

**Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Chris Pearce**

Interviewer: Rebecca Jennings

Date: 6 November 2007

Location of interview:

Reason for interview: Pride History Group Lesbian Oral History Project

Restrictions: None



<b>Time</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
000	DOB 30/09/54. Born in Sydney. Parents very young. Father an apprentice liner type operator. Enjoyed school – North Ryde Primary. Liked sport.	North Ryde Primary School;
056	Younger brother and sister.	
073	High school. Lived close to school. Socialised with friends from neighbourhood rather than school. Was fairly academic. Played lots of sport. Netball outside school. Athletics in school.	
140	Used to get comments from guys at school about being butch. Didn't feel butch. Maybe linked to sportiness.	
157	Had a boyfriend at 12. Remembers kissing him. Some ongoing socialising between boys and girls at school. Not very interested in sexuality when younger. Had a few boyfriends. One when 15 who was in Christian Fellowship – took ages to kiss and then felt nothing when it happened. Some inkling at this point that something may be 'wrong'. Some anxiety within family about sexuality because parents young.	Christian Fellowship;
205	Became conscious of lesbian sexuality at around 19. Had not taken any notice of previous comments of being a 'lezzo' as didn't think they were true.	
210	Went to university at Macquarie. Didn't study so failed first year and was thrown out. Following year coached netball team of Macquarie students. Went travelling with a woman from team (to Adelaide) and two others. Woman kissed her – moment of realisation that C was a lesbian. Began relationship. Fairly fraught as other woman was uncomfortable with lesbianism and ultimately broke it off.	Macquarie University; Adelaide;
265	Didn't discuss lesbianism with each other. Didn't know any other lesbians.	
279	Went hitchhiking in New Zealand alone. Set off on Boxing Day, 1974. Met lots of women who she had relationships with. Ultimately moved into the ghetto scene through these women. Met current partner; 2 women from Macquarie; Mandy and Jules (slightly	New Zealand; Mandy; Jules;

	older, on motorbike). Asked M and J if they were camp and said she was.	
300	Returned to Sydney in 1975 and moved out of home. Lived with 2 women met in NZ (had relationship with both) and with their friend. Then had relationship with one of women, Anne. Kept in touch with M and J, who were in scene. Lived in Epping. Returned to uni and failed again. Began to be aware that there was a lesbian scene.	Epping; Anne;
315	Invited by Mandy to move into houseshare in Redfern – moved with Anne. 2 couples lived there and a few others. Describes house. Experience an eye-opener for the two of them. Lawson St, Redfern. Met people from Chalmers St e.g. Sandra, Liz.	Lawson Street; Redfern; Houseshare; Sandra; Liz;
345	Went to Lesbian Festival in Derby. Beginning of 1976. Bought motorbike and rode to Tasmania as a group. People played pool, camped etc. Part of feminist scene. Feminist ideas made sense to C, without her having a strong intellectual engagement with ideas.	Lesbian Festival; Derby; Tasmania; Feminism;
370	Discusses language used to describe sexuality. Recognition of Mandy and Jules as camp.	Mandy; Jules;
385	Went to Camp Inc at 33A Glebe Point Road, when lived in Epping. Mandy's girlfriend at time sang and played guitar and was performing there.	Camp Inc; 33a Glebe Point Road;
401	After Lesbian Festival returned to Sydney and the six who had gone moved in together to house in Lewisham. Recalls being thrown out for not doing housework.	Lesbian Festival; Lewisham;
Side B	When lived in Epping Anne and C visited the Women's Restaurant on Milton St, Annandale. Note on blackboard inviting people to 'Mace's 21 <sup>st</sup> '. Later became reconnected with Mace and Sandra when C lived in Redfern.	Women's Restaurant; Milton Street; Annandale; Mace; Sandra;
050	Describes relationships when living in Lewisham. C had one serious relationship and something else with someone who lived in inner city but was not part of scene (continued for few years). Non-monogamy was part of culture at time.	
075	Met someone else at first CR group. Describes CR group in Stanmore at Mel and Sue's house. Had serious CR group in front room (Sue Bellamy, Robyn Kennedy, Robyn Plaister) and another in back room for 'babies', which C and Anne went to. Fell in love with woman there. Left Anne for this woman. Together for few years then broke up.	Consciousness Raising; Sue Bellamy; Robyn Kennedy; Robyn Plaister; Anne;

105	Socialising within group. Went to house parties. Women's dances – Glebe (Town Hall?). Judy Small concerts. Recalls making poster at Tin Sheds for Sheila, who performed at Native Rose pub in Chippendale. Pubs. When lived in Annandale went to ladies lounge at Empire Hotel, Johnson St because close by. Otherwise went to places where things were happening. Rubies.	Judy Small; Sheila; Native Rose pub; Chippendale; Empire Hotel; Rubies; Glebe Town Hall; Johnson Street;
161	Lesbian identity. Wore braces and men's shirts. Short hair. No bra. Feminist rejection of femininity. Different from bar dykes who looked more femme.	Lesbian Identity; bar dykes; femme;
182	Public response. People didn't like to be confronted by image. Intended to challenge people. Liked wearing those clothes. Didn't wear dresses anyway.	
202	Has never discussed lesbianism with family. Sexuality of any kind not discussed. But didn't change image when visited family so didn't hide it – was just assumed.	
232	Work. Had been doing teaching degree at Macquarie but was thrown out again in 1975. Then got job nursing at Marsden mental retardation unit – Westmead. Left end of 76 because of relationship with woman. Went on dole. Planning to go to Asia together – worked and saved. Recalls breaking up and being devastated. Friends were divided. C moved in with old girlfriend.	Marsden Mental Retardation Unit; Westmead;
274	Began relationship with woman from Melbourne and they agreed to move to Tasmania together. Lived in shared household in Hobart. Marg travelled round Tasmania and then returned to Melbourne. Describes household in Hobart. Travelled to Melbourne and began relationship with a woman there. Moved to shared household in Melbourne in 79.	Melbourne; Tasmania; Marg; Hobart;
297	Describes being involved in first Mardi Gras (see transcript below).	Mardi Gras;
365	Literature re lesbianism. Read anything lesbian available. Lots of lesbian music – mostly American. Remembers weekend trip down the Wollondilly, camping by the water – listening to Moon Circles by Kay Gardener.	Wollondilly; Kay Gardener; Moon Circles;
380	Compares Melbourne to Sydney. More serious about lesbian culture in Melbourne. There until 1985.	

390	Recalls life as fairly hedonistic. Was part of political culture, but more in a social sense - not actively engaged in politics.	
398	Describes living in lesbian houseshares. Social networks between women in households.	
Tape 2	Describes meeting a lesbian couple through nursing who became incorporated into social circle. Broke up and one became involved in houseshare scene. O'Wheels. Some households were centre of scene – one was Palmer St in Melbourne. Recalls visit there.	O'Wheels; Palmer Street; Melbourne;
060	Felt didn't fully belong to lesbian feminist scene in Sydney. Enjoyed sports and country music, which didn't fit. Not as intellectually engaged in the politics. Engaged more in Melbourne than Sydney – was more mature.	

#### Transcript of 1978 Mardi Gras:

C: We had heard – God knows how we heard, I don't know how we heard, I think Dragon [?] told us – that there was a party on and we were gonna go for, that there was a bit of fancy dress, we were going to walk through the streets, bit of a... You know we were very used to having demonstrations and stuff like that, celebrations – that went on quite a bit. So I had a particularly nice double-breasted, pin-striped suit that I had put on and we went off to there. I had a couple of joints in my pocket, you know we were a bit stoned, we were dancing up and down Oxford St.

R: Can you remember, did you just turn up to Oxford St and just join in?

C: Yes, I think so, yes, I think it just turned up. It's hard to remember that night. And just danced up and down it, we were just carrying on, walking past, walking up, I seem to remember, towards Taylor Square. But I don't know how we got to Kings Cross, because I vaguely remember being turned around and then we couldn't move. People were saying they were blocking us and then we couldn't get out and we couldn't go any further. And then people started getting arrested and then the scene moved to Darlinghurst Gaol, outside there and everybody gathered round.

R: So you weren't arrested but you went with other people?

C: I wasn't arrested there, I was arrested at Darlinghurst Gaol. And so we were all there, everybody's sitting around, everybody's yelling. The cops were there as well, outside Darlinghurst Gaol. And they're still pulling people in. And somebody grabbed a friend of mine and I went after them to get them and then I was grabbed and booted in, and thrown in. And so I had a couple of joints in my pocket – I had to flush them down the toilet! We were all of us in one room and we could hear

kind of yelling and screaming and stuff from somewhere, don't know where that was. And I gave a false name because I was on the dole and there was some idea, 'Oh, I'm going to get my dole taken away from me', so I thought, I'll just give a false name, so I made up one. And then from there we were taken to the City Watch House. We were kind of the last ones out, I think. And, you know, I just had a big kind of thing on my head, don't know how I got that.

R: What did they do when you were in the gaol? Did they just put you in this room and leave you there?

C: Yes. I don't know what they did with the guys. There was a lot of yelling going on. We were in a big room, all together.

R: So they separated the men and the women?

C: Yes, they did. And then I don't remember getting moved to the city but that's where we were released from, so we were obviously there. The Darlinghurst Gaol was small, really small, so we were quite tightly packed in there and the city one was a bit bigger. I'm just trying to think if we were actually in with a couple of other people that were not actually – I vaguely have this idea that there were because we were wanting something for breakfast, like a jam sandwich or something, and I have some vague idea that there were a couple of other women there, from something else. And then we were let out from there. And then there was a court case. You know, we went to the City Court House and Channel 9 did a big film of it – I remember seeing myself on the news. And at the time I think Helen Cunan was supposed to be defending us and then, at the last moment she pulled out and then I think Terry O'Gorman did. So it's an interesting thing, I'm sure Helen Cunan was the person who was supposed to be defending us. You know I can't remember a lot about the night because, you know, I was probably half pissed and half stoned but I do remember Darlinghurst Gaol, that was a pretty fiery thing outside there and also the feeling of not really knowing what was happening, when we were sort of corralled into this area. And I don't know why I think of it as outside the Alamein fountain, but I suppose we could have come down Victoria Street or something. But maybe, I don't know. But what started out as a very fun thing, you know, just a bit of a get-together and fancy dress and things like that, turned out to be that. And that was, yeah that was in June, wasn't it, I think, so it was cold - and '78.