

John Witte interviewing **Lance Gowland**. Lance was born 4/11/35 in Melbourne and grew up in Melbourne, Griffith, Tuggerah Lakes, Sydney, Tomerong and lived in Goulburn and Sydney. The interview took place in Surry Hills and Marrickville on 29th and 30th June 2005. This interview is part of the Pride History Project Oral History Project on the lives of gay activists in Sydney



Time	Subjects	Proper Names
000000	Born in Melbourne. Parents were Communists. Mother was a Catholic from Tasmania who became politicised in the late 1930's. Father a shearer. Poverty in South Melbourne. Graffiti on their house	Communist Party of Australia
000038	Bashed on the way home from school because parents were communists. Father left work early to take him home. Feeling of being an outsider in Australia. As a child wanted to have a gun to protect himself. Police protected the rich.	
000511	Talks about brother. Moving to Griffith. Father builds earth house and orchard.	Griffith
000629	Father cleaned canals during depression for work for the dole. Aunt from Tasmania visits and is upset by the Gowland's situation. Anecdote about a sympathetic Italian who left fruit for his Aunt because she was upset.	Tasmania
000726	Father avoided call up by getting a job at Fisherman's Bend aircraft factory. Lance was 6 and this is when he was bashed.	Fishermans Bend
000836	Goes back to Griffith after the war. School in Griffith where he and brother sided with the Italians.	Griffith
000949	Moves to Long Jetty lives in tent while father builds another home. High school in Long Jetty. Idyllic time, rural setting. His father was away for periods of time. When at home he was violent.	Long Jetty
001049	Talks about friendships. Tony Ames. Wrestling. Father disapproved. Suspects his friends were gay. All outsiders. Other in school played football.	Tony Ames
001333	Father's reaction to Lance being different. Tried to teach him to box. Brother boxed. 1952 joins a left wing dance club. Loved it. Father not happy. He suspects others were gay. But nothing happened.	
001523	Moved to Prospect.	Prospect
001535	Goes to Westmead. Westmead High School. Took petition around school to ban the atom bomb. Told to take it home or be expelled. Government was conservative – supported Apartheid.	Westmead
001643	Involved in the Peace Movement – demos.	Peace Movt.
001706	Left school after failing second year High School.	
001716	Gets a job in Post Office. Course of technician in training. Fails. Stayed in Post Office for a couple of years. Family moves to Tomerong and builds another house. Works full time at Tomerong on farm.	Post Office Tomerong
001820	Leaves home in 1959. Queensland for 12 months. Had to escape authoritarian father. Was about 20 years old.	Queensland
001846	Came home and then went to Europe and US for 4 years.	Europe

	Meeting many homosexuals but doing nothing about it. Knowledge of homosexual. He had picked up the term from books his mother read.	
001953	Communist Party was anti-gay.	CPA
002014	Communist Party begins to change when he got back in 1964. Splits from China, and splits locally. Poland and Czechoslovakia. He was involved in the struggle for gay rights and legalisation of marijuana. CPA was first party to take such a stand. There was enthusiasm within the party for change.	CPA China Poland Czechoslovakia
002224	There was some resistance, but generally there was support.	
002312	The trip to Europe. Cost £300 by boat. He was gobsmacked by the beautiful people in Columbo. Poverty shocking. Arab countries were exotic and different. Egypt. Rome Olympic Games. Has 8mm film of Landy running. Yugoslavia. People were friendly. Germany. Stayed with relations of friends. Worked in factory in winter in 1960. Met up with gay guys. From Canadian military base. Night club with lots of gays. Coldness of Europe and language barriers.	Columbo Landy Yugoslavia Germany
003125	Impressions of East Berlin. CPA supported CP in East Germany/Moscow, but found little choice and gestapo woman selling bread. Cultural events were open to everyone and were cheap.	East Berlin
003400	Found the return to Tomerong boring and had to go to Sydney for concerts. Hungry for the other side of life. Thinks this has something to do with gays. Gays were involved in the arts in the CPA.	Tomerong
003536	After Germany went to London and met up with friends from boat. Got involved in politics in the British Communist Party and the Peace Movt. Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
003615	March from Aldermaston. Every Easter to London. Along the way people would join march. Hundreds of thousands along country lanes. Logistics of feeding large numbers. No garbage left behind. People singing songs. Fear of nuclear war motivated marchers. Blockade of Cuba. Americans were prepared for world catastrophe.	Aldermaston Cuba
004011	Sold the Communist Party newspaper. Had a stand each. Morning Star. Cultural difference.	Morning Star
004106	Camp counselling in America during summer holidays. Jewish summer camp. One was thrown out because he was gay. Kept in touch. In Washington when Martin Luther King gave his famous speech to the Washington civil rights march.	Martin Luther King Washington
004200	In Philadelphia black rights demonstration for jobs	Philadelphia
004300	Boat back to Europe. Invited to go to Isreal. And got involved in 1963 in demonstration against confiscation of Palestinian land. Take over land and turn Palestinians into labourers. Handed out leaflets. Jews bashed up demonstrators. Some peace people stood ground and argued. Strength. Police took them out of town. Got to Dar el Assad. People were grateful. They pointed out spies within community.	Dar el Assad Palestinian
004755	Military parade near Jerusalem. Carried banners in support of	Jerusalem

	Arabs and Jews living together.	
004900	Left Israel and went to Scandinavia and stayed with Swedish gay man. Beauty of Stockholm in summer. Work for a few months on building site. Was shown a park for pick ups both gay and heterosexual by his friend. This was a new experience.	Sweden
005040	Went to Moscow. Like visiting somewhere sacred, where the revolution happened.	Moscow
005120	Train to Vladivostok and boat to Japan. Then Tokyo for the 1964 Olympic Games. Then by boat back to Australia	Japan
005200	Monitored by security? Mixed. He was let into the U.S. but friends who needed clearance to go to Zimbabwe found out that there was a baker who visited them was a communist. This was Lance.	Security monitoring
005400	He wrote for a student paper on the boat back to the Britain from the US where he interview Americans who refused to fight in Vietnam and about bomb shelters for the elite in Britain.	
005600	Eureka Youth League – involved when he lived in Westmead. Summer camps in Springwood – bushwalking. Rosenberg executions. Graffiti around Springwood and demos at US Embassy in Sydney. EYL believed Rosenbergs were innocent.	Eureka Youth League Rosenbergs
005837	EYL involved a bit of politics, but mainly fun. Lance remembers the leader of EYL at the time approaching him after Lance had been harassed selling papers at Granville by the police and “coming on to him”. Only later discovered he was gay. Another important figure was pointed out by one of the parents as a “queer”.	EYL Granville
010000	Lance talks about the hierarchical and authoritarian CPA. Parents left. Programs. Party couldn’t grow.	
010245	Couldn’t adjust to quiet life back in Australia. Went to Sydney for concerts.	
010350	Friend he met while working in Austria met up and he and Lance went to work in the Snowy. Lots of Europeans. He befriended a Yugoslav guy...	
File 02		
000000	Came into his room and suggested they have sex.	
000032	European food. Job in diamond drilling store. The let out clause for any responsibility.	
000254	He took a group of young men from Victoria to local pub. The waiter was gay but everyone enjoyed the others company. This taught him that it was OK to be gay. The young men had nearly been killed flying up to Cooma.	Cooma
000503	Lance didn’t get involved in the union there. No union presence.	
000530	Met wife in the Snowy. Both had been overseas and both aged 30 being pushed into marriage. Both clicked and got married.	
000600	Early in marriage had a fling with a young man.	
000710	Moved to Goulburn joined the Public Service.	Goulburn
000713	About 1968 began hearing about the gay rights movement. “This is interesting.”	
000820	Thinks now that he was being liberated not just by Stonewall and the Early Gay Liberation movement, but by encounters with gay	Stonewall

	people.	
000850	Early gay lib group in Goulburn set up by word of mouth. Nurses, a Catholic brother, an organist in the Catholic Cathedral. Nothing political and all left Goulburn for Sydney.	Goulburn
000930	Put in for transfer to Sydney. Separated from wife and both looked after the kids.	Sydney
001005	Transferred to Quarantine in Sydney. Came back at weekends to look after the kids.	Quarantine
001030	Came Out in Goulburn. He was Secretary of the Goulburn Trades and Labour Council and position became a bit dicky. Wife advised by Family Planning that it was a phase and she should stick by him. He refused to see FP.	Goulburn Trades and Labour Council
001128	Mutual parting.	
001145	Reaction of the CPA. The group was very small and fairly inactive. But Lance was involved in the Progress Association and a Film Group and when he came out he "almost had to leave" Goulburn.	Progress Assoc Film Group
001328	When he came back to Goulburn in the early 70's, would walk down street with gay badges and with wife and kids. Very provocative.	
File 03		
000110	In Goulburn, one of the psychiatric nurses had an affair with a man in Canberra. Police caught them in a car and were charged with indecent assault. Pleaded guilty. Relationship ended. Horror of oppression	Indecent assault
000230	L. came to Sydney and visited Peter Bonsall-Boon and Peter de Waal. Got involved with CAMP and the Phone Counselling Services.	Peter Bonsall-Boon Peter de Waal
000324	Within weeks he had moved into the rooms above 33a Glebe Pt Road, when Gay Liberation movement started, with boyfriend, Ron Austin.	33a Glebe Pt Rd; Gay Liberation; Ron Austin
000350	People connecting, going to meetings. There was live sketch club. They drew up a statement of aims. In a patriarchal society we fitted with women. Men screwing men threatened that patriarchy.	Patriarchy
000524	L. talks about working with other oppressed groups. Recalls the Green Bans at Macquarie University to support a gay student. A world first.	Green Bans; Macquarie Uni.
000623	Others involved at that time were Dennis Altman, Dennis Freeney, Lex Watson.	Dennis Altman, Dennis Freeney, Lex Watson
000803	Dennis Freeney had worked with Lance in the Communist Party to get support for gay rights. Dennis Freeney was a journalist.	Dennis Freeney; Communist Party
000820	L. talks about the issue of autonomy for the gay movement versus the position of ultra left groups who saw gay liberation as secondary to the class struggle.	Autonomy
001000	One of the first demonstrations for Gay Rights organized by CAMP.	Gay rights demos
001042	Protest at Hotel in Bondi Junction, where barman was sacked.	Bondi Junction
File 04		
000030	Another demonstration of cars to Parramatta for concert.	Parramatta

000113	Martin Place protests and demos.	Martin Place
000341	Gay Communists in CPA planned to put a statement about gay rights into the manifesto. Never finished. Lesbians attacked gay men for being part of patriarchal oppression. Gay men could not be free until women were free.	Gay Communists Manifesto
000510	Lance talks about limited venues. Gay activists organized dances.	Dances
000527	Consciousness raising groups, concept of self hate. L. talks about learning to cry and how liberating it was.	Consciousness Raising Groups
000649	Came out at work. Whistling, but as time went by good people rallied around. Could talk openly about homophobia. L. talks further about personal liberation and finding new friends.	Personal liberation
000845	Felt cheated because feeling like a real person so late in life. A pandora's box. Never thought he was capable of such emotions.	
001058	Rise of commercial scene. Nobody wanted to come to meetings. This was disturbing for him because of his deep involvement.	Commercial scene
001200	Became involved in Mardi Gras.	Mardi Gras
001230	First Mardi Gras when police attacked and people fought back. Police had treated us with contempt. He describes the resistance on the night. How he was rescued from arrest	Resistance to police
001420	Next 12 months felt like a revolution. The "Drop the Charges" campaign. Constant meetings, media inquiries, demos of 1 – 2,000 people. Solidarity from around the world.	Drop the Charges campaign
001517	After the first Mardi Gras each got better. Doubled each year. About 6 people worked on it for the first 4 years. It took up all of everybody's time. Met fortnightly or weekly.	Mardi Gras
001622	Very little help from the left or the right. Gay rights activists didn't like the involvement of business community. L. saw that this involvement was important to get away from a traditional march and be more colourful and celebratory. It worked.	Business community
001720	L. assesses Mardi Gras as being the real change that brought a lot of people into the movement – Stonewall in 1969. Feeling of solidarity of being with like minded people.	Stonewall
001817	Conservatives came in from 1980 and didn't want politics with Mardi Gras.	Conservatives
001910	Gay activists didn't like the involvement of the business community – L. describes their views of business community.	Gay activists
002000	National Homosexual Conference in Sydney overwhelmingly were against commercial involvement. Ultra left politicians were very persuasive.	National Homosexual Conference
002049	The position of the Mardi Gras Committee was tone down the politics and popularise the march. L. thinks it was successful with large numbers rallying for law reform in those years. People learned it was OK to be on the street.	Mardi Gras Committee;
002145	The right thought that if there was another Mardi Gras the police would attack it.	
002313	L. says that his boyfriend believed the police were going to get him.	
002317	L. describes getting the permit for the second Mardi Gras and threats made by the Traffic Officer.	Permit
002349	As a result the organisers were careful to have control over the	

	march.	
002415	The Committee steered a path between the conservatives and the radicals. As the conservatives realised that they were not going to be bashed, they came on board and kicked out the Committee in 1984.	
002436	One Committee member was Brian McGahen, a Sydney City Councillor and one of the first openly gay city councillors in the world. In 1980 he came on board, brought a lot of people and made a lot of difference. At that time the Committee was half Communists and half anarchists.	Brian McGahen Communists Anarchists
002600	Position of CAMP at this time – L. believed it had petered out. Conservatives had kicked out activists like Ron Austin and Jim Walker by the early 1980's. A national and international trend.	CAMP
002829	L. describes the struggles as vicious. Attacks made in journals to justify their political position.	
002915	The attack on the left in Mardi Gras was in the form of calling them left wing radicals who could not run Mardi Gras in a business like way. L. argues that the left organised Mardi Gras differently by delegating functions to community organisations and actively encouraging participation. The newcomers were against people joining the parade en route, whereas the left would have encouraged participation.	
003035	The move from winter to summer was covered. The National Conference had proscribed the involvement of business community in Stonewall. This forced the move from winter (Stonewall) to summer. L. says that conservatives loved the move.	Summer Mardi Gras; National Conference
003145	Feminists in the CPA would have supported the conference decision. L. 's view was that without commercial involvement it would have been just another political march.	Feminists in CPA
003307	L. says that Mardi Gras could have folded quite easily in those years. He recalls when it rained. A meeting to decide to postpone the parade was attended by large number of the business community.	
003425	Learned a lesson that all floats must prepare for rain and no parade has been postponed since.	Rain
003500	The workshop was set up in 1983. Had an artistic director, a conservative brought in by the conservatives. L. thought it was a good idea. Prior to this Brian McGahen had got arts grants.	Workshop; Brian McGahen
003650	L. discusses what Mardi Gras would look like if the left had control.	
003826	L. talks about coalitionism and his experiences in the trade union movement, and fights for womens and gay rights. This was important after the first Mardi Gras when half the demonstrators were heterosexual. Only 7% of population is homosexual.	Coalitionism;
004000	After he lost his position on Mardi Gras he pulled back from being political. Enjoyed social life more.	
004114	He talks about his involvement in the Street Patrol. The idea came from San Francisco, and was a response to large no. of bashings around Oxford Street. A lot to do with AIDS. Homosexuals were killing children. It was a fear thing. He recalls an incident at work when a colleague would not share his coffee cup.	Street Patrol

004300	His union did a lot of work explaining the facts.	Union
004330	He was surrounded by people dying – Brian McGahen, Jim his lover. He refused to go to funerals.	Brian McGahen; Jim
004417	Bruce Belcher had AIDS and he was on the Mardi Gras Committee. He was a good organiser. He started getting the AIDS organisations going. Involved people with AIDS in education and support groups. He was against AIDS being handed over to professionals. We should look after our own. He died and his radical ideas were not taken up.	Bruce Belcher
004640	AIDS took a lot of people from politics and they then supported people with AIDS. L. believes we lost our best at this time.	AIDS losses
004800	Law reform campaign. L. attended a CAMP delegation to Wran (State Premier). Wran said he fully supported reform but was surrounded by Catholic ministers. Demos not big until after Mardi Gras. L. describes a demo outside Parliament House.	Law reform Neville Wran
004952	Negotiations with Liberal Govt. Not acceptable. When there was an acceptable one, the age of consent was 18years – 16years for hets.	Liberal Govt.
005030	Lex was involved in the early days, Brian McGahen and his lover. Lots of Gay liberation people like Craig Johnston.	Lex Watson; Brian McGahen; Craig Johnston
005120	Gay rights at work and coming out at work. Barry Power worked with Lance and was supportive. In 1979 3 police came to his workplace at Quarantine in full uniform. He said it was an attempt to intimidate him. He had a promotion held up. The bosses could not provide evidence to justify hold up.	Barry Power; Quarantine; Police
005500	A campaign at work against his election in the union which was organised by supervisors. He and Barry were elected.	Union campaign
005640	As a result of their election there were a number of strikes and he argued for equal pay for women and gay rights. An attempt to remove him was unsuccessful. L. was doing a good job as a union rep (gained 35hour week, dirt money, pay rises etc) and his sexuality was not an issue.	Union campaign Sexuality
005815	L. tells an anecdote about a colleague who thanked him for showing he didn't have to conform.	
005917	Left Public Service and bought a yacht. Has been enjoying life.	Yacht
010016	Last year (2004) sailed to Nauru against govt. policy on detaining asylum seekers. L. describes the campaign.	Nauru
010153	Styles of protest has changed. Getting the point across using different means.	Protest styles
010318	Lessons drawn from Communist Party and Trade unions brought to gay movement. The CPA worked through organisations to change things. Changing things by involving people.	Lessons from CPA and Trade unions
010542	Doesn't believe he has changed much as a person. Just learned a lot.	