

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Ray Prasad

Interviewer: John Witte

Date: 4 August 2012

Location of interview:

Reason for interview: Early venues, OPI, Gay Social Clubs

Restrictions: N/A



Time	Summary	Keywords
00045	Born in Balmain, Sydney, 1960s	
00100	Completely dysfunctional family, father was a spray painter, mother housewife, had two siblings, sister passed away, brother married with a son.	Early life
00145	Mother passed away when 9, ended up in a boy's home twice, in Mittagong, which was where he had his first gay experience. Did not regret time there at all.	
00255	Went back to Balmain/Rozelle to live; Father's second wife brought him up. Has step-siblings.	
00355	School – didn't enjoy it, left at 15-16; went into workforce, couldn't hold down a job until aged 22 when discovered the joys of driving	
00430	Became a driver of luxury cars	
00445	Knew he was gay from age 12; got off with best friend (from age 11 until 16)	
00522	Was closeted living in Rozelle; too rough to be open	
00625	Discovered gay scene when 16, shown how to behave, introduced to culture, classical music, plays etc. by his lover at that time	
00800	Didn't mix much with his lover's friends	
00848	Didn't come across too many other gay folk in early work contexts, as they were mostly closeted	
00900	Didn't find out what a 'beat' was until aged 21	beat
01050	First gay 'establishment' went to was 'Green Park' (the Wall) but he was told how to be careful	
01200	First club was Castelllos; felt like the luckiest young gay boy as he was looked after by gay men, e.g. John Marsden, kept others away from him and did not experience sexual abuse. Didn't ask questions, did what he was told.	John Marsden Castellos
01540	Went to Les Girls a few times with regulars; drag queens loved him; occasionally operated lights for secondary shows. That's when he found Oxford Street. Went to Patches, met Trixie Lamont, became a regular there, loved her shows.	Les Girls Patches Trixie Lamont
01910	Got into dancing at Palms and at Tropicana. Had no formal training. Discovered satin pants/jackets. Had an afro. Would dance for 2.5hrs solid on his podium – and all without drugs, just 'youthful energy'	Palms Tropicana/The Midnight Shift

02335	Used to wander down Oxford Street to Patches after Trops/The Midnight Shift closed.	Patches
02405	Flo's Palace next door was competition – also known as 'the wok'; told not to go there. It was seedy looking. Very dark. Dancefloor at the front lit up. Just wasn't his cup of tea.	Flo's Palace
02600	The Hideaway – went once and walked straight out. Older clientele, creepy. Didn't want to know what went on there.	The Hideaway
02830	Taken up to Capriccios after the Tropicana closed down – shows on a par with Les Girls. You learned to do drag downstairs. Only ever did one show upstairs. Was on the opposite side of Lorraine's dressing room. Talks of the 'great bucket' (Lorraine used to squat over it).	Capriccios Lorraine Campbell-Craig
03140	Stopped dancing after that. Drag queens: Rose Leaf, Monique Kelly, Trixie Lamont, Teresa Green	Drag queens Rose Leaf, Monique Kelly, Trixie Lamont, Teresa Green
03255	Wandered around a lot – no fulltime employment; then met Kevin, first boyfriend, ended when Kevin moved to WA with his parents. Then short romances with boys.	
03425	The furthest out of Sydney lived was Fairfield. Also in Maroubra, Mascot, Balmain, Newcastle. Bounced around a lot.	
03530	Remembers Albion Street house well and the brothel next door. His place was 'drag queen central'. An eye-opener for him. Remembers someone having sex on the pool table in Signals. Told never to go in the back room – walked in but ran out! It was an experiment to be there! Didn't want to go back there.	Albion Street Signals
03850	First Mardi Gras/March up Oxford Street: Was walking up Wentworth Ave/College St and saw everyone in the street. Spotted his mates from Patches and started walking with them. Got dragged off by a couple of coppers, was compliant, put in the paddy wagon and taken to in Darlinghurst Police Station. He was 15 at the time! Police let him go. Went straight home, so scared. No claim on being a 78er, just in the wrong spot at the wrong time.	First Mardi Gras Darlinghurst Police Station
04520	Became more involved in later years – doing security at the parties. 'Rangers' at the Showground. Then licensing laws came in and became more officially organized. Left gay scene behind him, concentrating on being a security officer. Learned to do the job well. Never got into a fight. Worked for Concord Hospital; East Side Protection. Private door work, e.g. Beresford, 45s.	Jobs in Security East Side Protection Beresford 45 Club
04815	Attended his first Mardi Gras party in the 1980s, but bored, so threw on a Ranger's uniform and helped out with security. Security to keep gays and lesbians safe from those outside (heterosexuals/groups of men).	Rangers

05000	1980s: Wary of bashings up at Green Park; told clientele to move around in pairs/groups to stay safe. A lot of assaults never reported. Security tried to keep people as safe as possible.	
05300	Looked after the MG party marshals, who helped with medical teams, eyes on the street; all volunteers.	
05420	Lost job, lost boyfriend and lost flat all in one day: So, went to Canberra – stayed there. Job as telephonist for Channel 10, and at the tourist bureau. Then at Parliament House in security. The only black gay security officer in the Senate. Became good friends with Bronwyn Bishop. Bonded over coffee!	Canberra Channel 10 Parliament House Bronwyn Bishop
10000	Gay scene in Canberra. Met Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence when they came down for Gay Pride Week (basically uni students) to bless the proceedings. Story about the 'Call of the Dingo'. So, started the Canberra House of OPI.	Order of Perpetual Indulgence OPI Call of the Dingo
10340	As a nun, duties included blessing anything that doesn't move; going to clubs (all two of them), going to the uni (sex week), radio programs, anywhere where any religious folk were. Gorman House – opened once a week. Not scared to go out in habit in daylight.	Gorman House
10640	During the AIDS crisis, did sex education, handing out condoms, information sessions; started doing confession, using Sister Monstera Deliciosa Hysterica as a guideline. Took it more seriously once people started talking to him about having AIDS.	AIDS/HIV Sister Monstera Deliciosa Hysterica
11020	ACON was also operating in Canberra – used this to pass on information to people with AIDS. Became an AIDS activist in response to religious views. ACT-UP came into the Senate.	ACON ACT-UP
11315	Emulated himself on sketches from Monty Python's The Life of Brian. Fred Nile came to Canberra spreading hate.	Fred Nile
11500	Lost 28 of his friends in the early years of HIV/AIDS. Became an undertaker, driving cars. Talks about burial procedures for people with AIDS. Very cautious until they learned more about AIDS. Tried to treat them 'as normal'. Dealing with the sensitivity of families. Saw gay men mistreated by their families, e.g. contesting wills.	HIV/AIDS funerals
12130	Came back to Sydney in 1996. Just after diagnosed with HIV. Went through depression, drug trials. But was still better informed than most. Taking 60 tablets a day, but treatment was worse than cure. So just stopped taking them. Now lives with it.	
12350	Started at Concord Hospital in security. Was a casual in a funeral home.	Concord Hospital
12500	Nervous breakdown, but able to support himself and get through it. Fine now. But all this ended his working career.	
12650	Reconnected the OPI in Sydney – The great schism story. Sister Armageddon wanted to take the order in one direction – serious and properly with the High Church. This failed.	OPI Sydney

	So he joined the Sister Monstera House, which was much more fun.	
13015	Got involved with Sydney Harbour Bears (Broadway/Camperdown); Met Geoff Ostling there. Then joined Sydney Leather Pride – a gay men and lesbian fetish group. Ended up on the committee. Put together Inquisition 7, 8 and 9 – dance parties.	Sydney Harbour Bears Geoff Ostling Sydney Leather Pride
13300	How the dance parties were set up – subcommittees formed; hired producer/director; organized venue, lighting, sound, stages, shows, security. Had themes – better than Mardi Gras.	Inquisition parties
13500	Interesting shows: electric grinders applied to bodies; the great fridge fiasco; They used three pavilions - the Dome, the Horden and the Horden's toilets.	
13700	Initially Sydney Leather Pride was gay and lesbian.	
13800	Became a Leather Man – Master. Explains the meaning of handkerchiefs and keys.	Leather Man
14005	Talks about the Dolphins Motorcycle Club and Roadrunners. Likes the formality of the Dolphins. Quite strictly regulated. Roadrunners must less organized.	Dolphins Motorcycle Club
14330	[Ray leaves the room to get his leather vest] Talks about the patches on his vest. Not allowed to ride around in their colours. Constitution, dress code.	
14600	Dolphins formed 35 years ago, stem from South Pacific Motorcycle Club. Greg Tucker and Douglas Kent formed Dolphins.	Greg Tucker Douglas Kent
14810	Social activities include bike runs throughout the year. Mudgee trip was fun – used to stay at a farm near Mudgee with a big dinner on the last evening (ANZAC Day weekend). Curnell was another destination; had dinners and lunches throughout the year. Committee meets once a month. Well organized.	
15140	Everyone aging – no younger members anymore.	
15300	Drifted away from the Bears. Bear Essentials was very successful. International visitors come for the event. The most successful group in Sydney.	Bear Essentials
15745	Complains about younger gays needing to take their 'handbags' with them (straight Sheilas/girlfriends).	
15840	Was Ambassador to the United Federation of Planets, Sydney Embassy – A Star Trek group – not gay. Made movies. Got interviewed by Compass, Channel 2. They use the Articles of the United Nations, use naval rankings. Went to conventions. Met cast members of Star Trek.	Star Trek
20200	Currently: no longer a nun – in the RSL – Retired Sister's Lounge where old nuns go to die. Lost Gay Sydney archives/website tragedy.	

20400	<p>In 2000, San Franciscans came over. Mish, the founder of the SF OPI, and an excommunicated priest – because he was gay. Talks about the Catholic Church. They needed at least 5 hrs. to start getting ready – their make-up took time! Unlike the Sydney Order, who didn't use make-up.</p>	San Francisco Order of the OPI
20920	<p>The Kidnapping of Sister Sooty – “the lowest act a nun ever performed”, on the day the SF Order left. He ended up in Paris, when the French stole him from the SFs. And then his journey continued around Europe with other Orders who also stole him.</p>	