

## From a Whisper to a Roar

Interview Summary	
<b>Name:</b> Anne Howard	<b>Date:</b> 29/10/2019 <b>Age:</b> 66
<b>Key issues:</b> Post-war childhood. London. Lesbian. Kenric. Gay's The Word. AIDS Crisis. London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. Loneliness. Feminism. Female Oppression. Was co-chair of The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard for 3-4 years, and spent her time advocating for lesbians, encouraging more women to volunteer and take on leadership roles.	
<b>Narrative summary</b> Anne grew up in Watford in the 'post-war' years. She was never overtly aware of her sexuality, being neither particularly attracted to boys or girls; she was more interested in rebelling against the 'conventional'. She became aware of her sexuality after moving to London, finding herself in gay circles, and becoming involved with another woman. Anne became involved with the gay scene after attending a Lesbian Discussion Group at Gay's The Word bookshop and signing up to Kenric's monthly newsletter.  She talks about how during the time she was becoming aware of being a lesbian she was also becoming more politically left-wing. Although she did read Spare Rib and other feminist texts in her twenties, she began to move away from such feminist literature and instead began reading more texts that would support her feelings and political views as a lesbian.  In the mid-1990s Anne started volunteering for The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, in an attempt to become more active in giving back to the community. She had had previous training with the Samaritans, however felt they were lacking with gay and lesbian specialisation; which brought her to The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. During her time as co-chair of Switchboard, she began pushing for more women volunteers to join and take on leadership roles.  She talks about her reflections upon the lesbian community at the time she was staffing the phones for Switchboard. What struck her the most was the loneliness, especially amongst older members, of the lesbian community. Due to the difficulty of meeting other lesbian friends/lovers, it was hard for older women to find a community that they were active in; especially those who did not live in big cities. Anne found this difficult, as this loneliness was not something she could easily solve.  Anne goes on to discuss how female oppression and patriarchy is still at the heart of lesbian lives. She says that the gendering of women ultimately makes it harder for non-traditional women [lesbians] to break out of this pattern.	
	<b>Length of interview:</b> 55 mins





Marguerite: So I'm just going to make sure that this is recording. I'm Marguerite McLaughlin. This is an interview for From A Whisper to a Roar, oral history project conducted by Opening Doors London, and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Today is Tuesday the 29th of October, 2019. I am interviewing Anne. Now, Anne, could we start by you telling me a little bit about your early life, and how you came to understand who you are?

Anne: Okay. I suppose I was thinking about this in connection with this interview. I was born in the '50s. And, um. I think the '50s were a very big changing place and time for the place I grew up in which was a small town outside of London because most of the parents and people that I was familiar with in the area that we lived as a youngish child were people post the Second World War. They had come through a very difficult experience, and,

therefore, they were very much involved with their children, their family lives, their jobs. I went to school in the '60s.

During the '50s and '60s I can honestly say I was totally unaware of any kind of different sexuality. Most of the people within my family, and people that I mixed with, and school friends, et cetera, I would say that it was completely unknown to me at the time. I suppose as I moved into a teenager in the '60s I was aware that there were teachers at school who potentially could have been lesbians. I believe that we might have discussed that whether we used the term lesbian or gay, I think, probably we used the term lesbian. I suppose, again, it was almost a reflection of, again, post war because there was always a sense of women who were single and unmarried were probably in that state because of what had happened in the war.

Marguerite: Of course.

Anne: So that sort of experience of seeing teachers who were obviously very close, and were doing lots of things together socially, and a couple of them even lived together it was always, well, they lost their partners in the war so that was very much the sort of story behind it. Whether I would have discussed that with my parents I don't think so. I'm not sure; possibly. So that was a sort of awareness of changing sexuality. And then I think we hit this amazing period in the UK of the '60s where the pill was available, music changed, people started to wear very unusual clothing, sort of broke out of that very strict sort of '40s and '50s.

The '60s were a really exciting time. I can remember wanting to be very much part of that '60s. I was very interested in the fact that it all seemed to be happening in Chelsea, and London, and the West End of London. I can remember maybe age 16 traveling into London from Watford where I was living, and seeing people wearing clothing, and with hairstyles, and behaving in a way that you wouldn't actually have seen in Watford. I can remember the sort of Biba of West Kensington, and going there, and buying a dress, which was completely '60s, and then trying to wear it in Watford, and actually getting thrown off the bus by the bus driver.

Marguerite: Wow.

Anne: Because I had all these beads, and hair, and this very unusual clothing with dresses and velvet pants, and all that sort of thing. So I guess that was the sort of start of being a little bit different. Now how that difference started I really don't know. I didn't at that time have any particular feelings I would say sexually for anyone really. I wasn't particularly interested in men or boys, and I wasn't particularly interested in women, although I had a lot of close women friends at the time. I think I had a slow burgeoning sexuality, but it was more for me about being different, wanting to be different from everybody else. Not wanting to follow the crowd. Not wanting to do the conventional. A lot of that then revolved around finishing school, going to college, getting a job, those types of things. So I suppose I'm talking about probably at that time early '70s to mid '70s. After that I had a few

boyfriends, nobody really very serious, and then I moved to London, which I was very keen to do.

As soon as I moved to the London scene I began to realize, and the whole world of sexuality was really beginning to open up. I met people who I think particularly at that time, gay men, or men who described themselves as gay at the time. I think the thing about that that was really interesting is that they'd had this huge liberation for themselves in the '60s and '70s, and then the early '80s became the AIDS crisis. That was something that was very apparent to me, and I was very aware of that. I had friends, and colleagues, and people I knew who were either ill, or were worried about becoming ill. At the same time I met my first lover who was a woman. We got into a fairly sort of close and serious relationship quite quickly, but around that I had a lot of lesbian friends and gay men friends at the time, and moved in that kind of circle. I think that's how I began to realize just at that point of the early '80s that my sexuality was as is today lesbian.

Marguerite: Did you have an easy time with it with your parents? How did that go? Did you come out when?

Anne: Yes, I did. I introduced them to quite a lot of my friends. They came to a party at my then flat where all of my friends were there. As I said previously gay men, lesbians, and people who would describe themselves as straight. I think they began to get an awareness of it. They never actually directly asked me questions about it, but when I had introduced them to my partner a number of different times, and we'd done things with them I opened up the discussion. At the time my mother was very accepting, but my father said, "Well, I think it's a phase you're going through, and we don't mind, but I'm sure you're grow out of it."

That was quite optimistic of him because at the time I was probably 30, so the idea of growing out of my sexuality at 30 is not really very realistic, but subsequent to that through the many years of people that they've met, and things I've done certainly right up to probably the last 10 years, and to the end of my father's life, which was some years ago now they were very accepting. I think the thing that was hard for them, and we did discuss it at some point was that they felt that I had made them come out as well in the sense that if their friends said, "What's Anne doing now?" or "Has Anne got a boyfriend?" or "Is Anne getting married?" They had to answer those questions, and they felt quite uncomfortable about that.

I think they found that difficult to deal with because of their friends, and so on, but we did discuss the fact that on my mother's side certainly one of her uncles was almost certainly gay, although, undercover. He was a butler at a large house, and he never came out, but we're almost certain that he was gay because of the way that he lived his life. And there is another family member who is gay as well. I was able to reference those people and say it's around us all, and we see people who are gay all the time, and to use examples from television, and books, and magazines who at the time '80s and '90s people were coming out a lot more, so I think people in the media, and so on really did help with that quite a lot.

Although, I can remember an occasion my mother liked watching horse racing, and Clare Balding was on, and a neighbour came round, and was talking to my mother. The neighbour said, "She's lovely isn't she Clare Balding? I love that dress and hat she's got on. It's a shame she's one of them." And my mother said, "What do you mean one of them?" She said, "Oh, you know, one of them." My mom said, "Well, no, she's just a normal person isn't she?" So she actually did even with me in the room not saying very much myself sort of explained to the neighbour that Clare Balding was a perfectly normal person in every way, and her sexuality doesn't come out in any way unless she wants it to, and it's not relevant to the horse racing.

Marguerite: Except that she's jolly good and knows her horses.

Anne: Exactly, she's an expert isn't she?

Marguerite: Yeah.

Anne: Yeah. So that was quite an interesting situation.

Marguerite: You described that recognizing in yourself your sexuality that when you came to London you first met some gay men, and then met a whole variety of other people, and that led to meeting people who then not only became friends, but you got involved with in relationships. How did you form that community? How did you meet those people initially?

Anne: Through activities really. It's a good question and I haven't really thought about in my answer, but I think the first thing was is that there was an organization, which is still around today, Kenric. I was going to work one day, and I decided I wanted to just investigate this whole area of was I a lesbian or not because I didn't have any particular feelings for anybody at that time, but I was just aware of this sort of awakening because of the contact with people through a tennis club, and other friends who knew people in the area that I was then living in. I remember going to work, and then on this particular evening thinking I'm going to go to the library, which happened to be Marylebone Library, and see if there's anything on their notice board. I went to the library saw a poster for Kenric, and also something for Gay's The Word bookshop. So I decided that I would follow-up both those things. I went to Gay's The Word bookshop, and it was the discussion evening that they have. [Lesbian Discussion Group]

Marguerite: All right, okay.

Anne: And I can remember it's quite funny because, obviously, at the time, and working in a senior role in banking I had a very smart suit on. It was a little bit like Mrs. Thatcher arriving because I had a briefcase, and this smart suit, and a very nice shirt and shoes. I remember having to sit down on the floor, and feeling I stood out like a sore thumb in this particular group, but the discussion was excellent. It was a lot of women not many men. The people were all really, really interesting, and that kind of sort of took me into it. I mean, goodness knows what they thought of me. They probably thought I was a spy, or something for the Metropolitan Police, but I was there really



very much, and sort of that opened up a whole area. Then I used to go to the bookshop, and look at their notices, and buy books. In those days they had adverts as well people wanting to contact each other on their notice board. That was something that I did think about. I didn't actually do very much about it.

And then I started to talk to friends and people about Kenric activities. In those days they also produced a newsletter, which you could join, and then they would send you this newsletter, which is like a little magazine. I used to get that on a regular basis. I used to go to activities either with someone, or on my own. Gradually from that I built quite a circle of people that I knew, and that sort of took me really up to probably my sort of early '40s really.

Marguerite: Right. Now, you mentioned the media being very helpful to you in terms of your sort of forging of an identity. Were there other influences as well? I mean, for example, what sort of media? In terms of political movements, or figure heads, or personalities, who was it that was meaningful to you in that whole process?

Anne: Well, I think there's a combination of things really because certainly through Gay's The Word bookshop I was starting to read a lot of lesbian books, fiction, but also the more famous books that have been around for a long time things like The Well of Loneliness, and a lot of other material. I was very much immersed in lesbian fiction and non-fiction that was part of it. There were also magazines around at the time, so I was clearly reading magazines.

Marguerite: What sort?

Anne: I'm just trying to think. Well, the Pink Paper was around, and I think Diva might have been around, and the American one whose name I can never remember, but that was around as well. What was the American?

Marguerite: I'm not sure. Was the American one Deneuve, or was that the one that then morphed into becoming Diva?

Anne: I think Deneuve morphed into Diva, didn't it?

Marguerite: Right. I think probably. I don't remember a magazine from the states. You don't mean Ms. Magazine? That was more feminist. Did you read Spare Rib back in the day?

Anne: Yes, but Spare Rib was before being a lesbian really. I was reading that as a political journal really very much in my 20s, so very much. I probably gave up Spare Rib as I moved more into sort of lesbian fiction at that time, or lesbian media, which I was very much aware of. I suppose, also, there was a lot of music around, and I remember this because I don't know whether you know, but the Indigo Girls played a concert last night in London.

Marguerite: Oh, no.

Anne: I'd forgotten that it was on. I think music was also extremely influential in the sort of '70s and '80s, and that would have been people like Mary Chapin Carpenter, the Indigo Girls, Joan Baez, all the sort of famous protest type songs because I think as well as being lesbian I was also at the time becoming much more politically left wing. I was beginning to find my place, which, obviously, as I described earlier I'd been sort of searching for through my 20s, but in your 20s not everybody, but certainly for me I wasn't as politically aware 'til the end of my 20s as I really became politically in the 30s and right through 'til probably today. Yes, I was reading Spare Rib, and other feminist material in my 20s, but as I moved to realize that my life was going to be as a lesbian I wanted to read more stuff to support my feelings, and also my political views. I wish I could remember the name of the American magazine, but I had a subscription to it for a long time. There was one. Anyway, I might be able to come back on that one.

Marguerite: [inaudible 00:20:04] No? That was a very radical one for a while. I hope you do remember it. When it strikes you, and it will, you must tell me.

Anne: I will. I will let you know. I think the other thing that I didn't mention, but also had a fairly significant influence on me was that by sheer coincidence I have relatives in America. One of the relatives said to me, "I'm sending over my niece and her friend, and they're doing a tour of Europe. They just graduated from university. They're in their early 20s." I would probably have been 30 at the time. "Could they stay with you?" And I said, "Yes, they could." When they arrived I went to pick them up from the airport, and they looked like two little boys because they've both got completely shaved heads, and were wearing jeans, T-shirts.

As soon as they sort of arrived back at my house they came out to me, and said they were a couple. At that point I hadn't met anyone. I was just mixing and meeting people, but not developing any relationships. They gave me the confidence as well by meeting them. They introduced me to a whole I would say U.S. lesbian culture, West Coast, and so on. One of them subsequently went onto be a quite well-known lesbian comedian. So we've kept in contact over the years. Therefore, I've always felt that I don't just have a British context for lesbian life, I have a U.S. context for lesbian life as well. So that's been another big, big influence. I think the timing of all of these things came together, and brought me to where I am today really.

Marguerite: Right. Now, one of the things I'm particularly interested in talking to you about is your activism particularly as it involves London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, so can we explore that a little bit how that came into your life?

Anne: Yes, I think that's been a really significant part of my life albeit relatively short. In the '80s when the AIDS crisis started we all got these very scary leaflets delivered through our doors with the sort of rocks on the front of it, and it looked like it was going to be all hell broke loose. Of course, for many, many people sadly it was, but at the time there was a lot of confusion particularly amongst lesbians as to what the risk was for lesbians because it wasn't really described adequately in the literature. In fact, as far as I can remember lesbian relationships weren't mentioned at all. It was completely



about male to male sex. Maybe a little bit about male to female sex, I can't remember.

I called Lesbian and Gay Switchboard as it was then, and spoke to someone, a man, and I asked him lots of questions about what was the risk for lesbians. And he was really clear, and really reassuring so that sort of was in the back of my mind, I guess. Obviously, it cleared up a lot of confusion, and we were able as groups of women to talk about this, and to sort of clear up what our risk was, which I'm pleased to say was relatively minimal, not entirely, but quite small. So we carried on living our lives, but at the same time were very aware that it was very different for men, and, of course, some heterosexual people as well. When I got to about mid 1990s and I'd had a number of happy, successful relationships, and I had what I felt was a very good life, very comfortable life, I felt I wanted to do something that was more activist rather than sort of being quite passive.

Marguerite: Or social?

Anne: Or social, yes, exactly. Something a bit more political. I've always been very left wing, but I particularly wanted to do something that would perhaps help the community. I thought about joining Lesbian Line, but at the time Lesbian Line itself was struggling, and it looked very much like Lesbian Line was going to close, which it subsequently did very, very quickly. So I think it was about 1995, '96, something like that that I volunteered to become a volunteer at London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. It was very interesting because I felt immediately when I got there that it was a much better organized organization than many other things that I had seen in my life, other social groups, or political groups, or other things that I had joined. So I felt very much that it was quite successful, and was likely to become more successful. At the time that I joined the calls were huge in terms of volume of numbers. I believe from memory it was about 40,000 calls a year, although, it's now gone down, obviously, much more because the nature of calls have changed.

I had previously been a Samaritan in Ealing working with Samaritans so I'd had Samaritan's training. One of the things that I had felt about Samaritans was that whilst they are also excellent their sort of gay specialization, and their lesbian specialization wasn't particularly strong, so that was another reason that I wanted to take calls from gay men and lesbians. And that was a way to do it through Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. As soon as I joined almost within a few months people wanted me to do more, so I ended up becoming more and more involved through that period. I think it was a period of great change for Switchboard because it was clear that the nature of calls were going to change because people were now using mobile phones, email, instant messaging, all these types of methods.

It became very apparent that the organization itself had to go through a lot of changes to make that happen. Having led various little teams within Switchboard particularly around human resources, which was management of volunteers, and also supporting the public relations team and that sort of thing I felt it was very important for me to step up as a woman when to

some degree they hadn't had many people in leadership who were women. It was mainly a male led organization. Again, I think, I'm really talking from memory here so I can't be exact on it, but I believe we had something like 150 volunteers of which probably 30 to 40 were women, so it was very much a male dominated, male run organization.

It was important that we brought more women in, and encouraged them to lead, and take leadership roles, and to create influence within the organization that reflected much more women's experience because a lot of the calls, and it's not something that was unfamiliar to me because it was the same with Samaritans, but a lot of the calls were male calls. A lot of them were around masturbation and those types of things, and talking about sexual activity. I think as the sexual chatlines came in; the specific paid for sexual chatlines those sorts of calls diminished, and we began to get more emotional and practical calls. I think that was a good thing because I think the women generally felt more comfortable dealing with those types of calls rather than some of the masturbatory calls.

We began to get more women callers as well because at the same time Lesbian Line had ceased, and because our lines were less busy, and we had more ways of accessing our services we began to get more calls from women. We made real efforts to get more women volunteers as well. So that was a big push for me in terms of my activism. I think my period as co-chair of Switchboard lasted about three years, maybe four years, and that was a time when the organization did change substantially so I was very pleased and proud of that particular of time.

Marguerite: Understandably so.

Anne: I think now looking at Switchboard, interestingly they have a lot of more modern ways of expressing and advertising their services. For example, they now have podcasts and things like that. I was listening to one of the podcasts last night. It's really good, but now they have a whole range of ways that people can access and understand their services. I think the other thing that was important at the time as well was to get publicity out into the more mainstream media, and we were able to do that through linking in with a number of well-known gay for want of a better word celebrities and writers, and people like that. So that raised our profile, and at the same time we won a number of significant grants, and that was also good publicity as well because it meant that we were able to demonstrate that unlike, unfortunately, other similar organizations we were able to show that we had financial competence, and were, therefore, able to raise large sums of money from grant giving organizations, which also helped to support the work as well.

I think the fact that Switchboard has been around for almost 50 years now is really reflective of that, that it has a very good cohesive structure, and extremely good financial competence, which has survived where we've seen a number of very needed lesbian and gay organizations disappear for that reason. I think the one I'm really thinking about is the lesbian and gay centre

in sort of Shoreditch, which sadly was lost to the community, and it was a big loss.

Marguerite: It really was.

Anne: A massive loss, and it should never ever have happened.

Marguerite: No.

Anne: And that was due to financial incompetence, and that was very annoying at the time more than that possibly, very upsetting, because London really then emerged as one of the only cities in the world of any prominence that doesn't have a lesbian and gay centre. As you know I do a lot of traveling, or have done a lot of traveling. I've been to over 100 countries, and every time I go to a new place I always seek out the lesbian and gay centre because I want to see what it's like, who's there, and if I can do anything to support them, or just to get a sense of community as well, which is very important. It's sad to see that many cities I go to do have a reasonably successful lesbian and gay centre, but London doesn't.

Marguerite: I've come to realize the importance of space for politics of availability of space, and it is absolutely tragic.

Anne: Yes, and I think that has an impact on many smaller organizations as well because in a city like London to get a room that you can use for meetings, or discussions, or whatever activities we might want to do as a community is almost impossible because, A, it's too expensive, and, B, it's not always very accessible, and has all sorts of other problems with it. So having a lesbian and gay centre. would be fantastic. I suppose the nearest we have in London is St. Anne's at Soho, but that has its own connotations. It's part of a church, which is fine, but it would be much better if we had a more neutral lesbian and gay centre.

Marguerite: A secular space.

Anne: Secular space, but, also, accessible and maybe not in the center of London, somewhere perhaps where people could visit more regularly, not necessarily the West End. Why not East London, or South London, or somewhere else? So, yes, I think that's one of our sadnesses really.

Marguerite: How long did you actually staff the phones for as a Switchboard volunteer?

Anne: For the whole time that I was there so that would be from about 1995 through to 2010.

Marguerite: So it is a long time. You mentioned that you hadn't been involved with Switchboard for that long, but, in fact, you were.

Anne: Yes. I mean, initially, probably for the first two or three years it was very much phone work, and stuff around that, but as I became more involved on a management and administration level I suppose it was. In my last period

probably round about 2006 to 2010 it was almost a full-time job in lots of ways because there was a lot going on at the time, and although I had a male co-chair it was a very demanding role at the time. I believe, I'm not sure, but I think I was the first female co-chair because I think previous to that there hadn't been co-chairs. I think that was brought in about 1996, '97. Oh, no, of course, Boo Armstrong. I mustn't forget Boo Armstrong, of course. She was the first female co-chair. I think I was the second.

Marguerite: In terms of creating a community and the importance of a community I'd like to ask you a question about perhaps your reflections on the nature of things you came to learn about our lesbian community because you staffed the phones.

Anne: That's a very good question. I think I've got probably a couple of reflections there. I suppose to me one of the things that's most moving, and I still think about it is that many of the women callers I spoke to, and I can only speak from my own experience, obviously, but I guess it will be generic because it would be unusual if I happened to be the only person who got those types of calls, but I felt that there was a lot of loneliness within the lesbian community, particularly amongst older women. The younger lesbians who would ring and call, and want to speak to someone were probably coming out, and wanted reassurance, support to discuss coming out. Whilst they might have been questioning and needing support, generally I would say they weren't unhappy. They just wanted a mixture of information of being able to talk about relationships in the way that you would talk about relationships with anyone. So the calls perhaps weren't substantially different to the sort of calls that I would take when I was a Samaritan, but I think the thing that struck me particularly was certainly for older lesbian women. I'm probably talking about women in their 40s and 50s, and beyond.

It's very difficult to meet people particularly lesbian friends and/or lovers. A lot of them had had relationships, and they hadn't continued, so, therefore, they were really lonely, and struggling with trying to find community, and to move on. Then the other group probably were women who'd been married, perhaps had had children, and when they're coming out and questioning their own sexuality, and wanting to come out as lesbian, mostly as lesbian not often as bisexual, not really trans I don't think by any number, but certainly wanting to come out even if they couldn't articulate the word lesbian as gay, or just to discuss having relationships with other women often driven by meeting someone who they liked, or books. Certainly, in the 2000s, which is where I'm talking about now we were beginning to see more and more television programs where women were involved, so the soap operas, and all the soaps and series, and other programs where women were meeting each other, and having lesbian relationships.

I think that was a very difficult area of calls because realistically you can talk to people about their feelings, and you can support them in their feelings, but what they're desperate to do is really build a community, and have a social life. It's very difficult to say to someone who perhaps, and I'm just going to take an example here, lives in a very small town in Scotland, or a

very small town in Cornwall, or Suffolk where actually you can go to the local pub, and you'll meet a whole group of people. There is a lesbian club in your town, or there is a lesbian pub in your town, or there is a lesbian social group in your town because very often the answer is there isn't, and how lesbians build community is very difficult. It's easier in the big cities, and it's easier if you're young now because if you go to university there are almost certainly lesbian clubs, and social groups and so on, but for the older woman it becomes increasingly difficult.

I suppose that's a concern going forward for women who came out in their 20s, 30s, probably 20 or 30 years ago. There's a large group of women now in their 50s, 60s, 70s who are going to find moving forward with their lives increasingly difficult because there isn't the sort of groups, or support. For example, if you're heterosexual you can join the University of the Third Age, and it has thousands of different activities, but the majority of people who are in the University of the Third Age are older people who have been married, and mainly describe themselves as heterosexual. You wouldn't actually find a lesbian chapter, or a lesbian club within the University of the Third Age. The things that are available for older people they're not very accessible or suitable for lesbian women. I think coming back to your question about the calls, I think that was probably one of the things that I found quite difficult that it was not easy to support people, particularly women who were older, and were lonely, and wanted to meet people and/or were questioning their sexuality, and wanted support with that.

One of the easiest methods of support is meeting a friend for a cup of tea, or accessing other support methods through friends and/or relatives who understand where you're coming from, and that's not very easy for most women. I think that was a difficult call area, and often that led onto depression, and mental health issues. Again, finding the right support for lesbians within the NHS is tricky. A lot of women won't come out to their doctors, GPs. They don't like coming out even to their nurse practitioners within the surgery for things like breast checks, cancer checks, smear tests, those types of things, so that's a big issue as well. Not that we had many calls about those types of things, but they would be discussed generally within a call, people's health both mental and physical if that was appropriate, and they would raise the issues, but following up on those sorts of things is very difficult.

Marguerite: Do you feel there's anything that you haven't been able to bring up yet in this interview that you would like to say?

Anne: Well, we've ranged across quite a range of topics haven't we really?

Marguerite: Yes, or things that we've left out?

Anne: Yeah. I suppose the thing that is still unresolved is the wider representation of lesbians as strong happy successful people within all aspects of the media, and public life. There's always the sense that the lesbian is other.

Marguerite: And that there's a half a dozen.

Anne: Yes.

Marguerite: Yeah, and one of them is Clare Balding.

Anne: Yes. Well, we're lucky that we have some very prominent women who are prepared to put themselves right up there, and take all the shit that that involves.

Marguerite: Yes.

Anne: Sandi Toksvig, Clare Balding, Steph McGovern, I could go on. There are a lot of women now relatively who are doing that, and being open about their lives, and their children, and their lifestyle, and their partners, and so on, but they get a huge amount of attacks on things like Twitter, in the media, some of the rather hateful newspapers, and so on. I think still there's not enough representation of mass lesbians with happy successful lives, but I think that's also to do with women feeling uncomfortable about coming out in public, and being public about their lives because they know what will happen to them if they stand up and be counted.

Marguerite: Yes.

Anne: They will actually have to be very, very strong to deal with what that will bring them. I'm not sure it's quite the same for gay men. There's still a sense that women should be women, and I think that's a lot to do with the relationship between men and women.

Marguerite: Or the whole issue about independent sexuality I think is what is problematic.

Anne: Yes.

Marguerite: Because as a lesbian the thing that distinguishes and identifies you is sex.

Anne: You don't have sex with men, yeah.

Marguerite: Exactly. Of course, that is a whole other topic in terms of female sexuality, and socialization, but an active sexuality, which is necessarily the case for lesbians because otherwise nothing would ever happen, but someone has to take the lead, and if it's not in heterosexual terms it's got to be one woman or the other is I think a very, very complex, and challenging issue for us all.

Anne: Yes. I think, again, it comes back to some of the sort of hateful things that are going on. We have to frame this interview in the context of the fact that we're in October of 2019, and we're in the UK, but we have to recognize that much power is controlled in the hands of a very few heterosexual men who see their lives through the context of their own heterosexuality so they see women in a particular way. Therefore, for many men, not all, but many men the majority I would suggest I have met both in my work with Switchboard, my career, and my life day-to-day, and once again in the media they see women as very much the wives and mothers.

They don't understand the fact that a woman would not want to be necessarily in that role with them, so they see it through their own personal context. Why would a woman not want to be with a man like me? I have power. I have influence. I have all these things. I think that's why we see a lot of sexual harassment as well in the top level of politics, business, media, and so on because men have a particular view of women, and they do not understand anything that doesn't fit that pattern because after all we're all rather similar to that. We don't understand very well things that are outside our own understanding and pattern.

Marguerite: Yeah, that's fear.

Anne: Yes, but I think it's more insidious in the sense that, and I refer to the media a lot, but I think that's where it becomes more insidious because we get it fed to us every day. Before the interview started you and I were talking about the sexualization and the influence on children, particularly girls, through the sort of way that they are gendered. So the gendering of women is a really key issue because it makes it harder for non-traditional gendered women to break out of that pattern, and that becomes because there are fewer of them in some ways that makes it harder for men to understand that because men are also being heavily gendered as well.

Marguerite: Of course.

Anne: Just as the opposite is pink for girls it's blue for boys, so they have a lot of very heavy gendering, and it's therefore difficult to break out of that gendering, and to be successful.

Marguerite: It's a man's world, but there is a price to pay.

Anne: Yes, men pay the price just as much as women do, but nevertheless if you look at the world as a whole men still have, and particularly, also, in developing countries as well as here in Europe they have a huge amount of power and influence.

Marguerite: And privilege.

Anne: Yes.

Marguerite: Yes.

Anne: And privilege, yeah.

Marguerite: If you came to face-to-face with a younger you considering everything that we've talked about in this interview is there something in particular that you might say to your younger self?

Anne: I think probably what I would say is why didn't you come out sooner, and you should have been more confident about who you would be at the age of now 66 because I now feel at the age of 66 I'm a rounded happy person. I guess I don't really worry about what people think, or may think about me,



or what my future might be. I wish I'd had that real confidence perhaps in my 20s and 30s that life is going to turn out really well. I've been fortunate that it has. That's part of it, I think. Also, I think, enjoy it while you can is also a motto that I would have said. Get as much as you can while you can and enjoy it because there's lots out there available to you. I feel that maybe I was a bit too serious, so I should have been a bit more frivolous. Now is my time.

Marguerite: Now is your time.

Anne: Yes.

Marguerite: Excellent. Thanks so much.

Anne: Okay.