

Interview with **Ivy Richter** on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2006, at her home in Bexley Road, Earlwood. The interviewer was John Witte.



Time	Subjects	Keywords
	<b>CD1</b>	
0040	Ivy was born in Grenfell and lived in Quandialla (NSW) and went to school in Quandialla and Forbes.	Grenfell, Quandialla
0148	Parents moved to Sydney and she finished school and then she came as well. This was during the war and her father bought a barber shop in King Street City.	King Street City
0226	When she was 16 she worked at Reuben Brash's; Bruce and Allen. Then worked at Kings Theatre in Marrickville. She met a man at the door and married him. They went to Warwick Q to manage Kings Theatre there.	Reuben Brash's; Bruce and Allen; King's Theatre, Marrickville; Warwick Q;
0333	They came home and bought a grocer shop in Reiby Street Newtown. Ivy describes the business, buying a house in Kingsgrove a Holden car and her selling the business.	Reiby Street; Kingsgrove;
0506	Adopted first child Chris. Was disappointed with husband and split up. Adopted Donna before the divorce. She was on her own for a while earning a living and raising two children on her own.	
0608	Went into business with an Italian to buy a coffee shop at 101 Oxford Street. Coffee shops were going to be the big thing. Her plan was to have a coffee shop that sold wine. Her partner took over the wine bar but was not doing well. She bought him the poultry farm and she took the wine bar.	101 Oxford Street
0718	The licence was in her partner's name for a year and then Ivy took it over.	
0759	There were 3 wine bars in Bondi Junction. The Penfolds did very well. They were places for drunks. They'd wait at the door for you to open up at 10am. After Ivy took over the business improved and she didn't need the coffee shop anymore. She then met her husband who lived next door who was a builder.	
0915	Ivy got a hiding from a black woman and Ivy describes the incident, how the other drunks didn't try to save her and the subsequent appearance in Court.	
1131	Ivy could not open the bar and she contacted the licensing police telling them that she needed a holiday. The licensing police went around all licensed hotels, restaurants. Not all were honest and wanted a back hander. Ivy didn't pay because did not break the law. Ivy gives an example.	Licensing Police
1334	They built a little stage inside one window of Chez Ivy.	Claudia

	Claudia named it Chez Ivy decorated it with silver grape vines. Her husband put a little awning over the bar. Two boys named Tom put lights in the fishtank, the little piano and painted the piano gold	
1450	Ivy had met Claudia through Irwin, who was the hairdresser next door. Irwin would come and have a glass of wine. He took Ivy home one night to meet Claudia. Ivy did not know anything about drag or gay. She was "Mrs Western Suburbs". She sees Judy Burnett all done up and to Ivy she was a lady. Claudia was a lady. "It was such fun. I couldn't believe all this fun".	Claudia Judy Burnett
1600	When she closed the bar at 10pm on Fridays or Saturdays they would come upstairs they'd have a party. Max Phipps was there and the Countess used to play the piano. The boys would wear negligees and a mop. Wigs were hard to get.	Max Phipps, "The Countess" Wigs
1745	Ivy "got to realise it was whole new way of life". Her husband didn't feel threatened.	
2030	Ivy recalls that life at Chez Ivy was very busy, with the children, school, getting married.	
2118	Ivy was convinced to turn Caldwell's Wine Bar gay by the "three Toms". She also knew a lot of gay people and had a different attitude on it as well. Before then she thought it was something you made funny jokes about. There were Claudia, Irwin, Polly and Judy Burnett – people she got to know and they would come to the bar. Ivy got to know Fran, a barmaid from the Rex. Fran sent a lot of people over from the Rex and told them that Chez Ivy's was gay.	Caldwell's Wine Bar The three Toms Claudia, Irwin, Polly Fran Rex Hotel
2312	People came through word of mouth. Her market was from all over Sydney – e.g. Parramatta. And male nurses from Broughton Hall or nursing homes which had started up then.	Broughton Hall
2358	Ivy would introduce people to each other. If they were lonely or shy she would introduce people to them and finding a little bit about them.	
2600	Not quite sure when Chez Ivy's became gay. After 1962.	
2610	Wine bars were looked down on, but were profitable businesses. It wasn't too long after their honeymoon that it was changed (to gay) because the people her husband and her had met on their honeymoon came to visit and the bar was so packed.	
2705	The bar was open Monday to Saturday. Sunday closed. On Tuesdays she put a band in and it was free to come in and out except on occasions. The money was to pay the band. No floorshow. Just a band and everyone danced. (The Echoes was the band) It was a full night on Tuesdays. The other nights they just had a juke box going.	Opening days Bands The Echoes
28:20	It closed at 10 when it just got started, people pushing to get to the bar.	10 pm closing
28:38	After 10 they would go over to the Purple Onion. They	Purple Onion

	would do the promoting or sometimes Kandy would come in and promote it. Karen would come behind the bar. They could come in and help themselves to a drink. Ivy not sure if there was anywhere else to go besides the Onion.	Kandy Karen
2931	Remembers a party at Trixie's house. She had a big room and a balcony opposite Waverley Park. Trixie had a gun and was shooting the lights out in the Park.	Trixie Waverley Park
3013	Sometimes there was the Diggers Hall or Dispensary Hall. Dawn would have a dance out there. She was with the Chameleons.	Diggers Hall Dispensary Hall Chameleons
3038	Ivy got knighted into the Chameleons. Lady Flambé – after the place got burnt down. Not around when they were first formed. Molly Fuller, Donny Smith. Became a Chameleon because of Donny Smith.	Lady Flambè Molly Fuller, Donny Smith,
3149	The social dances. Everyone had to know each other. She got to know the two (lady) cashiers. Half and half men and women. "It was the only place in the world where the women and the men (the gay people) associated together"	Social dances
3302	Both men and women at Ivy's. When the licensing sergeant came in and said "I believe you have a lot of nonsense going on here. You've got underage people. She said "No I haven't". He said "What about that young fella there?" I said "That young fellow there is a girl" I brought this young girl over ... (and introduced her to the sergeant) ... She said "I know him, any way I was down in your lock up yesterday. Why didn't you look that up".	Lesbians at Ivy's
3349	Ivy then described going to court for serving an underage girl but charge was dismissed.	Underage drinking
3430	She believed there was harassment by the licensing police. But she had one good friend in the police force who looked after the boys. "He could see the transition". He didn't treat the boys like they were prostitutes. He would ask Ivy to ask them to come across to the office rather than come over and take them out. His name was Detective Sergeant Jack Rainer. He had a feeling for what it was (like being gay).	Police attitudes Transition Jack Rainer
3533	Their fathers wouldn't want them (gay sons) in their house.	
3606	Ivy describes jobs that gays had – window dressers, dressmakers, in offices (not too many). She tells of a nephew who had a sex change who couldn't get a job. It was hard for them. They would take them off to the psychiatrists and this was not what was needed.	
3716	Some would have a few drinks and be crying in the bar. "I'm lost. I can't go home. My father hates me and my mother doesn't understand." It was hard if you couldn't work properly and couldn't go home.	
3755	Tells of her place at Bronte and people she allowed to live upstairs.	
3820	Places to rent were hard to get and Ivy describes the lack of housing in those days.	

3847	"Plus being looked on as a freak." But things have changed.	
3907	Decision to employ drag queens. She was friends with Polly and Claudia, but Claudia did not want to work at nights so she got Judy and Kay. Kay had to do a "flit" out of the place she was staying at the Cross.	Polly Claudia Judy Kay
4004	They were put in Bunny Girl outfits. Black leotards, bunnies ears and tail. It was an introduction to drag and from then on she got all sorts of people in e.g. Stuart Wagstaff. Squares would come in for a look. They were a drawcard. Then she got a few articles in the newspaper and it made it a place to go. She then became friends with Di Arthur a fashion columnist. She would write it up now and again.	Bunny Girls Stuart Wagstaff Di Arthur
4200	There were no performances while Ivy was there. Only after Brian had it. He would give them \$1, and they would bring their record which played at one end of the room and they mimed over on the stage. The Birdcage (BC) was altogether different.	Brian Bird Cage
4244	The BC didn't get rough until after it got burned down and they were on the one floor and they had all the girls who were a bit rough.	Bird Cage
4315	Finocchio's/Enzo's. Ivy went once. She knew Enzo when he worked for Brian Hawse (?) But was too busy and didn't know about it.	Finocchios Enzos Brian Hawse (?)
4343	Sold Ivy's to Brian Neal. Then went to 191 Oxford Street after a couple of months. A male dancer came to her house and (it was called the Diamond Horseshoe) and said that Norm Harvey wants to sell out and talked her into going there. Ivy regrets selling the wine bar. Should have had both going one finishing at 10 and then other going after.	Brian Neal Diamond Horseshoe Norm Harvey
4441	She stayed friends with Brian and his wife Liz. He had Claudia managing the Wine Bar. Photo in Sx was at time she had sold it when Claudia was the manager. Rose and Lil (?) were friends, Judie Burnett, Soula. Brian died a couple of years ago.	Brian and Liz Claudia Rose, Lil (?) Soula
4719	Ivy describes her relationship with Dawn as fine. Dawn was making lots of money. She got Capriccios and all her staff. And Dawn had a liquor licence there. The BC was BYO. She has no fight with Dawn.	Dawn
4848	Money from the sale of Chez Ivys went into the Birdcage. She didn't realise that the records, costumes, choreographer cost money. Ivy gave them wages and didn't expect them to work for nothing. The girls at Les Girls were not getting enough money to live on and buy the next costume they had to have for the next show. It wasn't fair. Ivy gave them a weekly wage. Karen got more because she put the show together. Kandy came and did a few shows. Kandy at that stage was toying with performing	Birdcage Karen Kandy

	in her own voice.	
5030	The Bird Cage was very bland the way it was. It was more of a gamblers club. The gay boys started going in there but it was not a gay venue. Probably illegal. All a bit heavy. But Ivy recalls Norm Harvey coming to her aid when she was threatened by a Tow Truck driver driving way back from the Purple Onion and was always like a big brother.	Norm Harvey
5155	Got Claudia to decorate and help put up the birdcages which they had found at the tip. Strung them up in bunches. They would light up with the black light on them.	Claudia
5222	Karen (Chant) came up with the name for the birdcage. Believes that the Birdcage was advertised in guides for people coming to Sydney.	Karen
5358	Describes going to Finocchio's in San Francisco	Finocchio's in SF
5426	Ivy says that she had another dark girl at the BC and she goes to Los Angeles, West Hollywood, with Brian. The girl's name was Vivian. Vivian wasn't in but they gave them a good time. She describes Vivian's club.	Vivian (Walker)
5600	The artwork on the wall of the BC was done by Corinne when it was still the Diamond Horseshoe.	Corinne
5617	Ivy describes what it was like in the BC. Up to first floor. A cashier, Heather. It was \$2 to go in. You brought your own grog. In one corner was the band. There was a seat built in all the way along, tables and a dance floor. Pictures on the wall that Corinne painted.	Heather
5657	Up to next floor, with birdcages, with the stage up one end. A huge staircase went up the centre. That was wonderful to drape over. The staircase made the place.	Staircase
5745	The cause of the fire – they thought that Cliffy had overloaded the sound box. But when it was re-built it was burnt out again. The cause was the fire was a fire in the chimney that went up from the Sip and Bite downstairs.	Sip and Bite Fire
5844	The fire occurred just as Ivy had paid for everything to set the place up e.g. Rose (Jackson) for the costumes and it was to be her first full pay day but it didn't happen.	Rose
010010	They did a show. The race scene everything in black and white and big hats. Like the Ladies at Lunch. They were clever. Karen and Maggie Martin put them on. Then there was Core Direct (?) and his wife Anita. They were real dancers who could not get work. They taught Corinne to dance, Bernard. Then would do a fun show. "Riah" (Hair backwards) with numbers from the show. Send ups of Hair. They would get out into the audience and play up with everyone. The BC had strippers – Sue Le Gay, and Jackie (is Claire now). They were all beautiful.	Karen Maggie Martin Core Direct (?) Anita Corinne Bernard "Riah" Sue Le Gay Jackie
010242	Ivy then tells how she persuaded Karen back from a venue in Queensland. Got her drunk for 2 days. Rented a car and brought them home. Red Leslie and Corinne and Robyn. Started working with her at the BC – probably not working at the Onion then (c1967). There was about 8 of them. Ivy	Karen Red Leslie Corinne Robyn

	paid for the costumes, but not the solo one which the performer made herself.	
	<b>CD 2</b>	
0008	Ivy owed a lot of money, but she was earning a living. Her son started work at the birdcage	
0144	After the second fire, the stage was put down the other end and Ivy thinks this was a mistake. There because it was closer to the toilets. The place was distorted after that.	
0215	At the same time there was competition from discos – dances at the Masonic Hall in Darlinghurst. On Saturdays they were getting the crowds in. Big bands like Zoot played there.	Masonic Hall Zoot
0310	After the second fire she went over to the Masonic Hall for a while. And she went to the Chameleons, but it wasn't the Chameleons then, it was Peter Rolf, the Midas Club. She would go out there on a Saturday night and they would pay her. Then to the Curry House and they paid her, that when she bought it, but she shouldn't have bought it.	Midas Club Curry House
0400	Entrance of the BC was in Flinders. Jewellers on the corner. Then the Taxi Club which had more or less just started up.	Bird Cage Taxi Club
0446	Darlinghurst was reputedly rough. "The boys won't come down here (to Darlinghurst). Ivy didn't see any roughness. All the shops were old and decrepit looking. There was Wynns and Reuben Brashes. A rough working class area. Palmer street was all brothels. Illegal casinos and heavies. One in Crown Street she visited.	Darlinghurst Wynns Reuben Brashes Palmer Street Illegal casinos Crown Street
0644	Problems with fights? Problems with girls when there was just one floor after the fire. The girls took over. I had a couple of them barred. One is a millionaire and reminds Ivy these days that she had barred her. She runs a legal brothel in Rockdale.	Lesbians Rockdale
0745	Places for women. No really. Boomerangs was more or less women and the Polynesians. Not Pollys Club which has been going for 42 years. Mostly girls but not all girls. The first all girl place was Ruby Reds.	Boomerangs Polynesians Pollys Club Ruby Reds
0840	Dawn would open places. An example of one you entered through a little door through the shutter. It was in Oxford Street Paddington. It was a fruit shop. That was basically for girls. Dawn opened places for whoever, not just for a lesbian clientele. Jools was pretty girlie orientated, good shows, but a lot of boys.	Dawn Fruit Shop Jools
1014	Divas who turned up at the BC – Dusty. She had permanent clientele who would come along to see the show once or twice. Maggie Tabberer, Xenon the hairdresser, came along for something different to see. Solicitors and leading townspeople mostly gay but wouldn't tell anyone. Helpman would come all the time and he and Ivy were very good friends. Donnie Smith would bring him.	Dusty Maggie Tabberer Xenon Helpman Donnie Smith
1206	Some men would be married and go out with the boys on a	



	Friday night.	
1253	Ivy explains that she was paid to go the Midas club and talk to everyone she knew, after the second fire.	Midas Club
1306	Walking along the streets in San Francisco and people would say "What are you doing here Ivy" and New York	
1315	Remembers Lanie (?) who used to work at the Mercantile Hotel at the Rocks. Used to sing little ditties and make up the words. You weren't allowed to use your right hand to drink. She used to do Shirley Temple. She used to be in the show that Roxy did "The Vamps" They'd go around the clubs. Roxy started up a club possibly called the Vamps in Liverpool Street when Capriccios started up.	Lanie (?) Mercantile Hotel Roxy The Vamps Liverpool Street Capriccios
1445	The East India Restaurant. Ivy worked there and the owners decided to sell out and they already had Tracey and Pepper and Judy working there as performers doing a show that Tracey had put together.	East India Rest. Tracey Pepper Judy
1510	She decided to buy it. But the rent went up every few months. It was too much. So she sold it and tells how the new owners failed to pay for the licence after it was transferred and the ensuing court case was expensive and she got the licence back the business had gone. They were selling dope.	
1729	The floor show that was at the Restaurant had been Ivy's idea when she worked there. The Restaurant was a way for her daughter and son to be employed there	Floor show
1825	Kandy asked for the tables and chairs and the mirrors, because he was opening up the Krystal Pistol and suggested that if she didn't come with him, the Restaurant would be closed.	Kandy Krystal Pistol
1851	They did another midnight flit. Unbeknownst to Ivy, Kandy had done a deal with Perce Gallea and her tables and chairs then belonged to him. She held the licence.	Perce Gallea
1930	Business fizzled out. Perce Gallea had no idea how to speak to the staff. Smacked a waitresses face for giving cheek. Apparently Perce owned the building. She was the licensee and getting paid.	
2040	It was a gay venue and they were after the people from Her Majesty's. They did go to the bar, but Her Majesty's closed. It opened in a cold winter and it was a cold place and people didn't come down that end of the city.	Her Majesty's
2133	Ivy then went back to cashiering at the theatre and then got job at Jetset as a tour guide.	Jetset
2233	Began losing her friends in Sydney. Her daughter became pregnant so she came home.	
2330	Knowledge of AIDS. She knew about it before the people in Sydney would look at it. She came back from San Francisco. She had been to a bar called Sweet Lips. They were talking about this curse people were catching in the parks and dying like flies.	AIDS San Francisco Sweet Lips
2410	When she came home she tried to tell Donnie Smith and	Donnie Smith

	them about what was happening. Somebody like the mayor of San Francisco gave a speech and told everybody that they must use condoms. Donnie said "crap".	
2451	It wasn't long after that her friends who were Qantas stewards were getting sick and dying. Donnie Smith went.	Qantas
2512	One funeral a week. One good friend after another. Did work for CSN making dinners for people in Paddington in a house opposite a church and made lunches there in between trips. Did the CSN course with Wally Dowling and Donnie Smith. Couldn't help. Every time she went to someone's place they'd die. Couldn't cope with that. Anieke was in the same (CSN) class as Ivy. She has kept cuttings of articles about new (anti-HIV) drugs. It was a sad time.	CSN Wally Dowling Donnie Smith Anieke
2715	Was told that Molly who used to run the Kieron died while she was at another funeral. Had a black dress just for going to funerals.	Kieron
2855	Ivy has a group of friends who visit. She is too old to go out by herself. Billy Bland who was Molly's mate, people who run the Pollys Dance. They have dinners at each others houses, parties.	Billy Bland
3039	The contribution of these bars was to open up squares eyes to the fact that gays are people. Made people more tolerant. A place that both could go to. Les Girls packed with women's office parties. Plus the Mardi Gras.	Les Girls
3140	You can go to any bar these days and camp it up and nobody cares	