

Pride History Group Oral History Interview with Kerry Bashford

Interviewer: John Witte

Date: 4 July 2014

Location of interview: Mayfield West, Newcastle

Reason for interview: Gay Activism

Restrictions: None



Time	Summary	Keywords
00:00 – 00:30	Kerry was born in 1963 and grew up in Wallsend NSW	Wallsend
00:30 – 01:10	Both parents worked on the railways.	
01:10 – 02:25	Growing up in Wallsend was pleasant. His parents were Seventh Day Adventists, and he went to a Seventh Day Adventist School. Parents were fairly permissive and had progressive ideas.	Wallsend; Seventh Day Adventists;
02:25 – 3:20	The school was a small private school. Until the middle of High School, he was bullied or teased to a certain extent. Kerry became School Captain. He says he grew up and accepted the responsibilities that were given him.	
3:20 – 4:15	He was conscious at 11 Or 12 years that he was gay. It was not accepted by the culture he was part of.	
4:15 – 06:30	His religious background, the gay sub-culture and political movements were all marginal and he felt very much at home. Alcohol, cigarettes, drugs was a shock. The politics of his family his organisational skills from being a member of a church were useful.	
06:30 – 09:40	During his teenage years as a randy little teenager, he got a lot of positive feedback from men he was meeting. Days he was supposed to be in the library, he was hanging out at the beats. He found the old carriages with compartments travelling between Newcastle and the Central Coast were good for cruising and “it is amazing who you could pick up”.	Beats;
09:40 – 11:22	He tried finding mentions of “gay” in books in the library.	
11:22 – 12:20	He discovered “Victim” and watched No 96. He can’t remember seeing anything that made him feel good about himself.	“Victim”; Number 96;
12:20 – 14:50	He was always a writer. Working class peers would think you were a wanker and in religious circles, you are exposing yourself to evil influences. He would write songs with his best friend, and they would perform these in Church at the weekend.	
14:50 – 16:30	Kerry worked on the Railway after school as a storeman at Eveleigh Railway Workshops, Chullora and then to Cardiff loco workshops and Hamilton electrical workshop. Going to	Eveleigh Railway Workshops; Chullora; Cardiff Locomotive workshops;

	Uni would have been becoming a “bludger” in his family’s eyes.	
16:30 – 18:00	Kerry did one year of uni and then got a job for two years and then went to (University of Technology Sydney (UTS) to become a writer.	University of Technology, Sydney
18:00 – 20:20	From 17 – 18 years till about 23 he was active in gay politics. He wrote a letter to the Gay Rights Lobby in Sydney. This led to him organising a rally and a meeting in Newcastle 1982 – 1983. He organised a meeting in the backbar of the Criterion Hotel. He was 18 and had invited the Gay Rights Lobby (GRL), the Gay Liberation Quire and the Order of Perpetual Indulgence.	Gay Rights Lobby (Sydney); Criterion Hotel; Gay Liberation Quire; Order of Perpetual Indulgence;
20:20 – 21:24	Kerry was terrified, because he was aware he did not have some social skills due to religious upbringing and the activists were in their 30s and he was 18.	
21:24 – 22:40	He understood “Gay Rights” but not really understood the Lobby bit – the efforts behind the scenes with politicians.	
22:40 – 28:40	Around this time, he became involved with the Socialist Workers Party/Resistance in Newcastle. He had moved into a household and through people in the house he joined Resistance. It was the adolescence he never had – parties and learning about music. And it was during this time he organised [Newcastle Gay Rights Lobby] (NGRL) activities. He found only a couple of out gay people in the party. He did not have a gay friend his age until he was 21. Organising the Newcastle Gay Rights Lobby he met people – Jasper [Laybutt] (birth name Francene Laybutt) in the back bar of the Gateway while handing out leaflets. There was another group Gay Rap, a discussion group which formed – a gay doctor Peter Hutley.	Socialist Workers Party; Resistance; Newcastle Gay Rights Lobby; Jasper Laybutt; Gay Rap; Dr Peter Hutley;
28:40 – 32:45	Kerry was pretty much the lone person behind the Lobby. His memories of a NGRL a meeting he organised. About 30 people came up from Sydney. The meeting filled up the back bar of the Criterion Hotel. The attendees came into the main bar and the choir sang. Robert French, Max Pearce, Craig Johnston, Robert Johnson, Troughman and Paul van Reyk, Fabian, from the Quire. It became the official foundation of the NGRL. They held another (the second), public meeting at the Tonella Commercial Centre near Marketown in 1983 and 20 people turned up. An NBN news crew burst into the room. Kerry gave a short interview with them, and it was on the nightly news.	Newcastle Gay Rights Lobby; Criterion Hotel; Robert French; Max Pearce; Craig Johnston; Robert Johnson; Paul van Reyk; Fabian; NBN TV;
32:45 – 35:30	The ramifications of the NBN coverage - people were outed to their parents and Kerry turned up for work at the Cardiff Workshops. Most people were supportive or curious. His parents were devastated.	Cardiff workshops;

35:30 – 38:00	In mid 1983 he decided to move to Sydney if he was going to have a life – he had not been meeting anyone and his interest in politics had grown. It hurt not being accepted [here]. They were into drag and partying. He had lesbian friends who were his mentors, and his education was hard line lesbian socialist politics.	Socialist politics;
38:00 – 39:45	He got to Sydney. His first household was in Coogee. People identified themselves by their politics and their sexuality. It changed his life and the life of Jasper Laybutt, his best friend. They were introduced to something outside of socialist politics.	Coogee; Jasper Laybutt;
39:45 – 41:05	He abandoned politics and got more into culture and publishing and writing. People of this period included Robyn Daley (lesbian, Trotskyist S & M). She was very influential and went on to form SOW — Sexually Outrageous Women. At this time there was not a lot of contact between gay men and lesbians.	Robyn Daley; Sexually Outrageous Women;
41:05 – 44:55	His first Mardi Gras parade was around 1983. He had been involved in many gay political collectives through the 1980s such as “Gays Against Racism”, “Pink Ink Collective” but by the end of the decade he was over collectives. He had covered every Mardi Gras for ten years in the 1990s as a critic or commentator. He was saddened that we don’t celebrate Stonewall. [June 28]	Mardi Gras; Gays Against Racism; Pink Ink Collective; Stonewall;
44:55 – 46:30	In 1984, Kerry went to Europe for a year. He came back and injured his hand badly and went on a pension for a few years. He met people studying communication at University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and he was accepted. This changed him – it gave him permission to be a writer. It got him his job at Campaign.	University of Technology, Sydney (UTS); Campaign;
46:30 – 51:45	[The editor] of Campaign was his first job since late 1983. Kerry talks about his collaboration with Jasper Laybutt on Kink. Jasper had met Lisa Salmon aka Talisa Halliday, a charismatic person who attracted people to work on the Wicked Women magazine. There was an emerging sex radical scene. Performances such as Ms Wicked, where women got up on stage to do something transgressive and the most wicked would win. Performers involved, included Groovii Biscuit, Glitter, Trash. The magazine generated performances at the Wicked warehouse in Chippendale. Kink was launched there. Their first party was at Simon Hunt’s (aka Pauline Pantsdown) warehouse just off Oxford Street and they held performances at the Imperial Hotel. There was a Mr Wicked performance which Kerry helped organise.	Jasper Laybutt; Kink; Lisa Salmon; Talisa Halliday; Wicked Women; Ms Wicked; Groovii Biscuit; Glitter; Trash; Wicked Warehouse; Simon Hunt; Imperial Hotel;

51:45 – 53:50	He did three publications with them. Pink Ink (gay and lesbian writers collective he formed at UTS).	
53:50 – 55:35	Two years after that, the fifth anniversary of Wicked. Kerry's work was mainly journalesque – interviews and commentary, Kimberley O'Sullivan's was mainly history. He also wrote "Hellbent" with material from columns he wrote for Star Observer like "Hide and Cheek" and Grass Roots.	Kimberley O'Sullivan; Hellbent; Hide and Cheek; Grass Roots;
55:35 – 57:30	The experience with Wicked Women put him in touch with the queer crowd. Up until then the groups he was in, he did not find spiritual connection with – the gay left, the Bears etc.	Wicked Women; Queer;
57:30 – 58:55	Feminists tried to disrupt the performances. It had an impact on members of Wicked Women.	
58:55 – 1:03:15	Got involved with the Dolphins [Motorcycle Club] but didn't become a fully-fledged member. SPMC opened club rooms in Alexandria [Zetland] near where he was living. Dolphins were a sweet bunch and Jasper was a member. He went on a few runs.	Dolphins; South Pacific Motor Club; Jasper Laybutt;
1:03:15 – 1:05:30	Ozbears began meeting at SPMC. David formed it. He became sick. It was taken over by other people (including Bob Hay). David Coburn and Seamus Hyslop, Geoff Ostling, Julian Farrell formed a group. David and Seamus formed Bear Essentials. The group fell apart then formed Harbour City Bears which was still going in 2014.	OzBears; David Coburn; Seamus Hyslop; Geoff Ostling; Julian Farrell; Bear Essentials; Harbour City Bears;
1:05:30 – 1:08:45	This changed Kerry's life, Bears became his life. Bears came about because people believed they were discriminated against by the physical ideal and gym culture of the time. They attracted men from working class backgrounds.	Bears;
1:08:45 – 1:11:50	Campaign was the last big gay thing he did. He then got a job with NineMSN. The Human Resources person at the time was gay and hired staff from gay media. NineMSN – a joint venture between Channel 9 and Microsoft. Others involved in the site, Bernie Sheehan, Phillippe Cahill, Laurie Zion.	NineMSN; Channel Nine; Microsoft; Bernie Sheehan; Phillippe Cahill; Laurie Zion;
1:11:50 – 1:18:50	1994 – 1996 he was editor of Campaign. He had started writing articles for Star Observer and Campaign and had a relationship with Campaign with Greg Callaghan, the previous editor. Kerry was the counterculture writer. He was chosen as the next editor. Leo Cameron was the editor of Campaign.	Greg Callahan; Leo Cameron;
1:18:50 – 1:22:10	He was a committee member of the Bears, one of the elders. Busy in the last years of Bears. From being the publicist with Wicked Women now he had the opportunity to stage something. When the Bears met at the Beresford, there was a village feel, bit like going to Church. He was part	Bears; Beresford;

	of the clique. He sees Bears as the kids who were bullied in the playground.	
1:22:10 – 1:28:35	First time he remembers talking about AIDS in a telephone conversation with Robert French early 1983. He recalls a National Conference in Canberra in 1983 when it was mentioned, and Michael Hurley was there. Kerry says he had always been a loner with no peers during the 1980s. He can only think of a handful of people who he knew, who died. His lover, Grant Munday, his first boyfriend died in 1994. Grant worked for Plan 8. He feels Grant brought him to the human race, by introducing him to all his friends. The whole gay thing was real. He reflects that a lot of the activists back then were fighting for love but not practising it.	AIDS; Robert French; National Homosexual Conference; Michael Hurley; Grant Munday;
1:28:35 – 1:31:30	His next boyfriend was Nick Stathopoulos. He was then in Bears as a couple. Bears stuff was already happening. Later he realised the Bears weren't his tribe. He has moved back to Newcastle, and it doesn't matter if he fitted in.	Nick Stathopoulos; Bears; Newcastle;
1:31:30 – 1:34:40	The move to NineMSN. He had people who hated him, and he didn't care. He was the gate keeper to the portals NineMSN and Bigpond. His job was to collect up all the best content around the network – news; movies; music; games; travel; lifestyle; health; shopping; sport. He would select what were the stories of the day. He loved the job and was later retrenched but put back on to do weekends. He had moved to Newcastle.	NineMSN; Bigpond; Newcastle;
1:34:40 – 1:41:30	He talked about not knowing what he was doing in his life. He goes back to the 1980s and thinks who was he supposed to be? His first influence was the Gay Rights Lobby, then Jasper, then the Bears. Finding queer. It came to him that he had been going to events and was looking for these people. They are the next generation and have blossomed in Sydney. His concern that ideologically they can be quite vicious. There are areas you just don't want to talk about. He talks about a band he brought to Sydney, Armpit Stench. Punk rock band from Adelaide. His view was that with art you give it a second chance and he felt uncomfortable about censorship. People should argue their case.	Gay Rights Lobby; Jasper Laybutt; Bears; Queer; Armpit Stench;
1:41:30 – 1:42:20	He comments about the level of attack these days in the trans community. He would not try to articulate anything for fear of being stalked or savaged.	Transgender;
1:42:20 – 1:44:20	He remembered when queer came out, older activists were offended by it. It is more cultural than sexual. Working at Campaign queer was a catchier descriptor.	Queer;
1:44:20 – 1:48:27	The queer people that Kerry mentioned earlier included Chris Lego; John Seymour behind Kookie and Stereogamous who is with Paul Mac a recording artist; Ben	Chris Lego; John Seymour; Kookie; Stereogamous; Paul

	Drayton; Dick Savvie; They are DJs and entrepreneurs, promoters. He knows people who go to Bad Dog parties and have religious conversions. Diverse people having a good time. Unlike the Mardi Gras that doesn't offer that diversity.	Mac; Bad Dog Parties;
1:48:27 – 1:48:56	He has been living in Newcastle for ten years and had attempted a few things here, but nothing came of them. He lives his life through Sydney, even though he lives in Newcastle.	Newcastle;