

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Greg Reading

Interviewer: John Witte

Date: 24 November 2012

Location of interview: Marrickville

Reason for interview: National Homosexual Conferences, Gaywaves

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Keywords
	PART 2	
00100	People organizing the National Homosexual Conference felt 'miffed' that the conference had been hijacked by the protest in Taylor Square.	National Homosexual Conference
00130	Greg ended up in the Darlinghurst Police station, shared a cell with Max Peirce, Ken Lovatt, at least a dozen in the cells. He knew how long they'd been in the cells as he was wearing a watch on right wrist that the police didn't notice when taking finger prints. Felt like a Hitchcock movie. Released after dark.	Arrest
00350	Friend waiting outside and rather worried.	
00430	Needed cash, only person he knew who carried a lot of cash was his father, who reluctantly agreed in exchange for a cheque. So bailed everyone out. Back in court on Monday morning.	
00540	As a result, he publicly came out to colleagues, as SMH published their names, addresses and occupations, so immediately outed.	Sydney Morning Herald
00655	So had to deal with work fallout. Boss was very nice about his absence for the court hearing. Then told wider family, neighbours, gay colleagues.	
00830	Gay Solidarity Group had organized participation in the protest and following that he got more involved. First meeting he attended was at Paddington Town Hall on the Sunday night after their arrests. A small group – a gay left – largely strategy meetings to deal with drama and crisis.	Gay Solidarity Group Paddington Town Hall
00940	Greg first heard about the dramas of the First Mardi Gras when he was listening to 'Night Watch' on radio station 2UE the next morning.	First Mardi Gras 2UE
01100	Back to the protest: Police clearly had a plan to corral and arrest us that day. Greg was there more out of curiosity than being fully invested in the issues. At Taylor Square they were surrounded by Police. Some ran. Others more creative: E.g. One went into a Milk Bar and pretended to be a customer. No avenue to disperse so they were arrested.	Protest
01430	In court: felt individual on the day in court, defended himself. Was very angry. Doesn't remember anyone skipping bail. He got his bail money back.	Court

01600	At a union meeting that week at work, he spoke about the protest. Drafted motions to seek union support to call on State Gvt to do something about police harassment and the legality of gay male sex. Supported by colleagues. Frank Walker welcomed the motions. They were carried. Quite a turnaround for Greg in his activism. Wrote an article about it, published in Campaign. Wrote to gvt ministers.	Union support Frank Walker Campaign Magazine
02050	Gay Solidarity meetings every week, open, structured, rotating chair/facilitator, had minutes, agendas. All welcome to speak. Speaker lists. Everyone had a say. A model of democratic discussion. Impressive. Actions agreed.	Gay Solidarity Group
02250	Main work became the organizing of a second Mardi Gras – felt it was more important than the first. In the face of the dramas of the First MG, imperative to have a second (as an ‘up yours’!)	Mardi Gras
02445	John Marsden involved in the legal side. Greg was active in promoting his activism among journalists, e.g. David Marr, and gvt ministers. Got a few positive responses.	John Marsden David Marr
02600	Describes various disruptions/expulsions from the Group. He wasn’t fully conscious of the politics of the Group and their involvement in union activities. All happening in the background.	
03400	Back to the defense offered by John Marsden. Greg offered his Campaign article, but John chose another person as his test case. The case was dismissed.	
03545	Got involved in Gay Trade Union Group. Meetings convened by John Witte, attended with Bruce Belcher, Amanda Fazio. Contributed moral support.	Gay Trade Union Group
03800	Gaywaves: formed in 1979 when the National Homosexual Conference was held in Melbourne. Went down by train. Meeting about gay radio/media, had been trying to organize a program on 2SER in Sydney. Wanted to unlock the FM bandwidth for gay radio. 2MBS (now Classic FM) in Sydney was the first. Sydney was the last to get a community station but promoted by the universities as an educational license. UTS and Macquarie took the initiative and sponsored the radio station.	Gaywaves UTS Macquarie University
04300	Backtracking here: Dramas in Gay Solidarity Group Fight with the Counselling Service – Lance Gowland, on the radical left, wanted a drop-in centre, like in San Francisco. Gay Solidarity used to meet on the premises of CAMP on Glebe Point Rd, felt part of the gay movement, core business of fighting oppression by the State and rousing the masses. Counselling Service thought they should pay rent for using their room. So Gay Solidarity moved to the Tin Sheds at Sydney Uni. Lance urges that they should have a centre – so they take out a shop front, as a gay community centre in St Peters. Rent was \$50 a week so all paid \$5 a week towards the rent.	Gay Solidarity Group Counselling Service Lance Gowland Tin Sheds Sydney University St Peters

	Didn't blossom into the centre they had been hoping for. All fell through.	
04900	Adjourned to Glebe Town Hall. Discusses the male/female mix. (Missed out on the Summer Offensive activities.) Took on a conference in Sydney. Mardi Gras was core business. Conference in August. Decided that Mardi Gras should be a separate group. And Greg gradually dropped out and focused more on Gaywaves.	Glebe Town Hall
05245	Back to Gaywaves: Noel Sanders (academic at UTS) was organizing a gay radio program in Sydney. Greg was also union delegate at work (Film Australia) at this time. The Accord came in during Hawke era. A lot of time spent in community meetings, industrial democracy. Very much consumed with this work. Able to put all his skills from Gay Solidarity to use in these meetings. Back to Gaywaves: Noel convened a group of students and got Gaywaves off the ground and did first broadcast in November 1979, weekly, Thursday nights. Did a talkback show. Dennis Altman invited in to field questions/comments. Station manager decided that it should be a 3hr program: 10pm to 1am.	Gaywaves, first broadcast Dennis Altman Union involvement
10200	Hybrid mix of sponsorships. They paid rent for their time on air. Needed to raise money – dances, garden parties to pay for their time. Greg put out media releases before going to air. Then went on air, paneling and then put on a show himself.	
10530	Gaywaves posters designs. [Looking through posters] Describes photo by David James/Urquhart, reworked into a graphic by Prue Borthwick. Appeared on T-Shirts and posters. Went out during the night to put up posters – got some vandalism.	Prue Borthwick
10850	Pressure of fundraising kept growing. Never got on top of it. So switched to a radio sponsored program – a great relief.	
10930	One drama: one of the broadcasters, Susan Ardill, had said something seen as disparaging by Michael Glynn (Sydney Star), so received a complaint. [Tape ends]	Susan Ardill Michael Glynn
	PART 3	
00005	Continues describing this drama... Greg got involved in the conciliation meeting with people from the counselling service, Michael Glynn, the station manager, people from the Gaywaves collective, Annie Parkinson (had a wardrobe malfunction). People had very strong opinions.	Gaywaves Conciliation meeting Michael Glynn
00200	Gist of the complaint – Susan talked about something she had read in the Star. Doesn't know the details. But possibly a challenge to their standing in the Mardi Gras organization. Uma KaliShakti then got involved in the program.	Uma KaliShakti

00500	Discusses the tone of general political discourse of the time, activism and radical versus more conservative approaches.	
00800	Suggests that the lesbian point of view was what Michael Glynn may have objected to in his argument with Gaywaves.	
01100	Loud voices tend to carry the day. Silence is consent.	
01300	Dropped out of active involvement in Mardi Gras organisation. Tensions between the commercial, male, party, left and socialist lesbian right. A motion spilt the meeting 50-50. Greg abstained from voting because pissed off with both sides.	
01630	First summer Mardi Gras was called off because of predictions of rain but turned out to be brilliantly sunny. Some convened by the ANZAC memorial, but a man was sitting on the balcony of his terrace house across the road with a rifle on his lap. Scared he would start to shoot. Graig Johnson turned up on his pushbike and went to police.	
01930	At Gaywaves, always hungry for content. Went out and recorded events and edited into the shows. Saw Mardi Gras as a gift – could interview people involved.	Gaywaves coverage
02045	International Women’s Day the week after the Mardi Gras – so Mardi Gras quickly dropped and overtaken by IWD content.	
02200	Workshopped content for the program. Audience was school kids who might be fascinated or struggling with own sexuality. Saw Mardi Gras as good for raising profile. Saw themselves as serious, left, music was a tension point. Try to play both lesbian and gay artists or icons. Greg didn’t appreciate Stray Dags’s music. They would bring in their own records sometimes.	Gaywaves music content
02800	Membership of the group: A collective – no boss, decision by consensus. But power structures in the operation of the programs. Weekly meeting of the collective – discussion of last, current and future programs; program content suggested; people on air; one on paneling, one more junior, and one on the phones. Feedback given each week. Should be a majority of women in the group. Came under stress at various times. At one point Greg was the only male in the group. Recruited David Hare, Dietmar Hollman and another person.	Membership collective
03535	The male/female mix became a drag and the group tended to get smaller. Reached crisis point, so moved to suspend the rule. At that time: Michael Schembri, Uma KaliShakti and Greg. Often just 2 people doing the show, and at some point just Greg alone. Put out an appeal for members – lots of men came in and only Uma representing the female voice.	Michael Schembri Uma KaliShakti
03830	The final downfall: new rules, more formal meetings. More pressure for formalities to be observed rather than winging it.	

	Most people dropped out. One of the guys has a fight with Uma. Stalemate. But he hung around the station after this and proposed an alternative show (Queer Noise), which got up at the next Program review. And Gaywaves ended. Upsetting. Involved for 25 years. So a good innings. A personal blessing to be able to move onto other things.	
04255	Queer Noise had a serial, run by one person. But had same problems recruiting people. Run differently to the collective model.	Queer Noise
04450	Relationship with the station and the universities: rubbed up against the world on various issues. Feud with Fred Nile – he would have listeners calling in objecting to Gaywaves. Had a devoted listener willing to listen to Fred Nile and passing on what was being said.	Fred Nile
04640	Had one segment – Lesbian sex special – that talked about issues of sexuality, and the word ‘cunt’ was used and subsequently edited into the program and broadcast to air. Early 1980s. Reprimanded by the Broadcasting Tribunal. Compelled to pre-record the program as a result.	
04910	Had a fundraiser/live broadcaster at Holt Street. Julie McCrossin was part of the group, and somewhat mischievous, and she read out the formal judgement on air, which included the offending word ‘cunt’. So then they really got into big trouble and after this were compelled to pre-record a show.	Julie McCrossin
05130	A pleasure to do the show, adrenalin rush of a live broadcast, a real joy.	
05220	Station had a board appointed by the two unis. Greg nominated to be on the board, campaigned and elected for one or two terms. Would have coffee with the station manager to become closer. Pressure on time – nearly lost 30minutes off the end of the show. But won that battle. The 10pm slot was meant to be music, so they were an anomaly in that they were political and mostly chat. So moved earlier in the evening and cut back in length. Didn’t suffer the final indignity of only being a half hour show as they were cut before that happened.	Station structure
05650	Gaywaves was always part of the Mardi Gras. Marched each year.	Gaywaves at Mardi Gras
05950	Individuals might be involved depending on their degree of interest, or commitment, and then might turn it into part of a program.	
10030	Returns to the mistake made in reading aloud on air the confessional sheet inadvertently promoting pedophilia. It wasn’t discussed at a program meeting but a spur of the moment decision because of the party atmosphere of that night.	

10300	<p>Coverage of AIDS/HIV: Greg remembers Bruce Belcher came out as having AIDS at the conference workshop. Dressed as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, he stripped and announced he was HIV positive.</p> <p>Terry Goulden came on the show to talk about safe sex. One of the group left to take up activism work in HIV. The show promoted safe sex, offered advice. It didn't dominate the program as had plenty of issues to cover. 'Transsexuals' would come in to do a monthly segment. Other regular inputs. Ken Lovatt would provide news content on the rest of the world.</p>	<p>HIV/AIDS Bruce Belcher Terry Goulden Ken Lovatt</p>
10900	<p>March 1990 they adopted a new policy statement with membership criteria:</p> <p>'Gaywaves is a self-managing collective of volunteers, both lesbians and gay men, working within the structures and philosophy of radio station 2SER, who have come together to produce and present a weekly radio program on 2SER. We meet at 6.30pm on Tuesday nights at 2SER. We actively support and promote gay and lesbian identity and liberation. We support feminism and oppose racism.</p> <p>Membership is open to anyone who identifies lesbian or gay who shares our philosophy and aims who is happy to work collectively and who is compatible with the collective. The collective has determined that there should be a majority of women in the collective because of the underrepresentation of lesbians in the gay and lesbian media and of women in radio. So depending on numbers the collective may be closed to men from time to time. However, if the total number of active members falls below 8, it may be necessary to suspend this policy, in order to maintain as a core minimum membership of seven to ensure the survival of the collective. We also seek to ensure that the collective is representative of the broader lesbian, straight, gay community, by seeking to include people from different ethnic backgrounds [...] people living with HIV and AIDS, people living with disability etc.'</p>	<p>Gaywaves policy statement extract</p>
11125	<p>Some names:</p> <p>Initial founder: Noel Sanders</p> <p>Susan Hawkeswood, Susan Ardil, Annie Parkinson, Rock Reynolds, David Abello, David Urquhart, Glenn Hennesy, Robert Lomax, Gavin Harris, Uma KaliShakti, Prue Borthwick, Jessie Borthwork, Norri Numark, Maree Marsh, Barbara Head, Garry Schliemann, Chris Matthews, Stuart Round, Brett Wake, Tim Frazer, Lynell Sheridan, Lloyd Grosse, [...] Amanda Wallace, Michael Schembri, Dietmar Hollman</p>	<p>People involved in Gaywaves</p>

11700	Policy was to only use first names on the shows (some of the presenters were not out to family) with the exception of Greg Campling	
12030	Didn't get involved with the bids for FM stations.	
12250	Not sure what the impact was or their audience, just there as a resource. Couldn't predict the content from week to week. Each spoke to their preferences. Got recognized in a sauna by his voice one time.	
12630	The caravan embassy In the early 1980s, there were dark, backroom places where men could engage in sexual acts. Club80 was raided by the police. Many conservative men who frequented these places were exposed as a result. So mobilized against these actions.	The caravan embassy Club80
12910	Invited one of the lawyers onto the Gaywaves program to chat about what had happened. Then there was a second raid.	
13000	Various efforts at law reform – to legalise gay male sex; George Peterson's proposal was rejected; there was the gay rights lobby re gay male sex (Lex Watson); Barry Unsworth in the Upper House put forward another proposal. Neville Wran had been putting off this issues for years.	
13240	All so outraged after the second raid that there was a spontaneous march down Oxford St. without police permission – and a sit down on Taylor's Square. Greg was recording the speeches. Traffic was directed around them by the police.	
13400	Confronted Neville Wran – put a caravan outside his residence. Put out a leaflet to all the neighbours explaining their presence. Did lots of outrageous actions there: Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence came in one evening to give a blessing. Sister Fabian introduced all the sisters to the Police Inspector. Had a garden party – Greg funded it. Hired a Rolls Royce and driver, with Lex Watson in the back in drag holding an Azaelia. Had champagne and cucumber sandwiches. Greg gave a speech. Had a dog show as well (which started the event we now have at Fair Day). All culminated in the rally outside Parliament House. Complete silence/blackout in the general media. Only John Laws did an interview with Lex Watson.	Neville Wran Lex Watson
14010	Neville Wran then proposed gay law reform, which got up!	
	PART 4	
00200	Things done were always with others. Gay Solidarity was involved in organizing the second Mardi Gras; Festival included movie night at the Film Makers' Coop; Dance at Balmain Town Hall. They were also the marshals.	1979 Mardi Gras

	Had an agreement with Palms to party there after the march. (So as not to leave them in the streets after the parade.)	
00600	1980 Mardi Gras was in winter. Minimally involved in the preparation that year (as he was travelling in Europe that year for 3.5 months).	1980 Mardi Gras
00720	Lance Gowland – active in changing up how Mardi Gras was organized. Mardi Gras became a separate organizing committee.	
01000	All about partying in the outdoors, scantily clad – needed to do that in summer! But still committed to Stonewall.	
01110	Retrenched from the Commonwealth Film Unit (under Keating's gvt), 1988. Then done by contractors. There for 30 years. Too tired to transition to the freelance world.	
01340	Semi-retired, doing odd jobs here and there.	
01515	Working in the gay scene with Garrett Prestage, interviewing people for various research projects, mainly gay men, touching on HIV. Casual work. Lives off inheritance and partner.	
01730	Been with his partner since 1987/8 (but won't be talking about him here!)	