

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Kate Rowe

Interviewer: John Witte

Date of interview: 13 December 2016

Location of interview: Moverly Road, Maroubra

Reason for interview: First mardi gras

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Key words
0120	Born in the East End of London and was the second of four kids. Moves to a Housing Estate in Putney. Lived there for ten years. The estate was "hideous". It was a working class area. Parents were middle class. Concept of the Housing estate. Went to the Primary School there and then the Hurlingham Girls Comprehensive School.	Putney; Housing Estate; Hurlingham Girls Comprehensive School;
0350	Describes Hurlingham Girls Comprehensive.	
0440	School grades fall and sexual abuse was the reason. "Got in with a bad crowd" and then went off to catering school at Westminster Tech. The people Kate hung around with went to Borstal, girls' homes. On the estate she and her siblings were bashed.	Westminster Tech; Borstal;
0700	Political awareness in the mid 60s about the Vietnam War and current affairs. Father was a member of the Liberal Party. "Sense of injustice".	Vietnam War; Liberal Party;
0935	Interested in Australia.	
1010	Westminster (Tech, was High end) Catering College . Obtained City and Guild 147 and 151. Then the family left for Manchester. Had to act as the mother in the family. "All a big struggle".	Westminster Tech; Manchester;
1120	In Manchester began drinking and taking drugs. Her abuser remained in London. Worked as a waitress. Had met a drug addict boyfriend.	London;
1315	Migrated to Australia aged 19 to escape. Went to Granville Tech then went back to England 1974 – 1976. Was heavily into drugs and also became more politically active – abortion rallies. The welfare organisation Kate was working for (a Government funded organisation to help homeless youth and people coming out of gaol and they had hostels etc) had women's groups – consciousness raising groups - people asked her if she was gay. She was embarrassed. Began as a residential care worker, then deputy team leader. The team leader was a drug dealer. Kate flew back to Australia.	Granville Technical College; Consciousness Raising; Abortion Rally;
1815	Involvement with the women's group was important for her, although she wasn't out as gay. Anger about her brother who was a bully and the effects of women's place in society had on her mother.	
2000	Came back to Australia and fell apart. Suffered psychosis, and went along to Alcoholics Anonymous in January 1977. A group of lesbians there helped her become sober and she was introduced to lesbian networks. She got to hear about Gay Solidarity and she went to Acceptance at 33A. She acknowledged she was a lesbian but her coming out was difficult. This was late 1977 - early 1978.	Alcoholics Anonymous; Gay Solidarity Group; Acceptance; CAMP; 33A Glebe Point Road;
2210	Probably heard about the 4 th National Conference and the parade at CAMP. Her political awakening happened when she was arrested at the first parade.	4 th National Homosexual Conference; CAMP;
2230	Not many women went to Acceptance. Kate also went to the first Gay AA meetings in Oxford Street upstairs Saturday afternoon meetings. Mostly men. Later involved in setting up a lesbian AA group at Leichhardt Women's Health Centre. She was aware of segregation of men and women around this time.	Acceptance; Gay Alcoholics Anonymous; Lesbian AA; Leichhardt Women's Health Centre;

2515	Period of coming out. Kate was working at the Maritime Services Board, her mother had just died and she was an office assistant and became involved in the union and had organised a strike. Becoming clean and sober, meant sorting out her life and her sexuality. Some people in NA said it was “a phase”. One sponsor refused to deal with her because of her sexuality.	Maritime Services Board; AA; Narcotics Anonymous; NA;
2900	Did not have a political direction until the first mardi gras.	
3030	Was clean and sober, but she was taken to her first bar at Milsons Point (Possibly Mosaics JW). The venue was above a garage and you went to dinner there and it was held monthly. Went to Ruby Reds probably after 1978 Mardi Gras.	Ruby Reds; First Mardi Gras;
3230	Remembers going to the afternoon forum for Day of International Gay Solidarity at Paddington Town Hall. Went to the parade. Met her friends there. Dressed in army pants and duffle coat. Excited by the promise of other gays and lesbians being there; being out and safe; it being a celebration.	Day of International Gay Solidarity; Paddington Town Hall;
3445	But at the bottom (of Oxford Street) when police said that was enough, “we said, ‘fuck you it’s not enough’”, it morphed from a celebration to a demonstration.	Oxford Street;
3510	Joined at Taylor Square, met friends. They had agreed to go together – it promised to be really exciting. Walked around during the parade. At Whitlam Square lay on the bonnet of the truck when the police were removing it. She believes she saw Lance having the microphone taken away. Thinks Ken (Davis) told her not to make herself so obvious because the police would target her. She felt bolshie, a sense of freedom, but naive.	Suzanne Keys; Penny Gulliver; Chris Burke; Sabina Wynn; Marg McMann; Gail Hewison;
3800	The police wanted the people to go into Hyde Park. Reference to Branco Gaica’s photo of this before the interview. People went from Whitlam Square, up College Street to William Street. She met other lesbians who remarked about the large number of lesbians, because they “had the shits with the blokes”. Remembers shouting “up the lezzos”. A liberating thing to do.	Hyde Park; Whitlam Square; College Street; William Street;
3940	Going up William Street Kate is aware of paddy wagons “going across.” And going down side streets. Remembers conversations to the effect, “Gee, there is a lot of police wagons”. But no one was putting two and two together.	William Street; Paddy Wagons;
4005	Goes up Darlinghurst Road walking into a trap. They got to El Alamein fountain. At that stage she believes the feeling was that the parade was over. People were walking home.	Darlinghurst Road; El Alamein Fountain;
4115	Begins hearing shouting, things being thrown. People said ‘get out of here’, but there was nowhere to go. Paddy wagons everywhere and they were picking people off.	Paddy Wagons;
4205	Tried to get on to a side street and was hit by a bin lid. She was then dragged, losing her glasses and couldn’t see a thing. There was a cacophony of screaming and noise and you could feel the fear in the air.	
4240	Was picked out by the police and people tried to drag her away from them. She then was thrown in the wagon.	Paddy Wagon;
4330	In the cells, someone had her glasses. They (the women) were put in one cell. There was a heterosexual woman there who had lost it. “I’m heterosexual, get me out of here!” Each person was taken out separately or in groups for processing, upstairs. The noise from the people outside. She gave a false name, Anne Abbott and asked what the charge was. “They were making it up as they went along.”	
4530	The charge was offensive behaviour, to wit, “up the lezzos”. Was one of the later ones processed. Not known if they had to have bail money. Thinks bail money was being organised outside.	

4720	The people outside gave them strength. Remembers hearing Peter Murphy get bashed. They couldn't see anything. The doors were closed. They could hear him screaming then it went quiet.	Peter Murphy;
4900	After a sleep on the Sunday, thinks she may have been briefed, because she was prepared on the Monday. Her solicitor was blonde gay man with a moustache.	
5030	On the Monday when she arrived at Central Court, there were people there to support the arrestees. There were police and supporters filling the area (in front of the court), plus the media. She made it inside.	Central Court of Petty Sessions;
5115	She was exposed at work. People somehow knew. Her HR manager was gay and supported Kate. She began receiving pornography at work and called names. Not sure how she was outed – declaring she was there or asking for time off to go to court.	Maritime Services Board;
5325	This saw the beginning of her trade union activism.	
5425	Stanley Palmer Culture Palace. Virginia Bell was speaking. Met David Marr the journalist. David was at Liverpool Street and Stanley Palmer interviewing people for his article. Kate did not take in too much, being politically naive and shy. Struck by Marg McMann and Virginia Bell who were intelligent and articulate.	Stanley Palmer Culture Palace; Virginia Bell; David Marr; Marg McMann;
5800	The National Conference. Remembers listening to Frank Walker the Attorney General. He spoke about the Summary Offences Act and was defending Neville Wran's actions. He said he Walker was on their side. A political lesson.	Frank Walker; Summary Offences Act;
5950	The decision to march. They were aware (there was going to be trouble) and they were told to be passive and not resist. Kate was shocked when she saw the huge number of police "it was like an army".	
10125	Kate made it to the Right to Life rally at Hyde Park with a few others. Was at the stage area heckling and was grabbed and verbally abused by the Christians then arrested by police.	Right to Life Rally; Hyde Park; Christians;
10345	Went to gaol for the arrest at the Cross. She had gone to Court as "Anne Abbotts" and fined \$75. Later when someone said "Is Katherine Rowe here" she turned and was arrested. Virginia Bell paid her bail. But she never paid the fine (not sure for what event) and decided to go to Mullawah (Women's Gaol at Silverwater JW) and spent four days there.	Virginia Bell; Mullawah;
10544	Nobody knew she was in Mullawah. Frightening and lonely. Cellmates, other prisoners, activities, drug abuse. Nothing for prisoners to do. Katrina Harrison picked her up from gaol.	Mullawah; Katrina Harrison;
11000	Women Behind Bars was a fleeting group. Campaign to free Victoria Roberts. Kate was arrested again at one their demonstrations. Later met Victoria at an AA meeting in gaol. There was a link with Women's Refuges – Wendy was involved with Elsie Refuge.	Women Behind Bars; Wendy Bacon; Julie McCrossin; Victoria Roberts; Women's Refuges; Elsie Refuge;
11425	Joined the Communist Party of Australia. Two Marxist Summer Schools. Impressed by David McKnight.	Communist Party of Australia; David McKnight;
11505	Leaves the CPA and joins the Australian Labor Party.	Australian Labor Party;
11600	Involvement in union politics. Encouraged to be a women's delegate. Joined the Women's Trade Union Group. Edna O'Ryan was involved.	Edna O'Ryan; Women's Trade Union Group;
11700	After Maritime Services, got a job as a paid organiser for the AT&AEA. Met Linda Caruthers, Kerryn Fitzpatrick, Matthew Doyle. Got an organiser's position in Film and Television for three years.	Australian Television and Amusement Employees

		Association; Linda Caruthers; Kerryn Fitzpatrick; Matthew Doyle;
11830	Now interested in working in film and did a film course at university and involved in Women in Film and Television.	Women in Film and Television;
11950	Hears about the Gay Games at this time, and after graduating got jobs with documentaries and organising. Lasted two or three years in the industry. Getting work was difficult. Attends her first Gay Games in New York in 1994 and is still involved.	New York; Gay Games;
12040	Also an active member of Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and remembers the period of the inclusion of "lesbian" into the name and Cath Phillips as President.	Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras; Cath Phillips;
12125	Shared a house with Cath Phillips. Aware of gender politics at Mardi Gras. Remembers Jane Becker. Involvement of the community in the workshop and mardi gras.	Cath Phillips; Jane Becker; Workshop;
12620	Bev Lange was an important President for Mardi Gras with an extensive Festival. Doesn't feel connected to Mardi Gras.	Bev Lange; Mardi Gras;
12830	Since 1994 her volunteer work is with the Gay Games. She was a volunteer for the cycling for the triathlon. Was on the Board of Gay Games for three years. In 2010 went to Cologne and was then burned out. Resigned from the Board, remains as a volunteer.	AA; Rainbow Recovery Room; Gay Games; Cologne;
13015	Also involved with Team Sydney. There has been a change with Alan Johnston. Kate put together a proposal in 2014 to host the Gay Games in Sydney which was presented at the 2016 AGM of the Gay Games. She is a Team Sydney delegate to the Federation of Gay Games and is involved with reviewing the bids to host the Gay Games in 2022 for the Board of the Gay Games.	Team Sydney; Alan Johnston; Gay Games;