

**Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Peter Murphy**

Interviewer: John Witte

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Location of interview: Marlborough Street, Surry Hills

Reason for interview: Early activism

Restrictions: Nil

Call no.:



Time	Summary	Keywords
000	Peter was born in Moorooka a suburb of Brisbane. They lived in a war service home. His father worked as an Immigration Officer. Peter's mother had seven children. She entered the workforce in the mid-1970s.	Moorooka;
0128	Peter went to the local public school and then went to the local convent school. He was the fifth of seven children. They didn't have a car in the 50s or the 60s. Mum made their clothes. His parents were devout Catholics.	
0251	In 1965 Peter's second eldest brother, David went to be a priest at the Divine Word missionaries in Marburg. When he was 12 he went to stay with his brother for a week. That put the thought of being a priest in his mind.	Divine Word missionaries;
0331	He went to high school in a Christian Bros College called Gregory Terrace. It was a tough school environment. He barely had any idea of sexuality by the time he left school.	Christian Bros College; Gregory Terrace;
0435	Peter was a devout Catholic boy. He chose to go to the Divine Word missionaries. He was 17. He had done well at high school.	Divine Word missionaries;
0555	His second eldest brother had dropped out of the Divine Word missionaries and went to Vietnam. He had a bad experience.	Vietnam war;
0615	His family supported the Vietnam war but it was more his father and his eldest brother. They were Liberal voters not NCC supporters. The family were frightened for his brother going to Vietnam and his mother was especially anxious. When he came back he didn't want to talk to the family and soon left. He was upset that the Australian and American governments with through their troops and abandoned the Catholics.	Vietnam war; Liberal party; National Civic Council;
0949	In 1970 Peter went to Marburg. He would have been conscripted in 1973 but for the change of government. However he would not have registered. He was involved with a group of people at the seminary who were against the war.	Marburg; seminary;
1223	When he got to the seminary Vatican two had happened. Views had changed since his brother had been there. It was now a human centred theology. It was a big opening up for Peter. Other students were from Labor voting families and participated in the first Brisbane moratorium March.	Vatican two; Moratorium; Labor Party;
1408	They included something about sexuality including homosexuality in the course. Some of the graduating students had returned from the United States and they were exposed to	United States;

	far more intense political upheaval. They came back talking about homosexuality and heterosexuality celibacy and how the old rules don't really work. They had taken on board the women's liberation movement.	
1518	After a couple of years they moved to Sydney. They were based at Epping near Macquarie University. There was a lot more involvement with the community. Peter became a part-time student at Macquarie University. Peter tells of studying theology at a seminarian at Toongabbie which was run by the Marist Fathers. It was a rigid form of philosophy. It was opposite to what he had been previously taught. He then became a full-time student at Macquarie University. He studied philosophy and anthropology.	Epping; Macquarie University; Toongabbie; Marist Fathers;
1804	Macquarie University had only opened in 1969 and the teaching staff were exiles and rejects from other unis. The anthropology course challenged he is assumptions, things like sex and gender relations.	Macquarie University;
1914	Peter was not interested in student politics until 1974 when there was an upheaval on campus. Students occupied the Administration building. Jeff Hayler was openly gay and active in student politics. Not many others were openly gay. He took part in actions over Penn Short's victimization. People said what is wrong with love? He doesn't believe there was a strong gay lib group active on campus.	Jeff Hayler; Penn Short; Gay Liberation;
2154	In 1973 Peter stopped being a seminarian. 1974 was an important year. Peter didn't know what he would do after that. He had had intense friendships with other students and teachers and he had broken that off and the church was pretty meaningless. He got involved in student politics. Garfield Barwick was the chancellor.	Garfield Barwick;
2421	In 1975 he went to Alice Springs with a group of anthropology students to do a summer school of aboriginal languages – Pitjitiara. The life of aboriginal people was a shock to them.	Alice Springs; Pitjitiara;
2613	Three of them hitchhiked to Darwin. They were caught by Cyclone Tracy and had to return to Katherine and then to Alice Springs where they had no money and lived with other refugees.	Cyclone Tracy; Katherine; Alice Springs;
2741	They returned to Sydney. In January 1975 they went to a Liberal party rally at Randwick racecourse. After the election in 1974 the Liberals wanted to chuck out the Labour Party six months on. Some communists burst onto the stage with a huge NLF flag. Liberals and some Nazis there jumped on them. Ross May was one of them. The cops arrested them. Peter knew some of them from his student days. A couple of weeks after that he decided to join the Communist Party. It was a huge leap for him.	Liberal Party; Randwick racecourse; Ross May; Nazis; NLF; Communist Party of Australia;
3000	The Communist party became a high-speed education for Peter. He joined the tertiary branch with Brian Aarons but it was the	Communist party; Brian Aarons;

	group from Sydney University that impressed him. Craig Johnston was prominent in pushing for sexuality to be discussed, to discuss homosexuality in a bigger framework – Marxism and class. They had been activists in the anti-Vietnam movement and supported women's liberation. They were quick on their feet and sharp. Every second meeting was a political education meeting which meant that they read Lenin and Marx some up-to-date political economy et cetera. The other meetings were about political action. There was a steady build-up over East Timor and student funding which was cut back in the last labour budget and the surging Liberal revolt against the league labour government. The culmination was November 1975.	Sydney University; Craig Johnston; Marxism; Lenin; East Timor;
3403	He was elected to the Macquarie uni students Council in August 75. They were busy on campus over the funding issues and organising themselves as a left group working with other people. They promoted the idea of a militant student union. They had a good student union and the student council and they got delegates elected to the Australian union of students conference which was held in January 1976. Peter was a delegate to that.	Macquarie University; Liberal Party; Australian Union of Students;
3650	Peter went to the first national homosexual conference in Melbourne in 1975 organised by the AUS.	First national homosexual conference; AUS;
3708	1977 Craig Johnston and Sarah Sheehan were elected as officers of a US and though both members of the tertiary branch and they moved to Melbourne and Mary Perkins was elected as an organiser for AUS in New South Wales to replace Sarah Sheehan and in May 1977 Peter was elected as the second organiser. They were directly involved through the Communist Party homosexual collective in helping to promote a socialist homosexual group in Sydney.	Craig Johnston; Sarah Sheehan; Mary Perkins;
3829	By this stage he had had some homosexual relationships. He had a long-term relationship with Vaughan Hinton for a few years. Occasionally he had heterosexual relationships as well.	Vaughan Hinton;
4036	Peter recalls meeting Susan Ardill when he was in the church and she was a high school student at Marsfield and they were at the Roundhouse at New South Wales University at a Christian action for Bangladesh in 1971 or 1972. They met up later when he was living in a squat in Glebe and she was living with her partner Catherine in Glebe point Road.	Susan Ardill;
4126	"In the Communist Party itself, we had a program with the socialist lesbians and homosexuals material of going to different industrial branches of the party and talking to the members about sexuality and gender homosexuality and women's liberation ... The people were very interested, they listened, they asked sensible questions"	Socialist lesbians and male homosexuals;

4255	The national homosexual conference in 1978. The socialist group tried to get the conference to talk about trade unions, workplaces and discrimination at the day-to-day level. Peter had left AUS by the end of 77.	Fourth national homosexual conference;
4458	Communist party people and others had tried to form an unemployed People's union, and then there was a thing called the Trans National Cooperative which was a research initiative of the left trade unions and people from the AICD which was like a anti-war all peace movement. Peter was a volunteer for TNC working on maritime transport and energy. He was put into the waterfront branch. He remembers discussions at this time going on about the national homosexual conference and the Mardi Gras.	Trans-National cooperative; AICD; Mardi Gras;
4618	He remembers the discussions about the Mardi Gras more. He remembers that their homosexual collective of the party Lance talking about arguments about the Mardi Gras and having arguments with Ken Davis about it. He remembers people being troubled by the Mardi Gras concept and the arguments didn't follow any particular party line. In Peter's memory he was always for it. He argued against people who thought it was not the right thing to do. He helped paste up the posters for it. In his mind it was "a magical mystery tour".	Mardi Gras; Lance Gowland; Ken Davis;
4737	Peter thought it was a good idea – it was to complete the new kind of space for people to express themselves. He could tell that the street marches were not getting any bigger. "It will be easier for people to come out, they won't be holding placards, doing a rigid type of performance, they can do any performance they like."	
4826	The fear was that other people (in other groups) held was that the Mardi Gras was not really political, it was a copout it, had not got a slogan - what do we stand for?	Mardi Gras;
5004	"The Mardi Gras idea fitted into a bigger discussion in the Communist Party about doing things in new ways, do things that people will enjoy, don't be taking actions which are too demanding of people or will put you in isolation from them". The only problem was making it a priority.	Mardi Gras; Communist Party;
5121	The homosexual collective would have only met once every three months or so. To get a decision you would have really had to push hard for people to focus on something and do it on time.	
5249	The district committee would have had only the vaguest awareness that the Mardi Gras was on and that the homosexual group thought it was important.	District committee; Mardi Gras;
5417	On the night of the Mardi Gras Peter arrived at Hyde Park as the sound truck came into College Street. He raced over to find out what was going on and was there when they were trying to drag Lance out of the vehicle. At that point there was no one in	Mardi Gras; Hyde Park; College Street; Lance Gowland;

	charge "a ripple went right through the people there, 'let's just go to Kings Cross'. My instincts even then said 'no this is not going to go well' but everyone is going and they also said there were hundreds of cops in Hyde Park so don't go there so people had to go away somewhere."	
5530	In Peter's mind the police were directing up the march upward in straight and there is a photograph of a policeman doing that. "That really does cement in my mind that the police had a plan and they were able to carry it out they were able to get all the participants in the Mardi Gras to roughly to go where they wanted them to go and then beat the shit out of us and that's what they did".	Mardi Gras;
5609	"There was a huge line, I couldn't count how many paddy wagons traversed across the top of William Street into King's Cross... They were all ready ... I think there was a very big picture that we were operating in that most people wouldn't have thought about much. There was an election coming up and the police were already running a pretty severe campaign against the Labor government and they clearly chosen the gay movement as a target to help put a bad light on the Wran government."	Williams Street; Kings Cross; Wran Government;
5723	"Say if you were not watching up the top of William Street and you were just chatting with people or we were all chanting... You will not have be ready for what took place but if you looked you'd have actually seen they had their blue lights flashing so it was very visible and 30 or 40 paddy wagons it was like a military operation and there was no way they just stepped their fingers and an did that they had them all pre-positioned".	William Street; paddy wagons;
5757	"My attitude was, and this was inculcated in our tertiary branch was that if you if you organised something you have to take responsibility for it and you should be in the front row, you don't let other people get damaged for something you decided should happen you should be there and deal with it. Even though we didn't have a plan by the time we read William Street we were we were the people who helped create the Mardi Gras and so we had to go with the people on the night".	William Street; Mardi Gras; Tertiary Branch;
5830	"I could see very clearly we were going to have a terrible confrontation with the police and I peeled off from the group as we got to the top of William Street and rang Barbara Ramjam's number, knowing that she lived with a lawyer she didn't live far away and I said look I am at this Mardi Gras, there is cops coming from everywhere and we're all going into King's Cross I think something terrible is going to happen and I want you to be ready to come out and help. She said 'alright I'll tell Greg'. It was lucky that I had the money and there was a payphone then I just raced up and caught up with the people and we got to the El	William Street; Barbara Ramjam; King's Cross; Darlinghurst Road; Greg; El Alamein fountain; Chips Mackinolty; Graham Chuck;

Alamein fountain and the streetlights even were going dark. We felt that if we went any further we would be in danger, if we didn't get out we would be in danger and so we only had one megaphone and it was difficult to talk to everybody but I can't remember who had the megaphone ... They shared it around and five or six people said what will we do. It was agreed that we should all just turn around link arms and no more chanting or singing just walk down Darlinghurst Road and get out of King's Cross and don't be provoked by the police but as we walked out down every side street there were paddy wagons with cops in them. And I thought 'they are not moving' but as we swung around the corner into that straight bit of Darlinghurst Road this incredibly high beamed light came on us and the paddy wagons may be two side-by-side drove straight into the front of the group, I may have been one third of the way back,... Chips Mackinolty was on one arm and a woman friend was on the other arm again this was our training so we could see in the headlights these coppers bashing people and arms and legs up, people all over the road so we just raced straight into it and I grabbed the first person who was on the ground and started dragging them away from the police but ran straight into to a policeman who grabbed me by the arm and just swung me through the air straight into a paddy wagon door and my glasses went flying off. There were already five people in the wagon or four then I was the fifth. Then Graham Chuck got chucked in and he was the sixth one. Within 10 seconds I couldn't believe it happened so fast. The wagon was parked head into the curve curb at a funny angle and you could see through the little windows of the of the leather cover they have on those things what was going on in the street. It was mayhem. There were all these people punching it out with the police ... And the people on the balconies on both sides anything they could get their hands on, they threw at the cops and other people picked up rubbish bins and boxes and bags all flying through the air at cops. It was really amazing. I was looking at the other people in the wagon some of whom were in tears and said 'look it's not going too well for the cops out there. If we are lucky and they try to put somebody else in here we maybe can get away. So let's wait and see what happens'. And maybe we waited 10 minutes and the door opened and they were going to put more people in and Graham and I were the first two out and we pushed our way through. There was a big mob of people at the door and the cops really didn't expect it so two people got away but four of us got chucked back in. But no new ones ... Graham Chuck who was so quiet and gentle looked at me and said Peter I reckon if they opened that door we could jump out. 'Really Graham' I said you

	<p>go first and I'll be right behind. And low and behold they did and Graham jumped out and I jumped out and I think there were two women they jumped out too and I dropped my bag. I had a green shoulder bag and somehow or other I had it in my hand and I should have it over me and I dropped on the ground and it made me lose my momentum. I picked it up and when I stood up a policeman was there and he hit me right between the eyes and I was knocked down and grabbed me and through me back in and they managed to put all four of us back in."</p>	
010357	<p>Peter recalls some members of the CPA Gay Caucus. Vicki Wootton; Graham Chuck; Marilyn McCormack; John Cozijn; Jenny Lyons; Joyce Stevens came to that group too and Margot Moore; Lance Gowland and Barry Power. Brian McGahen again didn't come.</p>	<p>CPA Gay Caucus. Vicki Wootton; Graham Chuck; Marilyn McCormack; John Cozijn; Jenny Lyons; Joyce Stevens; Margot Moore; Lance Gowland; Barry Power; Brian McGahen;</p>
010438	<p>Peter continues and describes being in the paddy wagon for another 40 minutes. The police appeared to be stunned by the level of resistance.</p>	
010509	<p>Peter then describes going to court. It was Monday morning and the cops and superintendent Shepherd was in command. Peter thinks he heard Shepherd saying 'all these fucking pinkos ... bash them or grab them'. There was a huge police contingent at the court. They tried to get into the court but the police locked the doors and they had bail sheets and said to the police that they were supposed to appear. Peter's leg was badly injured as was Chips Mackinolty's and they were holding each other up. The policeman in response punched Peter in the face again but they got into the court. It was mayhem in the courtroom. Some people pleaded guilty but most people were pleading not guilty. They had a lawyer and the lawyer asked who was the police officer who arrested Peter Murphy and they said the arresting officer was not present. That they were proceeding until the arresting officer was present so they adjourned Peter's case. When they got the arresting officers names they charged them with a assault. Another 19 people were arrested on the Monday morning. Several were bashed up by the cops.</p>	<p>Supt Shepherd; Chips Mackinolty;</p>
010733	<p>They had a big meeting at Stanley Palmer cultural Palace. There was a basic tension between the more experienced anarchist activists whose target was the summary offences act and those who didn't want to make that the focus but rather the focus be on</p>	<p>Stanley Palmer cultural Palace; Craig Johnston;</p>

	<p>drop the charges. There was a motion that they not apply for a permit under the summary offences act for the March. In Peter's view that would have been begging the police to bash them up again. The majority of the meeting did not want to pick a fight with the police over the summary offences act and some started leaving the room. Craig Johnston who was sitting beside him suggested Peter say something to stop this going any further. Peter addressed the meeting and said that they should not have a fight over the summary offences act and that they should apply for a permit. That was carried.</p>	
011026	<p>They had the march and it was the same route as the Mardi Gras – it was one of the longest marches. About three or 4000 attended. It ended at the Darlinghurst police station. The couple of friends with Peter then pulled out flour bombs they were carrying at and started throwing them at the cops. He feels the march was a triumphant because it brought together a broad spectrum of the progressive community and Sydney – it was the gay movement but also others.</p>	<p>Darlinghurst police station;</p>
011201	<p>In August there was the National homosexual conference. Fred Nile was holding a rally in Hyde Park. People at the conference decided to march down and confront the Festival of light. This was a gift to the police. Peter did not take part. He did not want to get arrested. He went along to be a witness. About 1000 people were mobilised and placed in Taylor Square. They arrested just over 100 people and they charged everyone \$100 bail. Everybody was bailed out and all the bail money was returned. This confounded the police again because they thought it would break the protesters. He recalls Sue Lyons and Kate Rowe being arrested in Hyde Park.</p>	<p>Fourth National homosexual conference; Fred Nile; Taylor Square; Hyde Park; Festival of light; Sue Lyons; Kate Rowe;</p>
011445	<p>Peter attended the conference and the trade union organising group. His impression of the plenary was that there was a great momentum in the movement at the time. There was caucusing among the various groups. It was a series of resolutions and debates. And the outcome would be a series of decisions of what to do.</p>	<p>Gay trade unionists group;</p>
011719	<p>Peter did not recover from the first Mardi Gras. He had a bad leg and headaches and was depressed. He did not recover until 1981. He could not face the next Mardi Gras.</p>	
011811	<p>During this time Peter had a series of temporary research jobs. All he was on sickness benefits for unemployment benefits. He was living a very poor life.</p>	
011954	<p>He moved to Adelaide with his partner Pat Ranald and finally got a job as a Seafarer. He was still involved in the case from the Mardi Gras. The charges were dropped all the others but not against Peter. Peter was pursuing charges against them. In 1980 the police charges against Peter came up and Peter was found</p>	<p>Pat Ranald; Virginia Bell; Redfern legal Centre; Christine Robinson;</p>



	guilty of three charges illegal per procession, hindering police and resisting arrest. He was represented by the Redfern legal Centre's Virginia Bell. She recommended that they feel and they hired a barrister the appeal came up in June 1981. Peter believe the cops lied and had no knowledge of what happened on the night. He was found not guilty on illegal procession only but guilty of the other two charges. He could not get witnesses. He had to pay a fine of \$250.	
012221	His case against the police was then able to be listed. Peter got a job as a Seafarer and while he was on the ship they called the trial. But they could not get an adjournment. The chat the case was dismissed.	
012341	In 1984 the party asked Peter to come and work for a short time at Tribune. And then he went back to see.	Tribune;
012401	In 1985 he was involved in a industrial dispute at sea over the ship the Abel Tasman. They occupied the ship for one month in Germany.	Abel Tasman;
012435	The party again asked Peter to work at the Tribune to train and industrial reporter. And in 1986 they said that he had to come for good and work at the Tribune. Peter worked for the Communist Party until 1991 as an organiser.	Tribune; Communist Party;
012536	When he was working for the Tribune in 1984 he attended the first meeting on HIV at the teachers Federation Auditorium. About 500 attended. People were agitated and frightened but determined to do something about it. Nearly everybody who spoke at that meeting died within five years. The exit to the HIV epidemic was education and helping and not isolating and attacking the homosexual community and the community itself again arose to challenge. He attended most of the Mardi Gras is in the subsequent years.	Tribune; HIV; teachers Federation;
012744	Peter kept in touch with Lance Gowland and the 78ers. Most of them saw it as a mass participation event and that it was tremendously effective and a complete affirmation of the concept that day began with in 1978.	Lance Gowland; 78ers;
012924	Brian McGahen got elected to the city of Sydney Council with Jack Mundy and soon after resigned from the Communist Party. He remained close to Mavis Robertson who had supported him as a high school student.	Brian McGahen; Jack Mundy; Mavis Robertson; City of Sydney Council
013039	In 1991 Peter helped raise funds for a new newspaper – Broadside Weekly launched in 1992 will stop it was the media initiative of the New Left Party. He left after six months. The New Left Party folded in 1993.	Broadside weekly; New Left Party;
013352	Peter got a job with the Rail Tram and Bus Union as a research publications person. He has worked for the Search Foundation the last organisational thing from the CPA. He worked three days	Rail Tram and Bus Union; Search Foundation;

	a week and was a good vehicle for gatherings of new left people who took part in the campaigns of the next 15 years.	
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