

## **PAT DUNGEY**

*Clare (C) interviewing Pat (P)*

### **Extract 1: 10.58 – 14.25**

#### JOINING KENRIC

P: ... and there were just a huge group of us, that all seem to be at the same point in our lives coming out, and it was thanks to that wonderful badminton group that I met so many other people and many of them joined the committee and then I became a member of the Kenric committee. I was invited to be the Vice to the Chair, which I couldn't possibly turn down, so I became Vice Chair in my first position. Then I became publicity officer I think, and various other positions between 1986 and 1997, and again I just threw myself into it. I don't know ... the woman I was then I'm not any more. I don't seem to have the same courage, it was just it was something new and I was willing to try it.

C: And I know you've told me the history of Kenric, but tell me about, um, as much as you feel you can, about what it was like there, what the women were like, what the ethos was, you know, how you fitted in, those sort of things.

P: Right, well it is all about the fitting in, and I did feel there were a lot of kindred spirits there at the time. I think the main ethos was that people wanted to enjoy themselves and they loved the idea of enjoying being lesbians. There was very little political feel about it, and most of us got very angry when people started criticising us for not being political. That wasn't the aim, and it still isn't the aim, um, and I think the aim was to enjoy ourselves as much as possible, to meet as many new people as possible. It all sounds very frivolous, but it was wonderful when you spent many, many, lonely years not knowing anyone else who was gay, erm ... spending a lot of time with your head in manuals and encyclopaedias being convinced that you're crazy or sick, and suddenly you were amongst a lot of people who knew how to enjoy themselves because they realised how wonderful it was to be gay, to be out, and to have all these opportunities and it was a very ... in my memory, a very relaxed and happy time. Almost every Saturday something was happening, and in those years I managed to have a broken heart on three occasions but got over it very quickly because there were always social events on offer. And we all threw ourselves into it.

It feels very different nowadays but that's maybe because we're all twenty years older! But it was a fun place to be. There were lots of things on offer and people were incredibly welcoming and also there was a willingness to welcome other people who perhaps went to events on their own. I remember volunteering to be erm ... can't remember the exact word, but you were like a warmer, you gave a warm reception to new people who came along to events.

There were also more regular things on where all the members went. Nowadays Kenric is much more divided into smaller groups that are isolated from each other, which I think is a shame but maybe because fewer people are actually in Kenric and being much older, we've settled into entertaining at home or just, heaven forbid, watching TV at home on Saturday

nights! But I may not be so active as a lesbian in every sense but I know I still am. I don't need to practice the faith to know what I am!

**Extract 2: 18.15 – 19.34**

JACKIE FORSTER

Yes! I remember the first time I met Jackie Forster, it was a very scary experience. It was when Sappho was in Notting Hill, I think, and I walked in offering to do a talk. At that time I was still a history teacher and fascinated by lesbian history from Paris in the '20s, and I offered to give a talk about Natalie Barney and one of her lovers, Renée Vivien and the first thing she said to me "Well of course my darling", she said "Renée Vivien, you do mean ... Mary Tarn" and I had no idea that was her other name so I felt completely deflated since I was going to be talking about her. But er, once you knew the woman, she was OK, but she was quite formidable, especially when you were a raw, new, little lesbian on the scene! But she ... her contributions were great. People remember her in so many ways. I've seen many films of her, fighting for all of us to come out and have the kind of life that we have now, and I did get to know her a bit socially 'cos er, she and her girlfriend were good friends with a friend of mine and *her* girlfriend, and my then girlfriend, and er, I remember a particular evening with six of us having a meal and talking and Jackie's sense of humour was wonderful.

**Extract 3: 27.00 – 28.44**

SILVERMOON BOOKSHOP

P: Silver Moon I remember on several occasions, erm, down on Charing Cross Road. They would often have speakers in, in the evening and you could browse through wonderful selections of books. They do have um, selections like that in other bookshops now but this was, you know, completely lesbian in every sense with the talks ... with the speakers, with the books there, and it was just another place to go where you felt you ... you know, you saw lesbian books, not straight books. It was a little world all on its own and it was very nice and cosy. That did, when it closed down, some of its books went into Foyles but eventually the larger Foyles sort of took over, and there's just a very small gay section there now. So it was about a way of life, it wasn't just about where you could go and buy books.

C: I remember it had lots of notice boards which, at the time was sort of our currency for ...

P: That's right ...

C: Getting to know what was on.

P: That's right. There'd be all sort of weird and wonderful groups and there would be advertisements for people to find places to stay, er, temporary or, you know, if they were passing through London, or flat shares and you could find out what was going on in the ... in

the gay world if you were new or if you were just a tourist. Being a gay tourist in London as a woman, there's very little nowadays that, you know, is on offer. Maybe Gays the Word bookshop, there's a notice board in there, but Silvermoon definitely, you know, was a good idea for that then.