

## Pride history Group Oral History Interview with Diane Minnis

Interviewer: Sandra Mackay

Date of interview: 25 August 2007

Location of interview:

Reason for interview: Lesbian Oral History Project

Restrictions: None



Log	Summary	Key words
0000	Diane was born in 1952, in Melbourne and lived in Moorabbin until 15yo, then moved to Elwood.	Moorabbin; Elwood;
0058	Father was a draughtsman and computer programmer for the PMG. Mum stayed at home until parents bought a catering business when she was 15 and dad left the Public Service. Diane was the eldest child.	PMG;
0148	Attended Moorabbin State School, failed her final year and did her final year at University Night Classes. She found school subjects unengaging. Good academically not so good on the social side of things.	Moorabbin State School; University Night Classes;
0312	She went to High School when she was 11. Attitudes to homosexuality negative. At 13 she felt she was different and hung around with a bookish crowd. She wasn't interested in the overt sexuality of her peers and there was no discussion in her life about homosexuality. Remembers seeing films in her late teens and being attracted to some of the women and told herself to "get real".	
0546	This realisation made her more introverted.	
0600	Diane had gone out with boys.	
0635	After school in 1970 worked and studied part time at Uni High.	
0700	She became interested in politics and women's liberation and censorship issues.	Women's Liberation;
0720	Diane came out at University. She joined women's lib and hung around with people in the Russian course, then started going to Gay Liberation at the University.	Gay Liberation;
0752	They went in on Friday nights to Central Gay Liberation at Melbourne University. There were women involved. The Women's Movement was slightly homophobic at that time.	Central Gay Liberation; Melbourne University;
0827	Recalls a Saturday afternoon discussion at Women's Liberation on lesbianism and there was some real and over hostility from some of the women but as it turned out more and more lesbians came into the women's movement and moved away from gay liberation.	
0914	After 18 mo dropped out of university and came to Sydney in August 1973 with a group of lesbians and went to a women's conference at Minto. Marg Lyons was the driver of the combi van.	Minto; Marg Lyons;
0951	Gay Pride Week September 1971 was the first Nationally co-ordinated gay demonstrations in Australia. Diane describes the march to the Cenotaph in Martin Place, the laying of the Wreath, police violence, the march to Phillip Street and her arrest outside Phillip Street Police Station.	Gay Pride Week; Martin Place; Police; Cenotaph;
1228	Anne and Jemma were also arrested. They sang in the cells.	
1236	Diane got off the charges.	
1326	She was staying with Marg Lyons and she met the women in the Crystal Street house and moved in there.	Marg Lyons; Crystal Street;
1400	Crystal Street was the first lesbian house. There was a feminist house in Palace Street (check was this Australia Street?). There were already 3 lesbians there. They met Alex Kaufmann a runaway outside Gay Liberation in Glebe who moved in.	Palace Street; Alex Kaufmann; Gay Liberation; Glebe;
1511	Diane describes living with other lesbians. It was wild. They had a spray painting campaign. Remembers a campaign against cigarettes, meetings at Women's	Women's Liberation; Alberta Street;

	Liberation House in Alberta Street. Living arrangements were anarchic. People had their own stuff. No one seemed to cook.	
1600	Diane lived off her student allowance and went on unemployment benefits and then got jobs in factories, casual kitchen work.	
1650	Stayed in Sydney because she was bored with the courses she was doing at uni. She was also struggling to survive because her parents weren't supporting her. She got a Teaching Studentship.	Teaching Studentship;
1800	Her family had responded badly to her coming out. Her mother suggested treatment. Diane chose not to ask for financial support from the family.	
1948	Canterbury Castle around the corner came later. Diane was involved with setting it up. It was earmarked as an old person's home and had a short lease. It was large and other women moved in.	Canterbury Castle;
2023	At Crystal Street Diane formed a relationship and moved into Canterbury Castle with this person. (check Diane says the lease on Crystal Street ends) After lease ends they moved in together into a house in Leichhardt.	Crystal Street; Canterbury Castle; Leichhardt;
2055	Diane describes these share households. They didn't do too much collectively. People had dropped out of uni.	
2115	Lesbian separatism. It wasn't clear cut. Some women had male friends who would visit. Mentions Richard (?Bigg), a friend of hers, Mark.	Lesbian Separatism; Richard Bigg;
2220	Met her partner's family.	
2300	Had had an open relationship in Melbourne. There was the idea of anti-monogamy.	
2346	After moving to Leichhardt, had other people staying there. Then moved out and went with other girls to form a house in Redfern. Kate moved into that house and they became partners.	Leichhardt; Redfern; Kate;
2436	Didn't go out to bars. The bar culture and the feminist scene were separate. "We were too out, and that was too threatening. And the culture was quite different as well." A hotel in Surry Hills had a lesbian bar – Cricketer's Arms. There were women's and gay movement dances at Balmain town Hall for instance. "They would have live bands and not much else".	Cricketer's Arms; Balmain Town Hall;
2545	Went to meetings nearly every night of the week. Involved in Women's Speak a magazine – helped write articles; the early part of the Rape Crisis Centre (c. 1974-5);	Women's Speak; Rape Crisis Centre;
2650	Being an out lesbian in the Women's Movement at that stage was not an issue because there were so many lesbians in the Movement.	Women's Movement;
2715	Sat the Public Service Exam. Got into the Commonwealth Employment Service in October 1974, when unemployment rose. Due to tariff reductions in the garment industry. The Labor Government was in disarray.	Public Service Exam; Commonwealth Employment Service; Labor Government; Taffifs;
2809	When Whitlam was sacked, a group of CES workers collected a day's pay and donated it to the Labor Party. They went to some of the rallies in their lunch hour.	Gough Whitlam; CES; Labor Party;
2920	After the lease was up in the Redfern house some moved into a house in Barker Street Lewisham. Diane was working in Leichhardt at that stage and in the same relationship.	Redfern; Barker Street, Lewisham; Leichhardt;
2944	Left that relationship and moved out and in with other people she knew who lived in a 4 bedroom unit above a panel beating shop garage in Leichhardt. She had a motorbike at this stage.	Leichhardt;
3042	Had got involved with the International Socialists when she was doing stuff in the public service union. She knew a lot of people in left wing groups.	International Socialists;
	<b>END OF SIDE A.</b>	

0000 SIDE B	Talks about lesbian films, books. "Patience and Sarah", "Monster Poems" by Robyn Morgan. US culture had a large impact. Pat Kellifer (check). Diane read theoretical and political work. Music – Meg Christian, "Ode to a Gym Teacher"; the Adelaide Band "Shameless Hussies"; local bands "Clitoris"; "Stray Dags" – it didn't have to be good, it had to have the right message.	Patience and Sarah; Monster Poems; Robyn Morgan; Pat Kellifer; Meg Christian; Ode to a Gym Teacher; Shameless Hussies; Clitoris; Stray Dags;
0242	Film maker's Co-op had a women's film weekend.	Filmakers' Co-op
0324	Diane remembers getting more involved with gay issues. Ken Davis got her involved with Gay Solidarity Group. She met Ken through Jo Eccleston who was on the 1976 International Women's Day Collective to organise the march.	Ken Davis; Gay Solidarity Group; Jo Eccleston; International Women's Day;
0420	Diane talks about GSG involvement. There was a Saturday morning demo on the anniversary of Stonewall in late June for gay rights. The women and men had a pretty much new left feminist ethos. She was part of the organising group.	GSG; Stonewall;
0500	Lance Gowland and some of the others wanted to do something which "was a bit more fun that wasn't us demonstrating for our rights but just for our own community. One of the guys suggested (it). I was a bit sceptical about it".	Lance Gowland;
0526	Diane had had a bike accident at that stage. She was going out with Jo at the time. She had moved with the Leichhardt household up to Royston Place, Darlinghurst living with Richard (Bigg) and Heather (Grey). That household had walked down to the start of the March in Taylor Square. Walking behind a truck playing music playing Meg Christian's "Ode to a Gym Teacher" and "Glad to be Gay" with the Tom Robinson Band. Lance Gowland drove the truck. Met Jo toward Hyde Park. The mood changed. The police took the keys from the truck. People yelled let's go to the Cross. It was a full on demo at that stage. When they got to the (El Alamein) fountain they had been trapped. Ken was in a frock. The police were rough. Jo had them against a shop doorway screaming at Diane not to get involved. Ken would have been a target. People were being thrown into Paddy Wagons. People in the Cross got involved.	Jo Eccleston; Royston Place, Darlinghurst; Richard Bigg; Heather Grey; Taylor Square; Meg Christian; Ode to a Gym Teacher; Tom Robinson Band; Glad to be Gay; Lance Gowland; Hyde Park; El Alamein Fountain; Police; Paddy Wagon;
0844	Not arrested. Galvanised her to get involved. 150 – 200 people would come to meetings to plan a fight back campaign. Quite a lot of women there and progressive people.	
1045	Helped organise the next few mardi gras. Marshalled the second one with a megaphone in a slightly hysterical voice. No one was arrested.	Mardi Gras;
1137	Diane talks about the 1978 4 <sup>th</sup> National Homosexual Conference the series of demonstrations arising from the first Mardi Gras. Jo got arrested at the National Conference march. The charges didn't stick because the police said they gave the marchers time to disperse and they didn't. John Marsden was their pro bono solicitor. Carolyn Simpson was their pro bono barrister. Money for bail came from house money and people they knew.	4 <sup>th</sup> National Homosexual Conference; Jo Eccleston; John Marsden; Carolyn Simpson;
1408	Diane kept on with GSG, but didn't get involved with the Mardi Gras sub group. She was convenor of the gay trade union group. There were a number of other groups around. There was a flowering of activity.	Mardi Gras; Gay Trade Unionists Group;
1438	After the 3 <sup>rd</sup> mardi gras, there was a party after at Paddington Town Hall. Remembers chanting slogans on the grass outside the Town Hall, and party goers told them to piss off. She felt that Mardi Gras was changing at this stage. Still helped	Mardi Gras; Paddington Town Hall;

	GSG organise the morning march. But began to be a spectator and not parade because it became hostile to political stuff.	
1625	Gender issues. The Sub-Committee was all male and reasonable guys but it was moving toward more of a party thing. The male bar clone thing had started at that time. The move from winter to summer occurred during 1980 – 81. There were huge debates, and lost narrowly to keep it in winter. The tie to winter was the tie to Stonewall and the politics (of gay liberation). There were fears that the bars would take over a summer Mardi Gras. But in retrospect, it allowed a wider range of people to take part in Mardi Gras. It was a small p political thing. The women were more on the side of winter. It wasn't until Cath Phillips got involved did women come back.	Winter; Summer; Stonewall; Cath Phillips;
2000	Being out in the Public Service, Diane feels, obviously played a role in not getting promotions. Not overt, covert discrimination.	Public Service;