

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Gail Hewison

Interviewer: Shirleene Robinson

Date: 10 August 2012

Location of interview: Glebe, NSW

Reason for interview: Life of Gail Hewison and The Feminist Bookshop

Restrictions: N/A

Call no.:



Time	Summary	Keywords
00:28	Birth 1940s Richmond NSW	
00:50	Airforce Base RAAF	
00:50	Second World War, father in war, service family	
01:16	Adelaide until 12yrs old	
01:33	1950s teenager Sydney with Father as Doctor with Practice	
01:50	Music from 1950s: Elvis, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Rock Around Clock	
02:11	Menzies era: conservative, 'awful time to grow up'	
02:40	Lack of resources and awareness of Lesbianism: No books/films, had not heard the word Lesbian, no women's/gay movement	
02:56	Dated boys and married young	
03:20	Several marriages, still not aware of lesbianism	
03:47	Made some lesbian friends (1960s) – lesbian couples, still not identifying with them; still no women's movement; no political context	
04:42	Developing feminist ideas further – Early 70s	Feminist ideas
05:00	Grandmother in South Australia – suffragette	suffragettes
05:56	Books as a catalyst for feminist thought – Female Eunuch & Second Sex 1973/74	Female Eunuch Second Sex
06:47	Women's day marches – marched and male partners supported	Women's Day marches
07:11	International Year of Women 1975. More information about Women's Liberation and Greer led the march.	International Year of Women
08:00	Anti-Vietnam demonstrations – not part of group but attended; Relationship ended	Vietnam War demonstrations
09:00	Worked in Health Clinic and met feminists and lesbians through workplace	
10:31	Romantic attraction to women	Lesbian awakening
11:30	Social expectations of marriage and children	
12:00	Easy coming out experience with network of lesbians, feminists and anti-war activists. Involved in demonstrations, leaflets, graffiti; found community.	
13:30	Discrimination – Race, Gender, Sexuality	Discrimination
15:10	Lesbians involved in setting up women's liberation initiatives: Rape Crisis Centre, Women's Health Centres, Women's Refuges	Rape Crisis Centre; Women's

		Health Centres; Women's Refuges
16:20	Homophobia from straight women directed at Lesbians	
17:00	Organising – Women's House rented with newsletter produced, people's homes, telephone trees used for organising	Women's House
17:50	The Feminist Bookshop started 1974 – resources, women's newspapers, printed and distributed by collectives	The Feminist Bookshop
19:00	Women's House locations (INNER WEST). – Glebe (original), Chippendale, Petersham Links to Sydney University students.	Women's House
20:15	Marched for Gay liberation and attended conferences – Lesbian contingent	Gay Liberation
21:13	Separatism	Separatism
22:00	Gay Liberation March – First Gay Mardi Gras in June. Taylor Sq > Oxford St > Hyde Park (Truck and Music in Park – encouraged to dress up for the party). "Out of the Bars and Into the Streets" chanted to get participation. "Sing if your glad to be gay" Park ranger tried to stop entering park. Police called. Went College St and blocked traffic in William Street and rallied Kings Cross, el Alamein Fountain. March ended. Violence between police and Kings Cross surrounded by police wagons.	Gay Liberation march First Mardi Gras
26:00	Gail was arrested by police and pulled by hair. Friends also struggled with the police. [Image discussed – Daily Mirror]	Arrest
28:00	False names given to police. Names published in paper. People lost jobs. Sees first mardi gras as a turning point.	
29:00	54 arrested. 50/50 men and women. Darlinghurst police station. Friends immediately organizing bail money.	
30:45	Offensive behaviour and marching without permission charges. Men were bashed in cells.	Charges
32:00	Demonstration outside police station - transferred to central jail.	Demonstrations
32:15	Gay lawyers assisted. Gail was the last to get out.	
33:15	Further demonstrations – 18 months of campaigning Eventually all charges were dropped.	Second arrest
34:00	Attendance at 21 st anniversary of Mardi Gras – 78ers.	78ers
36:40	Outed to parents following arrest – Accepting and siblings offered bail.	
38:00	Worked at Powell Street Clinic 3 years – feminist abortion clinic; Involved with Women's Healing Centre – women's collective	Powell Street Clinic Women' Healing Centre
39:30	1982: Used inheritance to buy The Feminist Bookshop with two sisters, ran it for 29 years	The Feminist Bookshop
42:00	Space for lesbians, place for finding out about clubs, bars, events, female/lesbian referrals	
45:00	Lesbian Magazines – LOTL, US publications	LOTL

		Lesbian magazines
46:00	Awards - Edna Ryan Award for creativity and feminism awarded for work at the bookshop; - OA medal services to community, women and emerging writers (2006), few women recipients, nomination process, government house presented by Marie Bashir	Edna Ryan Award OA Medal
51:30	Mardi Gras Event – ‘Perverse Births’ Event organised from Bookshop	Perverse Births
52:00	First Reclaim the Night march collective	Reclaim the Night march
52:50	International Women’s Day marches	
53:30	Huge achievements but still a way to go with reform: Rape, domestic violence, pay gap, child abuse	
54:00	LGBT movement – courage of women coming out	
55:00	Michael Kirby	
56:00	Coming out	
57:59	Marriage equality	Marriage Equality
58:40	Early Mardi Gras – courage, Fred Nile demonstration	Fred Nile
1:00:00	Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Sexism, Marriage equality	
1:02:10	1970s venues – Ruby Reds attended, women’s pubs/bands, Crystal Street sharehouse, Canterbury Castle sharehouse	Ruby Reds
1:03:37	Relationship – 24 years, both feminists, Greenpeace activist on boat in Sweden protesting oil dumping in Baltic Sea, Arrested and held in isolation	Relationship
1:05:56	Partner is one of the first, maybe the first, out lesbian GP. Started ALMA (Australian Lesbian Medical Association) with Dr Karen Booth.	ALMA
1:07:15	HIV/AIDS - Lesbian carers, lesbians with HIV/AIDS, lesbian nurses	HIV/AIDS
1:08:30	Transgender issues – inclusion in feminist movement, resistance from some in feminist community, Feminist bookshop supportive place for transgender people, article in the Good Weekend SMH.	Transgender support
1:12:30	Butch lesbians	
1:15:00	Sold bookshop March 2011, closed December 2011.	End of the Feminist Bookshop
1:15:47	Committee for Edna Ryan Award & Feminist Conference (2010). F-Collective film night and preparing for Edna Ryan Award (November).	Edna Ryan Award; F-Collective
1:17:00	Independent bookshop in Balmain – working part-time	
1:18:00	Living Balmain 30 years	
1:19:00	Award - ACON community award (2011) for The Feminist Bookshop awarded to Libby (sister) and Gail	
1:22:47	Facebook, social media and web	