

**Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Alex Garfield**

Interviewer: John Witte

Date: 3 October 2016

Location of interview: Benledi, Glebe

Reason for interview: Early Social Groups

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Keywords
0036	Alex was born in London July 8 1946, moving from Edgware to Stanmore.	London;
0051	His father died when he was 11 and mum raised the family in Stanmore.	Stanmore UK;
0100	He did not do too well at school.	
0129	Mum worked at Boots the chemist. Life wasn't easy, but they made ends meet.	Boots;
0210	Interested at school in woodwork, gardening and going to the gym. He left school at 15 and started work as a trainee chef at Lyons.	Lyons;
0300	Then sold menswear.	
0315	In 1967 his brother suggested he go to Australia and on December 11 1967 he arrived.	
0340	In 1968 first went to a gay place Ivy's on Oxford Street. There were two places, one at Bondi Junction and one at Taylor Square. The Birdcage at Taylor Square was rough and ready but the shows were good.	Chez Ivy; Ivy's Birdcage;
0400	Arrival in Australia by plane. Airport - tin sheds and wooden benches.	
0427	His first job was at Farmers in George Street. His supervisor was unpleasant.	Farmers;
0500	Grace Brothers at Bondi Junction, then McDowell's Department Store.	Grace Brothers;
0550	Alex realised he was gay at 22. He was introduced to Ian Fenton (became Suzie King a transgender woman) and Ian introduced him to pubs. Menzies in Castlereagh Street, Rex Carlton (corner of King and Castlereagh).	Ian Fenton; Suzie King; Menzies; Rex Carlton;
0815	Realised he was gay in 1968 or 1969. In London working at Burberry's an older gay man took him to gay dances and pubs. He was very naive.	Burberry's;
0935	He went to gay groups by himself. One of the best was the Chelsea Players. He knew about them through someone he met at David Jones.	Chelsea Players;
1000	The Karingals, the Karnabys, the Cronulla Gay Group, Tiffanys, Regents – these were short lived.	The Karingals; The Karnabys; The Cronulla Gay Group; Tiffanys; Regents;

1014	Then the Chameleons and he went to all their balls and dances. First event he went to was at the Sky Lounge in Liverpool Street. Lovely people, men and women, drag and very social. Most people had partners. It was a dress up place.	The Chameleons; Sky Lounge;
1120	Claudia (Claude) Wagner ran the after-hours bar upstairs at Chez Ivy. Irwin lived at the front of the house. You would go upstairs and Claudia/Claude would introduce you to various people. He ran the bar upstairs for Ivy.	Claudia (Claude) Wagner; Ivy Richter; Chez Ivy;
1310	The best evenings were the Chameleons. Their fancy dress balls were "incredible". Good looking people went along. He met Bernard King there.	Bernard King;
1345	He joined the Pollys then left and went to the Mosaics a social group. They met above a service station and it was run by Yvonne Oakey and Fran. Yvonne was a "tough cookie" – a big lesbian. Ian (Flossy) McLean played the music. It was cheap.	Pollynesians; Mosaics; Yvonne Oakey; Ian (Flossy) McLean;
1450	Boomerangs social group was run by Colin Wiseman. They held dances, fun runs and picnics which were held in the middle of the harbour.	Boomerangs; Colin Wiseman;
1520	Vamps were a group of men doing "rough drag". Lennie Argent, Lanie (a very big bloke) played the piano at the Rocks. And there was Phyllis who had red hair and two brothers.	The Vamps; Lennie Argent; Lanie; Phyllis;
1705	There were the Saturday nights at the Rex in the 70s – the front bar was the gay bar. You would buy a box of beer and hope you were invited to a party.	Rex Hotel;
1735	Barrel Inn, Castellos.	Barrel Inn; Castellos;
1950	The social groups were mixed gays (camps), bisexuals, lesbians, transgenders.	
2020	Camp Inc at 33a Glebe Point Road, Glebe. Went to an evening there out of interest. A lot couldn't come out as gay in the 1970s and men married to protect their jobs. But if you were outlandish you could get away with it. For example window dressers.	CAMP Inc;
2220	A window dresser at David Jones, John McDonald, played the piano at <i>Phillip's Foot</i> a restaurant at the Rocks. He wore mad hats.	David Jones; John McDonald;
2320	During the AIDS crisis a lot of members passed away.	AIDS;
2340	Good people involved with Polly's. It is well run and had dances, drag shows. Remembers Amber who performed. Costumes made at home. Venues were Leichhardt Town Hall, Coronation Hall Mascot and now Marrickville Town Hall. Five people kept it together up until now. Amber was David Clare. Amber was a good choreographer. "Knew what he wanted".	Pollynesians; Amber; Leichhardt Town Hall; Coronation Hall; Marrickville Town Hall; David Clare;
2600	Cronulla Gay Group had dances and dinners. John Wall was a member.	Cronulla Gay Group; John Wall;

2620	Putting floats together. The parade got bigger and bigger. Worked on floats for the Pollys and volunteered on the parades and Sleaze Ball for Mardi Gras.	Pollynesians;
2750	First Mardi Gras parade in 1978. He saw the parade assembling near the Court House in Taylor Square. Quite a few dressed up. One float and some music and people walking. People who joined came off the street and may have come out of the bars. Gathered momentum and got to William Street. He had heard about the police actions in the Cross days later.	Mardi Gras; 1978; Taylor Square;
2915	Reaction to the parade among Alex's friends. Can't recall them talking about it. At the parade he was only observing.	
3000	Attended gay rallies through the MCC church. The rally was held outside Parliament House. Gays on (one side of the street) and the Festival of Light on the other.	MCC Church; Parliament House; Festival of Light;
3145	AIDS candlelight processions. Thousands attended these. Remembers walking from Hyde Park to Oxford Street with candles.	AIDS Candlelight Procession;
3210	Quilt ceremonies at Convention Centre, Darling Harbour. Moving ceremony.	AIDS Quilt; Darling Harbour;
3240	AIDS. Heard about it in the papers but was naive about it. Did know people like Amber who died. Pollys raised money for AIDS Ward (St Vincents Hospital).	AIDS; AIDS Ward; Pollynesians;
3520	Alex was involved in building the floats for Mardi Gras. He still has the costume for the "mirrors" float. It had mirror balls and people in mirror costumes. Assembled at Marrickville Council grounds. Team effort. Then drove the float to the parade assembly point. Where everyone dressed up. There was the birthday float. Some on float some walked. Danced and sang to music supplied by Ian McLean. Two straight couples drove the truck. Alex has done five floats.	Mardi Gras; floats; Marrickville Council; Ian McLean;
3715	Alex would go to people's garages to help build the float. You would have to make your costume. Other jobs were organising people, food for the day. The idea for the float would be decided by the group as was the music, costumes. Marrickville Council provided a grant for the float.	Float; Marrickville Council;
3805	Each group is required to go to Mardi Gras and submit the size of the float, the theme, the number of people on the float and walking. In recent years, safety and insurance is a concern.	Mardi Gras;
3855	Professional performers who were involved with Polly's shows. Karen Chant only a few of the shows. Judy Burnett, Maxine Du Barry have done spots.	Karen Chant; Judy Burnett; Maxine Du Barry;
3925	Producers. Sue Ellen has produced over 70 shows. Six weeks rehearsal, then on the day on site from 10am. A break between the rehearsal and show. They finish at 1am.	Sue Ellen;

4015	Membership of Pollys is now between 25 – 30 members. Fun at the rehearsals, at the dance. Some talented members, but Pollys are not professionals. The money raised goes to grants.	Pollynesians;
4100	People apply for grants. The Committee decides who is the most deserving and if the issue is gay. Recipients include PFLAG.	PFLAG;
4215	JW raises the issue of Pollys as identifying as “gay”. ( <i>Note JW refers to “Pollys” as “Boomerangs”</i> ) Alex explained that Pollys was a “group of people who just wanted to meet”. A lot of members couldn’t afford to come out in the 70s and 80s.	Pollynesians;
4300	Different world. If you were bashed on the beats, police didn’t care. Alex mentioned three people he knew this happened to. Dangerous beats – there was one in North Sydney, one in Ashfield Park and Belmore Park near Central Station.	Bashing; Beats; North Sydney; Ashfield Park; Belmore Park;
4545	Performers at venues in the 90s included Simone and Monique at the Imperial, dancers like Polly Petrie performed on the bar at the Albury, (now runs the Stonewall, Pollys Follies). The Albury was run by the late Leigh Jennings and Nanette Theakstone. Afterwards people would go to the Piano Room and sing around the piano. Performer there was someone who appeared in Simon Townsend’s program danced and sang. The drag was fun.	Simone and Monique; Polly Petrie; Albury Hotel; Polly’s Follies; Leigh Jennings; Nanette Theakstone; Piano Room;
4655	Performers at the Albury got dressed up back stage and were often drunk.	The Albury Hotel;
4730	After the Albury, people would go up Oxford Street or to the Taxi Club. The Taxi Club had shows and transgenders met there. Alex felt safe there. A good manager and bouncers kept the Taxi Club safe.	Taxi Club;
4845	As well as the Taxi Club folding, other places include, the Exchange Hote and the Flinders. The Beresford and Beauchamp went straight. He went to Oscars in North Sydney which opened briefly.	Taxi Club; Exchange Hotel; Flinders; Beresford; Beauchamp Hotel; Oscars;
4915	Feathers also operated briefly. It was owned by Jimmy Fishburn and his boyfriend Noni (?) who was a Qantas steward. Jimmy was a theatre producer. Billy Goodwin played the piano. He was Scottish and a talented pianist and he did drag.	Feathers; Jimmy Fishburn; Billy Goodwin;
5000	Feathers. Jimmy’s mother also helped there. It didn’t last long. It had a pink decor and chandeliers. Dawn O’Donnell opened Jools around that time.	Dawn O’Donnell; Jools;
5045	The opening of Jools. The social groups turned up. Interior had chandeliers.	Jools;
5100	Ruby Red’s was aimed at the lesbian market.	Ruby Reds;
5140	Capriccio’s was run by Tommy Brown and two other people. Capriccio shows were brilliant. Costumes and music. Music on records was imported by Qantas stewards and put together.	Capriccio’s; Tommy Brown; Qantas;

5225	Fires at Capriccios. There was a rumour at the time that costumes were removed before the fire.	Capriccio's;
5244	Les Girls attracted the country crowd and coachloads. Abe Saffron partly run Les Girls.	Les Girls; Abe Saffron;
5330	Sammy Lee was the prior owner. Sammy had previously had the Jewel Box.	Sammy Lee; Jewel Box;
5345	Alex went the Purple Onion only a few times and the Purple Onion became Kens (Karate Klub).	Purple Onion; Ken's Karate Klub;
5450	Darreal. Wore amazing fur coats.	Darreal;
5545	Some queens were very outrageous	
5600	Blue Mountains Queens Birthday parties. Alex didn't go. They were organised by a different social circle and were quite wealthy.	Queen's Birthday; Blue Mountains;
5700	He was introduced by a friend to a theatrical circle. Noel Brophy, Ron Fraser and Gordon Chater. Noel was chairman of Frank Strain's Bull and Bush venue in William Street. Ron Fraser worked with the late Johnny Lockwood.	Noel Brophy; Ron Fraser; Gordon Chater; Johnny Lockwood;
5820	<i>Boys in the Band</i> the play was outrageous at the time. It was at the Phillip Street Theatre starring John Stanton. It was important because "that's me". Other men got married and had to live double lives.	"Boys in the Band"; Phillip Street Theatre; John Stanton;
10100	Costume place run by Ian Johnson called <i>Attack Box</i> and he supplied costumes for different venues.	Ian Johnson; The Attack Box;
10115	<i>Aquarius. Changers</i> was in Newtown upstairs off King Street. Both didn't last long.	Changers;
10140	<i>Isadora's</i> . Was in Day Street, City. It was small and rough. It was possibly in the Communist Club.	Isadora's;
10200	Dennis Fisher also went to <i>Isadora's</i> . Dennis went to the Gold Coast and later died.	Dennis Fisher;
10400	Three Sisters Balls in the Blue Mountains.	Three Sisters' Balls;
10445	Enzos was a wine bar opposite Paddington Town Hall. It was run by good looking man called Enzo and his friend who was a wealthy butcher. Nice neighbourhood with a garden at the back. Very pleasant and no problems. You met friends and socialised.	Enzo's;
10625	The Regents was an off shoot off the Chelsea Players after they packed up. Debby was a member of the group worked for the Telegraph newspaper who was later became disabled after an altercation in a pub. Ron Quilter was a member and his partner Cammie. (JW reads out a list of members) Ann-Marie was a woman.	The Regents; The Chelsea Players; Ron Quilter;
10855	Joan and Charles Williamson were a straight couple who got involved with the Chelsea Players. Charles was big man who loved the gay people. He was a member of a gay Masonic Lodge, straight men who were gay. Evenings were outrageous.	Charles Williamson; Chelsea Players; Masonic Lodge;

11000	"Vicky" worked at Waltons. His partner worked in a nursing home in Neutral Bay. They put on a few shows. Done very quickly. Everyone supplied their own costumes.	Waltons;
11050	We (?Regents or Chelsea Players?) ran dollar dances with another group at the Sailors Home in Glebe. Upstairs, put the tables together, paper on top. Roxy (Ron Hart) ran it. They would get a record player. Downstairs was smelly – where the rough people lived. Ron Hart was tough.	Regents; Sailors' Home; Glebe; Ron (Roxy) Hart;
11230	Of all the groups the Chameleons were the best. Their balls were incredible. Everyone got dressed up. Alex went to 432 Parramatta Road a couple of times. There was a pub on the corner that was partly gay.	Chameleons;
11425	Soula the bouncer at Chez Ivys.	
11510	Barry Cecchini, Alex speculates was bankrolled by Dawn.	
11845	Roger Claude (Teyssevre) Dawn's partner. Had a pock marked faced. Owned a Lebanese restaurant in Oxford Street.	Roger Claude Teyssevre;
11915	The Exchange Hotel. Opened by Dawn O'Donnell. They did drag shows on a Sunday night. Back room had a piano bar.	The Exchange Hotel;
12030	Changes in gay society that have affected the look of Oxford Street. On line dating sites, venues closing. Couples still go out for a social evening with friends. People don't have dinner parties like they used to. Couples still have outside relationships. Although he has seen lesbian partners become jealous and fight.	Oxford Street;
12300	Gay Marriage plebiscite. Churches have a lot of influence – the Festival of Light, Christian Right Lobby, Family First.	Gay Marriage Plebiscite; Festival of Light; Christian Right Lobby; Family First;
12450	Religion has not been important. Alex was raised in a Jewish household, went to synagogue, but hasn't joined a synagogue in Australia.	Judaism;
12615	Goes back to his family in the UK on visits. They know he is gay and it's not an issue.	
12730	An important event. Finding out that he was gay at 21 (1968). In 1968 or 1969 he shared a house with a German in Mosman. There were problems and he left and moved to North Sydney. He has always been a loner. "Always dress up for the occasion".	



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### COMING ATTRACTIONS

- Boomerang Club - 13th. November
- Karingal Club - 20th. November
- Karnaby Club - 27th. November
- Polly-nesians Club - 5th. December
- Karnaby Club - 31st. December
- REGENTS SOCIAL GROUP - 18th. March, 1972.

Names mentioned at time mark 10625