

## MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE FOR WOMEN (1960s-1980s)

### **Barbara**

*I married at 20 but I had to have permission to marry as I was under 21. My first time abroad was our honeymoon in Spain in 1967. I had two kids and went back to work when they were three and they were in nursery. I went on the pill after the kids, as I didn't want anymore – I'd had two kids in three years. My wages went on luxuries for the family. I worked in a nursing home, and I was told, "Don't tell anyone else what you earn". When the kids grew up, I started going out again.*

### **Elaine B**

*My childhood – my parents shared roles, and dad was better than mum, who worked part-time in a shop. Dad worked in the mines, looked after horses, then the Water Board, looking after reservoirs, pumping stations, etc.*

*I shared child-care with my husband. Having a professional job – did that have an impact? Shift work too, so men had to pull their weight. You got lots of respect as a nurse. Husband was a jobbing builder. Once I was married, yes, I'd go out socialising with people from the ward to Chez Giovanni's for a meal. As a couple, we'd go to the 'Artful Dodger' on Saturday night.*

### **Pam**

*Husband did DIY. He cooks now, he didn't have time before. We worked different shifts, so he'd have the kids in the evening.*

### **Marilyn**

*I married at 18, finished work and had 2 kids by age 21. I was sterilised at 31. I didn't want any more kids. First marriage, it was all me in the house. I was the primary carer, after Ian was born I worked at home. No sharing of baby stuff.*

### **Sally**

*I got pregnant, then I was a housewife and mother. In my marriage, childcare wasn't shared. I was resilient, or is that being overly positive? Childcare was 'women's work'. There was no time off for husbands after birth, he wasn't at the birth, either. He was the handyman, and I was given house-keeping. We shared the shopping, I did the cleaning and washing, and we shared cooking. Other women would say, "It's my kitchen" but not me, I was used to it, with my dad.*

*There was some flexibility in working as a social worker. I managed my own hours, worked near the school, etc. My oldest girl helped me out, but it was my job to make sure kids were ok, not my husband's. I wanted to do the school run – it was unspoken.*

*I brought the kids up with no boys or girls' jobs in the home. They both had to do household chores. It was the 1960s. But there were no girl toys at home initially for the boy, as my husband thought it "cissy". I'd let the kids have whatever toys they wanted. The boy liked Action Man, the girls liked Tiny Tears and teddy bears – it wasn't a conscious decision, it was just age appropriate. Little ones shouldn't be harnessed towards gender-specific toys, just leave it. Don't plant ideas of right and wrong. Give them opportunities to make own choices.*

### **Jane**

*I married a police officer, moved away, worked part-time. I was age 20. My wages were supplementary. At 20 and 22, I had kids, and returned to work when they were in school.*

### **Elaine T**

*I had children at 25, then went back to work 5 years later. The children went to nursery, and then later, family looked after them. I went back on the 3-day week. I think I had Statutory Maternity pay, but I can't remember. My husband took his share of night feeds with the children, but he worked shifts. My wages originally went into the house-hold, but later they were my own, to keep. I wouldn't trust a man with a new baby though.*

### **Babs**

*I was married at 20 and had children at 24. I didn't work when I had the children. I was liberated against my will when my husband left me. I had to bring up the kids on my own.*

## **Melanie**

*You couldn't have social housing when you were married, only private. I got married, honeymoon was in Cornwall. We signed for the house a day before marriage.*

*I was main bread winner, as a nurse. We had no hot water, he was out of work, so he did the house, rewired it, etc. I worked continental shifts in the steelworks. Shared chores. It was always me to take care of money.*

*After the baby, I went back to work at 3 months. He'd have the baby at night. He was a house husband for 18 months. Then nursery, as we were financially secure. I had SMP for 3 months. Breast-fed for 3 months. He worried about the health, and did mum and toddler groups, etc, he was quite exceptional, but was brought up without mum, so was used to it with his dad. My brother was always hands-on, too. Parents were progressive too, on both sides. Husband's dad taught him to cook. It's important to have shared values when you meet and marry.*