

Oral History Interview with Lance Gowland

Interviewer: Ken Davis and John Witte

Date of interview: 29 October 2007

Location of interview:

Reason for interview: Early Mardi Gras

Restrictions: None



Log	Summary	Key words
File 1		
0000	What were you going politically before 1978? Crisis for movement with the development of bars. Alternative place to movement to meet up rather than be "political".	Gay bars,
0207	The CPA also began falling apart at this time.	Communist Part of Australia,
0243	Lance lists groups he was involved with – gay liberation, CAMP, Communist Party of Australia, Phone a Friend, Secretary of Quarantine Officers Branch of the Public Service Association.	Gay Liberation, Phone a Friend, Public Service Association,
0400	There also were the gay activists in the CPA and the Socialist Lesbians and Male Homosexuals.	Socialist Lesbians and Male Homosexuals,
0450	In 1978 he was involved in the "Task Group". Worked with the CAMP executive. Dr Jim Walker, Mike Clohesy and Marg McMann involved.	CAMP, Jim Walker, Mike Clohesy, Marg McMann,
0649	Old guard conservatives of CAMP had differences with the more radical leadership.	
0700	Talks about Lex Watson, expelled for not consulting. He formed Campus CAMP and Gay Lib Sydney University. Issues of Lex's leadership style.	Lex Watson, Campus CAMP, Gay Liberation Sydney University,
0850	Ken recalls meetings at Sydney University at SRC downstairs prior to Mardi Gras of groups like MCC, people like Max Pearce, Ken Davis.	Sydney University Student's Representative Council, Metropolitan Community Church, Max Pearce, Ken Davis,
1000	He believes CAMP discussed the letter from San Francisco and suggested a Mardi Gras Parade. Marg McMann suggesting the name "mardi gras". <i>Word is Out</i> a movie inspired the idea of a parade. "happy" with "lots of music". Brian McGahen had also seen this style of parade "an experiment worth trying".	San Francisco, Mardi Gras Parade, "Word is Out", Brian McGahen,
1200	The idea brought to Gay Solidarity 4 weeks before the parade. Reluctance from GSG to get involved.	Gay Solidarity Group,
1250	Later Mg parades. Non-political people got involved. Offshoot was created.	
1320	Lance still went to GSG meetings to give report.	
1340	Who else was involved. Ron Austin as well as Marg McMann. Bruce Belcher came in second year as did Barry.	Bruce Belcher, Barry Power,
1500	What work was involved in setting up first parade? The 'float' was a small truck, gay rights banners around the outside of the truck, a PA system, three foot speakers, very loud, played anthems of the gay movement. "our songs, our struggle". "The music made the night". "What lifted that night was the music"	Mardi Gras, float, gay music,
1755	The permit was from 1030pm at Taylor Square and Oxford Street, sometime in Riley Street and then to Hyde Park. Half an hour before, no one had turned up. Music played and police hassled Lance before they left and questioned who gave the permit.	Taylor Square, Parade Permit, Police,
1915	"Chucked a uuee" down Oxford Street. Riley Street detour on the permit was intended	Oxford Street, Rubies,

	to pass Rubies (which is in Crown Street – JW). Lance was not sure about Riley St.	
2000	The parade attracted many people and brought people into the street for the first time. Police pressured Lance to speed up. Police turned off the PA and Lance turned it back on and asked people to get on the truck (in Oxford Street). Police then threatened to disband the parade.	
2215	People around him – Ron Austin, Kym Skinner, Marg McMann.	Kym Skinner, Ron Austin,
2230	End of the parade was at Hyde Park. Police asked him to keep going or they'd arrest him. He went to Hyde Park and pulled him from the truck, but he escaped.	Hyde Park,
2310	Police drove off in the truck with people on it. Later Lance got the key back from the Darlinghurst Police Station.	Darlinghurst Police Station,
2340	He hung around and talked about what to do. People with loudhailers told the crowd to go up to the Cross. Lance and his group lost control because they had no PA. "Crowd had a mind of its own."	Kings Cross,
2430	Crowd mostly unaware of the dangers and went to the Cross. The police rushed to the Cross and wave the crowd on to the Cross.	
2510	At El Alamein fountain the crowd was told to disperse to the footpath, but the police had blocked off the street and they were trapped. Arbitrary arrests were made.	El Alamein Fountain,
2510	Arrestees and the crowd fought back and it turned into a riot. "I never seen anything like it". People fought back for the first time.	
2630	He reflects about the frustration with the lack of progress with law reform.	
2640	There were worldwide repercussions and it was a watershed.	
2700	Jim Walker restrained Lance from getting involved on the night. Graham Chuck was 'out of control'. Word went out that people had been taken to Darlinghurst Police Station. About 1,000 went.	Jim Walker, Graham Chuck,
2800	Peter Murphy's screams were heard by other arrestees in the cells. Jim Walker got permission to see Peter and others. Police refused to treat Peter.	Peter Murphy,
2930	Telegrams came in the next day.	
3000	He remembers people in a circle (at the police station) with a pile of bail money from everywhere.	Bail Money,
3100	Why did people go to the Cross? It was a Saturday night and that's where people went in those days. And many (at the Cross) were sympathetic and some were arrested.	
3330	Media were on to the event – particularly JJ radio and were wanting to interview Lance.	Double J Radio,
3345	Lance talks about the impact of these events on his relationship with Jim Walker.	
3430	He had a feeling of great change.	
3445	Follow on meetings. What impact on his life? Police visited him at work in 1979. He was already out at work.	Second Mardi Gras,
3700	The march at the National Homosexual Conference. Lance had a loud hailer. There were large numbers of police. When the police attacked marchers they ran into a nearby church and were pushed out.	4 th National Homosexual Conference,
3830	The messages on the loud hailer were "stay on the footpath" and "go back to Paddington Town Hall".	Paddington Town Hall,
3850	They had 3 minutes to disperse and before this people were randomly arrested. Charges were dismissed due to the film evidence.	
4000	Second Mardi Gras. Sgt Keogh tells Lance the police were going to get him. The organisers wanted prominent people there and thought it would be safer. Bail money from the Builders Union and Students Union. No intention of conflict with police. It had	Sergeant Keogh, Builders Labourers Federation, Australian

	to happen in the second year or it wouldn't happen.	Students Union,
4220	Hostility to Mg in the gay scene – Gay Army, Sydney Star, Michael Glynn and ordinary gay people fearing police could attack again.	Gay Army, Sydney Star, Michael Glynn,
4400	Trouble getting women involved. Male chauvinists and misogynists were involved. He was not prepared to compromise feminist values.	Male chauvinists, misogynists,
4719	Contact with social groups. When Gay Solidarity wrote to some groups they were hostile.	Gay Social Groups,
4800	Second Mg Lance circulated but avoided the lead truck. He was relieved there was not police harassment.	Second Mardi Gras,
4934	CAMP became conservative. Gay Solidarity set up an office in St Peters. Lance wanted it to become a social rather than a political meeting area.	St Peters, Gay Solidarity Office, CAMP,
5152	Lance was involved at that time with his union (the PSA) and he talks about his political activity prior to the gay movement in Goulburn and the gay scene in Goulburn.	Goulburn,
5440	1980 Mardi Gras. The same core group organised it and reported back to Gay Solidarity. He talks about the route and it ended at Paddington Town Hall and a dance and Lance talks about the caretaker. There were lots of police and a 1,000 attended.	Third 1980 Mardi Gras, Paddington Town Hall, Mardi Gras Dance,
5800	Community discussion about moving to summer. Lance believed it should stay as part of international Stonewall and be political. He was suspicious of the conservative people's motive for moving it to summer. Talks about CPA people involved with Mg.	Move to Summer, International Stonewall Day, Communist Party Australia,
10110	Feb 1981 was the first summer Mg. Range of people involved. Bruce Belcher had good managerial skills – flow charts. Lance talks about the mishaps – rain, fire at the Markets dance venue etc.	Bruce Belcher, Fruit Markets, Haymarket,
10310	He was setting up the stage near Museum Station in Hyde Park when it rained and met at Barry's place in Alexandria. Business people had come out of the woodwork. There were no fall back plans.	Hyde Park, Barry Power, Alexandria,
File 2		
0000	Concerns about electrics in the rain.	Rain,
0100	Brian McGahen gets involved and he is "a breath of fresh air" with his "entourage" of about a dozen people.	Brian McGahen,
0152	Happy with the successful move to summer.	
0240	They had wanted the Mg to be community run. After meeting at Barry's the scene changed – less community, more business focussed. Lance's vision was more like St Patricks Day.	Community, St Patricks Day,
0530	Lance is voted off the Committee and Brian lost his job as President the same night. (check this?) Barry and Phil had left prior to this. It was pointless to stay. Everything he proposed was ignored.	Philip King, Barry Power, Brian McGahen,
0610	Names – Dot Dingle was antagonistic. He was not a part of the gay activist scene with its agenda of coming out.	David Wilkins, Dot Dingle,
0750	There was an interest in Mg as a money earner, rather than coming out.	
0843	Funding for an artistic director. He believed it was a community art event that should be funded.	Artistic Director,
0945	Peter Tulley's relationship with Lance.	Peter Tulley,
	Interview ends	
Logged: John Witte 4/6/2015		