

# THE OTHER SIDE

Edna is a fourth year Arts student. She became pregnant the summer before coming to UNB and was due to have her baby in April. When she had the child she put it up for adoption. This is her story exactly as she told it. Nothing has been changed from the original tape except for superficial editing. The names of all people concerned have been changed for their own protection. The opinions stated in this interview are those of Edna and the interviewer and in no way should they be considered the opinion of the Brunswickan staff.

BRUNS: Why did you approach me about this interview instead of me trying to find you?

EDNA: Because I felt that the other side of the story should be shown. The one where the girl got pregnant and had the baby - not the abortion.

BRUNS: You had the baby then?

EDNA: Yes I did.

BRUNS: Now Edna, why don't you tell us about your story.

EDNA: Well, I was going out with a guy for three years. I was only seventeen at the time when I became pregnant, the boy was six months younger than I was. Since we had been going together for three years, over a period of time we gradually became more intimate, and there we were one day and both of us being virgins stumbled our way through (this was during the summer.) Then he went back to school and I came to UNB.

Having a very irregular period I avoided letting myself know. I fooled myself into believing there was just something until Nov. when I couldn't put it off any longer. I wrote the boy and he was a little upset. Then I went home at Xmas and saw my family doctor.

BRUNS: You got pregnant in July and you didn't admit it to yourself until November?

EDNA: Yep, that's right.

BRUNS: When you finally admitted that you were pregnant what was your initial reaction?

EDNA: My first reaction was, "Oh my God what am I going to do?". It was primarily fear. Not for the child. That didn't mean anything to me except that it meant trouble for me the father, and my parents.

BRUNS: Did you have any one to turn to in Fredericton?

## It was to late for an abortion

EDNA: I didn't know anybody except the people I had met at UNB most of whom were still getting acquainted with the place.

BRUNS: Did you have any knowledge at all of birth control?

EDNA: I knew about condoms and there were vague rumors of the pill but understanding that you needed a prescription to get on the pill and considering that this occurrence was minor (laughter). It only happened a few times and then we both split, and I slept with no one from that time onward. My knowledge was strictly and severely limited to safes and the boy

knew very little about birth control either.

BRUNS: The father was the first and only one you had sexual relations with?

EDNA: That's right.

BRUNS: Did you have any sexual relations your first year at UNB?

EDNA: No I didn't.

BRUNS: You had all sorts of avenues open to you. You could have an abortion, get married, or have the child illegitimately. You chose to have the child. Why?

EDNA: Well, by the time I admitted that I was pregnant it was too late to have an abortion (she was five months pregnant). Secondly, I wouldn't have known who to see, who to talk to and as far as marrying the fellow that was out. We were both too young and I knew that I wasn't ready.

BRUNS: If you had admitted to yourself earlier that you were pregnant do you think that you would have tried to have an abortion?

EDNA: Yes I do.

BRUNS: You didn't have this baby because you wanted it then, you had it because you were uninformed?

## Sex education in my home was severely lacking.

EDNA: That's right.

BRUNS: What happened after you had seen your family doctor?

EDNA: Well the doctor asked me if I would like him to tell my parents and implied that if I didn't he would. I then went and saw my brother and told him and he told my father who told my mother. My mother was needless to say, enraged.

BRUNS: How did your parents take it when you told them you were pregnant?

EDNA: My father took it extremely well. My mother took it very badly. She seemed more concerned with what the neighbours would say, and the status in the community should anyone find out.

After they recovered from the initial shock I stayed at home in Montreal for approximately three weeks. The father's mother was a social worker, and she put me in touch with a home for unwed mothers in Toronto. I applied to get in there and away I went and I was put in a home for unwed mothers in Toronto.

BRUNS: How did this make you feel realizing that they were not overly concerned with you, but more with what the neighbours would say?

EDNA: Not very good, but something I had expected since my mother and I were not close before.

BRUNS: What was the social and economic status of your family?

EDNA: My father was an executive with one of the larger companies in Canada. He was making anywhere from 35,000 to 37,000 dollars a year.

BRUNS: What kind of procedure did you have to go through to get admitted to the home in Toronto?

## I was fairly well along in my pregnancy

EDNA: This particular home was run by the Anglican church. There were 26 girls in the home. We all had specific duties to do every week as regard to doing the dishes or setting the table or doing some of the house cleaning. We were forced to attend chapel every day; the object of which was to humiliate us. We knew

given classes in the natural cl breathing, etc. etc. few people them. Our diet was ed very cl the food for the most was fairly lived here for three as and had in early April and as the obs were concerned being dned moth stigma or shame att to it. They so much of it.

BRUNS: You so by bitter ab forced to go to ch and about th making remarks.

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METHOD	EFFECTIVENESS (no. of likely pregnancies among 100 women using this method for 1 year)	POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS
STERILIZATION	0.003	
THE PILL	0.3	Weight gain, nausea, usual ending at general mon
INTRAUTERINE DEVICES	5	Irregular bleeding, discomfort, beginning
DIAPHRAGM OR CERVICAL CAP (with jelly)	12	Jelly use minor on
CONDOM	14 (increased effectiveness if used with chemical contraceptive)	
WITHDRAWAL	18	Psychological effects
CHEMICAL BARRIERS	20 (aerosol foam considered most effective)	Misconception
RHYTHM	24 (use of thermometer greatly increases effectiveness)	
DOUCHE	31	

this because we were told so. There were usually two girls per bedroom. I was in with a group of girls who were all about my own age. We had to go to a clinic; we all chose the hospital. There were three we could have gone to. We had to go to the clinic once a week or once every two weeks depending how far along we were in pregnancy. The last six weeks of pregnancy you had to go every week. The doctors for the most part were very kind, but a few were obnoxious. These were mostly interns. They would ask questions such as, "what does your husband do?", knowing full well that the average age was about sixteen.

We were examined fully at the clinic and then returned to the home. At the home there was a tv and there were card games. We were

EDNA: I can't help partic who had was this particul who out I di rude. At least it bother out I di about it afterwards who at the b of the girls at the ho ate me seemed to be trying to was fair in no mood to be both was fair ong in my pregnancy. was du

## There were girls in the

the child in two weeks quite upset that I had and did his best to up to go away and leave me doctor in;