

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

Respondent: Jack Dickson

Year of Birth: 1959

Age:

Connection to project: Local Knowledge

Date of Interview: 29/11/2024

Interviewer: Dr Sue Morrison

Recording Agreement: Yes

Information & Consent: Yes

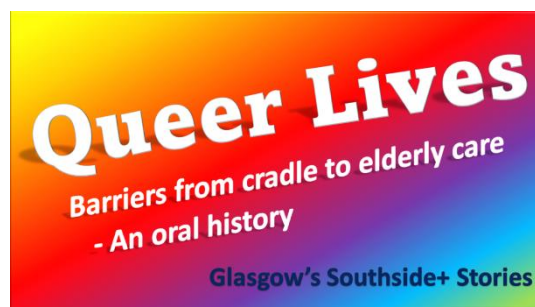
Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 9)

Length of Interview: 45.48

Location of Interview: Marie Trust, Glasgow

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)

Glasgow's Southside+ Stories



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.43	<i>Where were you brought up?</i>	
	"I was brought up in Saltcoats on the West Coast."	00.44
00.52	<i>When did you move to Glasgow?</i>	
	"I moved up here in 1981 I think, sorry 1983, 41 years ago."	00.54-01.09
01.12	<i>Can I ask what were your first impressions of Glasgow?</i>	
	"Having been born and brought up in a small town on the West Coast of Scotland, as far as everyone from Saltcoats was concerned and this wasn't just me, Glasgow was a big deal Glasgow was a big city, everything happened in Glasgow. Almost everyone who was anyone wanted to get out of Saltcoats and move to Glasgow as soon as they possibly could."	01.13-01.50
01.51	<i>What was it that attracted you to Glasgow in particular?</i>	
	"I was very into music and bands and fashion, so Glasgow just had all that. You could go into bands, you could go to clubs and dance, you could go to a much better selection of shops than they had in Saltcoats. It was every cliché, it was everything they didn't have in Saltcoats, and everything I couldn't have access to in Saltcoats, I could have access to in Glasgow."	01.56-02.32
02.39	<i>What was it like growing up in quite a rural coastal village?</i>	
	"It wasn't a village, it was a town and it was on the Ayrshire coast. In fact Saltcoats was a place where generations of Glaswegians came down for a fortnight in the summer and that was the one fortnight which always poured. Saltcoats didn't have any industry itself, but on one side it had Ardrossan which had the oil refinery and on the other side it had Stevenson which had I.C.I. In its day it was quite affluent, everybody had a job. That changed in the late 1970s early 80s when I.C.I. started to close. It was one of those big employers, almost everybody had a friend or family member who worked in I.C.I. and if your Dad worked in I.C.I., you worked in I.C.I. too."	02.41-04.58
05.23	<i>Can I ask if you've come out as Queer? Do you class yourself as Queer?</i>	
	"It's an odd thing. I don't think I've ever come out as such but I think that's because everybody knows. Queer is one of those words it's now become so encompassing, it's practically lost in the definition. It's not a word I've identified with."	05.26-06.35
06.42	<i>What would be your definition of Queer?</i>	

	<p>"I don't know. Because everything these days has such a high profile when it comes to getting equal rights for everybody that should have equal rights it's really important that everything should have a high profile but the downside of that is that the people presenting themselves and talking in the voices that are a bit louder than everybody else and you're 'on the outside', they seem to be the ones who everybody regards as queer and the characteristics that they have are what people regard as queer characteristics.</p> <p>If I had to define myself at all I would say I was an Outsider and I have never been in a group of people where I haven't felt like I was on the outside. As they say an Outsider sees the whole thing. As a writer, a screen writer, a novelist and a playwright, that's a huge advantage, but also in a strange way there's a part of you that wants to belong."</p>	06.42-09.00
09.15	<i>When did you feel that perhaps you were different from others?</i>	
	<p>"I don't think I ever did question that until I had people coming in from the outside saying this person isn't the same which in a sense was absolutely fine because I think I was in a really good position when I was growing up because I just seemed to amass as I went along with a wide circle of friends who were also considered not the same as everybody else. So I didn't particularly feel that being different was either a good or a bad thing,</p> <p>If I had to put a figure on when I got the impression that I was different from everybody else, I would be about 11 and me and another boy had sex repeatedly and both sets of parents found out and it was a huge deal, it was a huge deal. I thought it was sexual experimentation, I still think that. It didn't do me any harm and as far as I'm aware it didn't do the other boy any harm either, but that caused a huge thing. I think a lot of sexual experimentation at a young age went on with girls and boys and I think it still happens. I do think sex and love are completely different things."</p>	09.27-13.53
13.57	<i>Do you think there is a lot of confusion about sexuality among young people?</i>	
	<p>"I wouldn't define it as confusion. From my own personal experience I think kids will quite happily sexually experiment and I don't think it means you're confused, I think it just means that you are a sexual creature."</p>	14.00-14.40
14.55-15.26	<i>In recent years it has become a big issue that youngsters want to change gender, or achieve their correct gender and some of these are very young. When do you think that started to change?</i>	
	<p>"I think people's acceptance of what it meant to be male in a modern day and what it meant to be female was a lot broader. I think that what's happened is accepted by society type of characteristics that you can have if you're a guy over the past ten years have shrunk and I don't want to tread on anybody's toes here but again, I think this sort of comes from people and society's still deep-seated concern and scaredness of sex. Although gay rights have advanced incredibly and that is such a good thing, when I was growing up you didn't pin yourself down and you only pinned yourself down when that was imposed on you from the outside and I completely get that one of the big reasons that gay rights got established was because hundreds of thousands of gay men and women actually came out and said we do want the same rights as everybody else and there's no reason under the sun why we shouldn't have them, but I think that society still has this big weird thing about sex and if you bring the transgender thing into it helps society decide who they're having sex with. A man having sex with a woman, a man having sex with a man, a woman having sex with a woman, that seems to matter. It's scandalous with everything that's happening in the world people would have more to think about."</p>	15.27-19.19
19.31	<i>When you were at school did you face any barriers to your education or aspirations?</i>	
	"No."	19.33
19.46	<i>Did you have any firm ideas about what you wanted to do for work?</i>	
	<p>"As I said earlier on, I was into music and fashion. I worked as a self-employed designer for ten years in a small shop. I've probably been the only person I know who can hand on heart say I've never had a proper job. I've just always been in some way self-employed or freelance and I don't know if that means I've had a charmed existence to a certain extent and I've never been in a traditional workplace</p>	19.49-21.11

	so I have no insight into the sort of problems that people in a traditional workplace would face.”	
21.12	<i>Can you tell me about the bands you were in?</i>	
	“Bands were great. The Dice Men were one of the bands, Sun Glasses After Dark was another, and the never to be forgotten was Gomorrah and the Sodomites. It was the early 80s, so a post-punk and it was incredible. It was still possible in those days to play in pubs in Glasgow and you got paid enough to cover the expenses of a van but that was it, and it was just a great experience, because apart from the fact that you got to play in a band, you got to play your instrument and write and play the sort of music you were into. You also got an incredible schooling in interacting with other folk because in a band there’s you and at least another three folk and every cliché about a band is true. Fights were legendary, but it was also an incredibly creative environment and it was that experience I think that got me on to the.. I don’t want to be a passive consumer of things, and I want to spread that. Although after the bands I got into fashion and did that for a long horrible time, but again it was interesting because it was a small shop called Closet Clothes.”	21.20-25.11
25.13	<i>How did you get into creative writing?</i>	
	<p>“The shop closed and I was unemployed and this was back in the days when you got supplementary allowance which meant that you signed on every fortnight, but apart from that you were left. I’d always been a big consumer of crime fiction so I thought, I can write this, so I started. I wrote four complete 80,000 word books before I got into print. Four complete novels, just writing, writing, writing until I got into print with a small independent publisher but that didn’t set the heather on fire at all but I then diversified into what is uselessly called erotica which paid so much better. So I started writing that for four years and then completely by accident I applied to get a place on a scheme for writers who wanted to become screenwriters. So I did that and I met loads of interesting folk, I got a short film and out of that I got commissioned to do a full screenplay and a full-length film got made and off the back of that the producers that I was working with had a connection at River City, so I got a trial script for that and I worked there for ages. I did forty-two half hour scripts and no harm to River City because they were really nice and I learned so much and I was so well paid but after that I had no soul left, it sucked the soul from you.”</p> <p>“There’s such an amazing organisation that’s run completely by volunteers called Stage to Page and they advertised for a ten minute extract from a play and if your play got picked that got work shopped up and performed. So I applied for that, I sent it in which actually ended up an extract for a full length play and for reasons I can’t quite remember now, I started writing plays. Plays seemed to be the only thing I hadn’t had a go at. So I did that, and it got chosen and the director of that was also a playwright who had been given the opportunity by a play a pie and a pint, so he directed mine. I got that on, I got paid for that, I got a second play Pie and a Pint on and got paid for that too. I got other odds and sods on but as I’m sure everybody’s aware, the creative scene in Scotland is underfunded mad and the theatres started to be incredibly conservative in the sort of plays that they wanted to put on so it was at that point that I started to apply to Creative Scotland to finance my own stuff. And as they say, the rest is history.”</p>	25.22-32.27
32.48	<i>Can you tell me about your award?</i>	
	“The union in Scotland for playwrights is The Scottish Society of Playwrights and I’m a member. This year is their 50 th Anniversary and as a celebration of that they commission ten writers to go away and do a project. So I got that and I rehearsed reading a short piece that I put together that was written by people in the local community and it was great. It felt so good to go into a community where there was a lot of anger and a lot of stories that hadn’t been told and just get those stories told. I have to say, hand on heart, having spent my entire life to date as an outsider, when I’m talking to people in these communities, I have absolutely no right to say this, but I feel involved. I feel like somehow by some miraculous process moved from the outsider always on the outside trying to belong, I feel I found that and I don’t care it doesn’t pay that well because you can go in to projects like that, but you emerge with your soul intact and your heart has been increased so much. End	32.49-35.54

	of.”	
35.55-36.19	<i>You’ve worked in different diverse communities. Are there any where barriers were around you because of your sexuality?</i>	
	“No. I feel if you go into these communities and your concern as an artist is them, all the communities I’m interested in is this person going to tell my story and if you go into these communities and you make it all about you ‘I’m an artist and I’m so special’ obviously you’re going to get antagonism. It’s interesting about this sexuality thing and the gender thing, the people who have always been accepting of any sort of ambiguity are the upper class because the upper class are rich enough not to care and the working class because they own their own, because the people who have problems are the middle class. The middle class are in that horrible position, they’re trying wildly to make sure they’re better than the working class and they’re aspiring like mad to appear towards the upper end of the class structure. So hand on heart, I have never felt anything at all. I am speaking for myself from my own personal experience.”	36.20-38.34
39.35	<i>What do you think are the current barriers that a lot of queer people still face?</i>	
	“As I’ve said, I haven’t ever felt anything like that but that’s because I’ve been the situation I’ve always been self-employed and I’ve always been freelance. I’m sure there are still jobs in workplaces where people have an awful time, but again I don’t have any insight into that. I think it’s bad, I think it’s awful.”	39.37-40.21
40.24	<i>What are your hopes for the future of L.G.B.T.+ communities?</i>	
	“I think that what would be really good would be if people would stop sectioning themselves off. I completely understand why when you’re fighting for equal rights which is such an important thing and it has got all sorts of advantages if you can present yourself as a certain group but what that group does as presenting as a certain group does to people who aren’t included, it makes them think that you think you are special and you’re not special, but at the same time you are special because everyone’s special and I think we need to start to build alliances across society because it suits the people at the very top that have the power that all of us are down here underneath and all squabbling amongst ourselves whereas what we need to do is start acknowledging that to all intents and purposes we are all in the same boat and we need to come together in some way and just get that situation changed.”	40.26-42.09
42.14	<i>Have you ever thought about elder care?</i>	
	“Yes, a bit. I have this Quentin Crisp type fantasy about what I’ll do if Tom dies before me. I’d like to go and stay in a hotel where the room would be nice and spacious and warm and it would get cleaned and tidied by somebody else who wasn’t me and I would have access to food that I didn’t have to make and I would have somewhere to have people back to if I wanted to but I completely admit that I am yet again in a charmed situation to be able to consider that as an option.”	42.24-44.06
44.08	<i>Some people have kind of moved to the idea of Queer Only Care Homes, what are your thoughts on that?</i>	
	“I think that sounds like an absolutely fabulous idea but also a nightmare at the same time, the fighting that would go on, but is it not our squabbles that keep us young?”	44.12-44.44
45.01	<i>That’s all my questions, have you anything you would like to add?</i>	
	“There is something I’d like to stress that I’ve led a completely charmed life and I possibly am at the opposite end of a lifespan but I would just like to reassure people to keep going, it gets better, not only does it get better, it keeps going.”	45.02-45.41
	<i>Thank you so much Jack.</i>	
