

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Richard Riley

Interviewer: John Witte

Date of interview: 5 November 2016

Location of interview: Mayfield West

Reason for interview: Early gay activism in Sydney and Adelaide

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Key words
0000	Introduction	
0036	Born in Paddington and grew up in Granville. A suburban neighbourhood and ethnically mixed in the 50s and 60s. The Villawood migrant hostel was nearby, and another at East Hills. He went to school with the children of first generation Eastern European refugees.	Paddington; Granville; Villawood; East Hills; refugees;
0225	Dad was a boiler maker at various jobs. He was a union rep for the Boilermakers and Blacksmiths Union. Later became a security guard. Mum was a housekeeper.	Boilermakers and Blacksmiths Union;
0440	Father was strong on the "fair go" and this guided his union work. Not a member of a political party.	
0530	He grew up in a multi-cultural area. His dad was anti-Japanese and he was strongly Protestant. During the war, he worked as a boilermaker-welder on aircraft but wasn't able to serve in the military.	Protestant;
0725	But during the Vietnam War, when Richard was suspended from High School when his brother was serving in Vietnam, his father was very supportive.	Vietnam War;
0755	At school he chose Latin, but he couldn't do art and had to do Commerce. At his school, Ken Reinhardt the artist was the Art Master and art was "the thing to be doing" at his school. The school was a Technical High School.	Ken Reinhardt; Granville Technical High School;
0930	The students were organised and had a few protests. One was about hair length. They were refused entry to the school and so they camped out the front of the school with their books and rang the Daily Mirror. Richard was the vice-captain and the protest was organised by the school captain. During the Moratorium, there were supportive teachers. An incident involving the minister and the school principle during a church service removing students with Moratorium badges from the church. The parents were to apologise or the children would be expelled. His father supported Richard.	Daily Mirror; Moratorium;
1300	Richard's brother had to serve and when he returned from Vietnam he was laid off work. He challenged the firm and won. He also had nightmares as a result of his service.	
1340	Richard was "bookish" during primary school and was given leadership roles. He also trained as a swimmer. During his mid-high school years, he felt he was different. When he read the <i>Little Red School Book</i> and saw "homosexuality" written for the first time. During his second last year at high school he became scared of being found out and depressed. He had to repeat the HSC year at Parramatta High School. At university homosexuality was spoken about openly and this was a real change for Richard from the expectations of Granville.	<i>Little Red School Book</i> ; Homosexuality; Parramatta High School; Granville; Higher School Certificate;
1815	He had moved out into a shared house in Surry Hills. At University of NSW (UNSW) he did a Bachelor of Social Work. He met friends of friends from school at Sydney University that were gay and went to gay dances at Balmain and Glebe Town Halls. This gave him the confidence to come out and wear the double gay male symbol badge at UNSW. He then met other gays there.	Surry Hills; University of NSW; Sydney University; Balmain Town Hall; Glebe Town Hall; gay dances;

		Bachelor of Social Work;
2100	He was co-opted to work on the gay issue of <i>Tharunka</i> the student paper.	<i>Tharunka</i> ;
2125	The Sydney University people he met were Michael Hurley and Gillian Leahy. Then Craig Johnston. He met Chips Mackinolty of the Earthworks Poster Collective at the Tin Sheds through work on dance posters.	Michael Hurley; Gillian Leahy; Craig Johnston; Chips Mackinolty; Earthworks Poster Collective; Tin Sheds;
2130	He met a lot of people in gay, anti-war, anti-nuclear movements, feminism, the green bans. There were parties at Chippendale with builder labourers, feminists, gay men.	anti-war; anti-nuclear movement; feminism; the green bans;
2320	The gay issue of <i>Tharunka</i> . The tone was confronting hetero sexist myths. Attempts at wit and humour and cut and paste from American gay publications.	<i>Tharunka</i> ;
2420	The Australian Union of Students later became prolific putting out booklets on sexuality.	Australian Union of Students;
2450	He can't recall an organised gay group at the UNSW. He socialised with school friends and people from the Social Work course for example Terry Batterham. Social Work would have a wine and cheese afternoon once a week with the staff.	UNSW; Social Work; Terry Batterham;
2645	He came out at home in stages. To flatmates, brothers and sisters then two or three years later to parents. He wrote a letter then visited. His father was upset, mother was silent.	Coming out;
30:00	He went to Wagga following a lover. He got work as a youth worker with the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP). This was a large Australia wide project in Tom Uren's portfolio. <i>Note: It was Tom Uren who praised the initiative of Granville High School students opposing the war.</i> He was the first youth worker there and provided counselling services and they started a drop-in centre. They raised issues to the cities about local youth issues such as accommodation, worked with the local Council, High Schools. They completed a research project called <i>Out of School, Out of Work</i> . Assistance came from the Secretariat of the AAP. An interesting position created was Advocate Counsellors. These were lawyers who worked with people who had been excluded from Government assistance – example, farmers' widows. They advocated for a local Youth Prison. There was an issue when they were seen as becoming union representatives, when people were laid off from the Egg Marketing Board. The AAP was closed down in 1976.	Wagga; Australian Assistance Plan (AAP); Tom Uren; <i>Out of School, Out of Work</i> ; Advocate Counsellors; Youth Prison; Egg Marketing Board;
3555	Moved to Adelaide. Moved there with a Quaker friend after he had been made unemployed. Shared a house in Torrensville. Got a job 45 minutes south of Adelaide and moved into a share house with the train conductor. John Wishart lived there. He was a member of the Communist Party and he had met him in Granville Boys High when he spoke there. <i>Note: other speakers at Granville Boys High included David Stratton on censorship; Dennis Altman about sexuality.</i> He was introduced to the left scene in Adelaide. He continued on with his social work studies in the SA Institute of Technology.	Adelaide; Quakers; Torrensville; John Wishart; Communist Party; Granville Boys High; David Stratton; Dennis Altman; SA Institute of Technology;
4015	He did visit the University of Adelaide and got involved in their Gaysoc and met a lot of people through that. He met Gay Walsh who was at Flinders University. Quentin Buckle and he were in a relationship.	University of Adelaide; Gaysoc; Gay Walsh; Flinders University; Quentin Buckle;
4130	Non-student related events. The Dr Duncan Revolution Bookshop with Jon Ruwolt was one of three similar bookshops in Australia. Remembers helping pack up the bookshop.	Dr Duncan Revolution Bookshop; Jon Ruwolt;

4300	With the funds from the Bookshop, a group set up <i>Yeast</i> a funding collective providing set up loans for the gay and lesbian community to do certain things. Cheque book with names. Quentin Buckle, Richard, Gay Walsh, Karl Stepanic, Cheryl Catt, Judith Dwyer, were on the collective which funded the Fools Gallery Theatre Company putting on a gay play; helped sponsor the 7 th National Homosexual Conference; the Adelaide Gay Counselling Service and Ms print. Some money was paid back. In 1979, it was less than \$2,000.	Dr Duncan Revolution Bookshop; <i>Yeast</i> ; Quentin Buckle; Gay Walsh; Karl Stepanic; Cheryl Catt; Judith Dwyer; Fools Gallery Theatre Company; 7 th National Homosexual Conference; Adelaide Gay Counselling Service; Ms print;
4615	Out of Gaysoc grew the Greg Weir Defence Collective. Greg was prevented from teaching in Qld in 1977. Collectives were set up around the country defending the right of homosexuals to teach and support Greg.	Gaysoc; Greg Weir Defence Collective;
4840	The Greg Weir Collective was also sending support to the US over Proposition 6 – the right of gay teachers to teach in California. Harvey Milk responded, sending a telegram.	Greg Weir Collective; California; Proposition 6; Harvey Milk;
4950	The Adelaide Homosexual Alliance was formed as a male homosexual organisation. It had formal meetings. This was a change to how Richard operated in collectives, with lesbians, activity based. Non-hierarchical and unstructured meetings. He remembers Don Baxter running the show. Others involved were Tim Carrigan, John Lee. Richard remembers John Lee starting an oral history project then with older men. It may be with Adelaide Library.	Adelaide Homosexual Alliance; Don Baxter; Tim Carrigan; John Lee;
54:15	Gay Walsh was involved in Gaysoc, but people tended to work together. Remembers little fights at Adelaide University – about a meeting room, access to counselling for gay students – but Richard was mainly concerned with non-university work such as <i>Yeast</i> .	Gay Walsh; Gaysoc; Adelaide University; <i>Yeast</i> ;
55:50	3 rd National Homosexual Conference in Adelaide possibly 1977. Richard attended, but did not help organise it. He came over to Sydney for the 4 th National Homosexual Conference. He was overwhelmed by the decision to march to confront the Festival of Light Rally at Hyde Park. He had seen demos such as Victoria Street, which were violent. They were confined to the footpath. The side streets had cordons of uniformed officers, blocking escape routes. At Taylor Square, there were lines of uniformed cops covering the intersection. A megaphone announcement from the police, “This is an illegal march and you need to disperse”. Immediately they moved forward and began arresting people. He was midway in the march group on the footpath. The paddy wagons were probably up ahead in Oxford Street because this is the direction they exited. Isolated marchers were targeted because they were easier to arrest. Calls went up to link arms. A policeman attempted to arrest him, and he brushed his hand off him and said “no I’m not” and went to a group and linked arms.	3 rd National Homosexual Conference; Adelaide; 4 th National Homosexual Conference; Festival of Light Rally; Hyde Park; Victoria Street; Taylor Square; police; Oxford Street;
10320	Then they saw people being bundled into paddy wagons. People in the paddy wagons yelled out where they were being taken to. They would not have been able to handle the number of arrestees at one Police Station.	Paddy wagon; Police;
10505	Dodged police coming in from the side streets and went back to the Conference. He was amazed how well organised things were when everyone was so angry. They worked out what had happened, who had been arrested, where had they been taken, a bail raising exercise where a large amount of money was organised. “It felt really solid, felt really strong, I felt really proud, very upset ... I couldn’t believe what had	4 th National Homosexual Conference;

	happened, that the police weren't interested in us in a way, interested in us being able to be there or have a place. It was very much, 'close 'em down, pick up off, get 'em out of here'." It reinforced his attitudes toward the police at the time.	
1:06:40	He was interested in the theme "Gays at Work", coming from a family with a union link. It had been neglected for a long time. The movement had previously been about being gay, and not about getting institutions to respond. He remembers the formation of a gay union group.	"Gays at Work";
1:08:30	He went back to Adelaide. The events at the Conference reinforced what he was thinking – it did not come as a big surprise the views of the Government and the Police to gay organisation.	Adelaide; Police;
1:09:05	He joined the Department of Veteran Affairs as a clerk as he was studying part time. He worked as a social worker at the Repat Hospital in Daw Park.	Department of Veteran Affairs; Repat Hospital; Daw Park;
1:10:15	He was behind the 1982 <i>Becoming Visible</i> project with Quentin Buckle, Gabrielle Walsh, Leslie Adams and others. In Adelaide there was the Constitutional Museum, with displays about migration. They proposed an exhibition about lesbians and male homosexuals <i>Becoming Visible</i> . They created ten panels and some posters for the Speakers' Corner part of the Museum. He was the public face of the exhibition in the Adelaide Advertiser.	<i>Becoming Visible</i> ; Quentin Buckle; Gabrielle Walsh; Leslie Adams; Adelaide Constitutional Museum; Adelaide Advertiser;
1:13:00	This meant he came out at work. His clients, military veterans, were in shock.	
1:13:45	The panel behind Richard in the exhibition publicity was on George Duncan. Some details about the Duncan investigation. And the exhibition put names to the photos of the police officers. Steve Stephens from the Festival of Light attended.	George Duncan; police; Steve Stephens; Festival of Light;
1:16:05	Police began harassing him after the exhibition. Visiting Richard's house late at night for six months after the exhibition and stopping him in his car and try to defect it and stopping him in the street.	Police;
1:19:10	AIDS. There were reports about a gay disease, then medicalised as GRID. Discussions about whether gays should be isolated. Later, there was a fire bombing of a gay venue in Adelaide – a bar in a pub. There was a lot of hysteria.	AIDS; gay disease; GRID; fire bombing; AIDS;
1:21:15	Response in the gay community. Adam Carr in Melbourne, was spreading the facts when they were knowable. But in Adelaide, there was not a direct response, because it didn't seem to effect Adelaide directly. "Beware of the Sydney queens." There was unsafe sex going on in Adelaide well after safe sex practice was established.	Adam Carr; gay community; Adelaide; safe sex practice; AIDS;
1:22:55	Later a positive people's organisation developed; the SA AIDS council was established. Helping people became the focus of gay activity for a while. The Village People came back a couple of years in a row to support the Candlelight Vigil.	SA AIDS council; The Village People; Candlelight Vigil;
1:26:00	The commercial scene in Adelaide. Adelaide supported three venues. The Mars Bar – Roseleaf and Theresa Green performed there. It was the later opening venue. The Green Dragon was a pub, The Colonel Light was a pub and there was a venue on North Terrace that changed its name (eg. Bartoon) and look every now and then. There was the Pulteney 431 sauna. In earlier times, there was a bar in The Old Colonist Pub in Norwood which served expensive drinks.	Adelaide; The Mars Bar; Roseleaf; Theresa Green; Green Dragon; The Colonel Light; North Terrace; Bartoon; Pulteney 431 sauna; The Old Colonist Pub;
1:28:30	In 1993 Got a job in Parramatta with the Commonwealth Rehab Service in the Brain Injury Unit – a community based rehabilitation service. Lived in Newtown. In 1995, began working as one of the two HIV social workers at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.	Parramatta; Commonwealth Rehab Service; Brain Injury

	The AIDS ward was E10 West - a 16 bed ward, full all the time. More effective drugs and combination therapies was just coming in. The ward had a high turnover. People in chairs having two infusions a day to treat certain conditions.	Unit; Newtown; HIV; Royal Prince Alfred Hospital; social workers; AIDS ward; E10 West;
1:31:00	He lived and socialised in Newtown and so, he saw friends and people he socialised with later as patients. And when he socialised people would come up with work related issues. It was all enmeshed. His partner Greg was also working in health promotion in HIV.	Newtown; HIV; Greg Milan;
1:32:00	Greg started "Gay men fighting AIDS" (GMFA) as a promotional activity. It was a community activity. It included positive men and HIV negative men working together on an educational campaign for the community to support each other. There had been a separation in the gay community – people did not want to get infected. Positive people were being supported medically etc, but not in the wider gay community. Ian Roberts was the face of one of the campaigns. It was identified as a Health Department initiative and there was no support from the non-government HIV groups. It conducted stalls at Leather Fair, Mardi Gras Fair Day, nights at the Newtown Hotel etc. As far as Richard knows, ACON did not distribute GMFA material. They were there to support positive men. There was a split between Health Department and NGO initiatives.	Gay men fighting AIDS; Greg Milan; HIV; Ian Roberts; Health Department; Leather Fair; Mardi Gras Fair Day; Newtown Hotel; ACON;
1:37:25	Moved to Newcastle in 2003. He got a job as a social worker in HIV at the John Hunter Hospital. It is different to RPA. Older people and people returning to Newcastle for HIV care with their families. It is much more of an education role. With less resources, you are expected to do more and it is more interesting. He has a monthly clinic in Tamworth.	Newcastle; John Hunter Hospital; HIV; Tamworth;
1:40:33	His job is based in a hospital and he sees people as outpatients. He has potentially over 200 clients. He supports people with new diagnoses, adjustment to health changes, information about safety around transmission, relationship issues, with mums with children, placing young people in nursing homes, working with gay men and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups. He also works with HIV organisations like ACON and Karumah. New diagnoses in Newcastle are 50:50 gay:heterosexual. Heterosexuals do not have support groups and are isolated and closed down. Interview ends: 1:44:00	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse; HIV; ACON; Karumah; Heterosexuals;