

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

Respondent: John Smith

Year of Birth: 1955

Age:

Connection to project: Local Knowledge

Date of Interview: 04/07/2024

Interviewer: Billy Ferrie

Recording Agreement: Yes/ No

Information & Consent: Yes/ No

Photographic Images: Yes/ No (Number of:)

Length of Interview: 36.44

Location of Interview: Respondent's home, Glasgow

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)

Glasgow's Southside+ Stories



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.41	<i>Where were you born?</i>	
	I was born in the Gorbals in Glasgow	00.47
00.49	<i>Where did you grow up?</i>	
	I grew up in the Gorbals until I was 5, then we moved to Carntyne, then when I was 14 we moved to Ruchazie. I left there when I was 21. I now live in Newlands.	00.50-01.10
01.16	<i>Would you mind telling me if you've come out as gay and if so, when was that?</i>	
	I had definitely come out as gay, although my Mum outed me. I'd always had friends but I tended to keep my friends, my work and my straight friends all separate, but we had a family gathering for my Mum's 60 th and somebody made a few negative comments when I found out about it I said to my Mum I was going to go and deal with it and she told me to just forget it. She said we know about you, about Tom and mentioned all my friends' names. So she knew and I said how long have you known and she said since you were about 18. I said why did you never tell me and she said I was waiting on you telling me. So I thought I was hiding it all these years but obviously I wasn't.	01.21-02.10
02.14	<i>Did you feel any barriers in your education?</i>	
	I didn't feel any barriers. At Primary School I used to like playing football but I was never ever picked or if there was teams getting picked, I would be the last to get picked and I was always being criticised so I never really got a chance to develop it because I was more self conscious than confident because of the comments but I don't know if that was because people thought I was gay, I don't think I came across as being gay but that was the only negative stuff that I had at school.	02.32-03.10
03.27	<i>Did you feel you wanted to talk to someone about being gay?</i>	
	As a teenager, yes. I phoned up a hypnotherapist to try and see if that could help me. He said it could, but the cost was just way out of reach. So I never was really able to pursue that and there wasn't really anybody else to go and talk to about it. It was more a case of trying to make sure nobody found out.	03.29-04.06
04.13	<i>How did you feel about that?</i>	
	I didn't like it, I'd have done anything to change it. The whole environment round about me was negative about gay people, although they were never called gay people then, it was queer, poofs, all that kind of stuff. I know my friends they all used that homophobic language so you had to listen to that and knowing internally that that was you. It was a difficult experience.	04.14-04.47

04.48	<i>Do you think the barriers to accessing support has changed over time?</i>	
	Yes I think nowadays there's a lot of focus on mental health and stuff like that now I think young people now have School Counsellors or Guidance Support that they can go and talk to and also knowing that there's less of a stigma around it now, so it would be easier for them to get help and to feel confident enough to talk about it and maybe even peer support because nowadays even your friends would be more supportive than they were back in those days, they wouldn't have understood it back then but I think now the way society's changed it should be a lot easier.	04.55-05.33
05.34	<i>How would you like things to change as we move forward?</i>	
	I'd like it to continue the way it's been developing. I'd like it to be a non-issue. It shouldn't be anybody's business. So I'd like society to change but I think that'll take a long long time but the more it does change, the more positive and confident people will be about being gay. I think that will be a good thing.	05.40-06.16
06.25	<i>How can you see that happening?</i>	
	There's a lot of negative stuff still on social media and that would need to be policed better. They've got the available tools to do it but don't seem to do it, finding ways to prevent bullying, there's still that kind of thing going on and also society being educated. I mean Pride is a big thing but it's a once a year thing and some people are negative about it, and say why do they need to have Pride now. This is just keeping it in the limelight that things weren't always the way they are just now so continuing to promote it.	06.26-07.14
08.04	<i>Any experiences of barriers in the workplace?</i>	
	The negative barriers again were having to listen to homophobic jokes but that wasn't any different to having to listen to sexist jokes at that time, women were just as likely to have jokes made about them as gay people but having to listen to that and nobody knew they were actually talking about you. That for me was the barrier and thinking that if your bosses knew then you wouldn't get a promotion, so that was one of the reasons for keeping quiet. The industry I was in was logistics so it was a very macho industry. So I kept it to myself for a very long time.	08.09-08.56
09.07	<i>So you kept this to yourself, you didn't have an H.R. Department or someone to go to?</i>	
	The Directors were in charge of everything, including the H.R. Department, so I couldn't go to them. I actually never thought about support it was always just my problem and I had to go with it and not get found out.	09.14-09.34
09.46	<i>Were there any issues where you felt you might have to resign?</i>	
	No, I've never been in that position.	09.55
09.57	<i>Do you think things in the workplace have changed over time?</i>	
	Yes, I think having run businesses I realise that staff have equal rights, depending on the organisation. As you can imagine, I certainly promoted equal rights. I think Human Resource Departments now and in a lot of companies, take part in Pride and I don't think it's just for the marketing side of what they do they try and be an inclusive employer. A lot of employers realise now that some of their key staff might be gay but they're really good and what difference should it make. I do think there's been huge steps in employment and employment law has been a good thing. I would like to see this continuing and remembering how different it was in the past and not letting things slip and maintaining legislation that protects people's rights whether it be any kind of equality not just discrimination	10.03-11.28
11.30	<i>How do you see this continuing?</i>	
	By having a good Government and I think with the media being more positive than it's been for a long time and not allowing negative comments on people just because they're gay. Some of the newspapers should be made to certainly be less aggressive.	11.40-12.30
12.35	<i>What would you like for gay people in terms of opportunities in the workplace?</i>	

	I think people should be employed because of their ability not because of their sexuality or sexual preference. Equality is the number one thing that I can see and continue to promote that from the top down. It shouldn't be an issue.	12.42-13.12
13.25	<i>What was your experience of growing up as a gay person?</i>	
	I didn't really know any gay people where I grew up in the east end of Glasgow and I very quickly found a bar at the top of Hope Street and made a lot of friends there and would've been there every weekend. This would've been 1973.	13.26-14.01
14.02	<i>Why did you decide to come out when you did?</i>	
	Well I didn't really come out, I decided to pursue obviously the life that I wanted and not the comparable life in work and the gay life. I think I just felt that I needed an outlet basically that I couldn't get anywhere else because I didn't know anybody, these were the only people I knew that were gay, I didn't know there were bars or any place I could go but when I found that out I was absolutely delighted, to find that there were other people like me and there's nothing wrong with us.	14.03-14.51
15.03	<i>You mentioned your Mother knew but didn't say, who did you tell?</i>	
	Early on I would have some friends and some of my friends would have extended friends, girls who were straight and of course I told them, so these would've been the people I told at that time and we're still friends to this day which is great, but again I was still very very careful so only these select people would know, I wouldn't tell any of my other friends. I would go into town on a Friday and Saturday night, have a different life, then go back home to go back to a working life of supposedly straight. The people I told were okay because my best friend, he was one of their friends and that's why I knew them. I never told family members because I didn't want to be rejected really. I did know people that had been rejected by their family because they were gay and I didn't want that. I wanted to continue to be loved and I wanted to continue to be with my family, my brother and sisters, my Mum and Dad and I think I wanted the respect of being who I was as a person rather than a negative outlook because I was gay.	15.03-17.06
17.13	<i>Do you think the experience of being gay has changed over time in terms of acceptance?</i>	
	I think it has, certainly everybody that I know and have known for 30 years so I don't have anybody in my big circle that is negative about being gay which is a great thing and I also think on T.V. and that there is a lot of positive stuff nowadays which wasn't always there. So it definitely has changed, but I'm not going to lie anymore, if somebody asks me I'm just going to tell them. I think I was dreading the fact somebody might ask me, but nobody did.	17.16-18.25
18.26	<i>Do you feel your personal experiences are similar to that of other gay people?</i>	
	Similar to some but others, no. One of my best friends has never had any negativity, he told his mum and dad round about 10, they tried to get him psychiatric help but that obviously didn't work and he's had a really positive life, every job he's been in all his colleagues have known, that's who introduced me to the girls. So he would tell you that his experience is very positive and is very very different from mine. That's just one example but I'm sure there are many people who've had an okay life. I would say more have had negative experiences rather than positive experiences.	18.37-19.42
19.43-19.59	<i>Do you believe that there is such a thing as an L.G.B.T.Q+ community which implies a coherent group identity based solely on sexual orientation or gender identity?</i>	
	I don't really I think it's an umbrella name but nobody that I know feels part of that whole thing. I've got gay friends, lesbian friends, but we're not really under one umbrella, we don't socialise in the same places. I see it as a name that maybe helps politically when you're trying to seek changes but it's certainly not a socially coherent group.	20.02-20.35
21.25	<i>What are your hopes for the future for L.G.B.T. people?</i>	
	I hope that we can all continue to get on, that society can get on and that everybody can be who they want to be without depending on other people, again equality, it should be the same for everybody.	21.27-21.32
21.56	<i>What other things did you do in your youth to socialise?</i>	

	<p>There was a gay centre established but I wouldn't go there very often, it wasn't really a place that I would want to go to.</p> <p>There were bars, and then when Bennetts opened that was a great disco, a great place to go. Again in the early '70s there was a few events happen. One of the guys had an estate agent shop and there was a party in there late at night in the basement. There was also a gay night in some of the discos, one of their quiet nights would be a Monday night in Manhattan down on the Clydeside, so we'd go to these things. There was a club called Charros that had a Sunday night thing. So I would go to these places and then when Bennetts opened and then Vinters I would go to that. That's where I met my partner so I enjoyed that.</p>	22.15-23.48
23.49	<i>From what you can see have things changed as you've got older?</i>	
	<p>I think you naturally change as you get older, you settle down and you don't go out as much. I do still go out, if some gay friends want to meet up we'll meet in gay pubs and other friends that we meet in just good bars in the city centre or good restaurants in the city centre. So it's totally changed because I don't have to just go to a gay bar, I can go anywhere basically and I'd have just as good a time, in fact a better time sometimes. Some of the gay places have really really loud music which is not so good as you get older.</p>	23.50-24.37
24.39	<i>When you were younger, how did you feel about going to venues that were not gay?</i>	
	<p>I didn't have a problem just being in any kind of bar, a parallel life basically, so I'd be in both and wouldn't have a problem being in one. I enjoyed the gay nights but again you felt they were only doing it because they could make money on a night they were quiet they weren't trying to serve the gay community at all, whereas when Bennetts came along they were actually dedicated to the gay community which was fantastic and then when Vinters opened and one of the partners was gay, so that opened up as a gay bar. Until that point it was just bars who would have a gay clientele, so the Vinters was the first that actually opened as a gay bar owned by gay people.</p>	24.59-26.00
26.01	<i>Have you had any negative experiences in these places that you used to go to?</i>	
	No I've never had any.	26.11
26.58-27.18	<i>You mentioned Bennetts, Vinters and McColls, The Duke of Wellington and the Waterloo who would you normally go to these places with?</i>	
	This was before I met my partner, so it was a group of friends that I went with. Once I met my partner we would go there together and meet friends there.	27.19-27.32
27.33	<i>Would you like to see more specifically gay venues?</i>	
	No, I don't think so. Look at the Waterloo, it's a gay bar but now it's very very mixed particularly with the music that they put on, so any time you go in it tends to be very mixed.	27.41-28.02
28.08	<i>Have you experienced socialising in any other country in the gay scene?</i>	
	Yes, whenever we go on holiday. A lot of countries are far more advanced in terms of what they provide in Scotland, so we've had some really good times abroad, met some nice people. We go to Spain a lot now, my sister's got a flat there, and the gay scene is just around the corner. We know a lot of the owners of the bars and a lot of people that go to the bars and stuff. It's great fun.	28.10-28.52
29.18	<i>Do you think gay people need additional forms of healthcare?</i>	
	I certainly find that my G.P. and healthcare is accessible.	29.27
29.49	<i>What are your thoughts on the future of healthcare as we all get older?</i>	
	I think possibly a new Government coming in. I think things have definitely got to change in terms of people having to wait long term for appointments, operations and ambulances. It's got to be addressed. So the whole NHS needs to improve.	30.05-30.27
30.28	<i>Do you ever think about your future as you age?</i>	

	Yes, I wonder what's coming, I do talk about that with my family, friends and my partner.	30.41-30.51
31.34	<i>Can you think of any legislation that has brought more rights for gay people?</i>	
	Yes, the Equality Act on Anti Discrimination. First of all, civil partnerships which then turned into same sex marriage and these were wonderful things because they gave the same rights to partners. That's the main ones I can think of.	31.46-32.19
32.21	<i>Has any legislation diminished or rolled back the rights of gay people?</i>	
	Not recently but Section 28 certainly did way back, that had a tremendous negative affect on gay life.	32.28-32.48
32.,49	<i>In your opinion what are the barriers to equality for gay people at present in Scotland/U.K?</i>	
	There shouldn't be any	32.58
33.21	<i>In terms of the future what are your hopes for equal rights for gay people?</i>	
	I hope it continues to promote equality	33.25
34.00	<i>Can you give any example of any negative portrayals of gay people in the arts?</i>	
	It's fairly negative. The comedians are terrible, gay jokes or anti-gay jokes	34.26
34.40	<i>Do you think the portrayal of gay people in the arts has changed?</i>	
	I think there is a lot more positive portrayal of gay people. I think some of the soaps have had a great influence in changing attitudes and portraying people as more 'normal', to use that word. I really like it. I remember my Mum before she died she said she felt good that gay people had a voice now and were portrayed better on T.V. and stuff like that and people would find it more acceptable for people to be gay. For an older woman she was quite positive about things and I think since then it's changed dramatically.	34.48-35.40
35.42	<i>That's all my questions, is there anything you'd like to add?</i>	
	I think it's good that we're able to share these stories and it certainly does bring back some memories about how difficult it was when it was illegal and taboo and when it was negative about you and it had an impact on you and I'm glad that in this day and age that things have changed so dramatically and I do hope that this continues and I think for it to do so we must stay vigilant.	36.01-36.38
36.39	<i>Thank you for sharing your memories</i>	

