

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Gary Stocks

Interviewer: John Witte

Date: 19 February 2012

Location of interview: Glen Street, Marrickville

Reason for interview: Gay publishing

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Keywords
TAPE 1		
0000	Born in Launceston, Tasmania in 1956, the youngest of seven children.	Launceston;
0127	His parents were not strict and he could do what he wanted within reason.	
0150	His father was a wood machinist and worked at Gunns (the old Gunns). He was keen on sport.	Gunns;
0310	Gary was the last of the baby boomer children in his neighbourhood of East Launceston. His mum went to work as a party organiser.	East Launceston;
0356	He went to public schools. High School was tough for him. The intake area of his school took in a wide range of socio-economic groups.	
0523	He knew he was different and was attracted to males in class and easily joined with the girls social groups. About four of his male friends were possibly gay.	
0622	Sex was never discussed win the family. Some family members said they knew he was gay.	
0814	It was difficult in Launceston meeting other gays. He came out to his parents after he had travelled to the UK. His father was accepting, but his sexuality was never a point of conversation.	
0937	He left school and got a job in a local bank, the Launceston Local Bank for Savings. The bank manager was gay and lived with his partner.	Launceston Local Bank for Savings;
1100	When he started, when were still expected to resign when they married. When he was there, the first head lady refused to leave. Around 1976-7.	
1210	He saved and decided to go the UK.	
1325	Female friends who recognised he was gay, urged him to leave Launceston and experience something different.	Launceston;
1420	Air fares had come down in that period.	
1600	At first he travelled around Europe in tourist groups, then launched out on his own. This brought him out of himself and to engage more openly with people.	
1912	He made an overland trip through Iran, Afghanistan and India. This had a big impact on his life and he continued travelling to Egypt, Sri Lanka.	

2009	In Sir Lanka he met a man he became infatuated with and he visited him three times. He talks about the political situation in Sir Lanka at the time.	
2130	He kept in contact with this man, but regrets not bringing him out to Australia. The relationship was important.	
2500	Gary talks about why he wanted to travel while he was still young.	
2605	He talks about his coming out to his parents through a letter to his mum.	
2839	He says he was never close to his father and never discussed sex with his parents.	
3007	He studied hospitality when in London and then worked in hospitality in Hotels in Tasmania when he got back. He took on Supervisory roles. The hotels were a chain called "Four Seasons". He worked in Queenstown and moved around as a trouble shooter to improve customer service and doing administration jobs. Fly-Drive had started and that clientele had higher customer service expectations.	London; Four Seasons Hotels; Queenstown;
3243	In Queenstown, he learned about rural and regional Australia and how to live as a gay man in the environment. There are strict boundaries for having sex with men who are not gay.	Queenstown; Rural;
3414	He moved to East Coast Tasmania, Hobart, then Gladstone Queensland. His job was "baby sitting" a recently purchased hotel and setting it up, including firing some of the old workforce, before the new managers took up.	Hobart; Gladstone;
3700	Gary then worked as a Food and Beverage Manager of a hotel in Darwin. There was local gay scene there, and there was lots of dope, alcohol and partying. He put on weight.	
3845	He decided to travel again and began losing weight and then came back to Darwin for a different hotel chain. He then transferred to Alice Springs. There was a strong lesbian presence there in 1990.	Darwin; Alice Springs;
4015	This marked the end of his travelling period.	
4046	Gary describes the Darwin scene as insular and a gay and straight combination and he socialised with hospitality people.	Darwin;
4238	Alice Springs was the first time he got the benefit of friendships from being in a group of gay men.	Alice Springs;
4359	The Airline Pilots Strike meant he would not be paid, so he left for Townsville. He found it a very insular rural community and he never felt part of the gay scene and he never felt safe. He describes a bashing after an encounter with a customer. His employer backed him up. But being alone made it worse for him.	Airline Pilots Strike; Townsville; Rural; Bashing;
4818	Friends he met in Alice Springs, who now lived in Sydney, invited him down for his first Mardi Gras (the first Kylie Minogue Mardi Gras)	Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi

		Gras; Kylie Minogue;
5000	His friend and he went to the last night at the South Pacific Motor Club at their clubrooms in Alexandria. He describes how a person is injured and party stopped. He found he was attracted to the leather scene.	South Pacific Motor Club; Alexandria;
5244	He went to the Mardi Gras Party and describes the Kylie Minogue gig and after he went to the Laneway Party.	Mardi Gras Party; Kylie Minogue; Laneway Party;
5519	Gary went back to Townsville, but was invited to live with his friend who was called Paul Smith and his partner (not to be confused with his later partner, Paul Smith) in Sydney.	Townsville;
5549	He got involved with the Stronghold Club at the Clock Hotel with his friend. Gary describes the Club as being on the fringes of the leather Scene. He was also involved with the Bears and going to parties. He worked in hospitality.	Stronghold Club; Clock Hotel; Bears;
5641	He describes the aftereffects of too many “microdots” – a strong LSD.	Microdots;
5858	He got out of hospitality and got a job in administration in a timber yard in around 1994. He involved with the Bears and he went to the first meeting held at the Stronghold Bar.	Bears; Stronghold Bar;
5949	The Bears organised “Bear Essentials” and he got involved on Committees. Gary notes the increasing level of professionalism in gay groups – they now had to be incorporated and have money in the bank.	Bear Essentials; Professionalism;
10047	He talks about the last days of Oz Bears – it had turned into a dinner group. They held meetings at South Pacific Motor Club Rooms in Ultimo. Their demise had been affected by the many AIDS deaths among its membership. People also got older and got sick of the infighting in gay organisations.	Oz Bears; South Pacific Motor Club Rooms; Ultimo; AIDS;
10355	He tells the story of how he went to an early Inquisition Party – someone had got him a ticket. He wore jeans and a bar vest. There he met his future partner, the second Paul Smith. He began courting PS.	Inquisition Party; Paul Smith;
10847	Paul had been Bob Hay’s ex-partner and Bob Hay was a well-known academic and involved in CAMP. Paul’s next partner was Greg Metcalfe. Paul and Gary lived together for 15 years in Camperdown. At the time Gary had met him, Paul was working for Media Monitors. Paul was HIV+. Gary was still working at North Narrabeen.	Bob Hay; CAMP; Paul Smith; Greg Metcalfe; Camperdown; North Narrabeen; HIV;
011457	Paul leaves Media Monitors.	Media Monitors;
011536	Gary describes the social group of Greg’s exs – “The ex wives/husbands of Greg Club” who met and all were on friendly terms.	
011619	After Media Monitors, Paul worked for Jochen Holzrichter doing Market Research.	Jochen Holzrichter;

011630	Paul suggested Gary take up a job at the Star as a part time accountant in 2000.	Sydney Star Observer;
011658	Marcus O'Donnell was the editor. The job was more hectic and more people involved. Only 2 computers that did emails. Art work had to be shot on cameras to be published. SSO was 120 pages.	Marcus O'Donnell; Publishing;
011730	Describes the accounting system at the Star and what he did to sort out the accounts. But because he was from outside their gay scene he was viewed with suspicion. David Mills worked there. Gary still works at the Star.	David Mills;
011933	Gary describes how the Star operates. Paul had been the second editor of the Star. He, Bob Hay and John Wishart, Richard Turner, Tony Cooper had bought the Star from Michael Glynn. Paul had been Michael (Glynn's) first employee. Paul had been a printer. They may never have paid Michael Glynn. They then on sold the Star to Danny Vadaz in Melbourne (Bluestone Media). Paul had left the Star.	Bob Hay; John Wishart; Richard Turner; Tony Cooper; Paul Smith; Michael Glynn; Danny Vadaz; Bluestone Media;
012244	Paul had picked up mention of the unknown disease from the wire services and John Marsden had been bringing back mentions as well, when he came back from the US.	HIV; John Marsden;
012342	They could not run a Melbourne-Sydney office. (There is some confusion about the chronology of who owned the Star and when.) Jim Jenkins started up with a number of people and started up a shelf company called Cobyork and called for people to buy shares. They aimed to raise \$11,500 to buy Sydney Star Observer in 1987. In 1988 they had the money. It was also called Sydney Gay and Lesbian Community Publishing and this owns the Star. It has 490 shareholders. The paper is now called Star Observer and is published in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. It's online presence is starobserver.com.au.	Jim Jenkins; Cobyork Ltd; Sydney Star Observer; Sydney Gay and Lesbian Community Publishing;
012636	It is managed by a voluntary Board. When he first started the Boards were very political. The minutes document these discussions. If the Star published something the Board did not like, "they did not hold back in sending complaints in". One complaint is 13 pages long.	Sydney Gay and Lesbian Community Publishing Board;
012817	The editor was not allowed to editorialise without the Board's permission. The Boards were concerned about the politics rather than the health of the company.	Editor;
012946	What were the politics? For example, "have you written enough about this particular item?" What items? Board member agendas, rather community politics.	
013118	Gary thinks the correspondence between Richard Cobden and Larry Galbraith, who was the editor were indicative of the period.	Richard Cobden; Larry Galbraith;

013132	He describes what he saw were the other pressures that were applied to the editor – the community, the journalists etc.	
013256	When Marcus O'Donnell was the editor he made the decision to report the news. During the John Marsden Court Cases, there was a strong push, when Jane Marsden was Chair of the board, to defend John. Marcus was concerned for the paper not to be seen taking sides and stood his ground.	Marcus O'Donnell; John Marsden; Jane Marsden;
013558	It still goes on with the current editor, Scott Abrahams.	Scott Abrahams;
013639	Gary talks about the agreement with sponsorships (like Mardi Gras) that the Star reserves the right to comment on the organisation and any partners.	Mardi Gras;
013800	Gary describe the structure of the organisation – the voluntary Board, an office in Melbourne, the editor is in Melbourne, as is the sub editor, a sales rep in Melbourne, a journalist in Brisbane, a sales consultant in Brisbane, a sales department in Sydney, and a couple of editorial people in Sydney. As well as the administration in Sydney. This is where Gary works. The CEO is also in Sydney. There is a Melbourne based Director, seven Sydney based directors, and advertising for a Queensland based Director. The Directors need to have business skills that the Board needs and is responsible to the shareholders for the company's wellbeing. They are responsible for hiring the management and management reports to the Board of Directors. The CEO is on the Board ex-officio. (Previously this was the editor).	Sydney Gay and Lesbian Community Publishing Board; Directors; Chief Executive Officer;
014040	Talks about the business environment for print media and the move to electronic media.	Digital media;
014110	The Star is rare in that it is community owned.	
TAPE 2		
0000	Shareholders do not get a dividend. The Board is charged with making that business of providing community news to the community, happen.	Shareholders;
0040	There is currently more interaction with readers online than in print. The web is a daily media, with Facebook updates hourly, while the paper is weekly.	Facebook;
0201	Competition. DNA is not competition. Different style. Monthly with some news and aimed at gay men and the younger readership. Evolution Publishing (of Sx) is a privately owned company. Publishes gay and lesbian titles across Australia is entertainment based. They have continued on after the Satellite debacle when they bought Sx from Satellite. They are aggressive competitors on price.	DNA; Sx; Evolution Publishing; Satellite;
0500	<i>Same Same</i> is a purely online publication. They have a community which you sign up to. The Star is a news website and you don't have to sign up. They are supported by a crew called In The Mix. (Big music company). So <i>Same Same</i> is a	Same Same; Star Observer; The Mix;

	part of a group of websites. Sx are supported by outside sources if they are short. The <i>Star Observer</i> relies solely on its advertising revenue.	
0635	<i>Cherie</i> is part of the Evolution group. LOTL is run by a separate company. All the publications survive – just.	Cherie; Evolution Publishing; LOTL;
0732	<i>The Star Observer</i> has expanded to Brisbane and now covers the east coast. More national gay news.	Star Observer;
0758	<i>The Star Observer</i> was a sponsor for Midsummer in Melbourne for the first time this year. Readers are interested to see what is happening in other states, in rural areas.	Midsummer; Melbourne; Rural;
0845	Gary talks about the economics of web vs printed page. The costs of printing, the different markets or groupings on the web vs a printed publication. You have to work to a range of groups in print. Photos taken at social events are the second biggest web generator, but news is still number one. The interaction through Facebook onto the web site is very important.	World Wide Web; Facebook;
1025	They have their own Facebook page. There are 5,000 (friends). The posts go onto the website. The photos are posted on Facebook and they Friend <i>the Star</i> on Facebook and the stories are sent out to them. Community groups will alert their members of a story and that generates traffic. Web traffic has grown exponentially. But the revenue from advertising is not being generated at a sustainable amount. Gary notes an increase in revenue from major advertisers this year.	Facebook;
1317	The Board had made a decision to diversify the source of advertising revenue some time ago and not be reliant on one source. Advertising from community groups and government agencies like ACON is tight. Entertainment venues revenue can be susceptible to stories written about them. This policy has meant that the <i>Star Observer</i> has not been influenced by advertisers.	Advertising; ACON;
1600	Overseas trends. Gary notes many are advertorial oriented. Spanish examples, show that if you didn't advertise, you weren't mentioned in the listings. Tend to be about dinner and entertainment and not much about lesbian and gay issues in society.	
1749	The news items at the front of the <i>Star Observer</i> , is the crux of the paper. Also notes the speed of news which could be out of date by the time the paper hits the streets and the increase in coverage of gay issues in the straight media.	
2014	Trends in publishing. Books and papers are being replaced by e Readers and Kindles. But people read a weekend paper. So the trend for the <i>Star</i> looks like daily news online, and once a week a printed paper which summarises and has a couple of unpublished stories.	E Readers; Kindles;

2300	Gary speaks about the lesbian/gay dynamic. Shared issues – marriage and parenting, health and age rights. The editor in Melbourne is a woman and is having a positive effect on the writing in the paper. Talks about how he sees lesbian news and issues.	Lesbian, gay dynamic;
2748	Profile of the readership of the Star. On Facebook, the readership is much younger than expected and there are lot of women. There is a concern at the paper greater coverage for women.	
3006	Stories are brief and that is what people want. You will soon have the opportunity to go online to read the longer version.	
3025	There is one woman on the board and the first intersex person. It is difficult to get women on the board. The board has a wide range of professions, a solicitor, a manager of a Credit Union, a Human Resources Manager, someone from a university.	Intersex person;
3253	The AGMs. Attendance of shareholders is poor.	AGM;
3520	The Constitution has been changed so shareholders do not receive a dividend and so the SO is a not-for-profit company.	Shareholders; Not for Profit;
3600	Hopes to digitise the SO.	