

## Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Sau Foster

Interviewer: John Witte

Date of interview: 26 June 2013

Location of interview: Redfern

Reason for interview: Acceptance

Restrictions: None

Logging: John Witte 3/11/16



Time	Summary	Key words
0030	Born on Rotuma island, Fiji in 1944. Rotuma is 400 km north of Fiji. His father was a subsistence farmer and a titular chief. His mother was a village woman.	Rotuma; Fiji;
0145	He went to primary school and early secondary school run by the missions.	
0210	His father was a quiet man, and Sau was closer to his mother and dad tolerated him. He loved singing, dancing and his parents have always encouraged Sau to be himself.	
0315	When he took his first partner David to meet them they accepted him. And they have accepted his second partner.	
0410	In the island culture there was a tolerant attitude for example a lesbian cross dresser was accepted by the village. In the past there was lots of feminine men and there was a tradition of the fa'afafine as there was in Samoa.	fa'afafine;
0530	School was in the Catholic Mission and at 10 became a boarder. He was abused by the older boys. He would run home. His mum took him out of the school and she was ex-communicated.	Catholic Mission;
0650	Sau is upset by child and animal abuse. The abuse affected him as a person, thinking there was something wrong with him.	
0710	He had to do physical work on the mission plantation.	
0740	He was interested in literature and geography. He was spoiled by two nuns. They gave him books and opened his mind to what was happening overseas.	
0855	He went to Marist Brothers Grammar School, where Don Dunstan has studied years earlier. He wanted to be a priest and after matriculation he came to Toongabbie to study with the Marist Brothers.	Marist Brothers Grammar School; Don Dunstan; Toongabbie; Marist Brothers;
1000	At this stage Sau had no clear idea of his sexuality. He understood his same-sex attraction but did nothing about it. He held hands with another seminarian on a bus trip. "Particular friendships" between men was discouraged by placing another man with them to police their behaviour.	
1205	Sau relates how the first founder of the Marist Order was homosexual and his successor was anointed as the true founder.	Marist Order;
1240	Developing an idea of his own sexuality by looking up books.	
1425	Sau is a Roman Catholic but does not agree with everything the church says.	Roman Catholic;
1515	The Marist Brothers would meet the Marist Sisters "to socialise us". Or play football with the Jesuits.	Marist Sisters; Jesuits;
1650	It took seven years to study for the priesthood but he spent only four years there. He left because he didn't want to be told what to think. He was interested in the ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin but was not allowed to read him. He lost interest in being a priest.	Pierre Teilhard de Chardin;
1800	He left in 1968 and stayed with his uncle in Redfern. In 1969 he went with friends to Oxford Street and was chatted up by a man in a bar. (the Birdcage) He met the man's out mates – Colin, Peter and Graham. Graham was one of the original members of Acceptance.	Redfern; Oxford Street; Ivy's Birdcage;

1925	He met David Wyman and moved together into a share house in Paddington. "It was party time."	David Wyman; Paddington;
2025	Enzo's was close by and the Rex Hotel (Back Bar) in Kings Cross. The Rex was a rough place. There was a wine bar in Double Bay. Later there was Chez Ivy.	Enzo's; Rex Hotel; Back Bar; Chez Ivy;
2130	He went to the Purple Onion.	Purple Onion;
2230	He lived in Redfern and Colin in St Peters and they walked across the park to Randwick to Enzo's. They had no money.	Enzo's;
2250	Lots of parties and orgies after the pubs closed. The bedroom would be darkened and everybody had sex.	House parties;
2400	He would meet with people from the musical "Hair". Saturdays involved shopping then they would go to Bondi, then have sex in the showers.	Hair; Bondi Beach;
2515	He had a job with Dow Corning and they paid for his study at university. Then he saved up and went with David to London and then got a job in Dusseldorf with the British Army. Then to London and worked at Whileys at Green Square.	Dow Corning; Dusseldorf; British Army; Whileys; Green Square;
2745	London gay scene. Colherne Pub in Earls Court and the Catacombs disco. London did not have community groups and community dances. Pollys in Sydney had dances with performers like Johnny Farnham and Little Pattie performing.	Colherne Pub; Earls Court; Catacombs disco; Pollys; Johnny Farnham; Little Pattie;
2945	Came back to Australia with David. David started Chutzpah the first Jewish group.	David Wyman; Chutzpah;
3100	He got a job in a shop then worked in a library in 1973.	
3145	Gay activism. In Europe he had read Germain Greer's "Female Eunuch" It changed his life when he changed "woman" to "gay". "It explained myself to myself." He saw some Andy Warhol movies (Lonesome Cowboys) and saw how people led all sorts of different lives – "so why shouldn't I?"	Germain Greer; Female Eunuch; Andy Warhol; Lonesome Cowboys;
3430	He had seen his first porn films in Denmark. He was ready for the gay movement when he got back. And the gay movement was in the news.	Pornography;
3510	He went to a meeting of CAMP and met Gary Pye, Peter Bonsall-Boone and Peter de Waal at Cross+Section meetings.	CAMP; Gary Pye; Peter Bonsall-Boone; Peter de Waal; Cross+Section;
3545	Gary suggested a specific Catholic group and Acceptance was formed. It had its own masses at Sam's or Gary's place. Sau was an original member. Other members were Anthony Babicci, Michael Hill, Graham Donkin and David Ritchie. Later women joined. Margaret Berlusconi and Vall. Branches formed in Perth and then Adelaide.	Acceptance; Anthony Babicci; Michael Hill; Graham Donkin; David Ritchie; Margaret Berlusconi;
3830	He handed out leaflets at St Marys Cathedral. People would throw them away. Once they went screaming through St Marys.	St Mary's Cathedral;
3845	He wrote a letter to the Catholic Weekly for Acceptance and CW was threatened with a sit in if they refused to print it. It was printed with an editorial.	Acceptance; Catholic Weekly;
3940	At this stage a number of Catholic priests came to meetings to hold mass eg. John Thornhill. Priests were taken to the steam baths to have a look.	John Thornhill;
4000	Acceptance wrote to the Bishops. They were open to discussion.	
4025	Mike Clohesy case. Gary, Graham and Sau arranged for a meeting with their (the School?) representative and threatened to out gay priests. They were successful and this is the first time in this interview that this has been revealed. It was unlikely they would have outed the priests anyway. There was a court case and the Church withdrew.	Mike Clohesy;

4125	Mike Willesee Show appearance in 1974. They wanted to know about this gay church. (the MCC) Sau went in lieu of Gary Pye because Gary's brother was a policeman.	Mike Willesee; Gary Pye;
4335	Relationship between CAMP and Acceptance. There were two factions in Acceptance, one that wanted to worship and one that wanted to challenge the Church. The Church says that Sau is immoral and he does not accept that and that point should always be made.	CAMP; Acceptance;
4510	Gary was a leader. Gary was dyslexic and Sau wrote for him. Everyone loved Gary.	Gary Pye;
4610	Acceptance within CAMP. There was a time when CAMP would have thought Acceptance was a backward form of liberation. "if you were gay why would you bother with the Church?" Sau saw gay Catholics as needing a link to the gay community "and make them feel better".	Acceptance; CAMP;
4725	Acceptance provided Troy Perry for local support to found a church. There were no ministers or Catholic priests who were out here and Troy was out. They were not sectarian. He notes that the Quakers were supportive.	Troy Perry; Quakers;
4915	Troy split from his partner (Randy) and his partner remained and Troy returned to the US.	Troy Perry;
5040	Prior to Acceptance, Gay Pride Week took place in Sydney September 1973. Sau returned in 1972 and went to a talk in Surry Hills and went to the march on the Saturday. (Sau is in the photos taken on the day) He went to the Domain event on the Sunday, the meeting at the Paddington Town Hall on the Wednesday.	Acceptance; Gay Pride Week; Domain; Paddington Town Hall;
5230	October 12 Catholic Group meeting at his home is in his diary.	
5400	Discussion of GPW events in September. The Domain events.	Gay Pride Week;
5445	Was not arrested on the Saturday. He finished the march at the GPO in Martin Place. Martin Smith and Gary (Pye) also attended.	GPO; Martin Place; Martin Smith; Gary Pye;
5640	He was working at the State Library and going to Macquarie University. At that stage there was no gay activism. (1973 – 1974)	State Library; Macquarie University;
5915	Sau points out that his house was built by Fabian LoSchiavo's grand uncle when it was a fruit shop in 1913 in Regent Street.	Fabian LoSchiavo; Regent Street;
10020	He did not much to do with CAMP. "We were identified as these religious freaks."	CAMP
10055	A paper given at the 1975 National Homosexual Conference in Melbourne. He remembers being booed when he suggested gay marriage as part of the agenda. David gave a Chutzpah paper. They went as a group, and Gary's boyfriend lived in Melbourne.	First National Homosexual Conference; Melbourne; Chutzpah;
10240	And they submitted a paper on the Royal Commission into Human Relationships in 1975. David Ritchie was involved. Submission was titled "Lasting Human Homosexual Relationships".	Royal Commission into Human Relationships; David Ritchie; Lasting Human Homosexual Relationships;
10350	Chutzpah. Martin Smith was Jewish and was involved with his partner David. Services were led by Rabbi Reuben. Up to 12 Jewish men and women were involved. Viv Cass and her partner Hazel were also involved.	Chutzpah; Martin Smith; Rabbi Reuben; Viv Cass;
10735	Acceptance had a national conference in April 1975 and had a lot of media coverage. An opportunity for each state to come together.	
10915	How did Acceptance meet? Sometimes meetings happened after the service and held as his and David's place (behind the Clock in Surry Hills, in Birchgrove) often and Gary's place in Paddington and the Quakers in Surry Hills. They discussed how to communicate with the Catholic bishops, planning protests, letter writing. Apart from	Acceptance; the Clock; Surry Hills; Birchgrove; Paddington; Quakers; Surry Hills;

	the masses it was very political. On how they would co-operate with gay lib. They rarely discussed doctrine unless a priest was there to give a talk. Priests were mostly gay and some straight.	
11154	<b>Segment removed on request of interviewee.</b>	
11245	This was illegal for the priests to do this and they could have been sacked. This was important for members of Acceptance.	Acceptance;
11310	A lot of people don't accept the Church's teaching. Homosexuality is something people don't decide to be. It is a scientific matter.	
11430	Prior to 1978 he was active at the Library. He had come out on the Mike Willesee show, spoke on the ABC with Dean Shilton. In the 1980s with AIDS scare he became more active on workplace issues. His Mardi Gras posters were torn down or cut with knives. He was active with the PSA and a group from PSA was involved in Mardi Gras.	State Library; Mike Willesee; Dean Shilton; Australian Broadcasting Commission; Mardi Gras; Public Service Association;
11630	He did not go to the first Mardi Gras. He attended the march in the morning with his partner David. It was well advertised. Damien Parer (son of Damien Parer Kokoda Trail WW2 film maker) and his partner Peter, Graham and Gary Pye, Graham's partner Peter Klem (there is a photo). It was an upbeat march because a large number of people turned up.	Mardi Gras; International Day of Gay Solidarity; David Parer; Gary Pye; Peter Klem;
11950	He was playing cards when news came in about the arrests at the first Mardi Gras. Went to the flour bomb march and others after that.	
12025	"There was a sense of determination. We weren't going to let that go by without. We wanted to free the people in prison by hook or by crook."	
12050	He and a group have organised floats for mardi gras. Fabian organised an entry of the Sisters of Elizabeth Taylor of Hollywood.	Sisters of Elizabeth Taylor of Hollywood; Fabian LoSchiavo;
12200	Fabian's role. He was one of the first members (of Cross+Section) when he was a Catholic, before he became Anglican.	Fabian LoSchiavo; Cross+Section; Anglican;
12255	He was a member of the (Gay Liberation) Quire	Gay Liberation Quire;
12315	He was active in his union and the local Labor Party in Balmain ( <i>JW interjects and refers to the PSA not the ALP</i> ) around the time of Peter Baldwin's bashing. He was busy in union activities and in a court case for equal pay for librarians which was very successful. Bob Carr the Premier was sceptical, but the win had implications for his female staff – a huge salary rise. Sau was secretary of the state library (branch) and member of the Central Council of the PSA. Kate Burnham, now the librarian at the ABC was important. "An amazing speaker".	Australian Labor Party; Balmain; Peter Baldwin; Bob Carr; Kate Burnham; Chris Leams; Lance Gowland; ABC; Public Service Association;
12630	The era of AIDS. Sau believed reports of the new "gay disease". He had just broken up with his David, and was in San Francisco and Rio when AIDS began spreading.	AIDS; Rio de Janiero; San Francisco;
12800	Gary was ill when Sau came back from South America. Perhaps 1986. It was an emotional period. Friends dying, visiting hospital. At work people were scared and ignorant. But it changed to people being supportive. The played a role in this with education and support.	AIDS;
12945	The women joined the men in Sydney and the US. They came to meetings as working raising funds and visiting people.	Lesbians;
13045	Sau believes the legacy of the AIDS period was men grew to love. The stereotype was that gay men never grew up but they were like everybody else and were deeply loving people.	AIDS;

13130	He participated more in Mardi Gras. "We have to celebrate the lives of our dead friends if nothing else. And when we had the worst period we partied harder than anyone else."	Mardi Gras parades;
13230	He has left work is now involved with Cana Communities Volunteering. It helps ex-prisoners. Every Tuesday lunches and morning teas are provided for homeless people. The idea is to build community among isolated people. He and three women fund it.	Cana Communities Volunteering;
13500	He has many non-political friends who thought he was "mad" to be involved with Acceptance.	Acceptance;
13610	Getting involved in activism meant. He knew people who shared similar views – proud of being gay or lesbian and wanted to say so and to improve conditions for themselves and other people. He had an easy time. He never had doubts about his sexuality and has done what he wanted to do. His parents had encouraged him to be himself. He mentions Olivia who had a sex change in the 80s, was rejected by her family "and that is hard." His involvement with Gay Lib has helped him as a human being. He didn't waste his time with people who didn't accept him. People like Gary (Pye) were inspiring. Dennis Altman's book along with Germaine Greer's intellectually did it for him.	Gay Liberation; Gary Pye; Dennis Altman; Germaine Greer; Gay activism;