

MICHELLE EDD135

QU: Tell me what you're doing now and what you've been doing since you left school.

AN: Well, now, at the moment I'm a lunch time organiser at the local school.. (005)..that's willing to take local mentally handicapped kids to and from school, take them in the morning, taking them home at night.

QU: How did you get into that? Is that through your brother?

AN: Not really, no. I think it was an accident really. After leaving school, I had six months doing nowt, because I didn't want to. And then I went to college, and I did Psychology and Sociology. And I still didn't know what I wanted to do.

QU: Did you enjoy the courses?

AN: Yeah. And the lad that I was going out with at [CITY] had his leg amputated when I was at college.

QU: How did that happen?

AN: Cancer in his knee. So I wasn't really bothered about studying.. I did great up to the first exams, my mock exams were great. But after that, I just didn't want to know.

QU: Was it known about for a long time?

AN: No, I mean he's had a bad knee, he had a brace and everything, but they always said it was like water on the knee, he'd just have to endure it. And then they said it was a malignant growth.

QU: It must have been a big shock?

AN: It was about two weeks before he was 18. And his dad hadn't told him, so we just told him he didn't have to..(019).. His leg went, and then it could have spread into his lungs, so they did it then. I wasn't interested in college..(021).. I had a couple of months off after leaving college. Then I went and did a community care course, it was working with old people. With JAMIE, I know a lot of disabled people anyway, so I've never had any problems with that, I wasn't bothered with that.

QU: You must be good at understanding people's needs?

AN: Yeah, well it's never worried me, and I don't find any problems associating with anyone in a wheelchair. So I chose to work with old people in an old people's home. But that disheartened me to be quite honest; it was either they were very very poorly or dying, in the homes where I was working. Like three people died in the first week that I was there. And there was one lady that I got really close to in the year that I was at the course, and she died just before I left the course. And I was offered a job there, down Didsbury, but I just didn't have the heart to take it really.

QU: At the moment are you planning to do anything else?

AN: No, at the moment I'm quite happy how I am. I've got enough money, I don't need a lot of money. I'm not one for going out a lot; my mum is quite good about the rent, I pay £20 a week out of the £60 that I get. And I've no real need for a lot of money at this, I've no plans of leaving home. I did a couple of years ago, but I've not now. I'm quite happy. I'll probably, I am on the lookout for things that are about the same kind of thing, but more time or.. But I'm not permanently looking for another job.

QU: And there's nothing apart from what you're doing that you'd like to do?

AN: I do like writing; like stories and poems and stuff like that. And I've bought myself a word-processor, which I do.. But I've not done a lot since breaking up with my ex.

QU: Tell me about this.

AN: When I was 13, start at the beginning, I met a man called MATTHEW, and we've been going out together since.

QU: How did you meet?

AN: Down in Northenden. It was a friend from school, my friend, girlfriend, he was going out with her older sister, and he weren't going out with her very long: then he was going out with me. And from being 13 I've known him.

QU: How old was he?

AN: He was three years older than me, 16. And we've been going together since, and I got engaged when I was 18, well I got engaged...(052)..

QU: What do you mean by that?

AN: I mean he never asked me to get engaged, it was just something that you do when you've been going out that long. It wasn't anything, it was just everybody knew us as MICHELLE and MATTHEW. It was expected, and I expected it.

QU: Why did you expect it?

AN: I think it was what I wanted, to get married and have kids. Because when I was at college I didn't have any ambitions; I wanted to get married and have kids. ..(058)..all the rest of it, but what I wanted to do personally was get a house, have kids. And up until March of this year, that's what I wanted to do.

QU: So what happened?

AN: I don't know, I think I changed, not him, he's still the same, I mean I see him a lot, he's still the same person. I don't think he realises what went wrong. I went on an Outward Bound course, and since he's had his leg done he's been very moody. I mean it's understandable, that's the way it is. He used to ignore me for days on end. He'd come in, sit down and ignore me for two or three days. It didn't bother me that, it was his moods; fair enough. He's bound to have some comeback off losing his leg. But I lay it aside, everything seemed to be...(069).. I let it go, fair enough, I love him, that's what I thought, I love him; I must love him, I wouldn't be living with him if I didn't.

QU: That's how you looked at it?

AN: Yeah, that's what I did. And then I started, January this year, planning on getting married. Not this year, but next year, starting saving to get married. And still, I love him, my mum kept saying to me - Are you sure that's how you feel? Because when I look at you, you don't look as if you feel that way towards him. I said - I love him; I do love MATTHEW - and that was more to myself than to anyone else. And we went on an Outward Bound course, climbing mountains, swimming rivers.

QU: With MATTHEW?

AN: Yeah, with MATTHEW, through the club that we go to. And it was brilliant, I had a whale of a time. But no one there knew we were engaged.

QU: Was that important?

AN: Not important, it's just that we were there, he didn't want to do anything with me. When we were split into teams, it wasn't - Right MICHELLE, we'll go to together. It was anyone else but MICHELLE. He'd say 'hello' in the morning, and 'goodnight' at night. Not 'give us a kiss', or anything like goodnight at night. Fair enough; he's having one of them weeks, you know, when he doesn't want to know me properly. And halfway through the week, I had a really bad nightmare, and I don't normally have nightmares as such, and I don't normally dream as such. And it woke me up, I was crying, I thought -

Oh God. And what it was, it was me looking now at me in ten years time in the surroundings that I thought I wanted, a house, a little house with my kids, and me and him at each other's throats. And all I could think of was I wanted to get out, and I was prepared ... my kids in that situation and leave. And the type of person I am with kids, I wouldn't do it, I couldn't see myself doing it, in fact I was petrified. I thought if I could get myself in a situation like that, and leave my kids, it must be..

QU: In the dream you wanted to leave?

AN: Yeah, I would've left the kids, I'd've gone. No looking back, no anything. So it frightened me and it made me think truthfully about how I felt about MATTHEW. And I realised that, I loved him, but not the kind of love that you should get married and have kids and cause a family. I cared, just for the fact that I'd known him for so long and I cared. But I didn't love him; it wasn't the all-consuming love that it should've been, it didn't encompass everything that it should.

QU: What do you mean the 'all-consuming'?

AN: I don't mean passion and all the rest of it.

QU: But have you got an idea of what that is?

AN: It means you've got to have shared interests. And you've got to want to be with that person at least most of your time, not all of it, but at least when you're with that person, you've got to like being with them and feel comfortable. It doesn't have to be a flipping fireworks and the rest, it can be dead kind of soft kind of thing, that you don't realise is happening. But, I mean, he couldn't understand it, I mean the sex lives of our relationship went right out, completely, I just didn't want to know, didn't find it..

QU: After this (?)point?

AN: No, before, it was before, but I was - Nothing's wrong, nothing's wrong really, that's just me, I just mustn't like it that much anymore. My feelings that way.

QU: It was you that was drawing back in that way?

AN: Yeah.

QU: If it was him that was drawing away..

AN: I don't know, I think it had made me..

QU: ..do you think it would have been the same?

AN: I don't know, I think it would have made me look a little bit quicker at, something's wrong. But I was saying to my dad, I said - If it had been just the sex life that had gone wrong, the guidance, like a Marriage Guidance Counsellor, for the relationship, we could have gone there. To try and sort that part of it. I said - But we've got nothing mentally together either. There wasn't a mental bond to keep us together through that part. So when that part went, the mental part.. I felt empty, I mean I care about him, and if anything happened to him, just from purely the fact that I've known him for so long and we've been so close, if anything happened I mean I'd cry. But I can..

QU: So you feel it was the right decision?

AN: Yeah! I mean I kept saying to my mum - I'll be an old lady, I'll be kept on the shelf and nobody else will want me - Because for so long I've been a couple. I mean I didn't do what most girls go on. I mean I've never been to nightclubs or anything like that. Like I first went to a nightclub about three months ago with a married friend who's got three kids. And I sat there fascinated, looking at everything. And she said..(130).. And it was brilliant.

QU: An eye-opener?

AN: Yeah. It was funny because I mean I think I still do give off, you know, signals and vibes to the other fellas to keep away. Because, it's not that I see myself as part of a couple as me and MATTHEW, but I see myself as a couple just for the fact that I've been that for so long.

QU: Was part of the reason staying together that you find it threatening not to be part of a couple?

AN: I feel a lot better now than I did in March and April and May. Each month makes it a little bit easier. And each time I go out when I'm in a situation where I 've got to see single people, it's easier. But I mean all around me, the people, especially in the job I do, most people are married with kids. I'm on a play scheme, and I'm the only single woman on the play scheme with no children. There are other single women there, but they've got children. And my mum's, well she's not married, it's a bit difficult to explain, but she's a couple with kids. My whole family's couples with kids. And I thought to myself - Well that's obviously how you do it. I wouldn't want to get married now.

QU: Has it blown your illusions?

AN: It's not illusions or anything like that. I have decided that I want, it sounds selfish, but I want a bit of life for me. I mean if I met somebody tomorrow, I fell in love as they put it and all the rest of it, it wouldn't put my brake on getting married or anything like that. But it's not something I'm going to go out and search for and pressure for, the same way I did with MATTHEW.

QU: Do you think you could have understood that when you were younger?

AN: No, I mean I've always been older headed, my mum and dad say I've always been older headed, but I wasn't prepared to accept it. I mean it's been at least a year since me and MATTHEW were properly a couple. I mean we just drifted along for the last year. Well we were, we weren't together properly, either mentally or physically. And I let it drift. I tell you, it was funny, I didn't have enough courage to say to him - Get off your arse and piss off and leave me alone. Right? When I still cared enough about him for it to make a difference if he did it. So when I finally said it I meant it. You know, so when he did go, he didn't have a job, he was always lazing about, he didn't want to know. So when he did finally go and do the things that I wanted, that I thought I wanted him to do, like he's got himself a good job, he's out and about, he's getting himself together, I don't want him. So it was too late, I don't want him back now.

QU: If he'd done that earlier would that have made a difference?

AN: Yeah, it would, I felt it would have had something to salvage. But I let it, I let it, not him, I let it go to a point where it was past me caring, I didn't care. And it was just my lack of guts really. I mean if I'd've said a couple of years ago - Get off your arse MATTHEW else that's it, we're finished - right, he probably would've done something, and then we'd have probably been alright. But because I was frightened that he might actually go up and go away and leave completely, I didn't say it, until it was too late. I mean I don't think he does, still now, understand why.

QU: Do you regret getting involved in that sort of relationship at such a young age?

AN: I don't regret the years that I had with MATTHEW at all, I think the only one I regret is the last one. But I don't regret that as much as I wish it hadn't have happened. I just regret it for being a waste from MATTHEW's point of view, because MATTHEW thought everything was fine. I did in my own, up front, in the back of my mind it wasn't. But I regret, I mean I've learnt and I've grown, but I just regret it from his point of view.

QU: Now you don't just want marriage and kids, do you know what you want now?

AN: No, there's no fixed idea. I just want a bit of life, I want to see a bit of life, I mean I've never been in a nightclub. I've never been dancing as such, I've never been, I don't know, I've never been a lot of things. The only restaurant we went in was the Chinese in Northenden, and every time we went out it was the Chinese in Northenden. And it's not a particularly mind-broadening experience going to the same place everyday, every time we went out. Celebrate something: Oh, the Chinese in Northenden..! I mean I like Chinese food, I wouldn't have minded going to a different Chinese restaurant. But that was it.

QU: Is that because of the relationship?

AN: Yeah, it was just, that was it.

QU: You could have gone together to another one, you could have gone together to a nightclub.

AN: Yeah, I mean I made all the decisions. Being younger than MATTHEW and I still made all the decisions.

QU: Are you a stronger person?

AN: Decision-wise yeah, mentally-wise yeah. He used to say I baffled him, if we ever argued, I'd baffle him with these, you know, long words. I'd baffle him with long words, and I'd think to myself - I'm not that educated, I'm not that intelligent that way. I mean what's long words? And he just didn't like arguing. And he thought that if he shut up and let me natter on in his ear, it would all go away. But it just built up to the next time, and the next time, and then eventually when it did..

QU: Blow up, and got really serious?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Also you must feel quite liberated now?

AN: I do, I thought - Brilliant, this is absolutely brilliant this, because I can do what I want. I didn't have the courage before.

QU: What is it that you want?

AN: I don't know..

QU: What are the things that you thought you could do?

AN: At first I thought I just wanted to break out and be totally stupid. I'd been so sensible and so good, yeah, for years and years. I thought - I'm going to be a right pain in the neck, right. Nobody's gonna like me, right. And I just, it didn't work!

QU: What type of things did you think you'd do?

AN: I don't know, stay out til God knows what time in the morning, which I could do anyway; my mum and dad have got no restrictions on me that, as long as they know I've got a key, and they know where I am, mainly, they've no restrictions, I don't have to be in at a set time, I could come in at six o'clock in the morning. It wasn't hard to do. I thought I wanted to be really naughty..

QU: In terms of sleeping with people?

AN: Yeah, and I didn't.

QU: Did you try?

AN: I did, it didn't work. I went down to Glossop where I've got friends that I think of as auntie and uncle, and I stayed there, and met a lad that I thought was lovely. He was only 19. And I thought he was lovely, and he liked me. And I went back down the next weekend. And we got into a situation where we could have done something, only he

wasn't prepared to protect me. I'm not on the pill, but even if I was on the pill, I would still have expected...

QU: He wouldn't use one?

AN: He wouldn't. It was funny, because I had one in my purse from going out with MATTHEW, I was dead absent-minded me, I always forgot to take the pill. So I'd one in my purse for nearly a year. And I was prepared to let him use this. If he'd have said - I haven't got one - I wouldn't have minded, he didn't..(241)..

QU: So what did he say?

AN: 'I don't use them'. So I said if you don't use that, you get dressed and you go home, in that order. And I think it upset him. I mean, here I was prepared to, and I really liked him, and I was.. 'I don't use them'.

QU: Did you talk more about it?

AN: I talked. Funnily enough, being 19, I mean it's like I'm only 20, he's not that young, I'm 21. And he talked and acted like a 16 year old. And I felt ancient, you know, I'm all of what, 20, nearly 21, and I felt ancient trying to explain to this poor lad why I wasn't prepared to continue. And he said - But why, why? I won't get you pregnant - and I thought that's his nature, saying his line, 'I won't get you pregnant'. I thought - You poor bugger. I just thought - Leave that, let that pass. Let him, he must be..pissed! And then I said - That's not what bothers me. I said if that's what bothers me, I'd have been on the pill. I says, but, put it this way, how many girls have you slept with in your lifetime? A few, a few, he said..(263)..a few. I said how many fellas have I slept with? He said - I don't know. I said - Precisely, you don't know who I've been with. I said - I don't know who you've been with. I said - You could have anything.

QU: What what his reaction?

AN: 'I've got nothing!'- I said - Yeah, but I don't know that. I said - Are you going to take it on my trust? I said - I could be lying through my teeth to you, I could have said I've not been with anybody ever. ..(269).. You'd believe me wouldn't you? Yeah. I said - Have you not heard about AIDS and all that? ..(271).. I thought - You poor sod.

QU: How did this make you feel towards him? Obviously the moment had passed?

AN: The moment had passed, gone, buried, the lot! Jesus! I thought - No, no.

QU: Did it disappoint you?

AN: I was very disappointed, no, I knew when I'd been introduced to him and then met him, that he was a bit on the dim side. Young, I don't think he's dim as such, he was just young, he was a young 19 year old. And I knew that, and to be quite honest, the only thing I wanted him for I thought was sex. I thought at the time, right. Thinking about it later I realised that it wasn't what I wanted, I mean I had a lucky escape really, because he said no, he wouldn't wear one. I mean I wasn't that far gone in the heat of the moment to disregard it. I don't think I ever will be. I mean I'm protecting myself, sod him, me I'm worried about. If he wants to play games, he can go and find someone else, someone who's willing to. I was more concerned about myself.

QU: What did you think it was that you wanted, if not sex?

AN: I don't know, I've still not figured that bit out. I mean my dad said to me - What would have happened if he had've worn it?

QU: Do you talk to your dad about this?

AN: Yeah, and my mum.

QU: That's great. Have you always been able to?

AN: Yeah, I mean I had a one-night stand when I was only 14, and I've not told my mum and dad, not for the fact that they would have done anything or said anything, but the fact that I was so ashamed. It's part of something that I'd rather forget, it's personal to me. And I think it would have disappointed them both if I'd've told them, and if I told them now they'd..(298). But that was something that was for me, that I wanted to block away, my little skeleton that goes in my little cupboard. I mean everybody's got them. But from then on we talked about this, that. They came home and I told my dad. And he said - What would have happened if he had actually have gone through with it, if he'd have worn it? I said - Well, I'd have been regretting an act then, not a near act. I said - It'd've happened and I would be regretting it, I would have found out the hard way that that wasn't what I wanted.

QU: It might have been fun?

AN: Yeah, it might have been fun, but that's..

QU: Would you feel guilty, or alright about casual sex for the fun of it?

AN: No, I don't think, I felt fine, I felt lovely up until the time when he said - I won't wear one of them'. But I mean that's all I wanted at the time. And if it had gone through that I would have been quite prepared to continue. But that was all I wanted. But time passed, and I realised that it's not what I need from a man. I mean if I'm going to do it I'm going to do it properly. You know, have a bit more up top behind it, as well as down below. I mean he was really, we didn't even talk, and I fancied the arse of this lad, and that was all.

QU: And you were in a position to do something about it?

AN: Yes. It was funny, you know JAMIE, he goes round telling all the other people that I know - She got a boyfriend - and I haven't. I was introduced to a lad at our GARY's engagement party, and after five minutes, and I said - What do you do? And he went away. And our JAMIE said - She's got a boyfriend, she met a lad at this party and she's got a boyfriend. And I thought - God JAMIE, you'll get me a right reputation, you. It doesn't bother me.

QU: Do you think there's pressure on you not to be single, but having a relationship?

AN: Not off me mum and dad, not off my mum and dad, they don't put pressure on me. My mum is great, she's always been - It's your life, you run it your way, we're here if you need us. My dad's different in a way in that he tells you what he thinks you should do and shouldn't do, and if you don't do it he's a bit peeved, but then again it's your life. But it's down to the basic thing, they let me run my life, they didn't interfere when I finished with MATTHEW. They didn't interfere when I started going out with MATTHEW, they never interfered that way.

QU: What is it that your dad thinks you should do?

AN: He keeps saying to me, he still says it - Are you sure you don't love MATTHEW? Are you sure you shouldn't be going out with him? I think he's just trying to check up on me every so often to make sure I've made the right decision.

QU: Do you think a successful relationship..?

AN: It's not going to make me, it might get me out a bit more, but it's not going to make or break me. I mean I've spent the last two weeks climbing the walls, because I've been that bored, because I've not been out anywhere. I've not had anyone besides my mum and dad to talk to, and I've been climbing walls. How desperate I was, I asked SHANE

my brother and his girlfriend out for a drink, because I was desperate. They wouldn't come. But I've got my friend who..(354)..fixes me up for a blind date.

QU: When was this?

AN: It was about two months ago. I go weight training on Thursday night, and I arrived.. (357)..she was there, and she said - I've fixed you up for a blind date. All you've got to do is phone him and make it proper. I said - I'm not phoning anyone I don't know. She goes - There's no problem, just here's the number, go phone it. I said - You phone it, you're that desperate. She took me downstairs, she said - I'll phone and I'll do the talking. She dialed the number and went - Hello, hiya. And my voice went - H..h..hello! And this nice charming voice came over and he sounded very nice. And he was 30. And he said he'd arranged to meet me here, on a Saturday I think it was, or a Sunday, and it was arranged. And I thought - Fair enough, what the heck. And I put the phone down, and my friend JULIE said - Don't tell your mum how old he is.

QU: Did that seem old to you?

AN: No, not to me, no, I mean she's 32 JULIE. But she said - Don't tell your mum how old she is, she might not like it. So I said..(372).. The first thing I did when I came home was tell my mum. Anyway, I went. I took my friend JULIE and her husband and her baby down with me, because I wouldn't go on my own. All of us like a little happy family stood outside the pub waiting for this fella who looked suspiciously like he was on a blind date to come passed. And it was like half an hour after the time that we were supposed to meet him, and I couldn't see anyone, and I wouldn't walk in the pub on my own. So JULIE comes with me, and we pop our heads round, and he looks like he's looking, and he comes out. Oh! I thought - God, I wish I was blind.

QU: Wasn't he pretty?

AN: He was pretty ugly! And I thought - No, give it a chance, I'm not one to judge on first things, he might be very nice. So we went in the pub, he bought me a drink, he opened his mouth: Ooah, can I have a light please..

QU: Was he..?

AN: He was just a prat full stop. It was obvious why he..(389). And there I was, I'd got myself really, I don't always look a mess. I'd got myself really done up, you know, great expectations. I don't know what I thought I was waiting for.

QU: You were out of circulation for a long time. You've lost touch with the networks for meeting people..?

AN: Well, I lost all my friends from school. I've got people who I could phone up, like I've got friends, old friends from school, that I could phone up and invite to my 21st. But they're not people I could phone up and say - Do you want to go out on Saturday? There's a difference, a big difference. I mean the one school friend I have from school, is married with a baby. And I hardly ever see her, I mean I don't see her. ..(404)..and she was pregnant, and I'd not had a clue she was pregnant, she was nearly ready to have the baby then. And that was seven or eight months ago. I've had no contact since. And I won't have until I send her an invitation for my 21st.

QU: Do you think that was partly because you were having a relationship..?

AN: Yeah..

QU: And you weren't interested?

AN: You disregard your friends. That's one of the things I get annoyed with SHANE for, because I know..(413)..says you can't tell someone. I've got friends that I can see

occasionally, I've got a friend from college; I could go down and see her occasionally. But she's got three kids. I seem to have friends that have got kids. I mean you've either got to have babysitters or spend the night in. JULIE's great, I went to a single's bar with JULIE..(419)..went to a single's bar, and it was fun. The first time I went it was 25 and over, and I had to lie about my age, and I don't like lying. And I always end up getting caught out, and I kept saying - What's my date of birth, what's my date of birth? I can't remember! And this bouncer's looking at me as if to say - I'll get her, I'll get her. And he saw me doing, adding up on my fingers trying to remember when I was born. And I filled it in, and we got in and it was great, and it was young; there was quite a range of people. But it was a laugh to me, you know, I sat there staring at everybody, thinking - Ooh, what's he here for, and I know why he can't get a girl.. Just looking at them, you know. And it was funny, all the nice looking fellas were short, as in under five foot. And all the taller ones were over 40, and ugly. So I had no chance of meeting a decent fella, a decent man..no, no, decent as in decent person. I think there was the low life of everywhere went in that place. And so we left. And that was my first experience of like a proper nightclub really. I felt I don't want to go back there.

QU: Do you find it frustrating, trying to find a place that's right for you?

AN: Yeah. And then it was funny, we went again last week, on Wednesday, and I was paralytic. Me and JULIE, the girl that I went with had had brandy, neat, in the cab before we got there. I think it was Dutch courage really for me. And we got to this place, Solos it's called, and it was over 30s! They'd put the age limit up. And they didn't question the two people I was with. And this bouncer must have spotted me, he said - How old are you love? I said - 25. And my colour went up. I thought - Don't ask me when my date of birth is, because I can't tell you. And he said - Well it is strictly over 30, but I think we'll let you come in as a guest with your two friends. And I got in, and it wasn't strictly over 30, it was strictly over 40 and over 50. So the age limit had gone up again. So we left there, and went to Checkers in Altrincham. And I had a ball. I had a really good time, and I was dancing with my friends the girls, I mean I don't particularly need anyone to dance with me, I was dancing away. I was Acid dancing; I don't like Acid dancing music!

QU: You don't like it?

AN: No, I cringe if it comes on the radio or the television, I cringe. My mum loves it. And I was Acid dancing, I think I was, if there'd have been a competition, I'd have won. I was doing the lot. And at the end of the night, this, I think he was Arabian or Asian, man, and when I say 'man', I say 40-45, like my dad's age, he just grabbed me. And swinging me around, I've got my chin on his shoulder..(467). And this lad that, this lad had been smiling at me all night, and I'd been smiling back..(466).. dancing away and he's smiling again. And I wasn't having no go with this lad. I mean it just didn't click with me what he was actually smiling at me for, because it never entered my head, anything like that. It didn't click with me that he'd actually like to, you know, treat me as a come-on! It was a come-on what he was doing now..(474)..dancing away. So this lad's got me in a grip like this, this fella. And this lad's sat down, just next to the dance floor, and he says - Come here, come here. I couldn't hear him. I said - Excuse me? I disentangled myself, you know. And I went, he said - Sit down here and wait until that fella's gone. What for? He said - Do you want to dance with him? I said - No, you're alright. He goes - Alright. And when this fella had gone, he said - Right, would you dance? I've been smiling at you for

nearly two hours and you've not asked me to dance. I said - Why would I ask you to dance? He said - Haven't you heard of women's lib? I said - No, I don't believe in that.

QU: So was this a nice bloke?

AN: He was nice, he was 25, I was talking to him, and he seemed alright. But my friend JULIE who was married, didn't go to..(489). I didn't go, I just went for a laugh. But she won't have any go at all with any fellas that way. So she said - I'm going home..(492).. I'd just sat down - Are we going up..(493)...I said - Excuse me, to this lad, said, nice meeting you..(494)..I'm off out. And he said, he followed us, and he said - Do you want a lift home? I said - No thank you, I'm going with my friend. I've got no problem brushing people off, it's not that. So I got in the car, and he's waiting for a taxi, he was going to give me a lift home in this taxi. So JULIE by this time is absolutely paralytic, I'm too busy giggling my head off at the fact that this fella's offered me a lift in a taxi.. He said - Do you want..(502).? He was waiting for a taxi, he said - Do you want a lift home? I thought - He must have a car. He was going to drop me off in his taxi! He didn't have a clue where we lived or anything - Do you want a lift home? Yeah, I live in Liverpool! You paying? So I came home. But that's the last night I've been out, that's a couple of weeks ago. I've been climbing the walls slowly and surely since, because I had a taste of a bit of excitement and a bit of something to talk to people about, and a bit of fun. And I'm not going to have it now for a long time.

QU: Yeah, it's frustrating; if you were a bloke you could do that, go out on your own. Whereas if you're a woman..

AN: Yes, I won't go on my own, I wouldn't even go to the local pubs on my own, I took my mum out Sunday night, to the local pub.

QU: It's not that you're not brave..

AN: It's just I wouldn't do it.

QU: It's really difficult. I'd like to talk about AIDS. Has AIDS ever struck you as a significant factor in relationships?

AN: Yeah, but not the major thing, but I did think about it. I mean going out with MATTHEW it was different, I'd been with the same person, no problems. And as far as I knew he didn't mess about. And I wasn't messing about when I was going out with him. So there was no problems that way. But finishing with him, and like meeting that lad in Glossop, that major reason I wanted him to wear something was AIDS. It wasn't any other venereal diseases going round, it was AIDS, pure and simple. It wasn't a major thing that's stamped on my head, but that was the only reason I would have demanded he wear one. I've got the pill upstairs, I could take that, that's for pregnancy, it doesn't stop anything else though.

QU: So it's something you'd think about from now on?

AN: Yeah, I didn't think I'd have the guts to actually say to someone - Will you wear these? When it comes down to it it's me that's important, and I did, I didn't think I would.

QU: Did you find it difficult?

AN: With him? No, it wasn't difficult with him, because he was younger and he seemed younger.

QU: Like he was younger than you?

AN: Yeah, and it was easier then. But I can see myself in a situation with somebody that's older than me, and he had more experience and more mature in other ways. And I don't know if I'd be able to say - Oh, excuse me, will you wear one of these? And that's

just for the fact that he'd be more mature. I don't mean in age-wise, I mean experience-wise. I mean I think I would do, I think because I am important, my health is important.

QU: Do you think that if you were with someone more mature and confident, you would still think that the risk was enough to not wear one, and think - damn it?

AN: No, I don't think I'd ever put myself in a situation where I'd say - Damn the consequences. It's not that, I don't know. I am important as well as this fella that I'm going to meet. I mean if he don't think enough of me in the first place to protect me, then there is a risk with him. And if he don't think enough of himself from me, I mean it's not worth messing about. I mean I think what I'm looking for, if I'm not looking for a relationship really, but what I would be looking for is a little bit more of a mental relationship, getting on together mentally before the physical side came in. I mean when I met MATTHEW I was 13, I mean a kid of 13 has got a very limited amount to say to somebody. You've got your school, your homework, and your mum and dad, that's your lot. That was all we talked about. And really, up until a few years ago, it was school for me, college for me and he was on the dole. Fair enough, great, nothing to talk about, no joint interests. Or the pub. I don't want a man to dominate, I want somebody who knows how to take charge at least to initiate a conversation, at least. And talk, and say - Well look, this is what I think, and I did this today. MATTHEW wasn't interested in my work environment, and when I said - Look, this happened at work, he didn't want to know. So in the end I stopped saying - Look this happened - I kept my mouth shut. And I stopped talking, and I stopped asking him things. Because he didn't want to talk. So that went down hill. I think that's important, I don't think it's everything, but I think it's important enough to make that a good groundwork.

QU: Do you think that's easy in a nightclub environment, or do you think people expect people to sleep with each other, rather than get to know them?

AN: I think that's a lot of pressure expected. It doesn't work that way with me. Like I say, it's very easy for me to say to someone - Go away, and I don't want to know. Because, being a couple, when I have gone out, and I've ever been put in a situation where someone has come on to me, I've automatically - Go away - It's never entered my head, whether I've liked the look of the person or not, it's never entered my head; I'm a couple. You don't sleep around if you're part of a couple. I mean if it gets to a point where you think you need to do that, you might as well not be a couple, you might as well get out. And it was only up until the last part of my relationship that I ever felt anything remotely like the fact that I would ever dream of doing it. Not actually putting myself in a situation; it's different laughing and talking with fellas. I've got of a fellas and lads that I know. But it's different than actually setting a situation up where something could happen. I mean I've no problem telling lads to piss off.

QU: It's difficult doing the opposite?

AN: It's difficult, that's right. It's difficult lowering my signals, there must be invisible walls, that people say - She must be a couple, she's not available. And lowering them enough for people to come forward, for them to be confident..

QU: Without being 'I am available'?

AN: Yeah. I've never had to flirt properly. I mean I think flirting's quite important. But I'm learning all over, and I think I'm making a cock-up of it, you know. I mean I don't go out a lot, I'm not going out, so I can't go out regularly, so that I can get the learning in quick.

QU: The practice.

AN: The practice. Each time I go out, I'm making a small cock-up each time. It's not as bad each time, but there's such long periods between me going in and out, that it's difficult.

QU: You must get nervous as well?

AN: Yeah, I'm terrible. I mean the first time I went out to that single's club I sat on the chair all night just looking. And JULIE says - Come.. - I can't come, just leave me alone watching things. And it was just something I couldn't do. I thought if I dance and I dance the wrong way, people are going to think the wrong things.

QU: Did you feel conscious of the line between being a come-on and being..?

AN: Just me, yeah.

QU: Just you, but appealing! So you want to have safe sex?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Where did you get your information about it?

AN: No, we've always been a very open family, it's never been hush-hush, anything like that. And when it all blew up, because it wasn't a thing, it just blew up. One night it wasn't there, the next night it was over every newspaper and everything on the television, that's how it seemed. And when it went like that, we all sat down and had a family discussion about it. And my dad working in the..(702) Service had been given a lot more facts about it. He gave us all the facts pure and simple. And we had a big talk about it, and everything was brought out into the open. It was like drugs; that was all that brought out until my dad got the information and gave us the facts. I mean I've never touched drugs at all in any shape or form; like I was offered a little tablet, Speed I think it's called, and it didn't enter my head to take it. It wasn't curiosity or anything, I didn't want know. We had a big family discussion, that's how it was done. I mean it was the same with AIDS. Any questions we had were brought into the family, it's very democratic and we all have our own say. And if what we say is absolutely stupid, we're put straight. The facts.. I mean there's no point saying to someone - I say this, this is right, and this is this, and you will do that -if the person that you're saying it to hasn't got a clue what you're talking about in the first place. 'You should not sleep with people' - Why? 'You shouldn't sleep with everybody, you shouldn't have casual sex' - But why? 'Or if you do, these are the precautions..' And that's what we've always had, we've always had.

QU: That's really good. Did you notice the difference between you and your friends when you were young, because of that?

AN: Yeah, I had at least two..

(end tape: 741)