

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

Respondent: Betty Elliott

Year of Birth: 1943

Age:

Connection to project: Respondent

Date of Interview: 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2024

Interviewer: Rachel Kelly

Recording Agreement: Yes

Information & Consent: Yes

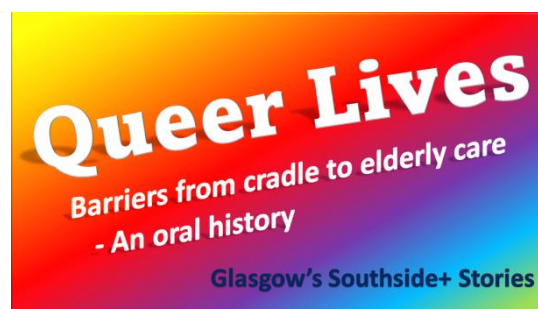
Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 1 )

Length of Interview: 1 hr 5 mins and 12 seconds

Location of Interview: Betty's home in Glasgow

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)





**Glasgow's Southside+ Stories**



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
0.43	Respondent was born in Alexandria, Dunbartonshire. Grew up in The Vale of Leven. Now lives in Glasgow.	
1.45	Respondent prefers gay as queer was a derogatory term when she was younger.	
	"I came out...I can't remember the year. But I very openly came out because both Sheila (MacAskill, her partner) and I appeared on a BBC television programme. And while I was out to family and close friends at that time. It would be maybe mid '70s....It was a documentary about gay life in Glasgow. I think it was Current Account. And that automatically was me coming out officially. So that was an official coming out because I could walk down the streets and be recognised. I hadn't come out at my work but I had come out to family and very close friends. So, the coming out at my work was quite a big thing."	2.40.3.40
3.40	Interviewer asks the respondent when she came out to family and close friends.	
3.47	Respondent came out to those people when she met her partner Sheila. She had had a partner before that in the Vale of Leven. Her partner then did not want to come out. Doesn't think family too surprised when she came out due to previous partner. They remained friends until her death a few years ago. Could not at that time have named another gay person. Mentioned in a joking fashion. Not a big subject. Sectarianism and politics bigger topics.	
7.10	Interviewer asks the respondent what people's attitudes to her being gay when she move to Glasgow.	
	"It was Kelvinbridge area. And for a short while we lived in Maryhill. And the only issue we had was one when we appeared on the television programme. I mean Sheila was out since she was a very, very young woman. So, living with Sheila you didn't really have a choice because she was the Chief Executive Chair of the Scottish Minorities Group. So, if you were with Sheila MacAskill you were seen and known to be gay. So, you didn't have a choice. But the television programme really brought it to the fore. And there was a few cat calls, And maybe more of people staring at you after the television programme. But, nothing radical. What interestingly enough was the radical part was-Sheila would apply for say a community hall to hold a disco. Glasgow City Council would permit it. But, the police could arrive and raid and could lift the men. And it wouldn't be unknown for some women to be, at least, in the back of the van because they were complaining on behalf of	7.16-9.06

	the men. They wouldn't be charged. But if you caused a fuss...That was probably the most aggravation."	
9.10	Respondent talks about Sheila having to wear a wig due to illness. This caused more trouble than them being gay.	
10.03	Interviewer asks the respondent about barriers to education.	
10.05	Respondent replies that she has never faced any barriers to education due to being gay.	
	"I would say that my career...I had a very good career. I worked for a top ranking American company. There were about 2000 people worked in it. And I had a prominent position. But I never, ever reached the position of being manager. After leaving this company I had several management jobs. And I had a quiet conversation a few years ago with someone that was in the HR and who said it was because I was gay. So, it was never open. There was never any nasty...I did get rewarded financially. And I did get different titles but never the title manager. And yet I retired about 54/55. And I finally stopped working when Sheila died. I would be about 77...And particularly because I worked with in the voluntary sector and the third sector. It was very, very inclusive. But my first role was in the private sector and they were a wee bit more...Shouldn't be but...But it wasn't overt it was just..."	10.15-11.58
12.39	Interviewer asks the respondent if there have been changes in terms of barriers in work places and careers over time.	
12.55	Thinks there has been substantial change. Thinks that we are in cycle at the moment where things are moving backwards again. Could be due to war and Covid and the economy. Talks about work with equalities work with a group at Hillhead High School.	
14.29	Interviewer asks the respondent if she thinks there are any conflicting perspectives amongst gay or queer people about sexual orientation or gender identity legislation.	
14.45	Thinks people of her age group find the different definitions confusing. This does not mean she thinks it is a bad thing. She thinks young people are much more clued up on all of this.	
16.40	Talks about her partner Sheila MacAskill's role as a lobbyist for gay rights. Thinks the young people at Hillhead High are walking in Sheila's footsteps.	
	"Sheila was...a very strong personality...I mean she does make a statement and it's been made several times that she came out the womb gay. But she never saw herself as anything other than gay all of her life....There was a gay movement set up in the city of Glasgow. It was done very low key. Very privately in people's houses to begin with. And then gradually they were accessing premises. And she was part of the original committee. Then she was appointed...the executive chair and one of the things that she did was she got grant funding from Glasgow City Council and went out and found premises for the gay community and that was at the foot of Sauchiehall Street...She found those premises within a period of about 2 to 3 months. Went back to GCC and said-I've found the premises. I'm not taking any more of your money...We held discos in it. We had different forms of meetings...And it was big enough to have meetings and the gay phone service ran from there as well. Gay Switchboard.It was in the '70s moving into the '80s. And I would say once the law had changed there wasn't quite the need for a venue of that nature. And some of the men started up a private members club in Queen's Crescent. The neighbours didn't like it and forced it to shut down. By that time, the law having changed, Sheila's health was going through a bad phase. And she stepped back from the political aspect of it. But, was very much to the forefront in having the law changed. There were other people on the committee. I am not for one minute saying that Sheila MacAskill got the law changed on her own."	17.46-21.27.

23.40	Talks about herself and Sheila's beliefs in gay people being an integrated part of the community and not in silos.	
25.49	Interviewer asks the respondent if she believes that there is such a thing as an LGBT plus community.	
26.20	Talks about the amount of gay people in the West End and other areas in the rest of Glasgow.	
28.02	Interviewer asks the respondent if she thinks that her experiences of coming out are similar to those of other gay people.	
28.07	Talks about young people being made homeless due to coming out. Talks about blank faces charity. Talks about Teddy Taylor hearing a tragic story of coming out.	
34.07	Interviewer asks the respondent about social life.	
34.29	There were more men than woman at the discos on Sauchiehall Street. Talks about hating gay pubs at the time. Not her scene. Sheila was running social groups for lesbians.	
40.16	Interviewer asks the respondent if she has faced any barrier to healthcare due to being gay.	
40.25	Sheila's illness appeared very soon into the relationship so healthcare was a big part of their lives. Only every faced a barrier due to arrogant male consultants who thought they wouldn't understand things.	
42.48	Interviewer asks the respondent if she thinks about the future as she ages.	
42.57	Hopes to live out her life at home but would go into a care home if needs be. She does not have any concerns due to her experiences caring for elderly relatives and their time in care homes.	
44.40	Interviewer asks the respondent if there is enough information on elder care for gay people.	
	"I think there's one or two groups have been started up. But in terms of accessible information. No, probably not. I mean anything I am interested in...and I am a huge fan of women's football. So, anything of that nature, I look up my laptop. But, I know that there are groups for older people and I know that there is one in the Botanic Gardens. It wasn't for me. One because I don't think I'm old...But, I know that there are things that I can go to. In the Merchant City in Katie's room there's a new group been set up. And they offer different activities. So you could have a pool night. We had a ladies' football night where we went to see Scotland play Serbia. So, that's much more of a range that you can dip in and out of, which appeals to me. Or, there's cinema nights. That's fairly new. I think that's only in the last year or so that's started..."	44.50-46.20
46.24	Interviewer asks the respondent if she is aware of any barriers to elder care for gay people.	
	"I'm not aware of it. It doesn't mean to say it doesn't exist. Because bias and discrimination is always there somewhere. I've never come across it. Sheila and I were treated as a gay couple. To the point that they would say we would need to have a special room for you two when your time comes. So, I have never experienced any. But. I'm sure it exists."	46.32-47.04
47.20	Interviewer asks the respondent if she can think of any legislation that has brought more rights for gay people.	
47.25	Says she is not political but does recognise and respect the laws that have changed. Civil partnership and being able to get married. Work HR policies that try to cut or eliminate discrimination. Is no longer working so not sure about HR in last 3 or 4 years. Always someone who will not walk the talk.	
50.34	Interviewer asks what are the barriers to equality for gay people in Scotland.	

	and the UK.	
50.48	Lack of awareness and ignorance. Still people who equate queer people with criminal behaviour. Thinks these are often mixed up. Very open in the West End. Depends on the area. Not sure what it would be like to go back to The Vale of Leven. Talks about how some of her straight friends view the current situation.	
53.05	Interviewer asks the respondent what her hopes for the future of gay rights are.	
53.10	That people are able to live side by side in harmony.	
54.15	Interviewer asks about positive portrayals of gay people in arts.	
54.39	The theatre in general. Openly gay people in abundance. George Michael. Sir Ian McKellan. Theatre is very much a gay world. Male football and rugby are the opposite. Openly gay women in women's football. Sheila and Betty loved the theatre. In particular musical theatre.	
57.02	Interviewer asks about negative portrayals of gay people in the arts.	
57.21	Sheila and Betty would often notice that there was always death involved in Lesbian love stories in film and TV. Thinks this has changed.	
59.45	Talks about experience working on the gay switchboard in the '70s. Mentions suicides. Talks about advising people on clothes.	
104.36	Talks about how she has archived her partner Sheila MacAskill's papers at The Mitchell Library in Glasgow.	
	Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for her contribution to the project.	
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