



# **FROM A WHISPER TO A ROAR**

**(FAWTAR)**

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# **FAWTAR      From a Whisper to a Roar      2019-2020**

**Name of Creator:** From a Whisper to a Roar, oral history project

**Extent:** 41 pdf files, 46 mp3 files

**Administrative/Biographical History:** The 'From a Whisper to a Roar' project (2019-2020) collected reminiscences from lesbian, bisexual and transwomen over a period of roughly fifty years – from the time of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, when the focus was on men and the legal fight. At this time there was silence around women's issues and women's voices were rarely heard. Over the intervening years women gradually came out of the shadows. Women's voices grew louder and they have become activists on many levels. The project was co-ordinated by Evelyn Pittman for Opening Doors London and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

**Custodial History:** Deposited with Bishopsgate Institute by Evelyn Pittman (on behalf of Opening Doors London), 4 May 2020.

**Scope and Content:** Forty-one oral histories conducted for the Opening Doors London project 'From a Whisper to a Roar' project of lesbian, bisexual and transwomen's reminiscences over a period of roughly fifty years – from the time of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967 to the modern day, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and co-ordinated by Evelyn Pittman (2019-2020)

**System of Arrangement:**  
No further arrangement required.

**Language/scripts of material:**  
English

**Access conditions:**  
OPEN

**Copying conditions:**  
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**Finding Aids:**  
Copy of handlist available in researcher's area.

**Rules and Conventions:**  
Compiled in compliance with General International Standard Archival Description, ISAD(G), second edition, 2000; National Council on Archives Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names, 1997.

Interviewee Name: Amanda  
Age: 54  
Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman  
Date of Recording: 15 January 2020  
Recording Length: 1 hr 11 mins

Key Issues: Bisexuality. The Female Eunuch. Spare Rib. Adrienne Rich. Compulsory Heterosexuality. Labour Party. Radical Feminism. Rape Crisis. Lesbian Line. Academia.

Summary of Interview: When Amanda was 15 she read the Female Eunuch, and was completely converted to feminism. She began reading things around feminism and lesbianism; she read Adrienne Rich's piece on Compulsory Heterosexuality and became interested in the idea that heterosexuality is so compulsory in society that she herself hadn't even thought beyond it.

Amanda went to the University of Sussex where she immediately joined the Labour Party Society and the radical feminist women's group. Joining the radical feminists really opened her eyes to the world of lesbianism, and she began feeling attracted to other women. She felt pressured by the people around her to come out as a lesbian, so she decided that that is how she would live. In her second year of university she joined and worked for Rape Crisis. She talks of the tensions regarding the identity politics of the group. She also joined Lesbian Line later on when she moved to Sheffield. During her teacher training year, she fell in love with a married man, which she describes as a traumatic experience – she decided to leave and accepted a job up North. She met a woman and began a relationship with her. She talks of becoming comfortable within her sexuality – dating both men and women – and her radical lesbian feminist friends weren't negative towards her about her bisexuality. In her late twenties, she decided that she wanted to have children so began actively seeking men to date. She ended up having two children with one man; she describes the relationship they had as difficult. She never really thought about her sexuality during this time; she did not publicly announce herself as bi.

She talks about how people treat you differently depending upon your relationship; whether or not you are subverting the norm. She talks about her work within Academia and how in recent years it has become much more 'macho'. She thinks that history is really powerful in validating choices and opening up possibilities. She talks about not feeling part of a bisexual community. Amanda thinks that maybe this is because previously she has never really claimed the identity of being bisexual – she has either been lesbian or heterosexual. She talks about current tensions facing the LGBTQ+ and Feminism; specifically, the position of Transgender Rights. For Amanda, she feels like there needs to be space for discussion where both sides can hash out their worries and questions.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/2**

**Amanda Russell**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Amanda Russell

Age: 65

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 21 October 2019

Recording Length: 58 mins

Key Issues: Working class background, psychiatric treatment, Feminism, 70s, 80s, Reclaim the Night marches, Lesbian Discussion Group at Gay's the Word, 1984 obscene publications raid at Gay's the Word, Lesbian Line, Fighting Fund, Lesbian Strength marches, Locations: London, The Gateways club, Essex Road Women's Centre, Gay's the Word bookshop, Hebden Bridge

Summary of Interview: Amanda was born in London but grew up in Essex. She was always attracted to girls, never liked to look feminine. Didn't feel ashamed but knew it might cause problems. Came out to her parents and was taken to the doctor who referred her to a psychiatrist.

Amanda regularly visited London's clubs, and moved there after leaving home at 17. She describes the lesbian / woman-centered club and pub scene in London in late 70s and 80s. Worked as a Harrods kennel hand, and for a

number of retailers and bookshops. Started working at Gay's the Word in the early 80s. Brought in more women-orientated stock – she describes the difficulty of getting hold of gay or lesbian books. Started the Lesbian Discussion Group at Gay's the Word. Describes the 1984 raid of the shop. As Manager of the shop at the time, she was questioned and her flat was searched. After that, moved out of London to Hebden Bridge in the late 80s. Discussed trying to find her place in the women's movements of the time, felt the movement too middle-class and heterosexual. Describes the Reclaim the Night marches and Lesbian Strength marches powerfully. Discusses the importance of women's spaces and events and the lesbian community. Volunteered with CAB and Victim Support. Now involved with Calderdale Friends of Dorothy which supports older LGBT.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/3**

**Angie Bates**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Angie Bates

Age: 63

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 27 June 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 5 mins

Key Issues: Catholic upbringing, Gay's the Word, Lesbian Discussion Group, 80s, Greenham Common, Lesbian Strength March, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, the Women's Movement, The Glass Bar, Girls On Top (Hemel Hempstead), AIDS crisis.

Summary of Interview: Angie had a Catholic upbringing and fell in love with a girl at convent school at about 12. In her mid-twenties she attended an event where she encountered many lesbian women and realised she was a lesbian. She was living with a male partner at the time and, after she came out to him, he was supportive and they continued to live together until she moved out to live with her girlfriend. Discusses her 38 yearlong participation with Gay's the Words Lesbian Discussion Group having taken over running Gay's the Word Lesbian Discussion Group after Amanda Russell

moved to Hebden Bridge. Discusses the value and importance of the group in the past and today.

Also discusses her experiences with Embrace the Base at Greenham Common, Lesbian Strength Marches, and going to Drill Hall with miner's wives. Also involved in a consciousness-raising group as part of the women's movement. Discusses women's bookshops, bars, and cafes, in particular, The Glass Bar, Girls on Top, and Tabby's.

Her girlfriend was a nurse and involved with the Terrence Higgins Trust working with people with AIDS. Word got around to parents at the nursery where Angie worked, and there were calls for her to leave the nursery or her girlfriend. A speaker came in and reassured parents.

Discusses the public perception of AIDS and the fear and misinformation of the time.

Discusses the ways in which AIDS and Section 28 pulled the lesbian and gay community together.

Discusses the personal and general impact of legislative changes, particularly marriage, and societal attitudinal changes.

#### **OPEN**

**FAWTAR/4 Anne Howard**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Anne Howard

Age: 66

Interviewer: Marguerite McLaughlin

Date of Recording: 29 October 2019

Recording Length: 55 mins

Key Issues: Post-war childhood. London. Lesbian. Kenric. Gay's The Word. AIDS Crisis. London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. Loneliness. Feminism. Female Oppression. Was co-chair of The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard for 3-4 years, and spent her time advocating for lesbians, encouraging more women to volunteer and take on leadership roles.

Summary of Interview: Anne grew up in Watford in the 'post-war' years. She was never overtly aware of her sexuality, being neither particularly attracted to boys or girls; she was more interested in rebelling against the 'conventional'.

She became aware of her sexuality after moving to London, finding herself in gay circles, and becoming involved with another woman. Anne became involved with the gay scene after attending a Lesbian Discussion Group at Gay's The Word bookshop and signing up to Kenric's monthly newsletter.

She talks about how during the time she was becoming aware of being a lesbian she was also becoming more politically left-wing. Although she did read Spare Rib and other feminist texts in her twenties, she began to move away from such feminist literature and instead began reading more texts that would support her feelings and political views as a lesbian.

In the mid-1990s Anne started volunteering for The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, in an attempt to become more active in giving back to the community. She had had previous training with the Samaritans, however felt they were lacking with gay and lesbian specialisation; which brought her to The London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard. During her time as co-chair of Switchboard, she began pushing for more women volunteers to join and take on leadership roles.

She talks about her reflections upon the lesbian community at the time she was staffing the phones for Switchboard. What struck her the most was the loneliness, especially amongst older members, of the lesbian community. Due to the difficulty of meeting other lesbian friends/lovers, it was hard for older women to find a community that they were active in; especially those who did not live in big cities. Anne found this difficult, as this loneliness was not something she could easily solve.

Anne goes on to discuss how female oppression and patriarchy is still at the heart of lesbian lives. She says that the gendering of women ultimately makes it harder for non-traditional women [lesbians] to break out of this pattern.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/5**

**Carole Bellfield**

**2020**

Interviewee Name: Carole Bellfield

Age: 69

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 20 January 2020

Recording Length: 1 hr 5 mins

Key Issues: Transgender. Marriage. Being closeted. Coming out. Counselling. The Beaumont Society. Oscillation. Transitioning. Opening Doors London.

Summary of Interview: Carol first felt that she was different at around the age of 11/12. She would wear her sisters' clothes and occasionally go out wearing them, after dark. She didn't tell anybody, and she felt like she was the only person like this; she hadn't read or heard about trans people anywhere else. At around 17/18 she began to become aware of other people going through the same experiences as her; spotting things in the press, as well as reading books. She talks about the lack of vocabulary back then; she did not know how to describe herself or her experiences.

Carol got married, and didn't come out to her wife until 12 years into their marriage. Her wife found her female clothes that she would wear when nobody else was around, or when she was in a completely different place with work. She found coming out extremely difficult; describing her experience as something completely beyond her wife's comprehension or imagination. After coming out to her wife, they both started attending a gender counsellor in order to give both of them the support they needed in coming to terms with this.

Carol talks about The Beaumont Society in Norfolk; they published a magazine which Carol found helpful for finding counselling and support groups and so on. These counsellors and support groups helped both Carol and her wife. Her wife found it difficult – not only in trying to understand Carol's identity – but also in struggling with what that meant in terms of her own sexuality.

She talks about how Carol consolidated her persona; and how a number of factors led her to 'oscillate' in terms of her identity. The main reason for choosing oscillation was in order to maintain her immensely important relationship with her wife, who has been a huge support, and help her in accepting the situation. She often dresses androgynously, and talks about how her identity changes depending upon the



circumstances.

Carol talks about the help she and her wife give other people – mainly couples – going through what they went through in terms of coming out and learning how to accept one another. She also talks about her involvement in Opening Doors London as an ambassador. She talks about what this involves; giving examples of training companies, corporations and the general public on LGBTQ+ people, as well as explaining what ODL do.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/6 Chryssy Hunter**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Chryssy Hunter

Age: 57

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 7 October 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 37 mins

Key Issues: Gender. Trans issues. Online groups. Trans scene. Sparkle. Trans Pride. Feminism

Summary of Interview: Chryssy was brought up in conservative Hull and by the age of 13 she was beginning to be different, rather than just thinking differently, but lacked the language to articulate this. In her teens she grew her hair and started buying make up. She and her friend came out as gay to each other.

She left home at 16 to be able to dress as she needed to and go to places like the Silhouette gay bar. She reflects on whether some of the people might have been trans, but everything was framed in terms of sexuality, not gender. She had relationships with boys and then found herself attracted to girls, but always felt herself to be an outsider amongst outsiders.

In the early 80's she 'ran away' to Northern Ireland during the Troubles. She had been back to night school and got a place at Ulster University. It was a very anti-gay place, but she connected with some tough butch dykes and was confident enough to wear make up in time. However, she met a woman there, married and had children. Chryssy didn't feel marriage changed her, but parenthood did. They moved back to England but her wife took the children

back to Ireland when they divorced. This was very difficult in a time before cheap travel and easy communication, never allowing as much contact with the children as she wanted.

All this time she had a sense of searching for something, but not knowing what it was. She went to work in Slovakia. Away from expectations, she became more aware that 'there was a gender thing', though without fully understanding this.

In '99 she went to work in the Gulf where she suddenly had access to good internet connection and found a trans community online, helping her to develop an understanding of herself. The internet was crucial and online shopping for clothes and make up was incredibly important.

She returned to London in 2002 and decided she need to do something. She began to connect with Trans women and talks about the clubs she went to and her growing confidence. She created a shared home where she could live authentically. She went to work abroad again – in Libya and then Pyongyang, discovering that she couldn't 'put the lid back on'. When she came back to London she pursued transition, now in her 40's.

Her political engagement was around visibility at this point, getting involved in Sparkle in Manchester, for example, though, her politics now resonate more with Trans Pride in Brighton. She talks about the pressures trans organisations are under and the Gender Recognition Act review. She also traces the progress of recent legislation and its impact and considers the evolving discourse around gender and the feminist perspective

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/7**

**Diana Souhami**

**2020**

Interviewee Name: Diana Souhami

Age: 79

Interviewer: Margaret McLaughlin

Date of Recording: 3 January 2020

Recording Length: 1 hr 37 mins

Key Issues: Wartime Britain. Judaism. Lesbian. The BBC. Writing. Novels. Butch/Femme. The Gateways. Sex Work. Labels.

Summary of Interview: Diana starts by talking about the changes in society that she's seen throughout her lifetime. She was born into a Jewish family in London in 1940 during the Blitz and she describes this as not being a very relaxing start; she has very vivid memories of the war. She talks about how she could not articulate the whole concept of being a lesbian in her early life. She got a scholarship to the City of London School for Girls, but she never felt like she fitted in there; she used to play truant. She talks about having crushes on teachers and other women, but not really knowing what to do about it. It hadn't occurred to her that she could act on these feelings. Diana dated men which she describes as easy – she got on well with men and boys. She fell in love with a woman, at 23, when she was in her first job, but she physically couldn't do anything about it. She moved to Israel to work and get over her and she finally came out to someone she met there who became a close friend.

Diana found that writing was a way of dealing with things; with insult, homophobia and emotions that she couldn't express. She worked at the BBC. She'd had plays put on the radio, short stories published, book and theatres reviews. And then Pandora Press contacted her asking her to write a book for them; they wanted to publish her. She wrote a biography of the lesbian painter Gluck's, inspired by her famous painting 'YouWe', and she cites this as her big coming out. Not only was this very important to her on a personal level, but her work has been very meaningful to so many other queer women. She has written fourteen books in total; her themes being lesbians and islands.

She talks about her romantic relationships, explaining that she was always looking for the intense love she'd felt for that first woman; but looking back she feels she didn't find it. She would go to the Gateways and pick up women, and have long 'sensible' relationships. She talks about the modern-day problems of labels and how she feels that they limit individuals. She doesn't care about being labelled Jewish or lesbian; to her they are just ways for other people to define you and put you into categories.

**OPEN**

Interviewee Name: Elaine McKenzie

Age: 56

Interviewer: Sandra Brown

Date of Recording: 31 January 2020

Recording Length: 1 hr 5 mins

Key Issues: Lesbian. Media. Lesbian Discussion Group. Glass bar. Racism. Sisterhood. Black lesbian scene.

Summary of Interview: Elaine was brought up in a traditional West Indian home. She understood herself as being different from a very early age and, thanks to her parents' insistence on wide reading, discovered the word lesbian when she was about nine and was able to recognise and explore her identity.

She discovered Time Out with its lesbian and gay section which helped her find events like the Lesbian Discussion Group and, ultimately, a club or event to go to every night of the week. However, she found the scene overwhelmingly white until she eventually discovered private parties where black lesbians were meeting.

Elaine talks about everyone being very political (left) and feminist with a strong sense of sisterhood, with Section 28 bringing lesbians to the fore. Everyone went on marches and sit ins and she hosted meetings in her bar. She ran the Glass Bar in Euston which was a private members club for women where they could relax, not having to share the space with men. Different groups came on particular evenings, so it was successful. She talks about 'the look' at the time of jeans and a check shirt. She talks enthusiastically about the quality of lesbian DJ's making a great club night.

However, she doesn't really feel that she necessarily fits in with the LGBT community as a black woman. People are appreciative of what she has done, as the Glass Bar was iconic, but 'you're in a world where whatever you do as a black person is never really going to be good enough.'

She feels it's generally easier to be out now, but is saddened by the fractures within the community now and lack of sisterhood and

community, citing Lady Phyll as someone who holds the black community together, but speculating what might happen if she was not there. Finally her advice is to make good friends and not sleep with them – they will sustain you through hard times!

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/9 Elizabeth Wilson**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Elizabeth Wilson

Age: 83

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 5 November 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr

Key Issues: Sexism in academia. Gay Liberation. Women's Liberation. Radical Drag. Feminism. Political Lesbianism. Communism.

Summary of Interview: Elizabeth was brought up in Exeter during the Second World War. She talks of her time at The University of Oxford and the sexism she, and the rest of the women there, faced. Elizabeth met her first proper girlfriend at Oxford; they got into the lesbian scene of the 1960s, which she characterizes as the 'Gateways' (arguably the most iconic lesbian bar in London of the late 20th Century).

It wasn't until the beginnings of the Gay Liberation that Elizabeth became very political. She describes the tensions that arose within Gay Liberation, due to the sheer quantity and diversity of those involved. When feminist issues began to arise the majority of the lesbians formed a separate group and began attending Women's Liberation meeting as well. After 1971 many lesbians split even further from Gay Liberation and focused on groups within the Women's Movement; she describes how lesbianism became far more focused on as an issue in the Women's Movement after this. Elizabeth became very involved with the Women's Movement; most prominently through her writings and published work. The two main campaigns she was involved with were the Abortion Campaign and the campaign for Women's Refuges. In addition to her activism and involvement in the Women's Movement, the Communist Party and Gay Liberation, Elizabeth

also taught Cultural Studies at University of North London.

Elizabeth moves onto talking about her experiences in the modern day, and how she thinks attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people have changed. She ends by discussing the current struggles that LGBTQ+ people face around the world, and how there are so many places that as a western lesbian she cannot visit due to persecution; she gives Chechnya and Russia as examples.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/10 Frankie Green**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Frankie Green

Age: 70

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 26 March 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 6 mins

Key Issues: Working Class. London. New Zealand. Colonisation. Gay Liberation Front. Butch/Femme. Women's Liberation. Lesbian. Feminism. Consciousness-raising. Non-monogamy. Squatting. Compulsory Heterosexuality. Women's Liberation Rock Band. Women's Liberation Music Archive. Section 28.

Summary of Interview: Frankie's family emigrated to New Zealand when she was young. Later on she began to feel uncomfortable living in a colonised country; she began to develop a sexual identity and a political mind that took account of indigenous peoples struggles. She became aware of pubs that were known to be 'gay bars', through word of mouth. She met some lesbian and gay people and got involved in their subculture; she experienced queer bashing, stigma, and some of her friends underwent electroconvulsive therapy.

She was drawn back to London due to the 'tradition' of a popular resistance; she was attracted by the Gay Liberation Front and Women's Liberation. She describes the main underlying theme of GLF as validity and visibility and moving from shame to pride. She was part of the women's group who had decided to split

away from the main GLF group, and instead focus on putting lesbianism on the agenda. For Frankie, the move towards Women's Liberation came with a realisation that the oppression of lesbians was coupled with the oppression of all women. It took a while for lesbians to be accepted into the movement and for them to include within their demands for the right for women to define their own sexuality and end the oppression of lesbians. They had meetings, protests, riots, magazines, consciousness-raising, and set up communal living situations (often in squats). At this time, she had relationships that were often not very long lived, due to the ideological issue of monogamy and not wanting to replicate heterosexuality.

She discusses the tensions within the different strands of feminism; whether this be radical feminists, socialist feminists, revolutionary feminists, etc. She talks about how she feels disconnected from many modern-day forms of feminism, which fail to take into account all oppression; i.e. class, race, sexuality, gender identity.

She became involved in the Women's Liberation Rock Band. They wrote songs about their experiences at the time, and performed at Women's Liberation events and demonstrations. After 2000, they decided that this history needed to be recorded, so established the Women's Liberation Music Archive, and included as many musicians/bands/organizers who were active at the time, in order to preserve this history.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/11 Gill Butler**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Gill Butler

Age: 67

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 11 November 2019

Recording Length: 45 mins

Key Issues: Working class background. Political influences: Vietnam War, Communism, International Socialists, Women's Liberation Movement (1971). Activism: National Abortion Campaign, Rights of Women & Lesbian Custody groups, Board of Stonewall (late 80's to 2002),

Trustee of Peter Tatchell Foundation. Qualified as lawyer in 1979, advocated on behalf of lesbian mothers likely to lose their children in custody cases from 1984 to early 90's.

Summary of Interview: Gill was adopted into a working class family and got to university against the expectations of her class and her sex. She had boyfriends, but discovered the delights of women through the Women's Liberation Movement. She became a committed feminist and fought for the rights of women in general and lesbians in particular. She talks about the initial antipathy to lesbians in WLM and about the tensions between the different strands of feminism (culminating in the 10th conference in Birmingham, 1978) as well as the political lesbians, separatists and issues around class.

She speaks about how the law stood in respect of giving custody to lesbian mothers in divorce cases and tells some arresting anecdotes about the behaviour of judges in these cases. These illustrate the underlying attitude that a lesbian was, of necessity, an unfit mother. She speaks of the bravery of lesbian mothers to 'take on' the courts and also mentions how difficult it was for gay men.

She believes attitudes have changed over time and that legislation has sometimes been ahead of this. Whilst the feminist in her revolts at the thought, she thinks the legal recognition given by the Civil Partnership & same-sex legislation has been the most important. It was pivotal in recognizing our relationships. However, she returns to the subject of class as ultimately one of the key issues affecting her life.

Finally she highlights the importance of remembering the struggles of lesbian and gay parents.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/12 Jacky Logan**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Jacky Logan

Age: 60+

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 9 December 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 30 mins



Key Issues: Activism: Social/cultural – same sex dancing DJ, same sex formation team and competitive dancer. Co-founded Pink Jukebox, runs the LGBTQ inclusive nights at the Rivoli ballroom. Resisting the impact of Section 28 in the library service.

Summary of Interview: Jacky came out at the age of 30 in 1985. One of the early actions she became involved in was resisting the impact of Section 28 on the library service in which she worked: rejecting the 'under the counter' policy around Gay newspapers and trying to keep up the stocks of books from gay authors. She discovered same sex dancing through Ralph Schiller's classes in the early '90's, becoming part of Ralph's Pink Dancers formation team in 1992, who have done much to promote same sex dancing and increase visibility.

She already had some experience as a DJ and was asked to run an LGBT night at the Rivoli (iconic ballroom dance venue) once a month in 1995. She refused to make it exclusive and said it would be open to all, but the management made it clear that no homophobic attitudes would be tolerated from others attending. Ralph and Jacky started the Pink Jukebox in 1996, a mixed LGBTQ bi-monthly event including tuition and social dancing. Jacky and her partner Mary have been competitive dancers continually for the last 21 years; the longest same sex dance partnership on record. They attended the first Gay Games in 1998 and Jacky recounts some moving experiences from this event.

Jacky feels that social dancing, rather than the competitive element, has perhaps offered the greatest challenge to traditional norms and has opened up dance to greater diversity and accessibility. It has introduced the concept of Leader and Follower which removes the traditional gendered assumption that the man will always lead. More experienced dancers can swap roles within one dance. This initially offered a huge challenge to traditional dancers and competitive judges. Jacky feels this increases accessibility and her philosophy is around using dance to increase visibility, challenge traditional gendered roles and build

confidence in a really welcoming atmosphere, which she has been fostering for well over 20 years.

Jacky received a British Empire Medal in the 2020 New Year's Honours list.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/13 Jamie Wildman**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Jamie Wildman

Age: 69

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 17 June 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 8 mins

Key Issues: Butch lesbian/ gender stereotyping. Stonewall Riots. Activism: Club scene in London: Gateways, Leather/ SM scene. Impact of Section 28. Working with the NHS to improve attitudes towards lesbian and bi women, particularly butch presenting women.

Summary of Interview: Jamie was born in LA and knew from her earliest days that she was different: attracted strongly to girls and enjoyed traditionally male games. She recounts listening to the news of the Stonewall riots and her distress at her mother's homophobic response. She has struggled throughout her life with gender stereotyping from her mother's early efforts to make her conform and her desire to become an actor, though she did take part in feminist theatre in the US.

In the late 70's she came to London and got a job as a bouncer at the Gateways for two years recalling the club in detail. She was steeped in the club scene, working at various other clubs and in the late 80's became involved in the SM scene and the clubs associated with that. She lived in other parts of the country, but came back to London in 1986 where she became more engaged politically through the Section 28 campaign, speaking very powerfully of the big march on Downing Street and the emotions of solidarity and community.

In recent years she has become involved in working with the NHS to change attitudes towards women - straight, lesbian and bi – in terms of really listening to them. It took two years for her to get a diagnosis for ovarian

cancer which was ultimately diagnosed through a chance conversation with a lesbian friend who was a GP. She particularly advocates on behalf of butch presenting women who she believes are not treated with due respect.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/14 Janet Jones**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Janet Jones

Age: 55

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 21 August 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 25 mins

Key Issues: Latex Theatre Group. MESMAC. Sexual health education. Section 28. Community growing/health project. Disabled access in LGBT community. Queer the Pier.

Summary of Interview: Janet recounts how she felt 'different' and felt attracted to other girls but she didn't have the language to articulate what this meant. So from early attractions to girls she moved into an unhealthy relationship with a much older man in Wales. However she grew close to a woman at work and thought that she was bisexual. These feelings grew until eventually she went to a Kenric event in Leeds, fell for a woman and moved to Leeds where she lived for several years meeting other lesbians and having relationships.

She got involved with the Latex Theatre Group working under the auspices of MESMAC (one of the oldest sexual health organisations in the country). They wrote and performed pieces to help educate young people, often based on their own lives. The involvement with the theatre group was a political awakening for her. They performed against the backdrop of Section 28 which had created a climate of fear denying young people access to information and understanding about LGBT life and issues. She found the young people were hungry for information and angry about the lack of opportunity to discuss how they felt.

This was also during the AIDs crisis when accurate information and support was often scarce. Latex travelled to many towns that were very poorly served by any kind of performances,

particularly those with LGBT content and in some very rough places. She also reflects on the difficulty people had of finding a community in these areas far from large cities.

She speaks about attending the very large Section 28 march in Manchester with the support of her mother and sister and listening to the speeches. She was becoming increasingly politicised because Section 28 was impinging in such a personal way as her partner had young children. They had T shirts and banners that said 'We are Not Pretending'. She went on to do a degree in Human Ecology which further developed her political awareness after which she went to work in a community garden project in Bradford. This grew into developing food policy throughout the Bradford area around growing fresh food and healthy eating, often as an intergenerational venture. Whilst there she was diagnosed with MS and became a wheelchair user.

She discusses attitudes to disabled people within the LGBT community and beyond, with the biggest issue being access to LGBT venues, particularly pubs and clubs.

More recently Janet has been involved in 'Queer the Pier', a museum project in Brighton to uncover queer associations with Brighton Pier performers etc. She expresses some frustration about limitations to her activism because of her disability, but has become a 'clicktivist' to carry on the fight!

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/15 Jennifer Wilson**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Jennifer Wilson

Age: 59

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: August 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 10 mins

Key Issues: London Lesbian and Gay Centre, Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign, Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action, Labour, 70s, 80s, Greater London Council, Ken Livingstone, Miners' Strike, Margaret Thatcher, Section 28, Stonewall.

Summary of Interview: Always knew she was a lesbian. Came out at school at 14/15 while living in Australia. School sent a letter home to parents which upset and angered her mother and affected the friends she made at school. At 17 moved to Perth for four years without her parents' permission. Then she moved to the UK around 1980 intending to stay for 9 months, but ended up staying for about 12 years. Worked as a computer programmer.

Around a year and a half after coming to the UK, she joined the board of Islington Voluntary Action Council through a friend of her then partner. Discovered her love of organising and activism, and met many activists through the lesbian and gay community. Discusses the tensions and conflicts of the time, and conversations around intersectionality and inclusivity e.g. around race, disability, bisexuality, gender identities, S&M, and prescriptiveness. Also involved in Labour politics. Discusses issues with prescriptiveness, purity of view and the difficulty of finding consensus in both Labour and LGBT movements.

Discussed the ways in which the Miners' Strike and Section 28 were rallying points for the LGBT community and broke down boundaries between groups. But also the impact of Section 28 on funding, the arts, education, and the profile of lesbian and women activists.

Formed Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA) with Eric Presland. Discusses the Section 28 campaigns, marches, and notable events (e.g. the invasion of the six o'clock news).

Discusses her involvement with the formation of Stonewall and the Iris Trust.

Discusses progress made, and current debates concerning trans rights and inclusion.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/16 Jenny-Anne Bishop**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Jenny-Anne Bishop

Age: 73

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 27 July 2019

Recording Length: 2 hr 28 mins

Key Issues: Trans woman. Catholic upbringing. Married with children. Transvestite. Drag Balls. Beaumont Society. The Wednesday Group(TV/TS). Gender and Identity Clinic. John Randell. Diversity Role Models. Ageing – Trans and Dementia. Trans Advisory Board for Prisons. Unique. Parliamentary Advisory Committee. Diversity Steering Group North Wales Police. LGBT friendly church.

Summary of Interview: Jenny- Anne felt from a very early age that she should have been more like her sister, although she was assigned male at birth. She was brought up in a staunch Catholic family and was taken to a psychologist when she was caught dressing in her mother's clothes. He was quite enlightened, but Jenny- Anne's mother believed it to be wicked so Jenny- Anne was forced into stealing secret moments to be herself. She fell in love with a woman at University and was advised not to tell her and that 'it would all go away' once she was married. This didn't happen but when she told her wife, she took it incredibly well and helped Jenny- Anne with makeup and clothes. They had children and were married for many years during which Jenny- Anne did much to explore her identity, such as attending the Drag Ball scene in London and a move to Manchester with a very focused gay community. She went to the Beaumont society and attended their dinners, but was always searching for local networks and found the Wednesday group (where she met Stephen Whittle) in Manchester a lifeline.

Eventually, as it became more and more apparent that Jenny- Anne would ultimately transition, her wife became depressed and Jenny- Anne bought another house in which to spend some time as herself and to keep this away from the children. She agreed a set of rules with her wife. Jenny- Anne was extremely successful in her career as her male persona, bringing in big contracts to the companies she worked for, but she recounts how the discovery of the real Jenny- Anne ultimately resulted in losing her job many times over, suffering discrimination, prejudice and huge loss of earnings and pension. She feels it was all worth it. She went to the Gender and Identity clinic in

the 1980 but didn't transition for another 28 years. Eventually the relationship with her wife broke down completely and she began on the pathway to transition. She recalls the unexpected, but incredible, sense of joy that surgery brought her. She had by now met her partner Ellen who was a huge support and encouraged her to retire, but she has used her retirement to become involved in a vast number of organization to bring people together and to further the cause of trans understanding and trans rights. She has done a huge amount of work with the police – describing her first tentative steps into this world. She lobbies in parliament as part of the advisory committee, is on the board in several health institutions and has a particular interest in the support for trans people with dementia. She also speaks of the empowering influence of being welcomed into a LGBT friendly church where she now serves as an Elder.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/17 Jill**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Jill

Age: 55

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 23 October 2019

Recording Length: 55 mins

Key Issues: Sexual abuse. Lesbian visibility. Women's spaces. Feminism. Trans rights. Radical activism.

Summary of Interview: Jill speaks of the most significant point in her life being the sexual abuse she suffered as a child from a family member. This sexualized her early in life and she had relationships with boys until her awareness was woken by attending a National Union of Students conference on abuse. Since then she has been passionate about speaking out. She took a break from having relationships which gave her the space to recognise that she was a lesbian and the comfort derived in women only spaces.

She was very involved in student politics, becoming President of the students union at Liverpool, starting a Gay Soc and organising a

big debate on Section 28 which was the point at which she publically came out. She also spoke at the huge Hyde Park Section 28 rally about the importance of an open education for children on sexual matters so they could learn to speak about abuse.

Jill speaks about the scene in Liverpool in the 80's and the current lack of women's spaces which she sees as a great loss for younger lesbians.

She became involved in the Liverpool Anarchists which squatted a large building and turned it into a social centre and began working at a radical bookshop. This is a women's co-op and she explains how they work collectively. Jill has also been involved in a women's holiday centre in Yorkshire which is a not-for-profit cooperative to provide holidays for women and their young children, with special times being made available for women with older boys. She believes it is very important to have women only spaces, whilst not being anti-men.

She is very in favour of trans rights, but has concerns about how those impact on lesbians and feels there is an unhealthy polarisation of the debate around these issues. Trans people and lesbians should be natural allies in opposing gender conformity. She feels there is a lack of positive lesbian role models to support young people who are questioning their identity and that butch lesbians, in particular have been pushed out.

Jill feels attitudes have improved, but legislation hasn't been forward thinking enough to enable people to nominate someone in the next of kin role.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/18 Karen Fisher**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Karen Fisher

Age: 50+

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 23 May 2019

Recording Length: 40 mins

Key Issues: 80s, punk scene, Greenham Common, Embrace the Base, S&M, Chain Reaction, Black Widows, Rebel Dykes, Rebel Dyke Project.



Summary of Interview: Realised she was interested in girls in early secondary school. She had a troubled time as a teenager and left home in Cornwall at 16 and started work. Was squatting, got involved in the punk scene in London, and became aware of feminism and met other lesbians. Eventually she got social housing in Lambeth.

Discusses finding the lesbian community in South London.

Discusses involvement with Embrace the Base at Greenham Common and describes it as a spiritual and political awakening. She lived at Greenham for a year and a half and describes what it was like to live there.

After Greenham she moved to Amsterdam and started a women's band and lived in a women's squat.

Moved back to London and was employed as a motorbike dispatch rider. Started going to Chain Reaction and meeting women and became a member of the Black Widows motorbike gang.

Also a member of the Rebel Dykes.

Discusses tensions between S&M lesbian groups and mainstream LGBT community. Also discusses the ways in which the AIDS crisis brought lesbians and gay men together.

She discusses changes in attitudes, and her current drag king act, writing and music performances.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/19**

**Lisa**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Lisa

Age: 53

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 6 January 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr

Key Issues: Bisexual. Women's Bi network. BiCon. BiPride. Biphobia.

Summary of Interview: Lisa was born in Australia and came to London in her twenties. She was aware of being attracted to both men and women from mid-teen years, but did not know how to articulate this. As a young adult she became more aware of her attraction to

women, but also of the negative reaction to bisexuality from lesbians.

She came from a strongly religious background and was distressed about her sexuality. When she came to London she saw a stall at the 1992 Pride for bisexuals and realised that this described her and she was happy to have found her identity and a community. It was an exciting time with lots of groups like the women's Bi network, meeting every week, with a sense of political excitement around change. She speaks about BiCon – the bisexuality conference which has run annually since 1981, where she got her political education. She describes how it has always been a very supportive community, reaching out in many ways. She speaks warmly of the core of bi activists who have kept this going over several decades.

Lisa quotes the survey, published in 2015 which found people experienced more biphobia from LGBT organisations, than other groups, although she references marked improvements in more recent years. However, there have been stark examples of bi erasure too.

She also talks about the recent BiPride event in London, which was extremely successful, and found it gratifying to see a new group of young activists putting this on.

She is in a long term same-sex relationship and allows assumptions to be made, but would never identify as a lesbian. She has many valued friendships with lesbians, but still feels anxious that it might undermine these friendships to identify as bisexual.

She reflects on an earlier relationships in which she experienced distressing biphobia from a partner with a radical feminist perspective and contrasts this with the incredibly supportive relationship with her wife now. The fear of biphobia has had an impact for most of her life, but she has seen a change in the last five years and has felt a bit more confident.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/20 Lisa Power**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Lisa Power

Age: 55

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 31 July 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 17 mins

Key Issues: Early Pride. Lesbians and feminism. Lesbianline. S&M. Section 28. AIDs. Founding Stonewall UK. 'Thrilling Bits'. Queer Britain Museum.

Summary of Interview: Lisa was fortunate to come out at Lancaster University into what was quite a radical scene at the time in a small community with a lot of solidarity amongst groups not welcome in 'mainstream' society. When she moved to London she identified as a lesbian and feminist, but it was a very fractured community: the women were separating from the men and into many different groups. She was one of the first lesbians to sign up for Switchboard after the women left to set up Lesbianline. Her first pride was 1976, which was already attracting complaints about commercialisation and she recalls the riot at the 1980 Pride.

She speaks about the separatists and the straight women who felt they should be lesbians for purely political reasons and the impassioned debates surrounding S&M at the Lesbian and Gay Centre (drawing parallels with trans debates today). A period of 'polymorphous perversity' with people exploring their sexuality in the early 80's gave way to clearer identification and solidarity with the LGBT community in the face of hostility arising from AIDs and Section 28.

Lisa sets out clearly the political situation of the time – the alliances with the Left and the efforts made towards improving equality, which were largely unsuccessful. She talks about the political landscape of the Thatcher administration and traces the threads leading to the implementation of Section 28. She discusses efforts to drive equality policy and expresses the frustration felt when the prevailing ethos encouraged a level of democracy where peripheral issues could take over the agenda and the main priorities get lost. So when they decided to set up Stonewall UK, they were very clear that it was a 'closed shop' with a clear lobbying purpose and that they would select people for their skills and diversity.

She describes how Stonewall was conceived

around the table in Ian McKellan's house and how the men said, at this very early stage, that it should be 50/50 men and women. She suggested the name Stonewall as it would mean something to the community, but was not well known beyond it. She talks about how people were recruited and also recounts some of the early debates about the age of consent, but also the plethora of other legislation which affected all members of the community, such as employment rights. Lisa also explains how the AIDs crisis added an imperative to the campaign with long term partners being excluded from both medical decisions and funerals. Whilst helping to found Stonewall UK, Lisa and her partner had also set up 'Thrilling Bits' the UK's first lesbian sex toy mail order business and has some great stories about the products and the risky venture of smuggling them in from San Francisco! She moved on from Stonewall to work with HIV organisations and is currently also a trustee of Queer Britain, a new queer museum project as she believes passionately that we need to learn the lessons of the past in tackling the current rise in hate crime against the community and particularly our trans members.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/21 Baroness Liz Barker**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Baroness Liz Barker  
Age: 58  
Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman  
Date of Recording: 15 February 2019  
Recording Length: 48 mins

Key Issues: Religion. Lesbian. Age Concern. Crisis Of Silence. Opening Doors. Ageism. HIV. Politics. House of Lords. Section 28. Adoption and Children Act. Same Sex Marriage. Transphobia.

Summary of Interview: Baroness Barker was born into an ordinary family without very much money. Luckily she was of the generation where you could go to university with grants; so, she and her brother both did. She talks of trying to conform – she had boyfriends. And one day she met a woman (whom she is still with now) and

from that moment on she knew exactly who she was. Her parents were both very religious but she lived her life freely in London.

Liz talks about the politics of being in and out of the closet in certain jobs in London; she ended up in the voluntary sector working for Age Concern – which she says is where a lot of gay people felt they could be comfortable. At Age Concern, she was involved in a report on HIV in older people called the Crisis Of Silence; as much of the HIV awareness campaigns were aimed at younger gay people. This was a way of opening up a conversation about older LGBTQ+ people; they set out to find older gay people and they produced a report called Opening Doors, the first of its kind. She did all this without being out publicly – her friends and colleagues all knew – but it wasn't until the passing of her mother that she felt she could talk about it.

Liz is probably most well-known for her work as a peer in the House of Lords. She talks of how, despite the House of Lords still largely comprising white and privileged men, it really has become more and more diverse since she became a peer in 1999. One of the first pieces of legislations she worked on was trying to repeal Section 28; which of course took several attempts due to the number of very conservative peers. Liz talks of how the most significant bit of legislation that she believes made the most difference was the Adoption and Children Act; that was the first time they beat the Conservatives. Liz says how this broke a connection in the public-mind that said gay people and children shouldn't be together. Liz thinks that it was this that set the scene for overturning Section 28 and enacting civil partnership and same-sex marriage legislation. She talks about what it is like debating in the House of Lords and giving important speeches; especially her emotions surrounding the one she gave for same sex marriage.

She talks about one of the very big issues at the moment is the 'horrible battle' going on between some lesbian feminists and the trans community; she cites it as deeply damaging and very toxic for us all. Liz believes that trans women should be cis women's allies in the fight against sexism and patriarchy. She ends by talking about the learning the LGBTQ+

community has to do; despite the need for a united front against the outside world, discussion of differences is needed.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/22 Maggie Jones**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Maggie Jones

Age: 66

Interviewer: Marguerite Mc Laughlin

Date of Recording: 24 April 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 18 mins

Key Issues: Working Class. Lesbian. Homophobia. WRAF. Nursing. Diva Magazine. WimWim. Brighton Pride. Older Lesbian Network. Opening Doors London. U3A. Racism. Islamophobia. Xenophobia.

Summary of Interview: Maggie grew up in a working-class family in Oxford; she describes the people around her at the time as very homophobic. She first realized she was 'different' at age 15 when all of her female friends had crushes on male celebrities and she didn't. At age 17 she was fully aware of her sexuality; she was so deeply ashamed, due to the society she grew up in. Maggie wanted to get away from home, so at 17 she joined the RAF. In her first week two women were dishonourably discharged for being lesbians; she describes this as another nail in the door of the closet. She ended up being married to a man, for 23 years, due to the worry of people finding out that she was gay.

She started getting qualifications in order to gain some independence; she ended up training as a nurse. She got her degree and divorced her husband. The month after she left her husband she came out to one of the other nurses.

Maggie talks about meeting a local group of lesbians in Swansea, through an advert in Diva Magazine. She started socializing with them, making friends and having affairs. One of the lesbian couples faced a lot of homophobia from the local people, and Maggie began to think that this was no longer a safe place to live; so, she moved to London. She began to feel free, and nobody was homophobic towards her. She joined WimWim (Wimbledon Women) an

apolitical lesbian group of over 400 members, where she met many great women. She talks about the struggles of retiring and being an older LGBT person – facing homophobia from straight older people, or struggling to find other LGBT groups. She gradually found Opening Doors London, and other LGBT groups for older people. She published an article in U3A talking of her experiences of homophobia within the organization; she felt like she needed to take action and speak out for other older LGBTQ+ people who suffered from the same prejudice. This ultimately led to her helping isolated LGBTQ+ people form communities and friendships. Maggie has also given talks for the U3A; she wants to change the outlook of older white British people; educating them on LGBTQ+ issues.

Maggie talks about the importance of being an out and proud gay person; she will no longer be silenced. We cannot be complacent because our rights can so easily be revoked. She also talks about racism, transphobia and ageism within LGBTQ+ communities, citing that there is still a lot of work to do.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/23 Mairi**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Mairi

Age: 59

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 15 July 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 11 mins

Key Issues: Brought up in a lesbian household. Tomboy. Lesbian. Sappho magazine. Loneliness. Sexism in the Medical profession. Feminism. Socialist Feminist Cooperative living. Collective Living. The Gateways. Socialist Feminists. Lesbian Feminists. Radical Separatists. HIV. Civil Partnerships. Marriage.

Summary of Interview: Mairi's mother divorced her father after starting a relationship with another woman. They moved from Canada to the UK and her mother and her mother's partner – Jackie Forster - set up home together, at first in Surrey and then later in London. Mairi

describes her younger self as a tomboy, always wearing trousers and having her hair cut short. She thought the world was an easier, more fun place for boys; and she also liked it when girls liked her. She always liked girls; she first properly fell in love with another woman at the age of 13.

Her mother and Jacky Forster started Sappho – a lesbian magazine – in 1970. Mairi drew the cartoons for Sappho from the ages of 10-12, creating a lesbian couple called Mabel and Mildred. Her family home was used as the Sappho headquarters, so she was constantly around other lesbian women who worked on the magazine. Sappho became a way for lesbian women – who may have been isolated all over the country – to get in touch with one another, allowing them to form friendships and relationships.

She studied medicine at Barts which she found to be the most heterosexist, misogynistic, awful experience; Mairi kept herself in the closet. She talks of how the socialist feminist cooperative household which she lived in at the time, saved her and helped to counteract the dreadfulness of Barts. She was constantly surrounded by talk of socialist and lesbian feminism. Mairi talks of how she frequented The Gateways – sometimes three times a week – so she could talk to, drink with and dance with other lesbians.

Mairi talks about the HIV and AIDS crisis, and the ignorance of the heterosexual doctors towards it. She was a junior doctor at the time, and they were all made to wear protective clothing and face masks so that they wouldn't 'catch' the 'gay disease'. She found the whole thing frustrating, especially when senior doctors and lecturers wouldn't listen to her; obviously being in the LGBTQ+ community she was far more aware of the actualities of HIV and AIDS. She talks about the current strains on the NHS, and the lesbian and age discrimination her mother and her mother's civil partner often face. Mairi talks about how lucky she was to be brought up in such an open and feminist family. She talks of how she never had to come out, she only had to come to terms with herself loving women.

**OPEN**



Interviewee Name: Marguerite McLaughlin  
Age: 68  
Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman  
Date of Recording: 29 September 2019  
Recording Length: 1 hr 12 mins

Key Issues: Stonewall Riots, NY. Street people. Gay Liberation Front. GAA Firehouse. Lesbian Feminist Group. Pride 1974. Global Pride 50. Dyke march.

Summary of Interview: The interview opens with Marguerite's recollections of hearing about the Stonewall Riots aged 17 and as yet unaware of her own lesbian identity. She explores the civil rights climate against which the uprising occurred and the tensions between the mafia, police and the members of the queer community - largely an underclass of 'street people' who frequented the Inn. She discusses the explosion in visibility as people came out of the closet and the big social as well as political scene that flowed from this. She describes how the Gay Liberation Front burst forth with the first Pride march following on its heels. She talks about the focal location of the GAA Firehouse for meetings and social occasions. The first Pride Marguerite attended was 1974, she describes how she directed a lesbian feminist musical – possibly the first ever! Within weeks she had left the US to undertake a Masters degree at Essex University.

At Essex she became involved in student politics, gay rights and feminism, noting the strong link between feminism and lesbian activism. She talks about the impassioned debate and annual decision within the feminist movement to reach a consensus on a 'demand' which would shape the following year's activism. She outlines the reasons for lesbians aligning themselves with the feminist movement rather than with gay men.

She talks about the AIDs crisis breaking and public's reaction to it; she also discusses the impact of Section 28 and the way in which these two issues drew the community together in the face of adversity.

Marguerite returned to New York in 2019 for Global Pride 50 – the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. She reflected on the original impulse in the wake of the riots to not only fight for gay rights, but to work towards an alternative to the status quo – different ways of living. She describes in some detail the celebrations in NY, particularly the dyke march and the strong sense of community and solidarity.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/25 Nettie Pollard**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Nettie Pollard

Age: 70

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 3 December 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 16 mins

Key Issues: Gay Liberation Front. Women's Liberation. The Albany Trust. The Counter Psychiatry Group. Icebreakers. Miss World Demonstration. The Festival of Light. Police. Pride. Age of Consent. Lesbophobia. The Red Lesbian Brigade. Squatting. Stansted 15.

Summary of Interview: Nettie attended her first Gay Liberation Front meeting at Middle Earth in 1971, before she realised that she was attracted to women. She started campaigning and protesting with the Albany Trust's Counter Psychiatry Group; a group who countered the idea that being gay was a sickness. She joined through the outrage that her best friend had been made to feel suicidal due to his sexuality. Their main campaign was to abolish the medicalisation of homosexuality. They formed a service called Icebreakers that LGBTQ+ people could call and talk to other gay people about their problems.

She talks about attending the GLF meetings and how, although there were often more than 500 people in attendance, it felt like one big family. She talks of how GLF supported the Women's Liberation Miss World Demonstration; some of the men dressed in drag and protested outside the Albert Hall, whilst many others protested inside and brought the show to a standstill. A key impetus of the GLF was not only furthering gay rights but also idea of

transforming the whole of society, and having a wider political awareness. Nettie goes on to talk about her involvement in protesting at The Festival of Light (a 'Christian crusade' which was very anti-gay) with GLF and with Women's Liberation.

She talks about her involvement in the women's group and the socials that they had. She talks about the tensions within the women's group; especially regarding trans women. But she illustrates how they were all united no matter what when it came to outside oppression. She also talks about the involvement of LGBTQ+ youth, especially in the Age of Consent campaign.

Nettie goes on to talk about The Red Lesbian Brigade; a group which emerged as a result of Mary Macintosh, Sarah Grimes and Elizabeth Wilson's manifesto. They used to go out and do things like spray painting the London Stock Exchange.

She ends by talking about the revival of the Gay Liberation Front, and the excitement that this has brought. Nettie talks of the excitement in talking about real issues and ideas again with the GLF, and how there are so many pressing issues regarding LGBTQ+ rights around the world. For the GLF, revolution is the only answer.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/26 Nic Humberstone**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Nic Humberstone

Age: 71

Interviewer: Susan Rudy

Date of Recording: 5 May 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 15 mins

Key Issues: Working Class. Lesbian. Feminism. The Female Eunuch. Pensioners Link. Association of Greater London Older Women. Social Housing. Separatist Feminism. Academia. LGBTMedia representation. Not So Lovelies. Ageism.

Summary of Interview: Nic is from a working-class background; she left school at 15 with no qualifications. She first heard of the term 'lesbian' as an insult. In her teens, she began to

go out with older men in order to 'prove' her heterosexuality. She didn't enjoy it and found it very boring – and that was when she realised her attraction to women. She talks of how she first realised there were other people like her through reading the novel 'No, John, No'. She met her first girlfriend at college in Norwich; where she lived with a male school teacher whom she'd met at a commune. They began their relationship and her girlfriend also moved into the teacher's house, until he threw them out. She talks of how around this time feminism was really beginning to 'blow up', so this was very intertwined with her coming out and identifying as a lesbian. Nic thinks that without feminism lesbians would be unable to have the lives they live now without it.

Nic and her girlfriend moved to Coventry to study at Warwick University; she talks of how she really helped create a lesbian and feminist community there. They set up groups and meeting and conferences and really protested against the male centric studies at the university; they used to wear big badges saying 'lesbians ignite'. She lived in a small house with a few other lesbians during her time at Warwick. After she graduated she went on to work in Social Work for a year or so, and then moved to London. She had been seeing a girl who lived in Highbury so she moved in with her. She started working for charities – mainly Pensioners Link. Pensioners Link started off just as charity work but then it became much more political; and her job was to support older people's campaigns and politics. She helped set up a Lesbian Workers Group, feminist groups and so on. She became very involved in challenging ageism due to her work. Following this she went back to university, first to do an MA in Gender Studies, and then to study for a PhD about the lack of LGBTQ+ people in Soap Operas.

She talks about her lesbian theatre group, the Not So Lovelies, who put on shows every year; rehearsing in houses and community spaces and then putting on shows in theatres, pubs and gay bars. She talks about how theatre used to be far more political – especially with lesbian feminist shows.

She ends by talking about her anger towards an increase in ageism in society; talking about the

elderly as if they are a burden.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/27 Ros Hamner**

**2020**

Interviewee Name: Ros Hamner

Age: 69

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 6 January 2020

Recording Length: 1 hr

Key Issues: Domestic violence. Section 28.

Youth work. Lesbian punk. Squatting.

Summary of Interview: Ros was born into a working class family and her father was in the army. When he left the forces they moved to a part of Liverpool where they struggled to fit in. Ros began to realise she was attracted to women at about 14 and began a relationship with a girl she had been to school with when she was 16.

She suffered a very violent attack in her own home by a sister's boyfriend intent on revenge, but its effect upon her was not fully recognised by her family. She left home to live with her girlfriend and became politically involved with the Labour Party.

Ros became a youth worker from her early 20's, she was active around Section 28, as she also felt the impact of this at work, and went to the huge march in Manchester. She and her partner made a close connection with some gay men with whom they went to clubs and pubs to look after each other as they would often be beaten up. There was an ever present sense of underlying violence, but they could be proud about who they were together.

When Ros met her new partner, who was in the music scene, she became the manager of a punk lesbian band called Chaos. It was hard work and there was a dark side with homophobic attacks, but it also presented great opportunities, like the time she met David Bowie through friends.

Ros came to London in the late eighties and went to live in a squat in Islington. She speaks about how they formed a co-operative and how this all worked. She also relates how the women learnt a lot of practical skills, such as plumbing

and electrical works to do them up. She remembers the Lesbian and Gay Centre in Farringdon and talks about the debates around S&M with tensions between feminist theory and private consenting relationships. Ros began further education, ultimately completing her doctorate, always focusing on women's issues. She has recently completed a book that she hopes will be published.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/28 Rosalind Pearson**

**2020**

Interviewee Name: Rosalind Pearson

Age: 69

Interviewer: Susan Rudy

Date of Recording: 17 January 2020

Recording Length: 1 hr 22 mins

Key Issues: Working-class. Socialism. Butch/femme. Lesbian. Women Like Us. Squatting. Lesbian Line. Homophobia. Section 28. London.

Summary of Interview: Rosalind grew up in a socialist working-class household; her father was a trade unionist. She talks of how throughout her school years' boys didn't really feature in her life; she went to all girls' schools. She always had crushes on girls at school. She talks of her first experience of a gay pub in Blackburn before she was out – she was horrified at the butch/femme roleplaying and thought the place was full of men. Once she'd moved away to university she realised that she was a lesbian.

After her MA Rosalind became a campaign research worker for a charity for older people, which led her to start working in television as a researcher. She made two documentaries called Women Like Us and Women Like That; they showed lesbians of all ages talking about their lives. Women Like Us is Rosalind's proudest achievement, mainly due to how much it helped other lesbians.

She joined Lesbian Line in 1980 – an offshoot of Gay Switchboard. She led the first ever Lesbian Strength March with Lesbian Line; she talks of how aggressive police and the public were towards them. She says people forget how

much lesbians were hated back then. She was involved in a lot of marches and protests – advocating for lesbian visibility. Rosalind was also very involved in protesting section 28 – she talks of one big demonstration at the Daily Mail Exhibition.

Rosalind talks about the progress she's seen in attitudes and laws towards LGBTQ+ people and women; however, she warns of a backlash towards LGBTQ+ people, with an increase in hate crimes. She talks about the importance that the word lesbian holds to her and others; because it took such a long time and a big effort to reclaim and make visible, it's important that people keep using it.

She talks about how much joy she gets out of living in London, really making the most of every opportunity. She gives Suffragette tours of London, goes to the theatre, museums, galleries and she still acts. Rosalind talks about the squatting that used to take place in Islington, which she also took part in. She talks about how content and happy she is being alone and living alone; she says there is so much excitement to be had in the world.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/29 Rosie Garland**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Rosie Garland

Age: 59

Interviewer: Marguerite McLaughlin

Date of Recording: 18 December 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 4 mins

Key Issues: Adoption. Writing. The March Violets. Goth. Rape Crisis Collective. Lesbianism. Bisexuality. The Yorkshire Ripper. Spare Rib. Poetry. Rosie Lugosi.

Summary of Interview: By the age of 5 Rosie knew that she was adopted by her parents. She grew up with a sense of being different; not in terms of queerness but everything else. At age 18 she tried so hard to be heterosexual because she knew she wasn't like other people in so many other respects. She started writing very early on as well as reading lots of fiction and sci-fi and this is where she found her solace; she had a very rich imagination.

She moved away from Devon and went to university in Leeds. Within 10 days a man had proposed to her – and she said yes. She realised her mistake fairly soon and broke off the engagement. After she left that relationship she started living as she wanted – she joined The March Violets (a goth band), started wearing and doing what felt right. She stopped trying to be heteronormative and settle down into a life that she didn't actually want. She started seeing women. Rosie says that more recently she's had lesbian and bisexual goths approach her to thank her for being a visible queer woman; she gave them something to aspire to. She was also radicalised by the attitudes towards women underpinning the Yorkshire ripper investigations.

After uni she was sick of England so moved to Sudan to work for the Sudanese Ministry of Education. Whilst she was there she witnessed some of the worst behaviour of Western aid agencies during the famine; Rosie explains that this increased her political understanding dramatically. She went back to Manchester after reading about what was happening there in Spare Rib. She wanted to get involved in political activism – so she joined the Rape Crisis Collective. She also re-joined the goth community.

She talks about her experiences with counselling. Counselling, along with being involved in the Rape Crisis Collective allowed her to realise her past experiences of sexual abuse. Rosie describes this as a major turning point in her life, as after this she was able to have successful relationships, form friendships; she was now more emotionally available in ways that she wasn't before.

Rosie talks about actively sitting down to write poetry. She set up Launch, a weekly night for up and coming female poets. She also got into a band called 'Something Shady' – a lesbian show band who performed at LGBTQ+ events like the Section 28 Celebration. She talks of really finding her community here. She creates her stage character, Rosie Lugosi; who she describes as 'gothing the gay scene and queering the goth scene'. It was something which people really hadn't seen before. She has performed at events like Euro Pride and



Manchester Pride.  
**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/30 Sally Knocker**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Sally Knocker  
Age: 54  
Interviewer: Mandy Hetherton  
Date of Recording: 30 August 2019  
Recording Length: 1 hr 5 mins

Key Issues: Religion, Greenham, Section 28, Lesbian parenthood, older LGBT+ in care, gay marriage.

Summary of Interview: Sally's parents divorced when she was young and she went to boarding school where she had 'pashes' on other girls, but these didn't stop as expected in her teen years. She tried dating, not unsuccessfully, but developed strong feelings for a woman at university in Exeter which was problematic. The woman was a feminist wanting to relate to other women, but not truly wanting a romantic or sexual connection.

She became involved in many political campaigns at uni such as anti-nuclear and anti-apartheid. She was very conflicted about being gay, partly due to very strong religious feelings as a young woman and identified as bisexual at the time. She still considers herself as bisexual, but homo-erotic as she can find men attractive, but her emotional connections are always with women.

During the eighties she was deeply involved in many causes: Greenham Common (where she began to understand women's empowerment), gay rights, animal rights, anti-racism and Section 28. She recalls the aggression on a Section 28 march caused by heavy police tactics, whereas most marches were peaceful. She also remembers the early Pride marches, feeling safe and the solidarity.

In her 30's Sally was longing to have a child, but was unable to become pregnant and her partner had a baby girl. She talks about being 'pioneers' as a lesbian couple in this situation and about being able to parent in a 50/50 way without the gender stereotyped roles. It was hard work and she sometimes felt on the outside as the non

biological parent, but nothing undermined her love for her daughter and they are very close. Currently she works a lot in the care sector for older people. She runs the first Rainbow Café for LGBT+ people affected by dementia and does training around raising awareness of the needs of LGBT+ in the care system. She worries about vulnerable older people, particularly the trans community. Finally she talks about her personal journey from being against marriage as a feminist to going beyond the political to enjoy the equality that this represents with her wife now.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/31 Sarah Savage**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Sarah Savage

Age: 37

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 4 November 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr

Key Issues: Stonewall. Trans Rights. Trans Erasure. Gender Recognition Act. Genderqueer. Genderfluid. Non-binary. Trans Pride. My Transexual Summer. L With The T.

Summary of Interview: Sarah begins by talking about how so often within LGBTQ+ histories trans people – and often trans women of colour – are not mentioned or are purposefully erased. She discusses the involvement of trans people in the Stonewall Riots, and how the modernity of the events gives trans people a more modern history with recordings, photographs and so on. She talks about how there hasn't been a major 'campaign group' for trans right comparable to GLF or similar. Sarah describes how the trans community is far more centralized around smaller community's cohesion and identities, as they haven't been able to rely on large well-funded campaigning groups. Sarah talks about the impact that the internet has had on herself and others in the community, and how being online allowed trans people to make their voices heard and challenge cis-heteronormative ideas of transness.

She goes on to talk about trans and non-binary exclusion at pride events. For Sarah, the

cisgender gay male centric prides are a result of commercialization and gay club culture, which fails to represent the whole LGBTQ+ community. This was one of the factors that led Sarah to become involved with starting the first Trans Pride in Brighton. Due to Brighton Pride being so big, and largely cis, trans women were left in vulnerable situations, often being abused. This led to the creation of a safe space for trans people where they wouldn't be mis-gendered, mis-represented or excluded.

She talks of the struggles that Trans Pride have had with the police and transphobia. From the refusal of licenses in 2013, to the refusal to acknowledge the march as a protest in 2018, Trans Pride have been constantly battling with the police and their failure to understand the trans fight, to ensure their event can go forward. Sarah explains how over the years there has been an opening of arms from Brighton's LGB community, realizing past exclusion and ignorance towards trans people. She talks of how visible allies and visible shows of support is such an important form of activism.

She ends by discussing the current climate for trans people. Sarah talks about how it is a scary time to be trans as there are daily attacks on trans rights by the cis media; and uneducated cis-people in general. She talks about how transphobia is still coded in everyday language and that there is a long way to go. She ends by saying how big change happens slowly, but also reflects on how far that trans community have come, and the positive things that they have achieved.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/32 Sigourney Ennis**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Sigourney Ennis

Age: 59

Interviewer: Sandra Brown

Date of Recording: 25 August 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 30 mins

Key Issues: Religion, relationship abuse, therapy/counselling, race, feminism, women's spaces.

Summary of Interview: Raised in care, mostly in

foster homes, until she went back to live with her mum at 13. However, her mum was not able to care for her so she was often hungry, isolated and 'ran wild on the streets'.

Met her husband when she was 15 and he was 28. While emotionally unavailable, he took care of her and their children well and she was a full-time housewife. Her husband was a Mormon and the church became her family. However, in her mid-twenties she started to feel dissatisfied, and at 28 left her husband. The church pressured her to stay, and her husband refused to let her have her children. However, she decided that she wanted to leave even if she couldn't take her children. It was hard, but she saw them at weekends.

She started working – enjoying freedom for the first time in her life. After a few years became involved with a feminist group in Streatham which she feels changed her life. There were many lesbians involved and they helped her get to know the lesbian scene and get involved with activism. She also became more aware of her identity as a mixed-race person and interested in her culture.

However, she became involved with a man who was emotionally and physically abusive who she was with for four/five years. As a result, she lost touch with the women's group. She eventually separated from him, but decided she no longer wanted to date men.

After a few years, she decided to go back to college and get her GCSEs and A levels. She started working in a pharmacy. After reading Susan Jeffrey's 'Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway', she went into counselling which she found very beneficial both for herself and her relationships with others. Around the same time she started dating women but found it difficult to form a long-term relationship. She re-entered therapy and started reading self-help books. She has since been in a number of relationships with women.

Discusses lesbian bars/cafes (e.g. Candy bar, First Out), Gay's the Word Lesbian discussion group, the current lack of women's spaces, the Black Power Movement, the intersection of her identity as a black/mixed-race woman and her sexuality, and her experiences with racism and homophobia.

## OPEN

FAWTAR/33 Sue O'Sullivan

2020

Interviewee Name: Sue O'Sullivan  
Age: 78  
Interviewer: Susan Rudy  
Date of Recording: 10 January 2020  
Recording Length: 1 hr 17 mins

Key Issues: Women's Liberation Movement, Red Rag, Spare Rib, Sheba Collective, Women's Health Movement, HIV, Lesbian visibility, HOWL.

Summary of Interview: Born in Illinois to a fairly liberal family, Sue met her husband whilst studying in London and had two children. She found parenthood very challenging but her husband was a particularly devoted father. She became involved in the Women's Liberation Movement through a small local group and was part of the first conference at Ruskin College. The movement transformed her world view and set her on a different life path. She began to find herself passionately attracted to other women and, when she eventually had her first relationship with a woman she knew it was 'the point of no return'. Ultimately she left the family home, but maintained extremely close links with her children and former husband that many future girlfriends found difficult to deal with. She became involved in the Red Rag journal started by women in the communist party and then became part of the Spare Rib team. This was an intense and sometimes bruising experience that prepared her for the rest of her political life. Sue was invited to become part of the Sheba Press collective which she found a fabulous experience and particularly enjoyed the 'mixed race' principle upon which it was run where Black and Asian women were in the majority. In the early 90's Sue moved to Australia with her partner at the time and, building on her involvement in the Women's Health Movement group for HIV positive women, she ran courses for nurses there. She discusses how attitudes have improved in some ways, but that there is a long way to go

particularly for lesbian visibility. She is very supportive of trans rights, which places her at odds with some of her old feminist colleagues, but still fears that a lesbian identity is at risk of no longer being recognised.

Sue is currently involved in HOWL (History of Women's Liberation) which is an exciting project to collect the voices of early Women's Liberationists.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/34 Sue Potter**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Sue Potter

Age: 62

Interviewer: Marguerite McLaughlin

Date of Recording: 28 August 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 3 mins

Key Issues: London. Lesbian. Lesbian bars/clubs of London. London Lesbian and Gay Centre. Pride. Drag Queens and Kings. Gay Scene Disappearance. Club and Bar Closures.

Summary of Interview: Sue had her first kiss with a girl when she was around 8 years old, and it was around this time that she realised she liked women. She was a tomboy, but she talks about how everyone was sort of unisex anyway; they were 'sort of skinheads'. She never worried about bullying growing up, and was always sure of herself. She had her first relationship with a woman at age 18, and that lasted for 7 years. Sue has comprehensive recall and talks about all the different LGBTQ+ venues she frequented in London: The Bell, Louise's, The Silver Lady, The Sol's Arms, The Duke of Wellington, Beryl's etc. She thinks that social media has a lot to do with the current lack of LGBTQ+ spaces disappearing and closing down. Sue also highlights the effect that gentrification has had on queer spaces, and how venues have fought and struggled to stay open.

She talks about how she has never really had an issue with being out and proud; for her it comes down to respect. Sue thinks that if you respect good people, then you'll get respect back, and your sexuality becomes almost meaningless. Sue never had problems with coming out to her family or her friends; everyone

was accepting.  
She gives younger lesbians the advice of living your life as full and as happy as you can; and remember to put time into your friendships, because those are the relationships that last the longest.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/35 Sue Sanders**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Sue Sanders

Age: 60+

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 3 May 2019

Recording Length: 2 hr 18 mins

Key Issues: 60s, 70s, 80s, Australia, London, Gateways, women's prisons, criminal justice system, drama/theatre, alcohol use, Greenham Common, Section 28, women's movement, Schools Out, initiating LGBT History Month.

Summary of Interview: Grew up in Putney. She had a difficult time at school but was praised in English, started writing creatively and discovered drama. Her lifelong passion for equal rights showed itself early through her insistence on equal access to students submitting articles to the newspaper she ran at school. Went to New College to study drama and drama teaching. Although she had dated men before, began to realise she was primarily attracted to women.

Worked as a teacher in London, then moved to Australia with her then partner. In Australia, she started working at an approved school, and in women's prisons. She also worked in a Catholic school and organised a performance at a women's prison. Ran the theatre attached to the University of New South Wales and did three radio programs for the Australian broadcasting company. Discovered socialism and feminism. After returning to the UK in the late 70s/80s, she ran the Oval House theatre however she resigned due to experiences of homophobia. Became involved in the UK theatre world again, directed theatre companies, and ran a creative writing course. Squatted in Brixton for over ten years. Trained as a therapist. She was an early driving force in the development of Schools Out,

The Classroom, Outing the Past and the LGBT Advisory Group to the Metropolitan Police. She initiated LGBT history month, She also discusses her work with the police after the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, and the importance of cultural change as well as legal change. Discusses Gateways, accessing and feeling welcome in LGBT spaces, alcohol and smoking in LGBT spaces, theatre/drama, being a lesbian in the women's movement, her alcohol use, women's movements, Greenham Common, section 28 activism and how it pulled the LGBT community together and impacted the arts community, progress and current issues in LGBT rights, and culture/attitudinal changes in the education and criminal justice systems.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/36 Teresa Edmans**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Teresa Edmans

Age: 62

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 15 October 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 17 mins

Key Issues: Self-discovery. Nursing. HIV/AIDS. Lesbian bars and clubs. Lesbian Strength. Feminism. Political organising. Finding and forming community spaces. Gays the Word. Lesbian discussion group. Sure Start. Changing identities and definitions of gender.

Summary of Interview: An early connection to girls during her childhood and teenage years, and confusion about being uninterested in boys. She had a gay female friend in Sixth Form, but this was hard to understand because of lack of representation of gay women in the media. Also her mother is Chinese, and gayness was not recognised in Chinese culture. After thinking about her sexuality, she approached her friend for advice and was introduced to gay and lesbian spaces in London.

In 1980she started nursing and was warned about lesbians at the hospital, making her concerned about how it was looked on. At this time men started nursing and most of them were gay, but for some reason this was more accepted. While at nursing school she began



having relationships, but when she was found out she was threatened with dismissal over concerns that she wouldn't be safe looking after female patients. She argued and was reluctantly allowed to finish her training.

In the early 1980s she continued nursing and started to explore her sexuality and met other lesbians through Gay's the Word. She was introduced her to many pubs and clubs – you could go clubbing somewhere every night of the week in the mid-eighties.

She was involved with the Lesbian Strength marches and speaks about feminism at this time. She nursed during the HIV epidemic and soon became very involved in HIV education. She did counselling at the Lesbian & Gay Centre, founded PACE and her job at Islington was to lead on HIV and AIDS. She tearfully recalls the young men who died and the gay men and lesbians who supported them, often with criticism from other lesbians and recounts the near dismissal of her partner from the Nursery school where she worked because of Teresa's connection with AIDS.

She was a government advisor for the Sure Start Programme; bringing in the lesbian and gay perspective and discusses deprivation, life outcomes, and lesbian and gay parenthood, including the beginnings of adoption for same-sex partners and alternative parenting structures.

Since her retirement she's set up a local Lesbian Tea Group and the Pink Growers Group as opportunities for staying connected, particularly as people age. She has concerns over the fact that there is silence over many of the negative things happening to lesbian and gay people. Wonders if this is because there's nowhere to meet and talk. Finally, Teresa speaks about her mother being Chinese. There was no word for lesbian in Chinese and so had no way of talking about it. She returns to the importance of activism and how a lack of spaces must make it challenging for young people to come out and find themselves now.

**OPEN**

Interviewee Name: Val Harvey  
Age: 75  
Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman  
Date of Recording: 26 June 2019  
Recording Length: 40 mins

Key Issues: Silence around lesbianism.  
Lesbians in nursing. Gateways. AIDs – nursing,  
education, treatment of the dying. The  
Lighthouse. Section 28. Carnation for a Song.

Summary of Interview: 'Everyone should have an Auntie Ethel'- Val begins by telling us about her aunt and the woman she lived with, but how their relationship was never acknowledged. She went to London and trained to be a nurse. She married and speaks of the position of power in which men stood in the 60's. She found herself attracted to a woman but did not fully embrace her lesbian identity until later. She speaks about going to the Gateways and the butch/femme scene of the 60's.

She was a district nurse in the 80's and the first AIDs patient ever attended by a district nurse was on her patch. She began working in health promotion and education about AIDs which was surrounded by ignorance, myths and, above all, a culture of fear and prejudice against gay men. She talks powerfully about the experience of nursing so many young men. She lost 127 men in 10 years of nursing. She speaks of the way she had to find GPs and Funeral Directors who would deal with the patients with compassion. She would not wear a uniform when visiting patients as it was essential that neighbours did not realise that they had an AIDs sufferer in their midst. She speaks about the different attitudes of relatives in a time when long term partners of dying men had no rights to be informed of their partner's condition or treatment. Some partners were excluded. In another case a man who was fearfully closeted for many years was lovingly supported by his sisters who 'always knew'. She also attended patients at the Lighthouse which was a hospice and also delivered education and some alternative therapies. All this played out against an increasingly hostile

political climate where Section 28 was being enacted, which was politicising for the whole community and brought people together in the fight.

She also speaks about a recent experience of performing in Carnation For a Song at the Young Vic and the very positive reaction she received from young people who hadn't realized what had happened and who were grateful for how Val's generation had paved the way for the greater freedoms enjoyed today.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/38 Vito Ward**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Vito Ward

Age: 76

Interviewer: Sandra Brown

Date of Recording: 26 July 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 17 mins

Key Issues: Lesbians in the forces. Pubs and clubs. Lesbian and Gay Centre. Women's groups. Pride. Opening Doors London. Ageism/Older gay community

Summary of Interview: Vito talks about feeling different, but not having the language to explore this and following her peers in dating boys.

She joined the Navy as soon as she could, partly because women were depicted as taking part in adventurous activities which were not available to her.

She began to recognize her feelings towards other women but suppressed them, taking solace in Christianity. However she did meet someone, formed a relationship and became part of an 'inner circle' of lesbians living a very closeted existence within the Navy with much secrecy.

She was very successful in her career and had reached the rank of Petty Officer after ten years when an ex-girlfriend was caught and a search revealed old letters from Vito. She describes powerfully the process of automatic discharge from the service and its consequences.

She describes the pub and club scene of the 60's. The Gateways was more heavily frequented by the army and she favoured the Robin Hood as being a bit more elite. She

recalls how they dressed in a fairly strict butch/femme environment. She also talks in detail about the rough pubs around the docks in Southampton where she had a male nickname. She recalls the Lesbian & Gay centre with its Tea Dances, Sunday brunch and plethora of women's groups and how feminism impacted strongly to empower women. There was a great social life and they even organised holidays and lesbian camping trips. She also remembers the changing atmosphere at Pride over the years, and other things that are the same for young Pride-goers today.

In later years Vito has become an advocate for the older LGBT community, challenging ageism. She became an Ambassador for Opening Doors London, supports the Wandsworth LGBT Forum and has been involved with a project looking at the best kind of provision for older LGBT people in need of care.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/39 Yvonne Taylor**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Yvonne Taylor

Age: 60

Interviewer: Sandra Brown

Date of Recording: 9 December 2019

Recording Length: 2 hrs

Key Issues: Racism. Diversity. Lesbian. Army. MI6. Windrush. Systematic. Women's Centre. Rebel Dykes. Squatting. S&M Dykes. Club Nights. Lesbian Erasure.

Summary of Interview: Yvonne was born in Nottingham in 1959 to Jamaican parents. When she was seven her mother left so her step-father was left to bring up Yvonne and his 5 other children. She learnt very quickly about racism and how to find her way around it; using peoples' ignorance and prejudice against them. Yvonne was aware of her sexuality from about the age of eleven.

After school and college, she decided to join the army as a way of leaving home as well as being attracted by rumours of lesbians. She became the army fencing champion which changed the power dynamics. She became a clerk/PA to some of the officers. She also began working for

MI6, collating information. She found the army difficult in terms of her experimenting with her sexuality; she was quite lonely as many of the white women were dismissive of her. She went to work at the Ministry of Defence in Pall Mall during the time of Windrush; she talks of the racism she experienced whilst there.

After she left the army she moved to Brighton because the woman she was seeing lived there. However, she talks of how she never really fitted in. She talks about the women's centre there that was mainly run by separatist lesbian feminists; who she did not agree with. She moved back to London and set up a club called Systematic, with three other women, at the Women's Centre in Brixton. Systematic became a community club for mainly lesbian women; it had a café, a games room and a club room. Yvonne talks of how Systematic was a godsend for many women of ethnic minorities.

Yvonne talks about Rebel Dykes – a group that had a load of fetish clubs that many other lesbians and feminists did not agree with.

Yvonne DJ'ed for one of their S&M parties at Ovalhouse – many lesbians were outside the venue protesting the event. Yvonne feels that nobody should be told what they can and can't do – as long as it's consensual.. She talks of how many of the Rebel Dykes were far more caring and welcoming than the lesbian feminists at the women's centre.

After Systematic Yvonne worked for Lambeth Council for the single homeless project. She also worked for Homeless Action. After that she got into hospitality and has been in the business for the past twenty years; in bars, clubs, restaurants and cafes. She runs club nights. She talks about how to create a great club night, and she talks about her own experiences of attending clubs as well as running them. She feels diversity is crucial in club spaces; she believes it is a way of educating people about their differences.

She talks about lesbian erasure – even with younger lesbians' ignorance towards lesbian history and the lesbians who came before them.

She says that 'we are being written out of history as we speak 'by our own community. She also talks about the current problems of racism and homophobia that people in the UK

are facing; with things reverting to how they were when she was young. For Yvonne, what really matters is trying to break down divisions.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/40 Lindsay**

**2019**

Interviewee Name: Lindsay

Age: 72

Interviewer: Susan Rudy

Date of Recording: 30 July 2019

Recording Length: 1 hr 55 mins

Key Issues: Religion. Lesbianism. Bisexuality. Racism. Domestic Abuse. Mental Health. Gay Liberation Front. Squats. Women's Liberation. Lesbian Liberation. Transphobia.

Summary of Interview: Lindsay talks of her first crush on a girl at school, and remembers thinking 'I wish I could change into a boy and marry her'. She remembers having close relationships with other girls even at a very young age. She had boyfriends in her later teenage years; this was her way of finding out about sex.

She talks about how she ended up becoming an evangelical Christian at 18, and how this affected her sense of morality. She was very aware of the concept of hell – not just in terms of her sexuality but everything else as well. She first became attached to a girl when she was applying for Cambridge. She knew immediately that she was a lesbian, although she thinks now that she is technically bisexual with a preference for women. The captain of her house was also a lesbian, so she was able to talk to her about it. She went on to Study at Cambridge and met other LGBTQ+ women. She managed to disentangle herself from Christianity during her time at university, however it was difficult for her. After uni she had a big break down and really struggled with her sexuality; so, she thought she should try heterosexuality for a while.

She moved to London and became very politically left-wing. She got involved with the Gay Liberation Front after the women had left, so Lindsay was one of the only lesbians there. She also got involved in Women's Liberation.

Lindsay also talks about living in lesbian communes; both rented and squatted. She was very involved with creating an alternative for women, mainly lesbians, by squatting. They were trying to create an empowerment movement, where women worked together to make a separate, alternative world. Some of the communes and squats became over-run with Lesbian Separatists, and it was at this time Lindsay decided to move out of London and into the countryside; first in Wales, and then in the USA. She travelled across America between women's communes and women's land trusts. When she came back to the UK she eventually got involved again with the voluntary and charity. She became the director of Polari (a campaigning organization for older LGBT people) which she says was the best job of her life.

She ends by saying how inspired she is by the younger generation of women and feminists.

**OPEN**

**FAWTAR/41 Sue Johnson**

**2020**

Interviewee Name: Sue Johnson

Age: 60

Interviewer: Evelyn Pitman

Date of Recording: 6 January 2020

Recording Length: 1 hr 31 mins

Key Issues: Religion. Visibility. Southampton. Lesbian and Gay Awareness. Greenham Common. Section 28. Women's Groups. Sustainable development. Equalities.

Summary of Interview: Sue grew up in Bedfordshire in a loving home and had her first lesbian relationship whilst at school, though did not identify as such. Her girlfriend's family found love notes and they were forbidden further contact, although Sue's father was not so negative. So she followed expectations and had boyfriends, but was quite conflicted, until a friend came out as gay and introduced her to the scene which she had no idea existed. When she went to university in Southampton where she signed up to a Gay Soc' that was shrouded in secrecy. She went on to run the society and was determined to bring it out of the

closet, increasing visibility, at first, by running a weekly gay bookstall. She set up the Pink Soc to secure funding for more social activities and in her final year organised a Lesbian and Gay Awareness week with a wide range of activities. She also speaks of visits to Greenham common and the culture of non-monogamy at the time. Whilst doing her doctorate she began to look beyond the university to become involved with the council, sitting on the Women's Committee and the Lesbian and Gay Committee tackling issues such as tenancy rights in the case of a death in a same sex relationship. A major achievement was raising funds for and organising a city wide Lesbian and Gay Pride week. She was also involved in a large Section 28 march and set up a feminist Women's Group. After university she got involved in a wide range of activism, setting up a women's centre in Southampton and being in the local Oxfam campaign group. She set up a sustainable development consultancy called Earthwise with three other women, She moved to Brighton and met someone with a common interest around environmentalism. This woman was trying to set up a residential home for older lesbians and the plans were far advanced when the political ramifications of the Brighton and Hove merger scuppered them and they changed the plan to make it into an 'intentional community with sustainability at its heart'. She moved into working in equalities which has remained her career ever since, working under successive mayors at the Greater London Authority. She speaks of the attitude survey moving from a low base of acceptance of lesbians and gay men to over 90% of Londoners accepting of same-sex relationships, glad that she had done her part to help bring this around.

**OPEN**