

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Kevin Hardwick

Interviewer: John Witte

Date: 9th October 2011

Location of interview: Benledi, Glebe

Reason for interview: Gay Activism

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Keywords
00000	Born in Sydney in 1948, raised in Rhodes. Father a plumber, died in an industrial accident when he was 4 yrs old. Mother a housewife. Has two older brothers.	Family
00110	Compensation from the accident helped keep the family afloat. Mother worked in a canteen. It was difficult.	
00140	Schooling – Concord West Public School; Homebush Boys High School until 15 yrs old. Hated school, didn't do anything. Like in a coma, still suffering from the death of his father – they never spoke about it, so grief wasn't handled well.	Concord West Public School Homebush Boys High School
00300	No idea what to do. But answered an ad for a hairdressing apprentice in Double Bay – and got the job.	Hairdressing Double Bay
00330	Always aware of sexuality – from an early age. Lots of crushes through school, but nothing acted upon.	
00410	Half the staff at the salon were gay. Ritzy place, lots of famous clients went there. Would go to photo shoots, worked at times at Channel 7 to help the senior hairdresser. Felt very comfortable in his sexuality.	
00540	One of the hairdressers became Dusty Springfield's personal hairdresser.	
00720	Some of the hairdressers worked in Capriccios, or for Les Girls.	Capriccios Les Girls
00815	Social life: still secretive. Went to first camp party with colleagues from the salon. It was terrific, in a private residence in Summer Hill. Everyone was camp. Then discovered Chez Ivy – the first gay bar he went to and where he got picked up. Didn't know what to expect. Used to wear white jeans and orange crepe body shirt. Fascinated by the look of Ivy. Admired her hairdo. Also went to Purple Onion, Les Girls. All good fun.	Chez Ivy Purple Onion Les Girls
01245	Went to see one of the hairdressers in drag in Les Girls. He was fabulous as a drag queen. Helped him get his costume on.	
01330	His mother outed him. He had a girlfriend at the time and wanted to explain his sexuality to her. Decided to do it through a letter, but his mother found the letter. She freaked out. Told everyone. Older brother and wife wiped him out of their lives. Never had a good relationship with his mother.	Family
01500	Wanted to be loved by family. Heard that a friend was seeing Dr Ross Chambers and he was sending people for aversion therapy. So tried to become straight (19 yrs old). Taken to Prince	Aversion therapy Prince Henry Hospital

	<p>Henry Hospital (under McConaghy). In the mornings, taken to a room with a slide projector, electrodes all over his body and connected to his penis through a condom to assess arousal level. Then shown slides, revolting, asked which ones turned him on. None of them. Too sleazy. Sometimes given an electric shock, even though not aroused.</p> <p>In the afternoon, given an injection, same slides but these made him physically sick. Felt permanently ill.</p> <p>Did that for a week. Left feeling completely destroyed, empty. Attempted suicide. Woke up in hospital. Caritas at Darlinghurst.</p>	Ross Chambers
02000	<p>The treatment left him feeling worthless, dirty, disgusting. Also felt naive because he had so little experience so didn't know anything from the questions they'd ask.</p> <p>Did go off men, but only for a little while.</p>	
02110	<p>Had a mental breakdown. Spent time in St John of God Hospital in Burwood. Given anti-depressants, electric shock therapy, the truth drug. But never asked questions about his life, family, the aversion therapy.</p> <p>While there, a friend died by suicide, his mother got run over by a car and died, sister-in-law abused him on the phone.</p> <p>Went from bad to worse, including self-harm.</p>	<p>St John of God Hospital</p> <p>Electric shock therapy</p>
02335	<p>Left the hospital for a half-way house. Nearly 21 yrs old – threw away all the drugs, and tried to live his life. And soon after turning 21, he met the partner he as been with for 42 years.</p> <p>Still suffers from depression.</p>	
02500	<p>After left Double Bay apprenticeship, was in hospital for about a year. Friends were scared to get involved with the health system. Middle brother supported him.</p>	
02610	<p>Met his partner through another patient at the hospital.</p>	
02710	<p>Next job was as a gardener. Worked at Centennial Park. Then rented a farm in Silverdale near Warragamba.</p>	Gardening
02820	<p>At 22, got involved in Gay Lib at Glebe. Saw Dennis Altman on TV, got his book and was inspired to become part of the movement. Went to a few meetings on Wednesdays (1972-73). First demo was against the ABC for canning a show about homosexuality. David McDiarmid was arrested.</p>	<p>Dennis Altman</p> <p>Gay Liberation</p> <p>Glebe</p> <p>ABC</p> <p>David McDiarmid</p>
03120	<p>Went to Gay Lib meetings alone. Very intense there. Too intimidated by the university types so didn't say much.</p> <p>Joining the May Day March was fun and promoted the cause. They didn't want them there. Great response from the crowds.</p>	
03415	<p>At the ABC demo: They were asking for a meeting with Simla(?). Wouldn't let them in the door. David had a sign that said 'Fucked over not fucked up' and this was why he got arrested.</p>	ABC demonstration
03640	<p>Was getting more confident. Had more friends and his partner. Would write letters to politicians about law reform. After first Mardi Gras, phoned politician.</p>	Activism

	<p>It was difficult to be more active as partner worked in a Catholic school and could be sacked if he was outed. So had to be careful.</p> <p>Was involved in other activism: Vietnam moratorium, Springbok Tour.</p>	Vietnam moratorium, Springbok Tour
03945	<p>At 16-17, would listen to speakers in the Domain. Could relate to their ideas. Encouraged to get involved in demos/activism.</p> <p>At the Springbok's demo in Bondi, a cop marched towards them, feared arrest, but he was the boyfriend of one of the demonstrators and just came up to say hello.</p>	Activism
04220	<p>Had a nursery in St Mary's for 7 years, then freelance landscaping and gardening. Reasonably successful.</p> <p>Had to stop at 50, because of chronic pain problems.</p>	Gardening business
04350	<p>HIV/AIDS: First heard about it on the ABC. It was frightening, thought all gay people were going to get it. Would be sent to an island, or exterminated. Freaked out.</p> <p>A neighbour kept leaving notes on their property that they had AIDS. Became paranoid.</p> <p>Then met people in CSN (Community Service Network/Ankali) helping people dying from AIDS and wanted to get involved. Set up a group in the Blue Mountains, and a PLWHA drop-in centre in Katoomba. Great support from council.</p> <p>Emotionally charged place. Helped at the centres, but found it very difficult.</p> <p>Cared for a guy called Bill in the mountains. Clear he was dying. He died while he was giving him a shave.</p> <p>They did have a grief counsellor for the CSN volunteers.</p> <p>Completely burned out so had a break from it all.</p>	<p>HIV/AIDS</p> <p>CSN</p> <p>Ankali</p> <p>PLWHA</p> <p>Katoomba</p> <p>Blue Mountains</p>
05300	<p>What next:</p> <p>Pink Mountains website started for LGBTIQ. He volunteered to take it on. Enjoyed it. It's a What's On site, with some activism events, e.g. marriage equality rally, annual IDAHOBIT event.</p> <p>They held a Forum on homophobia – so gay so what – at council chambers. How it affects people, how internalized, produced a report out of it. Promoted through the Pink Mountains newsletter.</p> <p>Next will be doing a Gay Men's Group (similar to MAG).</p> <p>Still have the Three Sisters' Social Group in the mountains as well – they put on a ball/dance and monthly dinners. They started going to the balls about 25 years ago.</p>	<p>Pink Mountains</p> <p>Gay Men's Group</p> <p>Three Sisters' Social Group</p> <p>activism</p>
10200	<p>The Gay Men's Group is still informal. Wants to make it more of an activism group. Interested in what is happening to LGBTIQ folk in aged care.</p>	
10345	<p>Got a lot out of involvement in gay movement – personal self-worth, coming to terms with his treatments at 19. Still believes in making a better world through equality.</p>	