I was just trying to do something for somebody that you had love for.

CATHY LEWIS:

Buster, I can really hear that. I wonder, I know you said you're a felon, you don't have the right to vote and I don't know - I believe that you can apply now for a restoration of your voting rights. I don't know if you've thought about that. And that's a small thing, but a large thing in the scheme of things. I wonder, you know, I'm always interested in this issue because well, for a variety of reasons. I mean, I think Bill, you know, when children are involved, as Buster suggests, you know you sort of think about what that moment is like. It's...

BILL SIZEMORE:

Yeah.

CATHY LEWIS:

Buster, as well, I wonder - we are told that life for people who have a felony on their records is very hard in terms of getting a job, so I wonder - would you mind sharing some of the ways that that has affected you over the years?

BUSTER:

It's actually been ok. I was able to get a contractor's license but it required a letter from my lawyer, it required probably about a four-page explanation of what the truth was of the matter and I was able to get that. But there's things I can't do. I would love to be able to be a (inaudible) and that's not a possibility for me. There's a lot of things that, you know, it's taken away. And it was my stupidity being very young...

CATHY LEWIS:

I hear you. How old were you when this happened, may I ask?

BUSTER:

21.

CATHY LEWIS:

Buster, thank you for the call today. I really appreciate it. I think you may be interested in seeing this movie, the documentary which will be at the Naro 7.15 to meet Bill Sizemore and he'll be signing copies of his book. Buster, thank you.

You know, I don't know Bill, I hear Buster's story, I think about this young man's story, 18 years old when the crime happens, Buster was 21, we know all this brain research about the fact that, as I understand it particularly young mens' brains take longer to develop, they do not have, not all of them have the kind of impulse control that would keep you from doing something like this and yet other say: There's a lot of young men out there that aren't making this decision. But then you hear stories like that about somebody who was just in the grip of passion and youth and makes a decision...

BILL SIZEMORE:

He did it for love. He did it for love.

CATHY LEWIS:

Yeah.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Just like Jens. He did it for love.

CATHY LEWIS:

Buster, thank you for the call. Boy, you can hear how painful that still is for him. Wow! And you know, I think we have to ask ourselves, if we were in a situation like that and particularly Buster's situation where there's a child involved and you kind of want to - the older I get the more I realize that life is complex and there's a lot that goes into decisions and sometimes you look back with regrets and sometimes decisions have significant consequences, like the ones we have been discussing today.

Are we, do you think, at a point - is this a turning point in this case today? The documentary, your book?

BILL SIZEMORE:

I don't know. I don't know. Jens is hopeful. One of the last things he said to me, when we talked on the phone last week, was, you know, Governor Northam is a physician, he is a man of science, he understands DNA, he will look at the evidence and I believe he will act based on the merits of the case. I don't know. I don't know. I wouldn't want to make a prediction.

CATHY LEWIS:

I hear you. I hope you'll let us know.

BILL SIZEMORE:

I will.

CATHY LEWIS:

If that day comes, it is a fascinating story told wonderfully well and Bill Sizemore's new book called "*A Far, Far Better Thing: Did a Fatal Attraction Lead to a Wrongful Conviction*". And again you'll get to see the documentary at the Naro Wednesday night 7.15 is the time. Bill will be introducing the film called "*Killing for Love*" and it's a documentary about this conviction of Jens Soering for the murders of Nancy and Derek Haysom and Bill will be facilitating a Q&A session afterwards, so that'll be something to look forward to Wednesday night at the Naro, tickets \$10, www.narocinema.com is the website where you can learn more about that.

Bill Sizemore, thanks enormously for being with us today.

BILL SIZEMORE:

Thank you for having me, Cathy.

CATHY LEWIS:

Thanks for the commitment that you've made to tell this story. Wow!