

Project: 'Queer Lives: Barriers from cradle to elderly care - An Oral History'

Respondent: Gordon Milne

Year of Birth: 1961

Age:

Connection to project:

Date of Interview: 17.07.2024

Interviewer: John McCormick

Recording Agreement: Yes

Information & Consent: Yes

Photographic Images: No (Number of:)

Length of Interview: 38.37

Location of Interview: Glasgow

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)

Glasgow's Southside+ Stories



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.35	<i>Where were you born?</i>	
	"Paisley"	00.36
00.37	<i>Where were you brought up and where do you live now?</i>	
	"I was brought up in Paisley and I now live in Glasgow."	0.38-00.53
00.52	<i>Can you tell me if you have come out as being gay and if so when was this?</i>	
	"I came out in my early 30s. It was a succession of people. The first person I told was my closest friend and then maybe four or five months later I told my sister I'm closest to. And then there was an incident that happened in my life where I had a car crash. I nearly lost my life. I fell asleep driving and in that six months I totally readdressed my whole life here. I couldn't continue to live the way I was. I was miserable. I was basically a gay man and I didn't want to be a gay man, so I was miserable. I basically decided this is not the way I want to be. I had already started the process of coming out and then I went through the rest of my family and the last was my mum and dad. And I still maintain that was the hardest thing to do and when I grew into the person I was going to be. I was much happier."	00.53-02.19
02.26	<i>Have you ever faced any barriers to accessing education in your life due to being gay?</i>	
	"No, probably because I was older to come out."	02.33-02.40
02.42	<i>What are your thoughts for the future of educational opportunities for gay people?</i>	
	"I'm not really sure to be honest. It wasn't taught when I was at school but I think it probably should be. It should be brought up because kids are more advanced now and maybe not at primary school I don't think that's relevant although the way it's going I don't know. But yeah I think it should be brought up. I had a period when I knew I was different, that's probably the best way to describe it. But if it had been talked about in school, maybe it would have been a bit different. Maybe I wasn't mature enough but kids are so different now. So yeah I think it should be part of the curriculum."	02.47-03.43
03.44	<i>Have you ever faced any barriers in work places or your career due to being gay?</i>	
	"No, having a career in hospitality and hotels, it's probably one of the easiest industries to work in. And I've worked alongside a load of gay people in my life and even now there's a number of gay people in the hotel industry, so no."	03.56-04.24
04.25	<i>What are your thoughts on the future for gay people in the work place?</i>	
	"That's a difficult one because if you look at the state of the world now and if you want to talk about politics you just need to look at the people who are running countries. This is my opinion, there are a fraction of us that are quite racist now and in that brigade now You've also got people who are racist and the chances are they will also be homophobic."	04.32-06.02

	And if you look at what's happening in America they've started with the abortion thing and then they'll start eroding away women's rights and then it'll be gay rights and then it'll be coloured people's rights and so on and so on. That's how these people operate. I think we're in quite a dangerous place just now. I think we're fortunate in Scotland but a change of government or a wrong government gets in and we could be in trouble I think. I also think that although it's much easier to be gay now, it could change very quickly. You just need to look at other places like Poland where it was fairly progressive, it's now going back the way, certainly it's happened in America in certain states."	
06.16	<i>What was your experience of growing up as a gay person?</i>	
	"I felt I got picked on at school when I was younger and whether that's because there was an element of flamboyant I don't know. But then that sort of changed because I grew quicker than your average kid so by the time I got to secondary school I was the height I am now and they suddenly weren't so quick to pick on me because of my height. So I can't really say I had a terrible experience because of it, that would be a lie but then again I didn't really deal with my own sexuality until much later in life. In my -20s to say my '30s I became a bit of a workaholic because I was gay. Because I didn't want to deal with it, and that was how I dealt with it. I immersed myself in work which was to my advantage. I became a workaholic and did incredibly well. I became a general manager in a hotel by the time I was 25. "	06.21-8.20
08.12	<i>How did people react when you told them you were gay?</i>	
	"It was quite funny actually, my closest friend after a pause he just kind of said, it sort of fits. My sister, she was great and she just said, well we always kind of wondered but we'd never ask you. I did get some negative feedback from my brother-in-law in Canada and it affected me quite badly because my sister moved to Canada when I was in my teens. And once I was started working I was the most frequent visitor to Canada and I went from being the most frequent visitor in my sister's family to not at all. My brother-in-law didn't want me in the house when he found out I was gay. He also prevented me from telling his own children which was quite hard because they didn't understand why I was not coming at all. That totally backfired on him because when his kids did find out years later they were not happy with him at all in fact they were furious that's the best way to describe it. So it caused a rift within his own family and I think he realised it was him that was wrong it wasn't me. It's all been resolved now but it took a long time to get there. It was the opposite when I saw my mum and dad. It was the hardest thing I've ever had to deal with in my life to tell my mum and dad that I was a gay man. I thought my dad might have a problem with it but he was the opposite, but I could see my Mum was physically upset. I had a funny time with my mum and I only remembered this recently, she had said I should've known, you went for the first time to Canada when you were 13, you had some money left and went to the duty free shop to buy some aftershave and what did you buy, Chanel. I've not had many negative reactions to being gay, but any I have had.. I've used as a tool especially when I was putting somebody out the bar and they would say, away you go you big poof, and I'd say is that the best you can do, and they never knew how to deal with it."	08.20-11.47
11.48	<i>Do you think the experience of being accepted as gay has changed over time?</i>	
	"I think it has, I do think it's easier than from what I went through. Then again there's still people today that struggle with it, but I think it's generally much more acceptable to be a gay person in this country and that's just now and I hope it stays like that. I hope in my lifetime it does, but who knows, because it changed so quickly in other places."	11.58-12.31
12.33	<i>Do you think your experience is similar to other gay people?</i>	
	"Yes and no. Most of my own friends have went through the same thing I think they've all had positive experiences that I'm aware of but I am aware of some people being torn apart by it, especially people I've worked with. I worked with someone who left where he was from. He was from Romania where being gay wasn't tolerated, so he left the country and I know that's not an isolated incident. Just like there's a few countries in the world I would not visit for that reason."	12.42-13.23
13.24	<i>Do you believe there's such a thing as an LGBT+ community which implies a coherent group identity based solely on a shared sexual orientation or gender identity?</i>	
	"I think there is. I've never been part of it, that's the way I see it. For some people it's obviously very good. I personally don't need it. The first time I went to Gran Canaria the whole experience of being able to, if you like, just be yourself with your partner and not	13.43-14.35

	even have to think about it. In other words if you wanted to hug and kiss your partner in public, you didn't have to worry about it. Whereas even now, here, it's not really acceptable. I have seen the look of disdain on some people and that's not pleasant."	
14.49	<i>Do you think that all gay people have similar perspectives on gender identity?</i>	
	That's a difficult one to answer because to be honest I can't relate to it and I don't understand it. I'll give you an example, my sister used to belong to a swimming club and there was a women only day. And she said now it's women and trans only day and she says she has a problem with someone who is obviously a man in a swim suit with his bits hanging out using the same changing room he's covered in body hair. And she says that's the experience we have now and it's not correct. And I have to say, I agree with her. It's not something I completely understand and I'm not clued up on it."	14.49-15.47
16.33	<i>What are your thoughts for the current public debates on gender identity?</i>	
	"To be honest, I think it is a bit fucked up, I'm being honest, that's what I think. When I was growing up or even in the hotels that I worked in there was just basically the three. There was a gay man, there was a lesbian and there was bi-sexuals if you like and then there was also transvestites and I've had dealings with them all and I've had no problems with any of them but now it's all kind of muddled and mixed up. One thing I don't agree with in schools is somebody that can identify as a girl because I know from speaking to friends that it's polarising young kids. There's nothing for regular straight boys as my friend said. She said we've got one kid that's identified as a girl and now he's identifying as something else. It's been something different each period. It's a bit muddled and I think they are far too young to be making that decision, that's my slant on it."	16.34-17.56
17.57	<i>What are your hopes for the future for gay people?</i>	
	"I would like everything to be equal for us. I think we are actually almost there but whether or not it will remain I don't know. I mean it's come in leaps and bounds from when I was a kid, I couldn't even think about coming out. I was too frightened whereas I don't think that happens now. We've got the same rights now. We can get married etc. I'd like to think it would remain like that but I'm not so sure and that's just because of what's happening across the world."	18.05-18.48
18.59	<i>How have you socialised as a gay person in your youth?</i>	
	"I didn't go to pubs and clubs when I was younger. I think the first gay bar I was in was probably in my late 20s. My first experience I thought was horrific. I just felt isolated and lonely. I didn't find it a particularly friendly environment, maybe I picked the wrong pub, I probably did. It's sort of changed now with disappearing gay clubs and they're disappearing for the fact it's just not gay people that use them. I don't like the fact it's a safe place for women now, so you go into the Waterloo on a Saturday night and it's a hen night. It's something I just think, have your own place, this is supposed to be our space and I quite like that. It's the way it should be and it puts me off. In saying that I've never been a big pub goer anyway. I never went through that period. Maybe I did when I was younger and first started working in hotels but I've never been an avid pub goer that I wanted to go every week. It's not my thing. I quite like the Waterloo and to be honest I couldn't tell you what's left now. I hate Underworld, I can't stand it. The Gallery is okay but again it's not something I really frequent now. I don't have the use for it now that maybe I had when I was younger. When I do go out I go with my partner and maybe sometimes on my own."	19.02-21.55
22.47	<i>Would you like to see more gay venues?</i>	
	"Yes, as long as they remain gay. When I was younger there were a number of gay bars you could go to, and they all had their own thing and were different. There's not so many now. Maybe I'm a bit square but I don't think we need fetish bars or that type of thing like they do have in other places, but I don't know. I always find the idea of them interesting but it's not something I'd want to frequent."	22.48-23.30
23.41	<i>Can you tell me about the socialising you did in other countries?</i>	
	"Spain is obviously a great example because they recognise the value of the pink pound. Your average gay man has got more disposable income because they don't have children. So Spain's wised up and it's obviously a tourist country. My experiences of being in Madrid, Gran Canaria, Barcelona, have been amazing because of the attitude and the way you can be. The first time I was in Gran Canaria I just couldn't believe that there was	23.42-24.48

	a place like that. It's one of the few places in the world where you don't get a complex, It's like exclusively for us. It's a bit tired now but it's still there and it's still thriving I believe. Madrid was amazing as well. They had a club for gay men over 40."	
24.49	<i>Have you faced any healthcare issues due to being gay?</i>	
	"None what so ever."	25.10
25.17	<i>Do you think that gay people need different or additional forms of healthcare?</i>	
	"I don't know".	25.24
25.40	<i>Do you think there are enough healthcare services available for gay people?</i>	
	"That's a tricky one to answer just now because the health service is in such a mess, so I probably would say no, there's not enough full stop right across. The NHS is broken just now. I'm hoping that will get better with a new Government but we'll see."	25.42-26.03
26.04	<i>How would you like things to change?</i>	
	"I would just like the NHS to get back to where it was maybe 20 years ago. "	26.11
27.08	<i>Do you ever think about your future as you age?</i>	
	"I think we all do. I'd be lying to say you didn't wonder what's in store for you. I'm getting to the age where I'll stop working soon' but yeah you do wonder how if I ended up in a nursing home, how would that work for a gay man. It's a difficult one."	27.15-27.38
27.40	<i>Do you ever share your thoughts about ageing with other people?</i>	
	No, not really, I don't really think about it, it's too depressing.	27.48
28.00	<i>What do you think about elderly care provision for gay men</i>	
	"I just don't know how that would work. As a gay man and you have your own home you invite people into your own space that you're comfortable with or you socialise with people that you're comfortable with. That's taken away from you when you go into a nursing home. So you could be put in the same home with a lot of people that might still have their wits about them and could be homophobic, and that's not a pleasant thought."	28.49
28.50	<i>Do you think there's enough information available about gay people's elderly care?</i>	
	"Probably not."	28.55
29.02	<i>What do you think are the barriers to elderly care for gay people?</i>	
	"I don't know, I've not really thought about that one enough."	29.03-29.08
29.13	<i>Can you think of any positive examples of elderly care for gay people in Scotland?</i>	
	"My father's care at the end was very good but we had to fight tooth and nail for it. We also had a terrible experience where we had social work breathing down our necks because one particular care agency could no longer meet my dad's needs and they didn't have enough people to do my dad's care. Because it was one person four times a day and one person could no longer manage it and their way of dealing with it to get him off their books was that they made a complaint that my father was being abused . I had to seek legal advice because it would have been totally against my father's wishes to go into a nursing home. And that's what they were going to do but fair play to the social worker who was coming to see me. She did her homework and said there was no evidence of abuse and actually we ended up with the best care possible for my dad and he got his wishes, he remained in his home until he passed away. That's how horrific it was."	29.20-30.44
30.45	<i>Have you any thoughts about what elder care may look like by the time you may require it?</i>	
	"I don't know. I know the health service is in a terrible way so that's like how long is a piece of string. I just don't know. I do feel that from recent experience with my partner and his sister. If there was nobody there to advocate for her she would have been in a nursing home a long time ago and that's not right. That's nothing to do with being gay, it's just how the health service is just now. It's not in a great shape. "	30.50-31.33
31.34	<i>What are your thoughts on the provision of gay elderly care in other parts of the world?</i>	

	"I don't know anything about it."	31.35
31.43	<i>Can you think of any legislation that has brought more rights for gay people?</i>	
	"Well obviously I'll be able to get married now. I don't know if there's anything else that we need. I don't know. I don't think about it enough because it's changed so much from my teens, whereas now and being the age I am. A lot of the kids growing up have never seen the prejudices that we had to go through".	31.45-32.24
32.35	<i>Has any legislation diminished or rolled back the rights of gay people?</i>	
	"Not just now but it just depends on governments, so even that could change. For instance if Farage got in what would happen then. The man came from the National Front as far as I'm concerned. It's a bit scary and I'm glad I am the age I am because with a bit of luck maybe I've got twenty years left if I'm lucky. But the world's a scary place just now."	32.26-33.27
33.33	<i>What do you think are the barriers to work for gay people at present in Scotland?</i>	
	"I haven't experienced that because of the line of work I'm in but I'm sure if you're in different industries it may be different. So I can't really comment on that but that's purely down to the industry I'm in but I've been in hospitality all my days. I've never done anything else."	33.34-33.52
34.03	<i>Do you feel that the general public are supportive of equal rights for gay people?</i>	
	"I'm going to come across as cynical. I think we are just tolerated. Not everyone, but in a lot of aspects I think we're just tolerated."	34.05-34.28
34.29	<i>What are your hopes for the future of gay rights essentially in Scotland?</i>	
	"Just to remain as they are. I don't think about it enough to be honest."	34.32
34.36	<i>Can you give any examples of the positive portrayal of gay people in the arts, the media or social media?</i>	
	"I'm not a great user of social media so I can't answer that question."	34.50-35.24
35.28	<i>Can you give any examples of negative portrayals of gay people in the arts, the media or social media?</i>	
	"Well it depends what you term as negative. Sometimes what they think a gay person's like can be tarnished by somebody that's loud and proud. My brother-in-law was a classic example, he thought everybody wore make-up and carried a handbag. We were all tarred with the same brush and you just need to look at you can go on to a sex offenders registry if you were caught having sex in your own car with your partner but a straight couple that wouldn't happen to. I'm not sure if it's changed but it used to be you were put on a sex offenders register. A sex offenders register is somebody that plays with kids, that's disturbing. "	35.28-36.42
36.53	<i>Have portrayals of gay people in the media and arts changed in your life time?</i>	
	Yeah, I think they have. I don't everybody's got that same perception now of what a gay man is like. As I said we all used to get tarred with the same brush, where we all wore wigs, make-up and ladies dresses. Which is so far off the mark it's not true and made me so angry but in saying that with people that I've worked with I remember the maintenance manager in a hotel I worked in in Glasgow, he could not believe I was a gay man who was into football and could drink with the best of them."	36.53-38.07
38.22	<i>That's all my questions, have I missed anything or is there anything you would like to add?</i>	
	"No I don't think so."	38.33
	Thank you for making me so welcome and sharing your memories and thoughts with the project.	

