

BT14 RT 1.2.90

Q: The way we generally do it is for you to start by telling me, more like a biography session, from when you were younger to what you are doing now, so if you can start thinking back. First of all just tell me about your background, about your family?

A: I've got two sisters and a brother.

Q: How come you're in Manchester, did the whole family move over?

A: Yes my dad's a minister and he came to the church over here.

Q: Is that quite common then for a minister to move around?

A: Yes ..(010)...

Q: When did you move?

A: About six years ago.

Q: What was that like then, because it's quite a different place isn't it?

A: ...(013)....

Q: Was it.

A: It was depressing. You don't notice it until you come over. I wouldn't go back now.

Q: You mean Belfast was depressing compared to Manchester?

A: No it was depressing to move, I didn't want to move but now that I have moved I wouldn't go back.

Q: Right.... You say that your dad's a minister, were you brought up quite religiously then?

A: Yes. He never really sort of imposed it on us but it does influence you anyway. I mean I always went to church ..(21)...

Q: Did you find that was a big difference, I mean I've got a friend from Belfast and she couldn't believe it when she came to England because its generally more religious isn't it, whether you're Catholic or Protestant, you're one or the other and most of them go to church. Did you find it sort of a shock, all these pagans?

A: Yes. I still have a problem now, I've got to really control myself, I always want to ask people - are you Protestant or Catholic - but it never bothered me but it was just one of those questions you always want to ask. And when I discovered that the school I was in was mixed Protestant and Catholic I was really shocked.

Q: Can you tell the difference, in Ireland presumably you can, the difference between Protestant and Catholic, in England would you be able to tell the difference?

A: No, no. I work with a girl that's Catholic and I never knew she was Catholic until a couple of months ago.

Q: Would that have shocked you in the past, would you have felt that you wouldn't have wanted anything to do with people who were Catholic?

A: Well it would have shocked me but I did have a few friends who were Catholic but I wouldn't really go round to their house or knock on the door, or play with them or such.

Q: I suppose it must seem really strange now, that sort of thing?

A: Well I was talking to my friend at work the other day and I was at her house and she said - I hope that Paki don't follow us home - and it's just a similar sort of thing in Ireland, you say - I hope that Catholic don't follow me - you know.

Q: Right, in a way it's a just a category for dividing people. It could be anything.

A: Yes.

Q: The church that you're in, is it the Pentecostal church?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about it, I'm afraid I don't know very much about religion at all.

A: Pentecostals are probably, well you see these comedy things when they are screaming hallelujah and dancing and things like that. That's where they get it from because Pentecostals believe in being free, and worshipping God however you feel most comfortable to worship God as long as your attitude is right.

Q: There's no little whispering or..

A: No it's all very open and friendly. I prefer it myself probably because I've been brought up in it but I do feel comfortable. I feel awkward in churches where you just sit there.

Q: Is there quite a community around your church, would you mix socially with people you're at church with?

A: Yes I do. Most of my friends are from church, there are some from work but the people I generally tend to go out with are people from church.

Q: Right so it's quite a tight community. Would you say it's an important part of your life then, your religion?

A: Yes. When I was at school I did think... I never actually thought to myself I'm going to leave church but I did start thinking I'm not allowed to do this so... I mean I got drunk at school.

Q: What, actually at school?

A: Yes, we did a 24 hour sponsored thing, and they had beer for the adults and somehow I managed to get drunk. Came home and my mother thought I had a tummy bug, so I just agreed with her. But they had some stuff that they sniffed some of them, liquid gold or something, and I had..... (065)... I was adamant, I said no, I'm a Christian, I don't do that. It was a bit funny but I wanted to try things and I wanted to see why people wanted to do them. I've never done them again because I didn't like it.

Q: Are there quite a lot of rules then in your religion about what you can do and what you can't do? Are you quite restricted?

A: Umm, yes.

Q: And what are the rules you find most infringe upon you?

A: Drinking is probably one of the biggest problems.

Q: There's no drinking?

A: You can drink but to get drunk is wrong, which I think is wrong anyway because you don't know what it does to your body really but my mum imposes it more but not because of the religious aspect. It's because when she was younger a lot of her family were drunks and beat people up and things. So she always imposed that we don't drink, my dad doesn't drink in pubs and things. I will go in a pub every now and again just for a change really.

Q: So you don't find it ..(80)...

A: No. If I was to get drunk I wouldn't agree with that, I don't agree with drunkenness. I don't see anything wrong in going in a pub and having a drink as long as you keep.....

Q: Well I think that's probably the basis of it all really, isn't it.

A: Sex before marriage is another thing.

Q: Is that strictly outlawed?

A: Yes definitely. We've had a few cases at church where people have got pregnant before they were married and it was sort of imposed on them to get married.

Q: What do you think of that?

A: Umm, personally if it happened to me I wouldn't want to get married, I wouldn't live with him but I'm getting married anyway in October so there's not much point in getting into debt and rushing things up and getting married anyway. I think it depends on the individual.

Q: In terms of that's obviously about the actual situation you're in, in terms of taking it away from the situation do you think there is anything inherent in sex which makes it wrong to do that outside of marriage, in that way rather than just?

A: Wrong outside of marriage? I think it's wrong outside of marriage because if you had sex with someone and then you break up and then you meet someone else and then you have sex with them and then break up and I think that's wrong.

Q: In what way?

A: Umm, I think it's only there for you and one person, it's like a way of showing your love in your marriage and it's all to do with your marriage.

Q: I'm sure that you are aware that your view is not shared with quite a lot of people, these days. Do you find that a problem or do you find it difficult that women, perhaps friends of yours that are quite happily jumping into bed with people or see it as a normal part of what you would do as young people and for you it's different. Is there any conflict there?

A: Oh I've got a few of those about me but I have always stood out like a sore thumb and I think I always will. But I think I work in.... and to them it's nothing. But I would view it more differently. And like they seem to use it against each other, you know.

Q: In what way?

A: Like this one girl, she had an argument with her boyfriend and he started going to get on with her and she sort of pushed him off and said - oh no - and she was laughing and joking about it and saying - I told him next week but he doesn't know I'm on - sort of thing so I thought you know that's pretty horrible really, I wouldn't do that. But on saying that I think people do influence me because I have, I'm not myself a virgin; not that my father knows but.

Q: Would he go mad?

A: Yes. He would probably go mad at first but then he would probably want to talk about it and .. he's not a bad person. It's like now, I don't think I've done it for about ten months, it's just we decided we would wait until we were married because he's a Christian as well now. And we just decided that's what we should do.

Q: Tell me about when you met your boyfriend, is this the first serious boyfriend you've had?

A: Umm.

Q: Did you have boyfriends before?

A: No not really, I was frightened of them.

Q: Frightened?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about then?

A: Well when I was very young I was sexually abused by my uncle. He also abused my two sisters and when it actually happened to me I told my mum and dad. It was all hush hush then, it was the time when it was never spoken about, and they wouldn't believe me. So since then I decided don't trust anybody, forget all about it and then somehow I made myself forget. I don't know how I did it, I just made myself forget, and then I started getting close to this lad when I was about fourteen and it just started coming back, sort of little bits.

Q: About sex again or feeling those feelings again?

A: Yes, yes. So then I met MICHAEL I used to work part time while I was at college, and he was the only person I never felt awkward with because he was just a friend and he just cared about being a friend, he wasn't pushy or anything like that. I mean he never asked me out or anything it just sort of happened and I told him and he was very good.

Q: And he believed you?

A: Yes he did.

Q: Was that the first person you told that believed you?

A: Yes. I did tell my friend DAWN but she believed me but at the same time it was like, you see everyone knew about my two sisters and believed them.

Q: And not you?

A: No, because theirs was more drastic you see.

Q: What he'd done to them?

A: Yes, yes. And I'd been telling my friend DAWN, and I said – it's funny but I've got this funny memory but I can't remember what happened - so she started saying - well try and remember it - so I did and when I told her she was like say - oh you just want attention. So I stopped telling her and then I just sort of went through it all myself and then when I met MICHAEL he made me tell him what happened and I'd never actually done that before.

Q: It's the spoken word.

A: Yes just saying what happened and remember it and it was awful. I think it just made me confident in him.

Q: It must have drawn you two together very much at that time.

A: Yes. As well he told me things, like when his Grandad died and he never told him that he loved him, and it was important to him and it was something, we just helped each other.

Q: So it must have built up an awful lot of trust in your relationship straight away. So you've been wary of men after that so how did you manage to, well there's MICHAEL being a man and with your bad memories, was there a problem in that, or was he a different category in your mind?

A: There was a problem at first because I was always nervous, I couldn't eat in front of people, couldn't drink in front of people, I just threw it everywhere. And I remember being in a cafe with two friends who knew that.... and I'd just had a coffee and he saw us and came in and I never drank it after that. Because every time I picked it up my hands were shaking and everyone joking, because he took a drink and I never drank after they were all joking about it. But I was nervous at first but he's a very easy-going person. You just get used to it, I'm a bit nutty I suppose.

Q: But you got your confidence slowly. It's really important that you had somebody that took you seriously as well. Have your parents come round to taking it seriously?

A: Never actually spoke about it. My mum just won't talk about it.

Q: Is it her brother?

A: No it was my dad's brother-in-law. Once we brought it up in the conversation and I was trying to figure out how old I was - I can't figure out, and in my second year of school I can't remember anything then so I figured out it must have been then. And when I said to my mum I must have been about six, she said oh no, you were much younger and she just fobbed it off. She wouldn't tell me how old I was, she wouldn't tell me when it was. You know.

Q: It must be really difficult for her because she may feel guilty about it at the time.

A: But it doesn't bother me too much now.

Q: Do you feel you've been able to resolve it yourself?

A: Yes but I think it was mainly due to MICHAEL. I went through a few months when I wouldn't let him touch me.

(interruption)

Q: So MICHAEL understands?

A: Yes. Well I went through a few months when I wouldn't let him come near me or anything like that but he was very good about it, he was very patient with me. I suppose just if I said don't do that, he would say why, and we just sort of talked through it.

Q: That's really good because you had to try and work out why I suppose?

A: Yes. He said he felt like a psychiatrist.

Q: Well probably you needed that if you were ever going to be able to have any sexual relationship which is your own you've made, then you're going to need to go through that.

A: That's another reason I think it's important that we take one partner. Because I've now built that trust up in MICHAEL and I don't think I could with anybody else.

Q: Do you think that would be different if you hadn't been abused, you hadn't had that deep trauma around sex or do you think that would be the same?

A: It mightn't have been so intense or such a strong opinion but I think I've always been a shy person anyway. I don't know whether that's because of that or not.

Q: It's a bit hard to say. You said you had sex with your boyfriend, why was it that you ended up doing that?

A: Easily influenced.

Q: You're easily influenced. Do you mean that it was because of friends or actually between you and your boyfriend?

A: I can't really remember. My mum and dad went away for a week and he stayed at my house and he slept in the same bed as me and everything, but we never even kissed or anything. We were just friends and that week it was just like that all week really. Then they went away again and he stayed and for some reason we just started talking about it and the next thing..

Q: You'd done it.

A: Yes.

Q: Was there a progression from petting or touching each other to actually having sex or was it?

A: Well the first week my mum and dad were away we did petting and things like that but then the second week, it was six or seven weeks after, and all this time it had all been going on like I wouldn't let him touch me or I don't like you doing this so he would only go so far, and by this stage I felt totally at

ease with him. We had sat up most of the night crying and then it was just the last day. I think it must have just been built up from the week.

Q: Well I can understand a lot of you probably wanted to, there's actually that as well. Did you enjoy it, did you get something positive from it?

A: Not the first time, it was a bit painful.

Q: Right but that was just in terms of the intercourse?

A: Umm.

Q: That wasn't the other things that you were doing, did you enjoy those?

A: Yes.

Q: So that's completely understandable. Did you use any contraception?

A: No.

Q: You didn't. Have you got any idea why?

A: We didn't have any.

Q: Right. You didn't have any, did you think of trying to get any or did it come up in your mind?

A: Well the first time it was late at night and there was nowhere to get any anyway. And I don't even think we thought about it. Then after that, it must have been about three or four times after that, we didn't use anything. We must have been extremely lucky but. We did talk about it but we were too embarrassed to go and get anything.

Q: Was that your boyfriend, presumably you would have used condoms at that time, you wouldn't have wanted to go on the pill?

A: No.

Q: So had he never bought condoms before?

A: No.

Q: And you hadn't?

A: No. We did sit and talk about the other options and I at school, we did sex education and we had all the forms of different contraception and we had that He got them from Rileys' Snooker Club eventually, they had a machine in there and he used that.

Q: Do you think it really is embarrassing to go and buy them.

A: I did then but now I don't because I met a girl at work and she used to work in a chemist. And she was going on, you know she can't believe why I don't have sex anymore. And she's always trying.... she's always going - babysit for me and we'll go out - you know.

Q: Giving you the opportunity.

A: I kept making excuses like - oh we've got no condoms, we've got no contraception - so she took me, she dragged me to a chemist and picked them up and bought them. So now I wouldn't feel embarrassed.

Q: Because you've got over that.

A: Yes.

Q: When you did use condoms, how many times did you use condoms?

A: Not that many times.

Q: How did you find them, were they OK?

A: Yes they were alright.

(interruption)

Q: Did you find them easy to use or did you find a problem using them?

A: No. I personally couldn't really tell the difference. But it seemed to take him ages to put it on.

Q: Well they are not always the easiest things to come to terms with, are they?

A: No.

Q: How about MICHAEL, what did he think about it, did he have a different opinion of them?

A: He never really said. It's just that he gave us ... when he started to put it on and he always turns away. He just laughed about it, and he's always saying - can't you try something else.

Q: Right so he would rather you used something other?

A: I think he'd rather I was on the pill, but I don't like the pill.

Q: Why is that?

A: I don't like things that mess up with your body but it's just a personal opinion that.

Q: I don't blame you.

A: And also my sister is a diabetic and some people told me that if there's Diabetes in the family you shouldn't use it but other people say it's a load of nonsense. I just wouldn't like to take the chance really. I think I might use the cap because my friend, she uses it and she said she'd go with me.

Q: I use it, it's alright. It also depends on what sort of situation you're in, what type of protection you need. How old were you when you knew MICHAEL?

A: I think I was seventeen.

Q: And how old was he?

A: I think he was about twenty-one.

Q: You said before that he was a Christian now, was he a Christian when you first met him?

A: No.

Q: Right, so this sounds interesting, what happened there. Tell me a bit about him?

A: Well he lives in Whitefield and he's mum is from Belfast.

Q: Right so there's the Irish connection.

A: Yes. So that always attracts me, I always go umm. He worked in a kiosk in [BUS STATION].

Q: What kiosk is this?

A: [BUS STATION]. I worked in the [BUS STATION] in the kiosk.

Q: The kiosk for information?

A: No just a newsagents. So and the bloke I work with, he went to the Poly with MICHAEL and he got MICHAEL the job with [BUS STATION] so I must have known him about a year and no-one never mentioned him and all of a sudden everyone was talking about MICHAEL so I was wondering who's he, you see. And then one day he just popped down and I thought 'Oh, he's nice'. And he kept coming after that and I wouldn't talk to him, I wouldn't eat in front of him. I sort of kept eyeing him, you know. And he just started meeting me everywhere and then he started meeting me after college.

Q: Was it romantic?

A: Yes I think it was. For me because I'd never had a boyfriend that long. Everyone I'd met before I'd met at church and they all had stuffy mum and dads. I know it sounds funny but some Christians can come across like that.

Q: I suppose as well you always knew their mum and dad and they knew you and you hadn't got as much privacy.

A: Well the lad when I was fourteen, who I sort of, well I didn't really go out with him, but just friendly with him.. His mum and my dad used to discuss it. They used to come back to us and say we've decided when you're sixteen you can go out.

Q: Cheers.

A: And up until then we didn't really want to, we were just good friends, but I suppose it made it different because they didn't know MICHAEL and I used to wind dad up and I used to come and say - oh MICHAEL'S done this - and he'd go - I've to meet this MICHAEL - and my dad was very ... and he asked me some embarrassing questions about him. He's just like that my dad, he's very open and he'll just ask you. And he said - I can't remember what he said but one of the things was - is he physical? - well I've not known him that long! And he said - I think you only like him because he's got all the qualities you lack - and I thought thanks! He's very friendly, you see, extrovert in some ways and I'm always very shy and I always am attracted to people like that, friends, so when he said that I thought I'll punch you in the face in a minute.

Q: He could have put it in a nicer way, it might be true, but he could have put it in a nicer way.

A: I think he just tries to protect you.

Q: Do you think your dad is protective over you. Do you think he may have felt unhappy about the fact that you'd got a serious boyfriend?

A: I think he was worried at the time because he's always worried if you've got a boyfriend that's not a Christian because..

Q: He might tempt you away from your religion?

A: Yes. He'd never met him so he didn't know what sort of a person he was. He didn't know anything about him and then he just kept hearing all these stories off me and MICHAEL was following me and I was meeting him, and I was wagging college. He just got a bit worried I think.

Q: So how did MICHAEL become a Christian then?

A: When he stayed at my house when my mum and dad were away, he stayed from the Saturday until the Sunday and I got up and went to church and when I came back my friend came back with me and we sort of coaxed him to come to church because he'd just been in the house on his own. And he came and I think he was a bit shocked.

Q: Because it was so exuberant?

A: Yes. He'd been once before but we had so it wasn't like a proper meeting and of course everyone So then when he came to the natural meeting he didn't really want to go to it - he was just shocked because we have a very big music group there, you know, drums... electric guitars and all that and I think he was just a bit shocked. And as well we don't have in church.. and they don't wear gowns and everyone is just normal.

Q: Was he Catholic?

A: No he wasn't. He said he'd been to church before but I don't really know where but he was definitely shocked.

Q: And so how did he convert?

A: He just started coming after that. Because on Friday nights we had a young people's thing which is just getting all the young people together. Sometimes they can be left out in churches and then they have a meeting and just mess about after, and he got to know everybody then and then he kept asking me things and he sort of thought I was different from other people and because I'd something to live for and then he just said to me one day - he kept saying I've got something to tell you, I've got something to tell you - and I thought what's wrong with him and then eventually he said - he'd decided he was..... and became a Christian.

Q: Was that important to you?

A: It was important. I think it was more important to my dad but it's important to me because I'd always said that I wouldn't marry anyone that wasn't a Christian because I'd seen so many problems with things like that and that was the first time I started thinking why. And then he just decided that he believed it.

Q: It made everything a lot easier didn't it. Can we go back a little bit to when you were at school, can you remember what kind of sex education you got when you were at school. Were you at school in Northern Ireland first?

A: Only for the first year of secondary school.

Q: Did you get any sex education in Northern Ireland?

A: Not in Northern Ireland.

Q: So it wouldn't have been mentioned. So when you came to England then you did?

A: Before I moved my friends were saying – oh, you'll be getting sex education.

Q: They were all excited for you?

A: Right, well you'll have to tell us. So when I came over I had to take a letter home to my mum and she just had a laugh and said - oh you've got to go to that. It didn't bother me because all my friends were open anyway about it, like they used to say rude things like you do at school and we had a very good teacher. I think we were lucky. Some of the teachers used to just get embarrassed and fob it off but he was very good. He would get embarrassed and he'd say he was embarrassed, but he would still answer your questions.

Q: What type of things did they tell you about?

A: First of all it was mainly about contraception and pregnancy. I think that's what it was mainly, but if you asked a question he would answer it.

Q: What sort of questions would people ask?

A: I can't remember now.

Q: Were they about what he'd been telling you about or were they were about things outside of it like ..?

A: They were mainly silly questions like what does a willy look like and this sort of thing. Or someone had drawn an obscene on a wall and say 'what's that'.

Q: Did they tell you anything outside of contraception and pregnancy, did they tell you about things like homosexuality, or things about sex which aren't reproductive like oral sex. Did they talk about anything that was more than just sort of the basic?

A: No not really. They told you about intercourse and all that very politely and I think most teachers were afraid of stepping on toes. They wouldn't say well we don't agree with homosexuality or anything like that, they just sort of said.... I think he mentioned homosexuality once but not in any great detail and I think it was only to keep the peace as it were.

Q: Would you have wanted more on these other types of things, would you have been interested to know more about these other types of things that people do

A: I think I knew most of it anyway because at school you find things out anyway. I think it would have helped if generally teachers could be more open. Because like me I couldn't have gone and asked me dad something. Most people can't talk to their mums and dads and I think its handy if you can ask a teacher.

Q: Right so even if it's not in the lesson, you know that you could actually go and talk to them if you had a problem. Would you have felt able at school, if you hadn't got anybody else to talk to, do you think.....

A: I think I should have been able to talk about it but when I first came over I was very quiet, I just sat and did my work at home but then I joined a school band and they had a girls and I got to know the teacher really well and I think once I nearly got round to telling him but I just didn't have the guts. He was very nice, he would have listened. I did talk to him about other things but I think that was just because I got to know him so well. I don't think so many kids would be so lucky.

Q: It's very difficult and also its often difficult for teachers because they don't have any experience of counselling or knowing what to say to people. Did they talk about AIDS at all at school?

A: Not really.

Q: Was it mentioned?

A: Yes they mentioned it and somebody would ask or something and they would briefly mention it.

Q: It wasn't part of the syllabus for sex education?

A: I don't remember any.

Q: What school was it?

A: [NAME OF SCHOOL].

Q: Oh I think I have interviewed a few from there.

A: We had it in fifth year but before that we had a Mr. who left the year after we had him and he was the best. He was very open and he was very strict and kept you under control but he was the sort of person you could talk to. Mr. ... was nice but I think you couldn't talk to him the same as you could with some of the other teachers.

Q: So when you were at school were a lot of people having sex, not at school, but I mean your friends and your peer group, were a lot of people sexually active?

A Yes.

Q: Were they using contraception as far as you knew, were you aware of that?

A: Yes, well no not really. They did sometimes and sometimes they didn't. ... (502)... I think I'm pregnant. The amount of times people came in saying that it just became normal. It shocked me at first how many people were having sexual relations, because I didn't agree with it.

Q: Would it have been the same in Northern Ireland?

A: No.

Q: So a girl the same age and a boy the same age wouldn't have been sexually active?

A: No I wouldn't think so, no. Or if they did they wouldn't tell you.

Q: Did people boast about it then, was it seen as something good rather than something to be ashamed of?

A: In Belfast?

Q: Well in England compared to Belfast?

A: Over here they seem to boast about it but over there it's all very hush hush. They would boast about it but it would be very quiet.

Q: Was it different for boys and for girls?

A: Yes its different over here. The boys would come up and say... In the band because I'd been there three years and I got to know everybody, they were

very open about things like that anyway. I remember having discussions about masturbation and all sorts. And the lads would come in and talk as well about sex and I mean one day one of us actually admitted he was a virgin and it was like a revelation. He was always going on about all these women he had and all this.

Q: And he was lying.

A: I mean we laughed a bit and he laughed as well but because we all knew each other so well we just sort of didn't make fun of him.

Q: Well that's important if someone is actually honest about it.

A: I think a lot of it is just pressure. I wonder now if all the people who'd come in and said - I think I'm pregnant - really did think they were pregnant or not. You're just under so much pressure really. There's always somebody that the night before who did it the next night, you know.

Q: Were you ever teased because you weren't doing it.

A: No.

Q: So it was OK, you didn't have pressure on you?

A: Especially among the lads I was respected a lot more because I would openly say I am a virgin and I would tell them my beliefs from the start and say I'm a Christian and this is why I don't believe it. I don't agree with evolution and we had not arguments but debates about it. I know a lot of the lads actually stuck up for me and respected me more really. Told me when the others had gone that they thought the other girls were slags and all that.

Q:

A: I think you get more respect for it. I think it's because I was honest as well.

Q: So if you didn't learn about AIDS in school where did you first remember taking notice of it?

A: I remember seeing something on the news and then I remember everybody talking about it at school and joking, you've got AIDS and all the rest of it. I think I had must have just asked one of my friends about it and if they didn't know they would ask someone else and just all used to sit talking about it.

Q: Right so there was quite a lot of discussion Do you think you knew enough about it or do you think you all understood what you were talking about at that time?

A: To some extent. I mean some things you don't find out until you leave school. I suppose in a way MICHAEL told me most of it, because I would start asking about AIDS and how do they get it. So I think he told me most things. Even things about my body that I didn't learn at school, he told me.

Q: What sort of things?

A: Like what a clitoris was and things like that.

Q: Which you are certainly not told at school?

A: No.

Q: They have great diagrams don't they that leave all..... but the boy's diagrams are much more That sort of way is the best way of learning when you are in a close relationship, you actually do talk about things like that.

A: His dad was very practical like that. He told him everything.

Q: So did you become more aware of your body then when you were in this relationship with MICHAEL, about your own pleasure and things like that?

A: I mean I only knew the very basics. He must have told me nearly everything. I just knew there was a womb, and a vagina and things like that and I didn't know about anything else really.

Q: Did you know that you were supposed to enjoy it as well as a man, was that something that you at school?

A: I knew that because I remember reading something somewhere, some book..... I had read something about how the woman was supposed to enjoy it but I couldn't really understand it. I remember doing a questionnaire actually at school in one of these sex lessons, did you think men got more enjoyment out of it and nearly all the girls put men got more enjoyment out of it.

Q: So amongst you and your girlfriends, when you talked about sex you wouldn't be discussing how do we get the most out of it, it wasn't, it was just assumed that you wouldn't?

A: Yes, yes but on saying that they did sort of say how good it was but I would never say how, or why or what did you do.

Q: So they didn't actually know why it was good or what was good about it. Do you think it probably wasn't good?

A: I don't really know.

Q: I'd like to go back and ask them all again now. You say that MICHAEL told you most of the things about AIDS, were you concerned at the time when you first slept with MICHAEL about AIDS? Had you ever felt that you yourself might be at risk from AIDS or HIV?

A: No I never. MICHAEL thought he was with somebody ... but I was never worried about it because we were both virgins anyway.

Q: He was a virgin as well at the time?

A: Yes but for some reason he just got it in his head that he so he was going to write me a letter and just go away and find out and come back and let me know but he just told me and I just said.... He was all dead upset and all thinking like he'd give it you and I thought 'how can you?'

Q: Why do you think he was worried, do you think something happened that he hadn't told you about?

A: Well when he was younger he was an only child and his mum works nights and his dad works all days, you know... so he was left on his own a lot so ... this is very confidential this is. So he said he used, he never washed himself properly or looked after himself properly and had like a year or two where he had problems with masturbation.

Q: He masturbated a lot. Which is a problem?

A: No but he thought it was, because he thought he did more than your average person.

Q: And he felt guilty about it?

A: Yes and he said he never used to wash himself properly and like he put germs in him and all sorts and I couldn't get it through to him.

Q: That that's not how you get AIDS..

A: No but he just seemed.. so I said right we will go to the doctor and I'll come with you. And he just said I think I've got a social disease. So she said don't be stupid where've you heard this and sort of talked to him and he just wouldn't have it. I just kept going - there's nothing to worry about - oh no.... so in the end she actually examined and said - it looks perfectly normal to me.

Q: Was he relieved then, did he believe her then?

A: No. He came out going - I'm not so sure, you know it doesn't look right to me.

Q: Did he have an AIDS test in the end?

A: No. I just convinced him in the end but I said - she's been a doctor for so many years, I think she should know by now. I think that was probably as well lack of being told at school about AIDS and about how you actually catch the disease. I've never worried about it myself.

Q: Are you quite clear and sure about how you can catch it?

A: Oh I'm not that clear and I couldn't sort of tell anybody else but from what I can gather it's through sexual transmission or whatever and it seems to be the more partners you have the easier it is to catch.

Q: Do you know how to protect yourself from getting it?

A: Yes, using a condom.

Q: Do you know why that is?

A: Yes because it not only stops the sperm from getting but the diseases getting in.

Q: I mean where the virus is in the body, so for instance somebody who had AIDS if they breathed on you would that put you at risk or would you be..?

A: No.

Q: Ok, so where is it in your body?

A: It's sexual.

Q: Right so it's in sexual....

A: I think we did learn at school that it was OK to shake hands with somebody who'd got AIDS but that was basically all. It was awful, it made you think well, where did you get it?

(end of side one)

A: People like prostitutes or people like that and people who sleep around a lot and don't use condoms or..

Q: If you use condoms and sleep around do you think that stops you from being at risk?

A: Well it narrows down the percentage but I think.....

Q: Do you trust condoms as a form of contraception or in terms of AIDS do you trust them?

A: I would trust them yes, but MICHAEL doesn't.

Q: He doesn't? Why, does he worry about them splitting or..?

A: Yes splitting or someone goes round pricking holes in them. Every time we've used them he's always going - I've made you pregnant... I think that's one of the reasons why we've not, like it's been ten months and we've not done anything because we can't be bothered.....

Q: Yes, the condoms.

A: Maybe he's thinking they're not going to work.

Q: He sounds like he's a worrier to me. So if you get married, when you get married what are you going to do about contraception, will you go on the pill may be?

A: Well no, I will probably use the cap.

Q: So you're not in any hurry to have children?

A: Umm, if it was up to me I would have children after about two, three years of getting married but MICHAEL thinks he wants to wait more like four or five years. But it's only because he wants to pay this off, pay that off so we don't

have any worries. I mean he thinks that, you see we've got a house now and we will live off his wages and be able to save my wages.

Q: Is he still working at the kiosk in [BUS STATION]?

A: No he works at

Q: Right.....

A: And then he thinks we will be able to save my wage and eventually pay off the house which theoretically probably would work but I think it won't be so easy. It's hard to say 'I'll save that', because he won't always do it.

Q: He'll see this great thing he's just got to have now!.

A: Just thinking of saving my wage..... it will be going everywhere.

Q: So you'll have to work that one out as it comes.

A: And I've told him that..... and he said alright we'll just take it as it comes but just try to save what we can. It will probably be about four years after we're married.

Q: So you're not going to get pregnant straight away?

A: No.

Q: But obviously you would like to have a family?

A: I would...

Q: Is it important for you to get married, is the getting married bit important?

A: Yes. Not just because I'm a Christian point of view but I think because I'll have my own house and I won't have to be in at a certain time or if I'm late have a reason to tell my mum and dad why I'm late. I still have a hard time with them.

Q: Really..

A: They're not so bad as they were a few years ago but if I was going to be home after 12 I would have to tell them and I have to tell them why.

Q: It's a bad off these days. How do you feel about your parents and your relationship with them? Do you have different relationships with your mum and your dad?

A: Yes I can talk more to my dad, my dad is a bit more open and he will listen. Although he won't necessarily agree with you he'll always..... he'll try to persuade you to agree with him but my mum, she's very difficult to talk to. I have tried even talking to her about when she was a kid and things but from what we can gather she was battered or something when she was younger, or perhaps abused as well when she was younger.

Q: She's from an alcoholic family you were saying before.

A: Well we don't even know who but.. She told us she was born in a concentration camp, she's Dutch my mum.

Q: Oh right.

A: And then her dad married three times, she was from the second marriage and she didn't know about the first marriage until her dad died and this bloke came up and said – hello, I'm your brother - so we got to know him very well and my sister took a liking to him and his wife and she wrote to them, and we now think that her dad was sort of like, a follower of Hitler, but not necessarily a Nazi, but he was actually in prison for some reason and she was born in prison. But of course she won't say that, she just thinks that her dad's wonderful and that her dad was fighting in the resistance and all that. So she doesn't know that we know this.

Q: There are some really dark secrets in your mum it sounds like.

A: Yes so she just won't talk about it.

Q: It must be all too difficult for her.

A: I remember asking her if she had a boyfriend and things. She told me she was engaged once. It was like a big shock to me because I just never knew.

Q: She told you very little about her past?

A: And sometimes when you are talking to her it's almost like she's ignoring you. She's very asthmatic as well and the doctor says apparently the problem of asthmatics is emotional as well. So it might be something to do with that. I get on with her alright.

Q: But maybe you don't have the type of relationship with her that you would have liked to.

A: I met this girl called MARY, she's about thirty and I've been going round there since we moved here and she's been great to me. Talked to her and asked her.

Q: A substitute mum?

A: Yes. But then some of the nasty people you find in churches started spreading rumours my dad was having an affair with her. So then they were trying to stop me from seeing her, my dad had to stop seeing her, because her husband was an alcoholic so my dad was trying to help her but people started making all these rumours so ever since then my mum won't talk about MARY. If I go round to MARY'S she pulls a face. It's not that she believes it, she just thinks she's a bad influence on me. But she's not so bad now, she actually stuck up for her the other day.

Q: Was she an important person for you to have?

A: Yes. Because I do dancing and she was my dance teacher. So I always looked up to her and when she had a little baby then, and she actually trusted me with her baby and I played with it and changed its nappy. She was just really great..... Her husband left her and then he came back and then she left him and everyone at church started saying, that's awful, she should be with her husband, because it's very hard, but in the bible it says somewhere that if you have an unsafe husband and he leaves you then it's OK to have a divorce, but you can't leave him.

Q: It says women?

A: It's says men or women.

Q: I was going to say, that's pretty sexist.

A: So when she left him a lot of people of church started.... I mean I don't know the full story because I was only fourteen then and nobody would tell me and I couldn't see MARY because they had stopped me from seeing her and I didn't like to just run out in secret to see her, she'd got enough problems without me going 'what's happened'. But as soon as she got her own house I started going round again and at first she hated my dad and she hated mum, and because of that my other sister who was very close to her as well, she stopped going, but I kept going and I kept saying, 'well, I can understand how you feel, but it's still my mum, it's still my dad'.

Q: Do you find that you didn't agree sometimes with the sort of moralism in your church?

A: I don't disagree with it but I disagree how people people tend to twist parts of the bible to suit themselves and I don't agree with that. So now if I find something and I think that sounds a bit off, I'll go and look it up myself.

Q: And not trust what people tell you about it. What was your reaction, I mean is there an opinion in your church about AIDS? I know there has been quite a lot about AIDS being to do with gay people and punishment from God and things like, would that be the view that's held in your church?

A: Probably from the older people they would say its punishment from God, but most of the younger people don't see it quite like that. Nobody agrees with gay people or

Q: Do you?

A: No I don't agree with it.

Q: In what way don't you agree with it?

A: Well I don't think it's right. I don't think that's what God intended, but having said that my cousin's gay and I still go to see my cousin. My cousin and I still but I just don't agree with it. I mean I wouldn't have an argument with someone if they were gay, or not go next to them or anything, but it's just my opinion, I don't hold with it and I won't do it and as long as I everybody else has got a.....

Q: Right, that's quite a liberal view what you're saying.

A: I don't think everybody's like that.... but I think most people.....and my dad tried to take me out of school, but I threw a fit so he let me stay.

Q: I was going to say because [NAME OF SCHOOL] is not at all a strict school is it?

A: No, but I think that helped as well because there were so many youths there and because it was so open as well. So I just sort of felt, well I've got my opinions and other people have got theirs.

Q: And that you understand that you can have an opinion that's different to other people as well

A: My sister she is one of these people - I've got my opinion and I'm right. She went to a

Q: What school was that?

A: It was in Belfast. She's a lot older than me and she came over here she went straight to college..... She always stood up for her rights, stood up for what she believed in and as well when we first moved over here, because none of us really wanted to move, she just threw herself into school and got all her 'A' levels and went to university. Stood up against abortion, she had a poster plastered all over university. And now you disagree with her you might as well.....

Q: She's dogmatic.

A: Yes, in a way, yes. She's right and everybody else is wrong.

Q: Difficult people to talk to sometimes.

A: She has admitted that she's been wrong on occasions, but after you've had a fight with her.

Q: Do you think generally then has your opinion and understanding about AIDS changed a lot since it first came onto the scene? Do you think you know more about it, do you think you are reasonably well educated about it now or would you like to know more?

A: I think I could know more but I know enough, but I would like to know more.

Q: Right, so you know enough for the situation you're in?

A: Yes.

Q: If say, for instance, that you hadn't met MICHAEL and you might have met somebody else who you thought was going to be as good as MICHAEL and that relationship went down the plug hole, whatever.. Do you think then that you are in a situation that you might be sleeping with more than one person, do you think you would know enough given that situation?

A: No. I think I would like to know more.

Q: Yes, often it depends on what is actually going on in your life at the time doesn't it. Do you remember hearing recently the stuff in the papers about AIDS is no longer a heterosexual disease or heterosexuals don't need to worry about AIDS or straight people?

A: No.

Q: Right. It's just one thing we are asking people because there was a big media thing about it. What do you feel about AIDS education, the type of stuff that's been on television, the posters and things like that?

A: I think it's important that kids need to know about it. In case they come in a situation where either they or someone else thinks they've got AIDS, like that case with MICHAEL. If he'd have known more, he'd have known that he was OK. And I think especially if it's all plastered over the news and the newspapers like it was when I was at school, and you can't ask anyone and you don't know much about it, I think with situations like that when it starts getting all over the newspapers, they should make a point of explaining to you.

Q: Yes, rather than just it?

A: Yes, because as well when I was in primary school they were all going on about nuclear wars and all that.

Q: Me too.

A: And we asked our teacher about it and he says - well if you get a three-minute warning you've got to run seven miles and dig a hole seven feet deep and you get in it quick. And we were all panicking then, you know, we've got to be Sebastian Coe and all this.

Q: Did you feel about AIDS in the same way, - oh my God AIDS?

A: Yes. I mean at least at primary school they told us about nuclear war and he said..... But at school nobody said anything.

Q: Have you noticed that there's been less stuff about AIDS since then?

A: Yes, yes. I thought at first it was just because I was more interested in it at school which might be, but it's not on as much.

Q: What do you think the message is with that, do you think that's telling people there's not a problem or..?

A: I think it shows to me that the media just go along with what they think people are interested in at the time and it probably still is a problem. You don't know whether it was as bad as the media said to start off with and it's just died down now, or whether it's just stayed the same but the media have just forgotten about it.

Q: Do you think it's serious, have you any idea of the seriousness of it?

A: It must be quite serious otherwise it wouldn't get to the media's attention anyway, but I have heard how serious it all is.

Q:

A: Especially..... I've been sheltered all my life from everything.

Q: Do you feel that you have been sheltered?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you regret any of that. What effect do you think it has had on you?

A: I regret it in a sense that it just made me want to go out and do everything. I think if they'd just been a bit more open with me to start off with then I wouldn't really have bothered so much probably.

Q: What, things like going getting drunk and that sort of thing - liquid gold.

A: Whatever it is.

Q: Do you regret sleeping with MICHAEL?

A: No.

Q: So that's not part of that.

A: I think with me though, if I'd have had to go through all that when I was married it would have put a big strain on everything.

Q: Talking to him about the abuse?

A: Yes because that's how it all started off anyway and I think.. When I think about it and think back and how.. I mean I used to go home crying and all sorts. I would lie at night thinking 'why did he do that?', sort of thing. But it was good because I wasn't with him twenty-four hours a day and I didn't have to come home to him every night and I didn't have to sleep in the same bed with him every night. I think if I'd have had to do that when I was married I would have killed myself.

Q: Right, so it was a time when you actually didn't want to be with him after you'd talked about it?

A: Yes. I think I needed to be alone, I needed just to get away even if it was just to lie in bed at night thinking you know, why did he do that. Because you need to figure it out in your own head.

Q: Was that when he first started touching you?

A: Yes. I couldn't understand it, I thought only dirty men did it.

Q: It wasn't something nice to be sharing. Did you have problems, when it came to.. you say about him touching you, you found that difficult, how about you touching him? Were you able to do that?

A: No. I couldn't touch him at all.

Q: I can imagine. Did that change?

A: It did yes, but it must have been six months, maybe longer. And it was because I was feeling guilty because I thought, he's doing it all, sort of thing, and I think I shocked him with it.

Q: So you felt guilty that you weren't perhaps giving him as much as he was giving you?

A: Yes.

Q: Is that why you did it?

A: Probably to start off with yes, but then after that I did it more because I thought well, I love you, and you'll do that and I should pay more attention to you.

Q: How did you feel about his body?

A: I feel alright now, yes. At first I thought, oh, it's ugly, you know, keep that away from me. Now it doesn't bother me at all.

Q: It's nice when it stops being like that. You think 'I'll never be able to enjoy this'. Is there anything you want to ask me about AIDS or HIV or whatever you think I should have asked you that I haven't asked you yet?

(end of tape)