

**Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Bruce Pollack****Interviewer:** Larry Galbraith**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> December 1995**Location of interview:** Newtown**Reason for interview:** Research for book on the Mardi Gras**Restrictions:** None

<b>Time</b>	<b>Summary: Tape ONE A</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
0.00.01	Grew up in Melbourne. Born in 1948 in Malvern attended Malvern Grammar and Scotch College, then Melbourne University. Completed 6-year architecture degree.	Malvern, Malvern Grammar; Scotch College, Melbourne University
0.01.20	Family connections with St Martin's Theatre, from age 8/9 worked there each weekend and then during university as stage manager. Led to employment with the Melbourne Theatre Co after university.	St Martin's Theatre (known as the Little Theatre until around 1977 approx), Melbourne Theatre Company
0.02.30	An experienced committee member. Involved on a committee establishing a youth group attached to the St Kilda Synagogue. Youth group ran parties with bands, discos for 3,000 people around 1965.	St Kilda Synagogue, St Kilda Town Hall
0.03.30	Also involved at university on the Union Council and responsible for university entertainment.	Melbourne University Students' Council, (university entertainment), SRC (politics), Gareth Evans
0.05.00	After university he went to work at St Martin's Theatre then Melbourne Theatre Company (starts there in 1969). Initially a trainee director, later Personal Asst to John Sumner.	St Martin Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Australia Council Grant
0.05.45	He left MTC in 1975 to travel overseas and was General Manager of the Leicester Theatre Trust and executive producer of four musicals.	Leicester Theatre Trust, Cameron Mackintosh, West End, 'Oklahoma'
0.06.20	In 1980 he returned to Australia as General Manager of the Nimrod Theatre Company until 1982. 'Most distressing three years of my life.'	Nimrod Theatre Company
0.07.15	Mid-1983 hired as publicist for the Playbox Theatre Company, and run own PR company ever since.	Playbox Theatre Company
0.07.35	In 1970 gets together with his future wife and married in 1975 - because she was pregnant. He had been having sex with men for a long period (from age 9 or 10). By 1982 both realized that the marriage was not going to work and they separated, after which he identified as a homosexual. Amicable separation.	
0.09.15	Still sees wife and son (age 20 at time of interview) lives with Bruce. Also a foster child - joined family in 1981 (age 14 approx).	Julian, Kay, Albury Hotel

0.13.35	Community involvement of parents. Father served as the Mayor of Malvern Council, on sporting committees, a member of the Liberal Party.	Jewish community, Malvern Council, Organising Committee (Olympics)
0.16.35	Bruce a Labor person, but never involved in politics. The ALP gives more social reform than the Liberal Party.	Labor Party, small 'l' liberal
0.18.00	Not in Australia in 1978. Aware of MG as an event approx 1981/82, after returning 1980. Stayed out of the gay scene officially until after the separation with wife at the end of 1982. Totally involved at Nimrod.	Mardi Gras, first summer parade - 21 Feb 1981, Patches
0.20.20	First night back in Australia (1980) goes to Barracks, Venus Room, Martins Bar. Saw 1983 parade as a spectator. Begins involvement in the community. Joins Gay Married Men's Association esp. as a way of meeting people (end of 1982 after separating).	Gay Married Men's Association, GAMMA
0.22.12	Enrols for training at the Gay and Lesbian Counseling Service at the end of 1983.	Gay and Lesbian Counseling Service
0.22.20	Same time pursues active involvement in MG. Difficult to get "in". Didn't know who to ring up. MG appeared a closed shop.	Mardi Gras
0.23.18	Early after 1984 parade, at the SPMC premises at a GAMMA meeting in Leichhardt, meets Brian Hobday - MG parade director. Mentions PR experience. Gets a call back from Damian Furlong (approx August), invited to management meeting (Mardi Gras Committee meeting) in Victoria Street, Potts Point at the Liquor Action Reform Group premises. Invited to speak about public relations. Said MG did not have a high profile in G&L media - esp arts and MG could do something about it.	South Pacific Motor Club, Leichhardt, Brian Hobday, Damian Furlong, Victoria Street, Potts Point, Liquor Action Reform Group, Mardi Gras, Tony Crewes, Rod Thorpe
0.25.55	The Committee at that time were those elected at the AGM in 1984. He then went to a few meetings at the workshop in Woolloomooloo. Decided that he would have an input into the arts fest of MG. 1985 was the first festival Rod and Tony did. He was an advisor only at this stage. Co-opted 1985.	Brain McGahan, Shane Mangan, Brian Hobday, Jim Jenkins, Gary Cox, David Wilkins, John Murray, Tony Cooper, Murray McLachlan, Damian Furlong, Rodney Thorpe, Adam Marriott, Bill Morley, Tony Crewes, Mardi Gras Workshop, Woolloomooloo, Thorpe, Crewes
0.28.10	He did PR from then on for the festival and went to meetings at Jim Jenkin's house to work on first MG guide.	Jim Jenkins
0.28.30	Memorable: early 1985 Furlong phones says media reaction against the MG going ahead - opinion in committee (who) that it not go ahead. Bruce says MG could play a media war and it should go ahead. This was approx two weeks out from the parade. Dr Pennington had attacked MG for safe sex reasons (AIDS)	Damian Furlong

	<p>Queensland babies - 1984  early 1985 - Pennington says 10,000 have AIDS  Paul Dexter says 50,000 - worked with Furlong two years earlier at Quickstaff.</p>	
0.30.30	<p>A Committee Meeting was called and it was agreed that MG would go out and promote themselves. McGahan's attitude? Bruce said go ahead - forceful media promo - and we did. Story is McGahan against going ahead.</p>	Mardi Gras Committee, McGahan,
0.32.35	<p>Bruce working in own business by himself and free publicist for 85, 86, 87, 88 and 89 festivals. McGahan on Sydney City Council - protecting himself. Damian keen to go ahead - but opposition within the committee.  How it moves from an event of the factionalised Left to 'party' people  Rod and Tony organised the arts festival voluntarily from Tony's home. Many meetings. Didn't know there were previous MG arts festivals if not so official.  It was wonderful to work on. He mentions a craft show, a photography exhibition, a MG film festival. No theatre - Barry Lowe pulls - no theatre show eventuates. There was media interest in the festival.  Media interest in parade - or prior to - can't comment. Not involved in PR for parade.  First time actually involved in PR for parade was first year to get paid - 1991. All the volunteer years - debates about PR for the parade.</p>	Mardi Gras arts festival
0.37.25	<p>Tully had argued against any media involvement in the parade coverage, because it would turn it into a spectacle for the straight community (which is what happened).  The Committee in any year never supported advance media coverage of the parade, rather work with mainstream media to provide the right coverage.  Community not impressed that mainstream media was not covering the event. But BP says committee did not encourage it - sometimes not even work (cooperate) with it. Seen as homophobic.</p>	Peter Tully;
0.40.00	<p>BP acknowledges the community blamed the straight media for lack of coverage. Committee did not work to get coverage. Bruce fought for coverage during the 1980s, but it was fought against.</p>	
0.41.10	<p>He was co-opted on to the Committee soon after the 1986 MG - May 1986 meeting - votes new committee - the final purge - Wilkins /Furlong removed. At this meeting big turnover from communist party (McGahan) and other Leftists - suggestions of corruption - Damian goes - the 'cleansing process' lead by Tully and supported by Whittaker is concluded.  Anecdote re 1986 election at Paddington Green hotel - Bill Whittaker reads out names - one short - Pollack's name added.</p>	

Bruce did not know a committee meeting had organised a ticket - but was invited to join

Bruce's first meeting

meeting held upstairs at Unicorn Hotel - a matter to be raised - the payment of legal cost for people who had been arrested at a fundraising event - a single/signal NYE party - Tully arrested - his legal expenses - phoned by Tully prior advised how to vote - committee agrees to pay the expenses - Whittaker closes meeting quickly - then a fisticuffs brawl - David Wilkins remembers better - Murray will remember - Bruce's first meeting - opposition to paying Tully's bill

Note dates:

1981-82-83-84-85	McGahan President
84-85	Furlong Chair
85-86	Whittaker Chair
86-87	Whittaker President until Sept 1986
Sept 86-87-88-89	Murray McLachlan President
89-90	Cath Phillips President
90-91	Phillips - Fawcett - Cobden

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festival directors

1985 - Tony Crewes and Rod Thorpe  
1986 - David Wilkins  
1987 - Tony Crewes  
1988 - Paul Hayes  
1989 - Chris Jarvis

1990-91-92 Gillian Minervini - paid position (Pollack paid for first time in 1991)

Guide Editor

David Wilkins - 84

Jim Jenkins 85-86-87-88 and 90-91