

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Dennis McManus

Interviewer: Robert French

Date: 22 Nov 2010

Restrictions: n/a

Call no.:



Time	Summary	Keywords
.30	Born in Portland in 1945 just before end of WWII. Moved to Sydney in 1951. Schooling in Sydney. Lived in Prospect, then a rural area of Sydney west of Parramatta. Attended local primary school then Patrician Brothers Catholic School at Blacktown, then Parramatta Marist Brothers for senior high school.	
2.30	Attended Sydney University, beginning as a 16-year-old. Graduated in Arts. Started work in town planning with the State Planning Authority in 1966. In planning for 15 years and then heritage work for 25 years. Retired from NSW Heritage Office in 2006.	Sydney University State Planning Authority NSW Heritage Office
3.42	In hindsight, aware of homosexuality quite young – as a nine- or ten-year-old. First sexual experiences were as 21- or 22-year-old.	
4.40	Worked in menswear in store in Blacktown while at university. Although had thoughts of sexual attraction for men, did not understand what the word homosexual really meant. Experienced ignorance of what it was to be gay.	
6.10	First girlfriend in early high school days. A second girlfriend was a fellow catholic who remains a very good friend.	
7.20	Looked up the word homosexuality in Fisher Library to find out what it was while studying at Sydney University. Although definition was ghastly, there was something comforting to discover there were others who felt like himself. Had felt that there was no-one else who felt as he did. Feelings of isolation.	
9.20	Began therapy while at Sydney University by going to a student counsellor at the medical centre. Was referred to Dr Wright-Short at North Shore Medical Centre where he was treated with aversion therapy.	Dr Wright-Short Aversion therapy
11.16	Was prescribed valium by the medical centre.	
11.55	In 1968 attended aversion therapy sessions at 7am before work.	
13.06	Sessions involved electrodes on both fingers and slide show screened of heterosexual and gay slides. When gay slides came up a shock was administered. The gay slides were things that he had never seen before and made him even more interested, rather than less.	
14.47	Dr Winifred Childs weekly therapy sessions for around nine months. Childs was a psychiatrist.	Dr Winifred Childs
17.30	Became more positive about sexuality and Childs eventually suggested that therapy sessions were no longer necessary. In	

	1970 had moved out of home, begun to meet men and more accepting of homosexuality.	
18.24	Met men at beats. Was from the western suburbs of Sydney where there were no pubs or other venues. Beats were the only place to meet men. Did not know that there were bars or baths where you could go to meet someone.	
19.36	No memory of first finding out about beats. Possibly through scribbles on a wall.	
21.03	Had several relationships and developed some very good friendships with men that were met at beats.	
21.42	Moved to Glebe in 1968 as a twenty-three-year-old. Glebe was very quiet – no gay places at all.	Glebe
23.11	Aware of the Wolfenden Report and the UK law reforms in 1967. Believes that discussion in the Australian media was rare.	
24.24	First heard about CAMP when living in Glebe, probably through friends or perhaps through posters displayed locally. Attended early meetings of CAMP at the CAMP headquarters in Balmain. May have attended with Stephen Harris, with whom he was living in 1970-1971.	CAMP Balmain Stephen Harris
26.42	Attended Campus CAMP meetings at Sydney University. Connection was through Stephen Harris who was studying Town Planning at the University of NSW. In a relationship with Harris for eight years.	Campus CAMP Sydney University University of NSW
29.04	Impressed with John Ware and his partner. That relationship important as example for he and Harris.	John Ware
30.22	Only lesbian friends were those met through Campus CAMP and gay liberation. Found some of the lesbian politics of the time hard to follow. Attended a conference at Minto at a communist camp.	Minto Campus CAMP
31.50	Gay liberation zaps including at a psychiatrist's office in Macquarie Street, Harry Bailey, spreading a bucket of brains in the office in protest against psycho-surgery. Terry Rolfe also present. Street theatre also at University of NSW re-enacting aversion therapy. McConaughy also protested against.	Harry Bailey Terry Rolfe McConaughy University of NSW
34.34	Catholic education gave a concern for social justice issues. At university was involved in anti-Vietnam movement with group Catholics for Peace. Also involved in anti-Vietnam protests later with Harris.	Vietnam Catholics for Peace
36.26	Experience of aversion therapy. Experience was exactly the opposite of intention of treatment – may as well have gone to a porn show.	Aversion therapy
38.27	Also involved in local politics with Leichhardt Council from 1972 on. Foundation member of the Glebe Society. Conservation movement. Stood for council twice but not elected. Became more involved in local politics rather than gay politics.	Glebe Society.

42.25	Goods friends with people involved in gay politics such as John Lee and Don Baxter.	John Lee Don Baxter
43.15	Attended protests at St Clements at Mosman and outside Sydney Town Hall in gay pride week in 1973. Mosman protest received good press coverage.	St Clements at Mosman
46.18	Fun meetings held by Gay Liberation at University of NSW. Met gay women for the first time at these meetings. Meetings of gay liberation were very affirmative.	Gay Liberation
49.45	Met John Lee through gay liberation. Lee moved often and redecorated each house that he lived in. Lee lived in a house near Peter Olive in Chippendale. Lee moved with Don Baxter to a house owned by McManus in Katoomba. Lee was marvelous but also infuriating person.	John Lee Peter Olive Don Baxter