

**Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Edd Ashmore**

Interviewer: John Witte

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Location of interview: Junction Street, Marrickville

Reason for interview: Gay Teachers

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Keywords
0100	Edd was born in Ringwood, Victoria in February 1945 and moved to Jerilderie NSW after he was born.	Ringwood Jerilderie
0119	His father was a mechanic, drove semi trailers for a local carter and later worked on a mail run to outlying properties. His mum worked as a maid in a local hotel.	
0225	Edd describes himself as a chubby child and realizes now that he was sometimes depressed. He was regarded as a sissy because he did not play Aussie Rules Football, liked music and avoided fights. He swam competitively.	
0514	His sister called him a 'queen' when he was 12 because of the way he smoked cigarettes.	
0540	He talks about sexual experiences with a boy his age from the age of 12.	
0612	To go to High School he had to board in the CWA hostel in Narrandera which he hated, but there was lots of homo sex at High School.	Narrandera
0700	There wasn't 'any pejorative stuff, except about his weight'. He loved dancing and folk dancing and was good at gymnastics, but was desperately homesick. Every Saturday he would 'take the 2 hour train trip to Jerilderie and get to Jerilderie about midday and I'd see my mother for about 30 minutes and she would be gone off to golf because it was ladies golf day on Saturday and I would hang around the house by myself until half past four and then I'd go and catch the train back to Narrandera again" (0857)	Jerilderie Narrandera
0934	Then went to Finley HS in 1960 for 3 years. He got a teachers training scholarship and went to Wagga. Before he left HS the boy with whom he had been having sex with and he became close friends like, '2 gay guys hanging together being able to talk about stuff.	Finley
1120	He had no plans when he left for Wagga – 'just to be out of Jerilderie'. Did teacher training in 63-64 and was posted to Ingleburn.	Wagga Ingleburn
1145	His roommate from teachers college in Wagga died in a car accident. This affected him. He had been in love with him.	Wagga
1300	Then moved to Moama on the Murray River.	Moama
1400	He had a run in with a School Inspector over him allowing a child to use a reel to reel recorder unsupervised (it was expensive) and resigned on the spot.	

1516	In May 1967, he came to Sydney, with no idea what he wanted to do. Moved into a flat in Randwick with mates and was in a relationship with 2 girls for a few months. An attempt not to be gay.	Randwick
1646	His first taste of gay Sydney was when a mate from Jerilderie and he went out to a wine bar (?The Purple Grape) in Bayswater Road down from Mansions Hotel. There was an upstairs section with a tiny bar in an arc and standing behind the bar was Jackie Monier. She was a drag queen and he had seen her at the Tivoli in Melbourne when he was 12 (1957). She used to sing in her own voice. He became her instant new friend.	Purple Grape Jackie Monier
1920	When it became obvious he was more interested in men the flat in Randwick dissolved. He met Reg Lim, a property manager for LJ Hooker in KX. Reg was a big guy and about 10 years older than Edd. He found him a bedsitter in Elizabeth Bay and he lived there for 12 months and he met lots of people through him, like Sandy Paterson, Harry Miller's PR girl and people in show business and through her the gay scene.	Reg Lim Sandy Paterson
2112	Reg and he would regularly visit the Purple Onion on a Saturday night and the back bar of the Rex Hotel. He would do the beat in Rushcutters Bay and Hyde Park Fountain. He realizes he was playing Reg's handbag. He was the good looking, tall, intelligent, young fellow Reg would carry around.	Purple Onion Rushcutters Bay Hyde Pk Fountain
2216	Their friendship died away when Edd became political. 'He was very, very anti-gays being political. He was one of those queens. Put your head down and do pretty much whatever you want without involving anybody else and if you're smart about it you won't get into any trouble. And nobody will know the difference.'	
2245	Reg loved intrigue and lot of this went over Edd's head. He considers himself then as innocent and naïve. He didn't want to get involved with anybody. Only interested in casual sex.	
2400	Back bar of the Rex – it was a Friday, Saturday night thing. He had a steady wage – he worked for a transport company at the airport. The back bar was incredibly busy – a couple of hundred people. And all sorts. It was the place to go to pick up and be picked up. There were never any problems with police raids.	Back Bar Rex
2545	The bar was a long narrow oval and threw re highish tables out from the wall with stools. There were bar maids and bar prices. Very few women. Occasionally Jeannie Little would show up. There was a Saturday afternoon dance at the Rex upstairs on the first floor and he went with Ann, a friend from Jerilderie. He met his first full on dyke Maria there. She was dressed in full men's gear, short hair cut, suit and tie. He didn't understand that she was a lesbian.	Jeannie Little Rex upstairs Ann Maria
2837	He recalls a pair of dykes in Jerilderie. One was Barbara, daughter of the local baker and there was Dorrie Wells who was	Jerilderie

	married to Peter Wells the green grocer. Barbara and Dorrie had a relationship, was open in the town and nobody said anything negative about it.	
3024	Purple Onion operated Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights and Edd went on Sundays to catch the earlier show. It was famous and Katherine Brisbane would review the shows in the <i>Australian</i> .	Purple Onion Katherine Brisbane
3108	He also worked occasionally in a friends coffee shop, a pancake parlour called Adonis Pancake Parlour, across the road from the Wayside Chapel. It was a place where you could get a cup of coffee at 4am. The drag queens from after the shows at the Onion or the Birdcage and later Capriccios. It was a gay place. He recalls Beatrice (David Williams) the grande dame with a sharp tongue. Edd was a friend of the drag queens like Robyn, Judy and Black Leslie.	Adonis Pancake Parlour Beatrice Robyn Lee Judy Burnett Black Leslie
3339	Mentions seeing Dusty Springfield with a group of women at the Onion.	Dusty Springfield
3420	Later, maybe 1969, he lived in Vernon Street, Woollahra a short distance from Ivy's Winebar. He went there regularly. It was pretty quiet. "If you were a regular and let it be known you were gay, you met a lot of people".	Vernon Street Ivy's Winebar
3600	Also a place on Oxford opposite Paddington Town Hall – Enzo's.	Enzo's
3700	There comments at work (at the airport) about his figure – his waistline was smaller than his chest. Workmates thought it was weird that someone could exercise.	
3754	First bout of depression in 1970 and he saw a shrink for 3 years. He couldn't work at the airport. He became aphasic – couldn't speak for 12 months, couldn't talk on the telephone.	
3830	He went back to teaching as a full time casual at Ashbury. He started a relationship with one of the women teachers.	Ashbury
3915	Then he moved into a Terrace in Surry Hills behind the Clock Hotel and lived there for 3 years. His friend, Barbara Marless (?) bought a large terrace in Newtown and he moved in and lived there from 74-82.	Surry Hills Barbara Marless Newtown
4000	It was a busy period for gay people he knew. He still kept p with the camp circle.	
4100	In the 70s GAYTAS was formed and it was involved in getting anti-discrimination laws up. Michael Glass was active in the teachers federation to get an anti-discrimination policy into their constitution. Edd began going to union meetings when at Ashbury and got to meet people in the political scene there and where he met John Cozijn, Ken Davis, Jennie Lyons,	Gaytas Michael Glass John Cozijn Ken Davis Jennie Lyons
4220	"There was enough risk being involved in gay teachers, because we were pretty upfront and used to do a newsletter which we sent off to every member of Parliament talking about the stuff we had done"	

4260	He went on marches during this period remembers being told that to do if you are arrested – give a false name. Even her 5 year old son was trained to do this. She was living with John Cozijn in Glebe and both were members of the Communist Party. John had the collected works of Lenin on his bookshelf.	John Cozijn Communist Party
4582	Gay Teachers met at CAMP (33a Glebe Pt Rd) and about 6-8 people would turn up – Ian McNeill, Geoff Ostling, Michael Glass, Steve Vella, Jennie Lyons, Robyn Plaister, Ian Tait, Gary ...	Ian McNeill Geoff Ostling Michael Glass Steve Vella Jennie Lyons Robyn Plaister Ian Tait
4737	Discussion about Gay Teachers <b>and</b> Students – students being student teachers.	
4835	Remembers, Ian McNeill was alert to issues of language. Michael was the rock at the centre of the group – he was keen to write the letters, had a typewriter, he was out at Teachers Fed and wasn't teaching at a school – Correspondence School and was a careers advisor.	Ian McNeill Michael Glass Correspondence School
4942	"Someone had a rush of shit to the brain and said why don't we produce a kit to go into high schools to go in as part of the personal development course to let people see some things about homosexuality and provide a support for gay kids in schools.	
5018	In 1980 obtained federal funding through "innovations in schools" for \$11,000. The plan was that there would be a booklet and a series of slides – photographs and cartoons.	Innovations in Schools
5140	Mocked up a kit. As a guide they used a book published by Melbourne group which had sexually explicit content. But they weren't going to be explicit. They were about attitudinal change – "gay people are normal"	
5249	Tim Hornibrook was running the project from the Federation. Fred Nile notified, the then Minister of Education who signed it off on their funding, Wal Fife the member for Riverina and a member of the Festival of Light. He got up in Parliament and denounced Gay Teachers for defrauding the Commonwealth.	Tim Hornibrook Fred Nile Wal Fife
5417	Edd got a phone call from his friend Barbara Marlis. "What have you done. You've just been named in Parliament by the Minister for Education as defrauding the Commonwealth" Geoff Ostling was also named.	Barbara Marlis Geoff Ostling
5548	It was 1981. He had started a relationship with Steve Vella and was living in Lennox Street Newtown. Had left Ashbury. He believes Geoff and he were covered by the Anti-Discrimination legislation. Geoff was the son of the Marrickville Church of England minister and "he was getting a bit of stuff – he was	Steve Vella Geoff Ostling

	living at home at that stage. Edd had not come out to his parents.	
5834	They did not know how to control the media, but knew they had done nothing illegal.	
5904	Fred Nile gave John Laws a copy of the Victorian publication "and Laws did a whole number on Geoff and me on the radio ... He said I have got this kit here in front of me and it is disgusting." They had no idea what Laws had.	Fred Nile John Laws
5940	They had the media on to them. They got support from the Teachers Federation through Tim Hornibrook, from the ADB, people writing in to the newspapers supporting us – like Ken Lovett. The <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> went rabid front page news and kept going on about it. Full on homophobia, against proselytising homosexuality. The <i>Northern Star</i> in Lismore ran with and they got a lot of support from people up there.	Teachers Federation Tim Hornibrook Ken Lovett <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> <i>Northern Star</i>
010255	Went into a training course for ESL teachers and was doing the course when all of this was happening. The Group made a decision they would not talk to anyone but the ABC. He was pulled out of his course to answer a phone call from a dude from the newsdesk at channel 7. The reporter said "but you have a responsibility if you are going to be doing this stuff in public schools and teaching children about this stuff, you have a responsibility to the public to let them know what you are doing." Edd replied "no I don't." "If you want to find out about gay talk to some of the people who work for Channel 7, because I know there are a lot of them". He was angry.	Channel 7
010607	Then PM called him to do a bit. Went to ABC offices in William Street. The interviewer was David Margan. Edd objected to being treated rudely by the interviewer. And then the interviewer fluffed the interview and it had to go to air on the Monday AM program.	David Margan
011111	Things eventually calmed down. He was then asked to do a show for 4 corners. But he had not heard from his parents or family about the radio interview. Then his sister called him "how could you do this to Mum and Dad".	4 Corners
011319	His parents would never engage Edd on his homosexuality.	
011338	Gay teachers went as a group to the National Homosexual Conferences Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and contributed to the conferences and issues like law reform.	National Homosexual Conference
011611	After the 4 Corners show, he went overseas on long service leave to Greece, the States. Arrived in New York at the beginning of Gay Pride Week 1981 and was in San Francisco for their Gay Day Parade on the July 4 weekend. Went up to Russian River and did "all that gay stuff". Drank a lot and had a lot of sex, made friends who he is still in contact with. "San Francisco was just full of beautiful, beautiful men".	San Francisco Gay Day Parade Russian River

011844	Stephen and he moved out of Lennox Street, Newtown and got a house in Premier Street, Marrickville. Gay teachers carried on for a while but died. It did not have a purpose and people retired. Michael Glass wanted to have a child and get married. Steve and he were in a monogamous relationship until 1992 when they broke up.	Marrickville Michael Glass
011941	They established a new social group with neighbours and moved out of the Newtown/Oxford Street scene, into a settle married gay scene with straight people. They were insulated from the spread of HIV. "It was like that was happening on another planet". They didn't lose any close friends. They were involved in the political activity surrounding it but emotionally distant from it.	
012317	Edd's cousin Graham Milane (?) who worked in television in the UK was horrified for being introduced as the gay cousin. He was party promoter involved in a lot of the smaller (gay) parties of the era. He was HIV+ and kept it secret. His family in Melbourne would come up and stay with him for stretches as well as Ankali. He did not want anybody to know.	Graham Milane Ankali HIV
012532	He can't recall where he was on the night of the first MG. But remembers people from Gay Teachers who got arrested. Ian Tate nearly lost his job. Robyn Plaister.	
012646	Steve and Edd walked in one parade, with a friend Glenn in drag. Edd wore a sari and blue stack sole boots. It assembled in Art Gallery Road, walked the parade route and his feet were a mess.	Mardi Gras Parade
012756	And they worked on the parade as marshals for years and then only recently walked in the Trade Union Group with Ken Davis.	Trade Union Group Ken Davis
012848	Went to parties after the parades, and did not do drugs, come home collapse and go to work on Monday.	
012916	1994 he met Mike Sousamlis and they had a relationship until 2000. They watched the parade and then went to the party. But he did volunteer work for the parade.	Mike Sousamlis
012958	Moved into TAFE in 1989. Work was much less stressful.	TAFE
013025	In about 1990 he became depressed, didn't recognise it and it drove Stephen away. Went into therapy when Stephen moved out and went on medication.	
013136	Retired from TAFE in 2000 because he was so sick.	
013158	After the break up with Michael, he became more involved with MG and worked at the end of the parade. He also helps out at the workshops.	
013243	Mentions Murray McLachlan who was a member of Gay Teachers, he was a friend of Cath Phillips.	Murray McLachlan
013340	Edd talks to the idea that MG was taken over by the women. He had women friends who had problems with men at parties.	

013557	Gives another name from Gay Teachers – Bill Symon.	Bill Symon
013629	Remembers an artist he knew who run the workshop and how he got a lot of pressures not down the structure (Committee) but from paid workers at MG. It was poor management and he had to leave. The year that the MG lead float was left to find its own way in the parade.	
013858	He observed men who came into MG who were full bore misogynists. Their politics were not inclusive. Michael Glynn's politics were about excluding, Edd believes. And there were people in charge of MG, and there gay politics were fucked. He thinks that a lot of people were involved as a stepping stone to a career path.	Michael Glynn SGLMG
014319	Retired in 2000 and was unwell. Went back to MG. Volunteers at the Museum of Contemporary Art Library for 8 years, every Friday and at APHEDA union aid abroad, 1 day a fortnight at the Green Elephant Op Shop and loves retirement.	MCA APHEDA Green Elephant Op Shop