

# 'My Story'

**Tony Rugg**

## Shortened interview transcripts from the Unheard Voices Project

**M**y name is Tony Rugg. I was born in Bridgend in Glamorgan, in 1955. My wife Jayne has a hearing loss. I met my wife in 1980. She could hear at the time we got together, she had a hearing aid.

Her hearing was deteriorating all the time, not too badly, but then in 2000 Jayne had an operation on the one ear. About three months after that her hearing had completely disappeared from both ears. We never really got an answer why. We suspected it could have been a virus of some sort.

I remember going into this padded room with Jayne for another hearing test, and she had some headphones on and I could hear the noise coming out of the headphones. It was so loud I almost had to cover my ears up. But Jayne couldn't hear any of it. I think it was at that point that it struck me; 'My God, Jayne is totally deaf'.

### Depression

Jayne was getting more and more depressed with it all. But I think we both were. It was a very dark time in our lives. Jayne didn't want to go out. She didn't want to face people. So basically Jayne closed down as a person, she used to sit in the window watching me go to work in tears and then I would come home and she would still be in tears sitting in the chair. And that was a very difficult time, obviously for Jayne and myself.

Sometimes I had time off to help her through, but you know, at some point life has to go on. So you just carry on. Some people say 'Oh, it is brave' but that's what you do. You just carry on.

### Communication

I remember an incident, I was at work and I was at the coffee machine. And it

was only about six months after it happened and obviously it was a very depressing time. But I remember a colleague saying to me, 'well of course, this is the sort of thing that will bring you close together'. And my initial reaction was, 'well no, because it is trying hard to pull us apart'. Because you can't communicate. I think it is the act of bringing yourselves back together again that, how can I put it, brings you closer together. The deafness itself is a terrible thing and lack of communication. It is trying so hard to pull you apart. But then you know, over time we have overcome that. But you are always working against it.

The spontaneity of discussion communication has disappeared. I mean, the silly things like telling jokes. It is very difficult to tell a joke or share a joke with somebody who is deaf. Because if you miss the punch line, by the time you have explained it you have lost it.

Jayne is fortunately very good at lip reading. Even with my beard and moustache! We did toy with the idea of signing but, as Jayne said, she doesn't really want to do that because she is still part of the hearing world, she is not part of the deaf world. So if she learned to sign, who would she sign with?

### Social Life

Jayne has lost her self-esteem, her self-confidence. She doesn't like going out, she is better now than she used to be. Going out in groups is one of the most difficult times for Jayne. She is very good on a one to one but with a group of people, obviously, communication is that much more difficult.

Family occasions can be difficult as well, because quite a few of the family live locally, so quite often there are maybe seven or eight people at a gathering of the family, and of course they are all keen to talk to each other. But that can leave Jayne out in the cold quite often. So I find that sort of occasion is quite difficult for me as well as Jayne. Because

if I just turn round and talk to everybody else, I feel as if I am cutting off Jayne as well. So there is always that feeling of guilt behind everything.

So I try my best most of the time to bring her into the conversations but sometimes it is not always possible. And obviously I am no saint either; I am not perfect all the time. I am just a normal person.

### Working Hard

One thing that I found helped me as the hearing partner when everything went wrong, one thing I could do was try and find out about all the technology. These things don't worry me, so I threw myself into the Internet and doing all sorts of research to find out what was around at the time.

I think we are closer together now than we were at the beginning. But you have to put an awful lot of work into it. I mean with any marriage, or should I say partnership these days, it is hard work to keep it together. But even more so if you have communication issues. But yes, you know, we just celebrated our 27th anniversary, so we are fine; we have come through it all. But there is nothing to be complacent about I think. You have to work hard to keep on top of it.

It has taken a long, long, long time, but yes, things are a lot better than they were then.



Jayne and Tony Rugg