

**SERIES:** Caucus: New Jersey with Steve Adubato  
**TITLE:** Up-Close with Bill Berlin and Sean Murphy  
**SHOW #:** 1802  
**TIME:** 26:00

STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Recently on our sister series "One-on-One," I had the opportunity to talk with two people who had to deal with MS face to face. The interviews were so compelling that we felt that it was important to share them with our CAUCUS audience. Now on the second half of the program you'll meet Sean Murphy, who has been living with MS for 20 years but was only diagnosed in 1997. But, first, you're going to meet Dr. Bill Berlin, our senior producer here at CAUCUS, whose daughter Jane has MS. Bill will talk about this mysterious disease from a parent's perspective. This is one of those CAUCUS programs that you just can't afford to miss.

(Sponsorship of program)

ADUBATO: Bill, we should let folks know that we've known each other for 25 years. We've worked together for 20.

BILL BERLIN (Daughter Has MS): Twenty maybe. Twenty, yeah.

ADUBATO: Way back. And you're a senior person on our television production team. But we're not here to talk about television. I've known your daughter Jane since she was--I don't know--three or four. Jane was diagnosed with MS when?

BERLIN: Well, she was actually diagnosed, I'd say, about 10 years ago, but she actually has had MS probably for 12 years because the symptoms began 12 years ago, and we took her to physicians and so forth. And they'd had--it wasn't a conclusive diagnosis at that point. We waited two years for that, but it--in terms of symptoms o--of the illness, she's had it for 12 years.

ADUBATO: When she was diagnosed and it was clear, what was your first reaction?

BERLIN: I was devastated. I was terror--terrified. I found it very, very difficult to deal with. I--maybe I tend to c--catastrophize things, but MS is a serious problem. I thought, you know--I--I--I thought she wouldn't have any kind of good future. I saw her in a wheelchair. I remember I used to go to the mall and walk around, and there were people in wheelchairs and I would say, 'Oh, God, is she going to be like that?' I was very, very scared. I just was scared that she wouldn't be able to have a normal life.

ADUBATO: What's actually happened, though? It's been very good.

BERLIN: She's had a--she's had a normal life, which is, you know, a

blessing--a blessing.

ADUBATO: Describe Jane's life.

BERLIN: Jane is married. She's a mother of two children, which is also something I'd worried about. I didn't think--I--like I said, I didn't think she'd have children. She's trained as an opera singer. Currently she teaches voice in Concord, New Hampshire. And I'd say she has a pretty good life.

ADUBATO: When--when Jane was diagnosed, obviously you talked about how devastated you were, but the family--talk about the family dynamics.

BERLIN: Well, it's really hard to say. It--it's really hard to say. I think for some folks in the family there was a good deal of denial. For others there was fear. I don't think, in terms of family dynamics, it affected it that much because the illness didn't seem to affect her that much. But I think in terms of my wife and I, it--you know, it's always been planted in the back of our minds.

ADUBATO: How much do you talk about it?

BERLIN: We talk about it w--I guess when there's a need to talk about it. I mean, we don't go around talking about it. But if something comes up, if I read something, if I find out about a new test for MS, my wife and I talk about it, certainly. And I often talk with Jane about it.

ADUBATO: Jane's two brothers...

BERLIN: Yes.

ADUBATO: ...what about them? Michael and Stephen.

BERLIN: Well, they--they've been--they've been helpful because they're both physicians.

ADUBATO: Yeah, that helps.

BERLIN: And they're a good source of information. And in some ways it's been good because they've sort of clued us into studies and clinical trials and things like that. At--but I--you know, also as physicians, they--I--I think they have a very, you know, practical attitude toward these things, you know. You know, I don't think they overreact to it at all, you know.

ADUBATO: The myths about MS that--I mean, not just as a friend but as a colleague-producer, I know that that's been important to you to try to help folks better understand what MS is and what it isn't. Some of the myths.

BERLIN: Well, I think, as I've said before, when I r--reacted and I was devastated and terror--terrified, it was because I had certain myths about MS. Again, you know, I saw her in a wheelchair. The reality is that 75 percent of people who have MS never are in a wheelchair. I saw it--that it would curtail her life. Most people with MS, you know, live to a--live--live to their 70s. Unfortunately, there is--there is a minority of people who it affects very severely, and, you know, they could die from it. I--I thought it was a disease like mul--I didn't know the difference between MS and muscular dystrophy...

ADUBATO: Right.

BERLIN: ...and other nerve diseases. I--I--I thought, you know, it--it inevitably led to paralysis. It doesn't. I mean, when a person has a flare-up or an episode, parts of their body can feel paralyzed or numb. But once the flare-up is--is over, it might go away. So it--and MS is a very devious disease.

ADUBATO: Devious?

BERLIN: Yeah, because it--it's kind of wayward. You don't know what the course of it's going to be. You don't know when a flare-up is going to occur. I think in Jane's case, y--you know, when she's feeling good, she's feeling good, and it's easy to forget that you have the illness. It's easy to be in denial about it because, you know, you're not particularly feeling any symptoms. I think that she has a positive attitude. You know, she--she does everything a--a regular person would do. I mean, she works hard. She had two children, which is...

ADUBATO: How old are the kids now?

BERLIN: They're three and a half and about six months. And, you know, at those ages, you're doing--you're doing--doing a lot of work. It's--it's very demanding physically. I--I think her attitude is very positive. She doesn't let it hamper her activities. I think her--her ma--her major symptom has been fatigue. But she's not really feeling that now. Since the birth of her second child, she's been feeling very, very good.

ADUBATO: You talked about Jane's attitude. What about your attitude?

BERLIN: I still have my fears. The--I guess the way I dealt with it initially was I went through my, you know, terrified period, and then I began to learn about MS. I g...

ADUBATO: You did a lot of research.

BERLIN: I did a lot of research.

ADUBATO: You do a lot of research.

BERLIN: I did a lot of research. And I guess, you know, for me, the way to control my anxiety was to learn things about it. And I, you know, try to keep up on all the research and so forth and so on. And I have a positive attitude. I mean, there's a tremendous amount of research going on now, and in the last 10 years there's probably been more progress with MS than 200 years before that. So I'm pretty--pretty optimistic that in the next 10 years the therapies are going to get better; there might be a cure; that, you know, there--life will be better for people who have MS and--and--and hopefully fewer people will ha--will have MS.

ADUBATO: Do you have any advice for any parents?

BERLIN: Yeah, my advice would be try not to overreact. It's not the end of the world. Many people lead very normal lives, as we know from Lee and from Jane. It's a serious illness. It can be a serious illness. But it's an illness that people can, not so much overcome, but can meet the challenges of the illness. Learn about MS. Talk to other parents who have children with MS. I get a lot of calls. I've become sort of like a source for this stuff.

ADUBATO: Right.

BERLIN: And I--that's what I tell other parents. I reassure them because there's a good deal to be reassured about.

ADUBATO: Yeah. Corny question but I'll ask it anyway. Can you ever love your kids enough?

BERLIN: I don't think so. I mean, I--I--I think love is something that doesn't have limits to it, you know? You can't measure it. And it shows itself in a lot of different ways. Yeah.

ADUBATO: Thanks, Bill.

BERLIN: Thank you, Steve. Thanks for the work you're doing.

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ADUBATO: Sean Murphy has been living with multiple sclerosis since 1997. That's when it was diagnosed.

In fact, you've been living it--living with it for a lot longer than that, right, Sean?

Mr. SEAN MURPHY (Living With Multiple Sclerosis): Much longer, around 25 years probably. I was misdiagnosed as having inner ear infection, have a stability disorder. So I've only been diagnosed around seven years.

ADUBATO: How exactly has it affected you?

Mr. MURPHY: It's devastating. I mean, it affects every aspect of my life. From day--the time I wake up, the time I go to sleep, it affects every part. It's a struggle. It's been a huge struggle.

ADUBATO: Your professional life--you're a very successful professional person. But I happen to know that the MS has changed the way you work.

Mr. MURPHY: The MS has changed. I generally don't travel like I used to. I don't function five days at a game level as I used to. I have some difficulties doing some things. So I'm in New Jersey now. My employer has to accompany me to New Jersey three days a week.

ADUBATO: Let's do this. One of the last times we saw each other was out on the stage at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, "Musical Moments for MS," and it's put together by our good friends Lee and Murry Kushner. And you were there speaking very courageously on stage about MS and how it's impacted your life. But there's a message that you want to get across to people, and that message is?

Mr. MURPHY: I would say the message is you must have faith: I mean, faith in God, faith in--in--in a higher source, something, you have to have. And I believe, for me at least, it's made things much easier. You can thrive with this disease. It's hard--it's hard, and most people don't. But some people can actually thrive on it the way I have.

ADUBATO: But, Sean, it does take more than faith, though. I'll tell you what I mean by that because, as--as I looked at your daily regimen, you work out.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Describe your--your workout routine.

Mr. MURPHY: Three days a week I work out on the Total Gym, which is a pretty vigorous workout. And I also have an in-ground pool, and I work out there. That's where--it's much easier in the water.

ADUBATO: What does that do for your body?

Mr. MURPHY: General conditioning. Certainly inactivity from MS, I would balloon up and be 300 pounds most likely if I didn't do that.

ADUBATO: The a--activity is necessary. And--and we also have some footage of your kids and your wife playing basketball. And--and you're playing with them as well. But obviously you're limited in terms of the way you play with them. You have said that this is a humbling disease.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah, certainly it is. And when you're in New York commuting and falling down in front of hundreds of people, I mean, it's very humbling to have people come over and help you up. And--and a small percentage of the MS people have what I have, which is a pseu--they call it pseudobolbar. It's laughing inappropriately at times, and I'd laugh. And that makes me weaker, and I fall. Speech has also been greatly affected. My speech, you can tell, it's much slower, much less--I'm worse on my feet than I used to be. Everything--everything is affected by this.

ADUBATO: Do you at times ask yourself, 'Why me?'

Mr. MURPHY: I certainly started out saying, 'Why me?' It's gotten beyond that now. I've--I've learned that you can thrive and not--not be depressed all the time. There certainly is a period after being first diagnosed when I was depressed and I was saying, 'Why me? Why me?' It--certainly you struggle with the disease, but you can live a normal life. And I've been more than lucky and blessed with my life so far.

ADUBATO: Well, you're also lucky--lucky and blessed. Do you have any kids?

Mr. MURPHY: Two boys.

ADUBATO: What are their names and ages?

Mr. MURPHY: Joey is t--f--13, and Michael is eight.

ADUBATO: How has this affected their lives? Because we're going to ask your wife, Diane, to come out in just a moment. How has it affected your boys' lives?

Mr. MURPHY: It's affected their lives a lot, more so with the younger guy, the eight-year-old. He sees me falling down, and it certainly--they know something is wrong with their dad. I mean, I can't play with them. I can't throw a baseball with them like a normal father does. But I try to compensate doing other things.

ADUBATO: Let's talk a little bit about Diane as she comes into the studio. You know, you talk about support, you know, and Joseph and Michael have been very supportive of you, your 13- and your eight-year-old. But your wife has been tremendously helpful. And, you know, let's talk about her a little bit.

Mr. MURPHY: Boy, she's been tremendously helpful, and I'm more than lucky to have her. She is everything to me. She supported me with the MS. And certainly when you say 'for better or worse,' you don't expect to have a disease like this. So she stands by me all the way, and I certainly am thankful for having her.

ADUBATO: And as we talk about her, here she is. Diane, come on in.

Mr. MURPHY: I'd be lost without her.

ADUBATO: Yeah. Diane, do me a favor. Sit right here.

Mrs. DIANE MURPHY (Sean's Wife): Sure, OK.

ADUBATO: How are you doing?

Mrs. MURPHY: Doing well. Pretty courageous guy, huh?

ADUBATO: He's the best guy. Good to see you.

Mrs. MURPHY: Good to see you.

ADUBATO: Have a seat.

Mrs. MURPHY: Thank you.

ADUBATO: Sorry we don't have a real chair for you.

Mrs. MURPHY: That's OK. This is totally unexpected.

ADUBATO: Talk about him.

Mrs. MURPHY: Just amazing, really. He has so much courage, so much strength, and I admire him every single day. He gets up and does everything he needs to do. You know, most people at this point would not work, and they would pretty much give up. And he gets up every day, he makes it to work. He does pretty much everything he needs to do. It's a difficult thing f--but he does it. It's amazing.

ADUBATO: But the other side of it, because that expression when we get married 'for better or worse,' there are physical issues and then there--you know, obviously we're talking you're a terrific guy.

Mr. MURPHY: Well, thanks.

ADUBATO: And hopefully you were just as terrific before. But you seem like a very spiritual and down-to-earth person. For you, what has it meant to you? Because there's no way you could have predicted or expected or thought this was going to happen.

Mrs. MURPHY: It's--it's meant a total change in my life. You know, I've had to pretty much pick up everything that he is unable to do, you know, everything around the house that, you know, you'd hope for a man to do: and, you know, the heavy stuff, the heavy work, the outdoor work. And, you know, having to--to do all that in addition to, you know, think about my career as well because, you know, unfortunately I'm not sure how much longer he can continue to work and to have to try to focus on a career as well as everything I need to do

at--at home...

ADUBATO: And be there for the boys.

Mrs. MURPHY: And be there for the boys, right. And that--and that's the most important thing, be there for them. You know, it's difficult for them to watch him every day struggle and him falling and him, you know, having a difficult time. It--it's been devastating for them. It really has.

ADUBATO: But--but, Sean, the--the other part of this--as I said, you're working hard. You do it every day, and you're an inspiration to all of us, not just those who are--are challenged by MS. But--but as I'm listening to Diane talk, she's saying she's not sure how much longer you're going to work. I mean, a part of me wanted to believe and I--I don't know if I'm wrong about this, that if you keep working, you can put it off. Am I wrong?

Mr. MURPHY: No, you're right. You're right. I mean, I--part of it in that as long as I keep active, I feel like I can go. If I stop, I'll sit down and watch TV every day for the rest of my life. I mean, it's just the difference between what's in me and what's in other people that have the disease.

ADUBATO: So wait a minute. Doctors say what to you about the role that your attitude and your physical fitness and your commitment to it--wWhat do they say about the impact that has had on the MS?

Mr. MURPHY: I mean, it's everything. General conditioning is so important. Certainly the working out is part of it, and it keeps me active, keeps me going and keeps me with a good outlook of how--how you should live regardless of whether you have MS or not.

ADUBATO: Do you know how it's changed--do you have any sense as to how it's changed you in the past six years?

Mrs. MURPHY: Actually in some strange way, it's made me stronger in so many different ways. It's made our relationship stronger...

ADUBATO: Really?

Mrs. MURPHY: ...which is unusual because MS patients--I think it's something like 90 percent or 95 percent of MS patients, their marriages fail within the first two years.

ADUBATO: Ninety to 95 percent fail?

Mr. MURPHY: It's a large percentage. I don't know if it's that high, but...

Mrs. MURPHY: I think--I think with your type--I think the type he has, chronic progressive, it's--it's--it's very high. Relapse-remit

is a different type.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mrs. MURPHY: It's a little bit lower. But his is a constant progression, and it's very high.

ADUBATO: What do you--you think it's made you stronger?

Mrs. MURPHY: It has. Yeah, it has. I've--I've gotten a compassion for illness and diseases that I've never had before. You know, it--I almost feel this came into our life for a reason, you know, whether it's to help other people or--you know, I don't really know what the reason is. But I feel like it's--it's happened to this family for something, and we need to turn this around and make something good out of it.

ADUBATO: The reason--you know, it's interesting, as I listen to Diane saying there must be a reason, do you believe, Sean, that there's some reason? And if so, what could it be?

Mr. MURPHY: I believe with all my heart that there is a reason and--and...

ADUBATO: That it's you?

Mr. MURPHY: That it's me put here for a--for some greater purpose, to be an example to others on how people with MS can function and thrive, like I've functioned and thrived my whole--you know, since being diagnosed.

ADUBATO: Let me do this because I'm--I'm so fascinated by you as a person and your relationship, which really speaks volumes, especially for--for those of us who--you know, you know who you are out there, and I'll include myself, who wind up complaining about an awful lot of things in--in our, you know, relationships, the--the small things, if you will. Those small things don't get in the way, do they? Or do they?

Mr. MURPHY: They do. They do. They do.

ADUBATO: See, I went into this whole big, you know, philosophical, spiritual thing, and you're like, 'Yeah, those small things still bother us.'

Mr. MURPHY: Small--small things...

ADUBATO: Well, share just a few small things with us, and then I'll move on to another topic. What--what--what do you want to share?

Mrs. MURPHY: Oh, small things. I don't know. Him not picking up after himself.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

Mrs. MURPHY: Not that he can do that that much, but...

Mr. MURPHY: Not cleaning up after myself.

ADUBATO: When you actually could.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah, when I could.

ADUBATO: OK.

Mr. MURPHY: Right.

ADUBATO: And you want to share anything?

Mr. MURPHY: I have enough strength to do things, but I don't have enough strength to clean up after myself.

ADUBATO: I hear you. You're working out like...

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...you know, a muscle man, but you can't clean up.

Mr. MURPHY: That's right. That's right.

ADUBATO: And you have no complaints here, do you?

Mr. MURPHY: None at all.

ADUBATO: Good. I just want to make sure.

Mrs. MURPHY: Yeah.

Mr. MURPHY: She's perfect.

ADUBATO: Let's talk a little bit--she's perfect. I like that.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: That's the message of this show--is that your wife, Diane, is perfect.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: That'll get you good brownie points. What--we should talk a little bit about your background. Before you were diagnosed with MS, very big into sports. You played basketball in college. You also love softball, golf, tennis, right?

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah. I played a lot of tennis with my wife. She played in high school. I played college basketball, high school basketball. I was all-county, all-area, and I was third team all-state. So I was pretty--pretty fair basketball player before I got--got diagnosed with MS. I was actually--I was playing bas--playing softball when I first noticed my balance was off. I couldn't get it--I couldn't field high pop. And I knew something was wrong. And I mentioned that--we were dating at the time, and I mentioned it there and I went for follow-up and...

ADUBATO: You were dating at the time?

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Wow.

Mr. MURPHY: Dating.

ADUBATO: Let--let me--let me...

Mr. MURPHY: We've been married 15 years and dating, say, 18 years.

ADUBATO: Whoa! You...

Mr. MURPHY: No, 18 total years, plus 15.

ADUBATO: I gotcha. Yeah, OK. And I got--you guys aren't old enough to be together for like 30-plus years. But the--the regimen medically--let's talk about some of the medications you take. Talk to us about that.

Mr. MURPHY: Medications--I take the IVIG once a month, which is pretty--pretty good. I get an IV once a month that's immunoglobulin. That's one of the front-line medications for MS, along with Betaseron. You have to take that every other day. And Avonex deep muscle once a week. So I don't have that part. I have just the IV once a month. I also take Hytrin for bladder control.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. MURPHY: I also take Elavil for emotional stability. I take baclofen for spasticity. I take a lot of that.

ADUBATO: All these have to be done. You have to take all this medication...

Mr. MURPHY: Right.

ADUBATO: ...combined with all the other stuff that you're doing.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: And also your diet--diet different in your house?

Mr. MURPHY: Very different. I'm on the Atkins and...

ADUBATO: You're on Atkins.

Mr. MURPHY: Right. And--and not her.

ADUBATO: What are you smiling about?

Mrs. MURPHY: It's long-term Atkins...

Mr. MURPHY: She likes...

Mrs. MURPHY: ...so I'm not exactly sure it's too healthy for him.  
But...

Mr. MURPHY: She likes that pasta.

ADUBATO: You like--you're a pasta person.

Mrs. MURPHY: I'm a pasta person, and we always have meat cooking in our house. So it drives me a little crazy. But...

ADUBATO: What about the boys? Has it changed their diet at all?

Mrs. MURPHY: No, not at all...

Mr. MURPHY: No.

Mrs. MURPHY: ...because I pretty much cook for them what I would eat. And then we cook kind of separately for him.

ADUBATO: So you're working, you're hanging out with this guy, right?

Mrs. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: And you figure...

Mrs. MURPHY: Yeah, hanging out with this guy, trying to take care of him as best I can.

ADUBATO: OK. I'll tell you what. We're up against this last break. Could you--could you stay with us through the last break?

Mrs. MURPHY: Sure.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: More with Diane and this guys she's hanging around with, Sean, who's a pretty good guy. Stay with us. We'll be right back.

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(Announcements)

ADUBATO: You know, you guys make a really nice couple.

Mr. MURPHY: Thank you.

Mrs. MURPHY: Thanks.

ADUBATO: You think you'll hang out for a while together?

Mr. MURPHY: Yes.

Mrs. MURPHY: Absolutely, a lifetime.

Mr. MURPHY: We've made it 15 years.

ADUBATO: And you'll make it a lot longer.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Listen, in the last minute we have left, what would you say the message is, Sean, to folks watching?

Mr. MURPHY: The message, I would say, is MS is a difficult disease. I struggle every day with it. But you can succeed with it and you can function. You can have a regular life--a regular life with it. So my--my--what I'd like people to know is that no matter how tough it is, you always can make it better.

ADUBATO: Diane?

Mrs. MURPHY: Yeah, I would agree with Sean, and just take it a day at a time, you know, not looking into the future and just--just hoping for the best every day. You know, this is a progressive disease, but I think you can--I think you can beat it.

ADUBATO: Any marital advice for the rest of us?

Mrs. MURPHY: Don't sweat the small stuff.

ADUBATO: Don't sweat the small stuff.

Mr. MURPHY: Oh, yeah.

ADUBATO: Great name for a book.

Mrs. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Oh, that's right. Richard Carlson already wrote that book.

Mr. MURPHY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: And--and--and the last question. We've got 30 seconds left. Your boys--I mean, it's obviously challenging for both of them. But they're going to be all right?

Mrs. MURPHY: Mm-hmm.

Mr. MURPHY: I think they'll be fine.

ADUBATO: What's your hope for your boys?

Mr. MURPHY: Grow up normal and healthy and--and just get--have a normal life, and that will be fine for me.

ADUBATO: Well, they have a great dad...

Mr. MURPHY: Thanks.

ADUBATO: ...and a great mom.

Mrs. MURPHY: Thanks, Steve.

ADUBATO: And you are terrific people, and I thank you both for being with us.

Mr. MURPHY: Thanks, Steve.

ADUBATO: Thank you.