

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Geoff Evans

Interviewer: John Witte

Date of interview: 11 October 2016

Location of interview: Mayfield East

Reason for interview: First Mardi Gras

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Key words
0048	Born in Melbourne in 1952. Father was a lawyer and mother had a background in clerical work.	Melbourne;
0150	His parents separated when he is four. His father's new wife had problems with his four children. He was not close to father or step mother.	
0245	He lived in Elwood near St Kilda and went to Elsternwick State School and Elwood High. This was a progressive school with 60% Jewish students. The teachers contradicted the conservative views of his father. One teacher involved in the Moratorium campaigns another promoting arts in the school.	Elwood; Elsternwick State School; Elwood High; Moratorium;
0540	This was the period of the emergence of a music scene around Melbourne – the Loved Ones; Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs – and Geoff was more into this scene. A period of ferment, alternative ideas and people.	The Loved Ones; Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs;
0640	His father and his step father both had served during the WW2.	World War 2;
0800	His father was active in the Public Schools Association (ie Private Schools) and had gone to Wesley College.	Public Schools Association;
0910	Geoff was getting into petty crime and was sent to live with his mother in Canberra.	Canberra;
1000	He was sent to Canberra Grammar School never settled down and failed.	Canberra Grammar School;
1125	Interest in geography but did not settle down and nor did well in other subjects.	
1245	In 1969 the Springbok tour visited Canberra and he got involved. He had made the shift to alternative politics by then with friends from Canberra Grammar and friends he met through playing AFL football. Allan Gould an anti-war activist was the brother of someone at Canberra Grammar.	Springbok Tour; Canberra; Canberra Grammar School; AFL football; Allan Gould;
AFL	Friends were also involved in the Aquarius Festival in Canberra.	Aquarius Festival;
1500	High profile anti-Springbok protest at Manuka Oval in Canberra.	Anti-Springbok Protest; Manuka Oval;
1525	Did night school in 1970/1971 and worked as a builder's labourer among other jobs and got himself into Canberra University (Canberra College of Advanced Education).	Canberra College of Advanced Education;
1615	Influenced by emerging environmental movement and did an environmental studies course in 1972. Perhaps Aquarius Festival in 1970/1971 influenced his choice. This was a festival of alternative ideas. Here he met other people in environmental politics and some inspiring lectures. Frank Fenner; Peter Cullen; John Harrison.	Aquarius Festival; Frank Fenner; Peter Cullen; John Harrison;
1915	Radical Ecology Conference in Melbourne perhaps 1973. He and his friends were exposed to Jack Munday, the Green Bans, Ruth and Maurie Crowe (Marvellous Melbourne and urban planning) Peter Hayes and Friends of the Earth, Neil Barrett.	Radical Ecology Conference; Melbourne; Jack Munday; Green Bans; Ruth Crowe; Maurie Crowe; Peter Hayes; Friends of the Earth; Neil Barrett;
2005	First anti-uranium march was held in Melbourne.	Anti-uranium march; Melbourne;

2010	The group returns to Canberra and becomes politically active and form a branch of Friends of the Earth with students from Australian National University (ANU). He was in touch with Frank Moller (who later worked for Tom Uren), Julius Rowe (president of ANU Students Association), and a lot of feminists.	Friends of the Earth; Canberra; Australian National University; Frank Moller; Tom Uren; Julius Rowe;
2115	Geoff was also learning about feminism, sexual politics, labour movement politics. For example, learning about feminist critique of masculinist way of doing politics, challenges about men's sexism by feminists, more inclusive political practices. Friends of the Earth had a men's support group which was involved in consciousness raising.	Feminism; Friends of the Earth; Consciousness Raising;
2225	Anti-uranium movement was taking off nationally.	Anti-Uranium Movement;
2245	Whitlam had abolished university fees allowing Geoff to go to university.	
2335	Probably would have identified as an anarchist at this time.	Anarchism;
2345	Through Friends of the Earth nationally, met people who were influential on his life. Leigh Holloway in Melbourne was the first gay person he became friends with. Leigh was a creative activist. Learned a lot about gay politics through Leigh.	Friends of the Earth; Leigh Holloway; Melbourne;
2500	Finishes university course in 1976 and all friends moved to Sydney. He had a job of national liaison officer for Friends of the Earth (FoE). FoE combined environmental politics with social justice. Political economy of environmental destruction and broader feminist and class politics were being taken into the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF).	Friends of the Earth; Australian Conservation Foundation;
2630	Worked from FoE offices in Crown Street, Surry Hills. The building was leased by Robert Tickner a law lecturer at UTS precursor.	Friends of the Earth; Robert Tickner;
2715	Also worked out of Tom Uren's office in Sydney. Tom was a supporter.	Tom Uren;
2750	Moved from FoE to organising in the Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM). MAUM was a mix of hippy, anarchist politics of FoE and socialists and members of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). Organising in the trade union movement he found people interested in MAUM were communist shop stewards e.g Brian Dunnett at the Railway Workshops at Chullora, Harry Delaney, Hal Alexander at RPA Hospital.	Movement Against Uranium Mining; MAUM; Brian Dunnett; Harry Delaney; Hal Alexander;
2915	Trucks moving uranium from Lucas Heights to the docks got through as a result of police bashing picketers. The wharfies refused to load the uranium. Geoff addresses a meeting of waterside workers about a MAUM campaign at Sydney Town Hall. And they put a ban on uranium shipments through Sydney. He thinks this had an influence on the ACTU policy of no new uranium mines.	Lucas Heights; Wharfies; MAUM; ACTU;
3155	After this he joined the Communist Party in 1977 or 1978. The anti-uranium movement has successes in local suburbs and country towns, universities etc. He had learned a lot about internal movement politics.	Communist Party of Australia; CPA; Anti-Uranium Movement;
3350	He got a job at General Motors Holden in Pagewood with Johnny Stephenson. He was sacked for trying to remove the existing Vehicle Builders' Union shop steward. The shop steward had told the workers that ASIO had told him Geoff was a Communist Party member and anti-nuclear activist.	General Motors Holden; Pagewood; Johnny Stephenson; ASIO;
2515	The CPA had set up a branch in the western suburbs of Sydney. He got the job of organising for the new branch. His job was to organise the organisers of campaigns like the 35 hour week, the Unemployed People's Union, the Liverpool Women's Health Centre etc. He acted as a conduit for local activities to wider audiences, through articles in Tribune, reports to the CPA leadership, political education schools at Minto Bush Camp.	CPA; 35 hour week campaign; Unemployed People's Union; Liverpool Women's Health

		Centre; Minto Bush Camp;
3750	He produced bulletins for mass meetings like <i>Hot Metal</i> for the 35 hour week campaign at Lidcombe where AMWU officials, Laurie Carmichael and Jim Beard spoke.	<i>Hot Metal</i> ; 35 hour week campaign; AMWU; Laurie Carmichael; Jim Beard;
3835	He was aware around this time of gay activists in the CPA – Lance Gowland, Brian McGahen.	CPA; Lance Gowland; Brian McGahen;
3930	He then became organiser for the Sydney District of the CPA. He was interested in supporting communists in the gay movement and the CPA Sydney Branch had formed a homosexual collective. Geoff joined the group to provide support for a central human rights struggle, but as a straight man.	Sydney District CPA; CPA Homosexual Collective;
4110	His friend and housemate, Marilyn McCormack and Kim Back, an ex-lover were members, plus Lance Gowland, Brian McGahen, Barry Power, Graham Chuck and Peter Murphy.	Marilyn McCormack; Kim Back; Lance Gowland; Brian McGahen; Barry Power; Graham Chuck; Peter Murphy;
4230	And he was still friends with Leigh Holloway.	Leigh Holloway;
4320	The collective was relatively small – about 8 – 10 people. It discussed politics in the gay movement, sexism among gay men, the politics of lesbian separatism. Perhaps Joyce Stephens, Margot Moore attended – there was an overlap between the gay and women’s collectives.	CPA Gay Collective; Joyce Stephens; Margot Moore;
4635	The first mardi gras. Geoff was aware that the International Day of Gay Solidarity was happening. Not involved in organising and did not participate until the evening.	International Day of Gay Solidarity;
4740	Joined the march after it was directed down William Street into Kings Cross. He came late.	William Street; Kings Cross;
4725	When he arrived “it was a stand up fight” in Darlinghurst Road. Police had blocked the road and set among the marchers “and arresting people and it was a chaotic riotous moment”. He knew when he arrived he had to join in. He left his girlfriend and “got involved in trying to rescue people who were being pulled by the police into paddy wagons”. And joining the chants “stop police attacks on gays women and blacks”.	Darlinghurst Road;
5030	He heard police say “get him” and he took off through the crowd to escape but ran into a pile of newspapers. He was arrested and thrown into a paddy wagon. This was not the first time he had been arrested.	Police; Paddy wagon;
5150	Inside the paddy wagon, perhaps Shane Brown (he was later in his cell). People were feeling proud about the stand they took. “I arrived at a place where I had to make a decision about what side I was on and it was pretty clear what side I felt I was on and I was willing to get involved and do what I could to stand up to the police in defence of people’s rights”	Shane Brown;
5340	They were taken to Darlinghurst Police Station and put into a cell. About 20 men plus were in the one cell. The women were in another cell a far distance away. The men were singing songs, as were the women. There was a large crowd at the front of the station chanting.	Darlinghurst Police Station;
5435	Were other straight men arrested? Chips Mackinolty and Tony Press were. But the majority were gay. No straight late night revellers were arrested. The straight men were like Geoff, activists.	Chris Mackinolty; Tony Press;

5550	The feeling in the cells was both fun and alarming. They had heard that Peter Murphy was being bashed. Peter was bashed at another location at Darlinghurst Police Station presumably an isolation cell. Peter was a friend and comrade.	Peter Murphy; Darlinghurst Police Station;
5635	It felt like this was the first time large numbers of gay activists had been arrested. People were on a high. History was being made. There was repartee between the men and women singing "what should we do with the cops and judges come the revolution". With the chants the feeling was uplifting.	
5715	They were bailed or given self-surety. Robert Tickner was involved negotiating with the cops getting them out on bail. At that time the Sussex Hotel was good at putting up bail and suspect they did on this occasion. Stella was the owner.	Robert Tickner; Sussex Hotel; Stella;
5805	Why feel it was a turning point? The feeling of the gay activists that they had made a stand and it was the biggest mass arrest for years.	
5950	Why did people end up at Kings Cross? He had heard that cops had blocked it off at the El Alamein Fountain and then corralled people.	Kings Cross; El Alamein Fountain;
10130	He heard people in the cells talk about the march exhorting people out of the gay bars and that the march had brought together a broad range of gays. And together they had taken a stand against the cops and the likes of Abe Saffron. Geoff got a potted history of the gay movement that night in the cell.	Abe Saffron;
10325	Released around 8am. David (Geoff later remembers his surname - Buchanan) was his lawyer.	David Buchanan;
10425	He attended the 4 th National Homosexual Conference. He was peripheral and ambiguity about being there. Attended with Leigh Holloway and wanted to understand gay politics post mardi gras for the CPA. Understood leading CPA members were speaking like Betty Hounslow as well, the previously mentioned names from the CPA gay collective.	4 th National Homosexual Conference; Leigh Holloway; Betty Hounslow; CPA gay collective;
10850	Recalls conference discussion about whether to march. "People just said, 'fuck it' let's do it anyway". Geoff decided to march. The arrests were 'passive' when compared to the mardi gras. No strong memories of the arrest or taken to a police station. His name was listed in the Herald.	
11207	After the Mardi Gras, the CPA organised events (including wharfie meetings) which featured the Gay Liberation Quire and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.	Gay Liberation Quire; Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence;
11415	Peter Murphy post the mardi gras. CPA members supported him as best they could but people may not have had the experience of supporting someone in deep shock. Peter lived in a house with Hal Alexander and Tony Press.	Peter Murphy; Hal Alexander; Tony Press;
11625	Dennis Freeney may have been around.	Dennis Freeney
11900	After this period he was involved in industrial issues, such as with the nurses with Jenny Bateman, Marilyn McCormack. Also involved in Pacific Island and Maori issues, the alternative music scene. There were regular music gigs at CPA offices including the Lighthouse Keepers, Women and Boys.	Jenny Bateman; Marilyn McCormack; CPA; Lighthouse Keepers; Women and Boys;
12115	Relationship with the music scene at the Sussex. The Sussex and the Criterion Hotels were rivals. The (punk) music and social scene was at the Sussex. The established socialist circles met at the Criterion. He was friends with Stella at the Sussex.	Sussex Hotel; Criterion Hotel; Stella;
12240	Most of the venues for gigs was at places in Cleveland Street – the pub at the corner of Regent and Cleveland Street for example. His role was to support the organisers. Andrew Oofee and his sister Sharon, Vicky Reseena. There was a big music scene	Cleveland Street; Andrew Oofee; Sharon Oofee; Vicky Reseena;

	at the Leichhardt Hotel, Rose of Australia (Erskineville), The Native Rose. Stray Dags performed at the Native Rose.	Leichhardt Hotel; Rose of Australia; Native Rose; Stray Dags;
12450	Geoff's relationships – Kim Back, Keiran Finnane, Jacquie Widen and he met his current partner Deborah Hartman in 1982. Deborah moved to Darwin and he joined her in Tennant Creek in 1983 where she had a job as a school teacher and where she set classes for kids in the fringe camps. He got a job as community youth centre co-ordinator and this became a venue for aboriginal bands like the Warumpi Band and Coloured Stone. The committee running it was majority aboriginal.	Kim Back; Keiran Finnane; Jacquie Widen; Deborah Hartman; Darwin; Tennant Creek; Warumpi Bank; Coloured Stone;
12930	He then went to Julalikari Council. His job was to get a representative body that represented all the camps, community development projects around alcohol, family violence, design of town camps, police community relationships, night patrols.	Julalikari Council;
13030	The went on to co-ordinate the community out station centre.	
13130	After the death of his wife's sister, they moved to the south coast of NSW then to Alice Springs then to Newcastle.	Alice Springs; Newcastle;
13210	In Alice Springs he re-connected with Leigh Holloway who had contracted AIDS.	Leigh Holloway; Alice Springs;
13240	He and Leigh's partner Bruce and friends scattered Leigh's ashes at Lake Rodway near Cradle Mountain, Tasmania.	Lake Rodway;
13310	The demise of the CPA in 1991. Geoff did some work trying to promote the New Left Party (NLP). The CPA was closed because the project of communism had failed because of the legacy of Stalin. The politics needed to be re-thought through. But it was not about "parties" but a different way of doing political work and it is was not clear what the NLP was about. The Search Foundation was formed to protect the resources of the CPA.	CPA; New Left Party; the Search Foundation; Stalin;
13650	Important events. Getting involved in the anti-Springbok demonstrations, the Aquarius Festival, Friends of the Earth, the Mardi Gras, having a child, the White Bay protests, moving to Tennant Creek.	Anti-Springbok demonstrations; Aquarius Festival, Friends of the Earth; Mardi Gras, White Bay; Tennant Creek.