

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Amanda Crammon and Mandy Millar

Interviewer: Rebecca Jennings

Date of interview: 21 February 2008

Reason for interview: Lesbian Oral History Project

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Keywords
00:00	AMANDA CRAMMON Born 18/11/77. Only child. Acquired stepbrother and stepsister after mother's death.	King George V Hospital
01:18	Growing up in multicultural Tempe. Schools. An overachiever. Sports and school captains. Primary school was beautiful, though classed as disadvantaged.	Tempe Primary School, Tempe High School,
02:55	Loved PE. Attracted to PE teacher. Also liked English. Studied Greek in primary school but can only count and swear in it.	“ “
03:45	Issue of keeping touch with school friends. Ten-year reunion. Has known Lebanese man for 25 years, since primary school. Going to wedding of kindergarten friend.	Ferncourt Public School at Marrickville.
05:30	Boy and girl school friends. Tomboy. Reports cards cited her fighting boys.	
06:10	Boyfriend off and on from Year 5 to Year 10, when she realised “there wasn't something quite right”. Never attracted to other students but to teachers. Maybe related to having female figures replace her deceased mother, her father's up and down relationship with her stepmother. School was her one stable place, where she got recognition from the teachers, which was a sign of affection. Affection for female teachers was really important.	
08:00	At the time, she thought she loved her boyfriend. The relationship was off and on in high school.	
08:48	Interest in girls. She always knew and, when very young, thought it was normal. Sleepovers and playing doctors and nurses. Didn't recognise it was “wrong thing to do”. Thought it was natural. Misgivings after Year 4 sleepover. Chose her boyfriend in game of catch and kiss. Always knew she was lesbian but never felt it was wrong to explore either side.	
11:00	School. Fragile X genetic disorder impaired maths skills. Strong in English and drama. Adored female English teacher. Played every sport: netball, soccer, cross-country, swimming. All-round sports award in Year 12. Did 3-unit Ancient History and 3-unit Modern History. Also liked food technology and PE.	Fragile X
13:15	First degree at Sydney University allowed her to become a high school teacher. Didn't qualify for PE teacher course, so did technological and applied studies.	Sydney University
14:00	University experiences like the film <i>Love and Other Catastrophes</i> . Belonged to Drama Society, Queer Society, Students' Representative Council.	Sydney University
15:25	Involvement with Twenty10 led to accommodation in Nelson Street, Annandale, for a year, then to Glebe Point Road.	Twenty10, Annandale, Glebe.
15:55	Came out to gay male cousin, Ben, who was working at the Imperial Hotel, Erskineville, and told her about Twenty10. She knew she would need accommodation because her sexuality would not please her parents. Description of services provided	Twenty10, Imperial Hotel, Erskineville, DOCS,

	by Twenty10. Now helps Twenty10 through charity work at her employer, SalesForce, including Mardi Gras float.	SalesForce, Mardi Gras,
20:20	Lived in one-bedroom unit in Twenty10 shared block of about ten flats in Nelson St, Annandale. Like a young <i>Melrose Place</i> . Community-housing feel. Residents rehoused due to white-ant problem; she moved into heritage house on Glebe Point Road with others, including queer university students.	Annandale, Melrose Place, Glebe
21:45	President of Queer Girls at Sydney University. Another housemate was president of Queer Boys. Only three in five-bedroom house, so Twenty10 made students share with young people with drug problems or criminal records, which led to problems.	Queer Girls, Queer Boys,
23:00	Queer Girls and Queer Boys, social and political groups. Queer Space was a safe place to meet, discuss and plan activities. "Fantastic times". Activities in and outside Sydney University. Friday lesbian nights at Lansdowne Hotel, City Rd and Broadway. Bank Hotel at Newtown was popular for students on Wednesday nights. Also Manning Bar. Queer Week lead-up to Mardi Gras. Kiss-ins.	Queer Girls, Queer Boys, Queer Space, Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby, Sydney University, Lansdowne Hotel, Bank Hotel, Manning Bar, Queer Week, Mardi Gras.
25:30	Queer Collaboration events at universities. Attended Brisbane event in first year of uni then Hobart. In protest march photo on front page of Hobart <i>Mercury</i> . The pink dollar. Campaigning for equal rights in superannuation, health rights and general queer rights.	Queer Collaboration, Brisbane, Hobart, <i>The Mercury</i> (Hobart)
27:30	In final year at University of Technology, Sydney, studying adult education part-time, majoring in human resources development. No queer groups of social events this time.	UTS Sydney,
28:15	Works in corporate training and development. After first degree, she became a school teacher, at St Euphemia, Bankstown and, for three months, at Newtown Performing Arts High School. Then moved to Melbourne with partner at the time. Entered corporate training field at Optus. Earns much more than underpaid school teachers, who are one of the most important resources any country has.	St Euphemia School, Bankstown, Newtown Performing Arts High School, Melbourne, Optus
29:35	Sexuality at work. Has previously been advised not to flaunt it, to tone it down. But now, in SalesForce most of her colleagues are gay. She is not shy about being a lesbian. Proud of it and of her partner.	SalesForce
31:55	Three weeks after she came out she met a woman ten years older, at Bank Hotel. First sexual experience was a threesome, with male and female. It was what you'd want your first sexual experience to be. Sexual opportunities in uni queer groups.	Bank Hotel,
37:20	After that relationship ended she mixed with friends into the Melbourne BDSM scene and discovered another side to herself. Sex parties with doctors, lawyers and architects in million-dollar houses in Toorak and South Melbourne - the elite of the gay culture. Never found a similar crowd in Sydney, where the scene is dirty and sleazy. Enjoyed being single at an age when many young lesbians sought long-term relationships.	Melbourne scene, Sydney scene, Toorak, South Melbourne

39:25	Returned to Sydney to study drama but re-entered the corporate world at News Ltd, in sales and training. Sydney is home.	
40:42	MANDY MILLAR Born 18/3/75 in Cook Islands of English and Scottish parents. When she was two they moved to New Zealand. She went to Brisbane when she was 16 and Sydney when she was 22. She lived in Auckland until she was nine and then in Wanganui and a nearby town. Father was a banker. After he nearly died and had a midlife crisis, they bought a general store in a tiny town where they lived for two years. Moved to Wanganui and later sold store. She has one sister two years older and one 13 years younger. Saw little of parents when both were working.	Mandy Millar, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Brisbane, Sydney, Wanganui,
44:30	Family moved to Australia for father's job, which did not exist, but, despite hardship, he finally found a job which he still has. It was her final year of high school in New Zealand.	
	TAPE 2	
00:00	Continued high school in Brisbane and did a journalism degree at the University of Queensland. Too studious to join extracurricular activities. Moved closer to uni after six months living with parents. Worked part-time for 30 hours a week while a full-time student. Way too serious for her own good.	University of Queensland, Brisbane
02:00	Forming and maintaining friendships despite moving home often. High school environment facilitates the making of new friends. Continued school friendships, though none went on to uni with her. Worked with school friends at Hungry Jack's. Among uni friends, she was the only one who worked. Paul, a gay housemate, is her best friend from uni.	Hungry Jack's
05:06	At school, she was good at English and languages and could hold her own at maths. Her studies in New Zealand had been up to two years ahead of the Australian curriculum, which helped her in some subjects but confused her in others. Harder to focus on her studies at uni than at school.	New Zealand
07:22	Sexuality not an issue at uni. Had a boyfriend who was a cross-dresser (which makes more sense now)	
08:00	She was mother hen of dysfunctional shared household with Paul (from Kingaroy) and two of her girlfriends from school.	Kingaroy
09:30	Wanted to be a journalist since high school, which wasn't a good school. Resented advice of teacher to add TAFE to list of unis to apply to.	UTS Queensland, Griffin University, TAFE
11:20	Journalism jobs were scarce in Queensland and she didn't want to write about school fetes for country newspapers for less money than she was already earning at Suncorp call centre. Never found a way back to journalism. Stayed at Suncorp six months, and had the social life she avoided at uni. Moved into an apartment with a gay male colleague, Delaney, and started hanging out with his friends. He introduced her to the gay community. She felt comfortable and began to wonder why.	Suncorp
14:15	A girlfriend invited her to move to Sydney. Moved in with her married cousin at Cremorne Point. Worked for four years for a husband and wife who ran insurance and superannuation businesses and a dot com business.	Cremorne Point, Sydney
15:33	<i>[gap in recording]</i>	
15:46	Began a PR degree at UTS Sydney. Halfway through, she was made redundant at work. Fellow uni student got her a PR job, initially for her technology skills. Hated it after 18 months, but her	UTS Sydney

	next PR job made her realise that it was not PR but the first company that she hated. Has worked in PR for about eight years.	
18:03	Came to Sydney because it's easier to be someone else when you're somewhere else. Didn't come out until she'd been in Sydney a little while. She was house-hunting and her cousin took her to Newtown. At one house a man asked Mandy if she was gay and her cousin said she was not; but had the cousin not been there, Mandy would probably have said yes. "That moment really stands out for me." But she ended up moving into a place near her cousin.	Sydney, Newtown
20:34	In 1997 or 1998, while she was living with Delaney they came to Sydney for Mardi Gras and she "kind of had a little thing with this girl, who was straight". Back in Brisbane, Delaney told their friends about it. She was annoyed at their reaction that it didn't mean she was gay. Her biggest fear when coming out was that people would think she was misrepresenting herself as straight, pretending to be someone she wasn't. Didn't know how to reconcile being a different person.	Mardi Gras
22:58	Lived in amazing dilapidated 1920s house at Cremorne Point with harbour views and zoo noises, with high-achieving people. Moved to Newtown when the house was sold. Had been visiting Newtown on weekends to wander around an "get some gayness". Asked two gay males friends to go out with her to Spicy Fridays, as she didn't want to go alone. Moved in with Tricia. In the meantime, met the woman who would become her partner for 5½ years. Chose Tricia's house rather than a nicer one at Glebe whose occupant was straight.	Cremorne Point, Spicy Fridays
27:54	Tricia and her friends were around ten years older than Mandy. She met Mischa at Spicy Fridays one night, after a disastrous blind date with another woman who got drunk to deal with her nerves. Mischa was the breakthrough friend who introduced Mandy to other young lesbians.	Spicy Fridays
30:00	Spicy Fridays was the most exciting event of the week. At the time, she looked straight and felt she was regarded as a fag hag. Venues held lesbian nights on nights when no one else would go to them. It was the only way to network. <i>[From this point, both interviewees are speaking].</i> Scarcity of lesbian venues. Women denied entry to boys' nights at male venues. Used to go to Icebox in Kings Cross, a queer alternative nightclub.	Icebox, Kings Cross
34:30	Amanda Crammon and Sam, a boy at school, became close friends without, at first, knowing about each other's gayness. He was a Muslim Lebanese. They explored nightclubs together but often she was the only girl there. At girls' venues, she would be desperately searching for a woman while Sam would find the only other male present. Also went to Sirens on Enmore Road.	Sirens
36:00	Difference between lesbian and gay male venues, such as canapés and free drinks for early arrivals. Venues never lasted long. The two daggy Caesar's. <i>[Both interviewees are speaking].</i> Hard to find women who were semi-well-educated rather than big butch dykes (scary lesbians) or worked in a cafe. Everything is technology-based now, especially networking. The Pink Sofa.	Caesar's, Generation Y, Pink Sofa

38:50	How the two Amandas met at a performance by a comedian friend, Jodi. Not interested in each other at first. Mandy drove Amanda home and thought she was talkative, a pompom holder. A few weeks later she found Amanda online and made contact. Returning from a month's holiday in South America, Mandy ended her relationship with Michelle, who was in the navy. Ran into Amanda at the Bank Hotel a few days later. Amanda had recently slept with about ten girls in two weeks but thought that at her age this was no longer a good thing. She felt slutty and really poor.	Bank Hotel
43:30	Cancelled a dirty weekend with a woman she met online and who, a week before, had started to act a bit full-on. A friend took her to the Bank Hotel, where she got blind on mango daiquiris, and then met Mandy again. Amanda said she had lost her mojo and Mandy said she could only have sex with someone she cared about. They exchanged phone numbers. Amanda went home and was about to get into bed when Mandy texted her and invited her to the Sly Fox. She got dressed and went there because she had other friends there too. Mandy was waiting for her at the door. Danced together and kissed.	Bank Hotel, Sly Fox
	TAPE 3	
00:12	Moved in together after five months. As a Scorpio, Amanda had hoped for a partner who was a Pisces, but got "ripped off" with Mandy, who has a lot of marshmallow underneath her flaky surface.	
01:47	Amanda says there are lots of lesbians moving to Marrickville because of high housing prices in Newtown and Camperdown. Mandy says that living somewhere where you feel connected to the community is really important and it would take a lot to make her live elsewhere. Marrickville offers less than Newtown.	Marrickville, Newtown, Camperdown
03:52	Amanda's friend Trish had an old Kingswood which she repaired rather than replaced. They pushed it to a mechanic along a one-way street in the wrong direction. Help from schoolboys showed the spirit of a community that looks after its own.	Kingswood (car)
05:24	Love being in Newtown rather than in a bigger house further out. Wouldn't leave the area even if they won lotto. Their place is very central for meeting friends, who mostly live nearby.	
07:06	The decline of Oxford Street makes Newtown more important for the gay and lesbian community to hold on to.	Oxford Street
07:53	END OF INTERVIEWS	