

Excerpts from Agnetha radio interview Swedish Radio P4 December 22nd 2013
Elving möter Agnetha Fältskog

It's most peculiar that it is Ulf Elving conducting this interview. In 1967 he was the host of the Swedish radio chart Svensktoppen, and this was the very first time Agnetha spoke to media.

Agnetha Fältskog: I had just done the first recordings then and I entered at number three on Svensktoppen. It was something very big for me as a 17-year-old to start out like that from nothing. And I remember when you called; my heart was beating a little bit faster.

This was 46 years ago, and now they meet again for an openhearted interview to talk about Agnetha's career, her childhood and the enormous success with ABBA.

AF: I managed to combine marriage, giving birth and world success during these 10-12 years we worked, and divorce.

Ulf Elving: How did you cope with all of that?

AF: I can say it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy to leave home to travel. And also the fact that their dad was away, both of us left them. But we made sure they had a really good life at home and we were never away as much as you might think. I made sure that if we were away for 2 weeks, we would stay at home for at least 2 weeks. But I know there were difficult periods when I felt "can I handle this or should I quit"... I said that we have to be at home for as long as we've been away to start with...

UE: Were you actually thinking about quitting?

AF: No, I never considered it, but it was something I could use, to cope, and so that everybody would understand how difficult it actually was...

UE: I just want to ask: How did it feel to fall in love, get married and then get divorced in front of the whole world?

AF: Well, it's nothing no one would wish for. When you get married and have children it's very sad to fail... but that was what happened. We just couldn't stay together. And then when the same thing happened to Benny and Frida it was bit of a catastrophe. What people don't know or think of is that we continued for several years after that. So that wasn't the reason why we quit as a group. It was more like we were "ripe", and we didn't want to become "overripe". We said that when we felt it wasn't any fun to sing together anymore, we would quit because then things won't turn out good. And we felt that it was over, we didn't have the energy, we didn't sound the same anymore. Now I'm talking about the music, not our divorces. Something happened, it just felt a bit heavy to record the last album we made.

UE: Still you were right in the middle of a successful international career.

AF: But in a way it was enough. There were several years at high pace and we did quite a lot.

UE: Did everyone in the group feel the same way?

AF: Not in a way that we all agreed and said, "now we'll quit". It just happened.

UE: Who took that step, to close the store? Was it you?

AF: No, but I think I was very much blamed for it. "It was probably Agnetha who didn't want to continue". But then you haven't thought about the fact that I had worked with this for 10-12 years... We just didn't have much more to give.

UE: "The Winner Takes It All". Is that song about your divorce?

AF: I guess you could say that. But you should really ask Björn, he and Benny wrote the music, and Björn wrote the lyrics and I sang it after our divorce. It's not necessarily all about personal experiences; it could be that Björn wrote about himself, or maybe 50% about him and 50% about me, a mixture I would say. But it is an incredibly strong song.

UE: But with what feelings did you sing the song?

AF: Of course it was a tragic period for both Björn and me. It was very strong [effort] to record it, probably the strongest I've ever done because both of us were very sad and I think you can hear that in the song. But it's incredibly good, that song.

UE: Another myth is that you are like Garbo, completely impossible to get close to. You are furious about that image, right?

AF: Well, I think it's a bit sad that it gets that way. If you're not as others... It should be completely up to each and every other to decide if you want to show off your home [in media] and if you want to talk about everything, then you should just do that. If you don't want to, if you're a bit more private, which I think is important, and you want to keep a part to yourself, then you should be respected for that. Then I think it is a lot of fun to hangout and mingle as well, go to town and have some fun.

UE: Now you're performing again, you've made a comeback; you've been on stage in London, in spite of everything.

AF: Yes, I did the duet with Gary Barlow.

UE: Gary Barlow who's on the album. Were you as nervous now as before?

AF: Yes I was, absolutely. But this was for a good cause, it was Children In Need, and it felt very good to do a charity thing.

UE: Will there be more new albums?

AF: I won't say [laughing] - then I haven't said anything.

UE: Apparently there are thoughts of it.

AF: I am very easily tempted.

UE: What type of album would you release the next time then?

AF: No, I don't dare to talk about that.

UE: How does it feel to get older?

AF: Well, what should I say... it isn't very pleasant. But there are certain advantages of course, but it's nothing you can do anything about. I have passed 60 now and I think many things get better in some way. You learn to deal with life, you can give good advice to the younger generation. So I think it's very good.

UE: What is your best advice to the younger generation?

AF: Wow... I would like to tell them to try to slow down, things happen so fast, you should try to analyze yourself... Nothing bad about Facebook but you should be a bit careful with private things, I think.

UE: What is luxury for you? What extravagances do you treat yourself to?

AF: Luxury to me is to be healthy, that's what counts and that I get good sleep. I am incredibly dependent on good sleep. If I don't sleep, I don't feel well. Luxury to me is to wake up in the morning and feel "I slept very good last night, that's great". And then we treat ourselves with property, good houses. Why should you say no to that if you have the possibility. And luxury is also to spend time at home with your children and grandchildren and my dogs.

UE: Earlier, you were a bit secretive about a new album, I allow myself to guess that there will be one sooner or later, but you just won't let us know yet...

AF: I don't dare to say anything.

UE: How do you associate with the other ABBA members today?

AF: We met not too long ago. We sat down to talk and it felt really good and I think that we're closer to each other today than we've ever been. I think it has to do with us getting older and we're all very proud of what we accomplished in the past, even if we still can't understand how it got as huge as it is. We are very proud and humble of what we have done.