

Galop and Stonewall Housing Oral History Project

Interviewee: Colin Richardson

Interviewer: Rasheed Rahman

Place of Interview: Galop Offices

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Key

EG: = Interviewee, Colin Richardson

PC: = Interviewer, Rasheed Rahman

[time e.g. 5:22] = inaudible word at this time

[5:22 1A] = inaudible section at this time

Word 5:22 = best guess at word

CR: I was born on 5 March 1959 in London.

RR: Whereabouts did you grow up?

CR: Well I was actually born in St. Bartholomew's hospital so I'm technically a cockney, but I grew up in Lewisham, on the edge of Blackheath.

RR: Do you want to tell me a little bit about your childhood and growing up in Blackheath?

CR: Well I'm the eldest of three. My sister, who's next down, has Down's Syndrome, and then my brother. My mother was disabled, my father was a journalist, my mother worked as a secretary. When I was born we were living in a tiny little flat but then my grandfather had to come to live with us so they found another house, which they were very lucky to get this big house round the corner from where the flat was, and so there were six ... well there weren't at the time, I think there were four of us because I think my sister had just been born and then my brother was born after that. But we never had much money because it was a big house, and quite a lot of the time we had to rent half the house out, and that sort of thing. I went to primary school, Church of England primary school on Blackheath, All Saints. There's a big church on Blackheath called All Saints Church and the school was about ten minute's walk away in the middle of the heath, where there was a sort of groove cut out of the heath. They used to quarry for sand and stone and whatnot and so the school was down in this weird place with the heath towering above us. It was very strange, but it was more like primary school. We had a mad headmistress, but it wasn't a bad place. I enjoyed that.

And then I went to comprehensive school in Eltham, Crown Woods, which I hated. In the meantime everything at home was getting worse and worse. My parents didn't get on and blah blah blah, it was just ... and you know, I was the eldest so I was carer for both my mother and a sister in a sense, and my father was ... hid himself in work, so basically I did most of all that. And then I went to university in Bristol. Got a degree in politics. And then I came back to London and I suppose two or three years ... or maybe one or two years after, I can't think now ... '86 was it I got involved in Galop, something like that?

RR: We'll move on to your work with Galop specifically a bit later.

So the comprehensive in Eltham and moving on to university, can we stick with that period a little longer? Obviously you didn't enjoy it so I don't want to linger over it too much, but is there anything you want to say about that?

CR: Well Crown Woods was an enormous school and when I went from All Saints, which was almost like a little village school, to Crown Woods, which apart from anything else was nowhere near where I lived, so I had to go on the train, and although my next door neighbours went they were all in different years and it was such an enormous school that if somebody wasn't in your year and in your half (it was divided in two, so half the people in my year I never met because they were in the separate parallel half), I mean when my brother started there I hardly ever saw him. He was five years younger than me, but I never ... I could walk around that school for days and not bump into him. It was so big.

And I guess it was because I was clever and ... I just kept my head down because cleverness wasn't popular. And because it was a long way from home I didn't have friends coming back to the house much. My mother didn't particularly welcome people coming round. I suppose I would have been a bit embarrassed about both my mother and my sister to some extent. <Sighs>

So I just got on and I did very well, I did very well in all my exams, and I actually got a place at Oxford, but I turned it down, which was a big mistake, and I turned it down I think because my father was dead keen for me to go there 'cause he'd been. I think he went to Oxford ... I can't remember now but I think he'd just started at Oxford when he was called up for the Second World War and he resumed his studies when he came back, so for him it was a happy time. But ...

It was a mistake really, looking back, 'cause Bristol wasn't ... I don't like Bristol. Well, I like the City, but I didn't like the university. So ... and I think I was trying to come to terms with my sexuality then and it was hard, very hard.

So that was part of my unhappiness. And I think because of the way things had been at home I think I effectively had a sort of ... very protracted sort of nervous breakdown type thing. So ... Bristol was not happy either.

It was a very strange childhood I had. Very strange indeed. And my mother was, as well as being physically disabled she became increasingly depressed and turned to drink and it was all ... not very nice. And as I say, my father just sort of ran away from it. So I think I realised, looking back, that I just turned down Oxford largely because, to spite him I think. It didn't feel like that at the time, but I think that's probably what it was. So ... there we are. These things, my parents are now dead, they'd separated long, long ago, I think when my brother left home they separated then, and my sister lived with my mother, and then my mother died seventeen years ago and my father died just before Christmas.

I'm an orphan. <Chuckles>

RR: What was your passion, what was your outlet during those times? Tell me what took you away from it?

CR: I read a lot, I spent quite a lot of time on my own. I did have friends. Unfortunately I had two really good childhood friends, both of whom moved away from London. One went to America 'cause his dad got a job there, and I never really saw him again ever after that, and one who was the son of a local vicar who was ... I had known since he was born in effect because his mother and my mother were both pregnant at the same time, my mother with me and his mother with him obviously, and ... they moved away because the father got posted to another parish which was down in the West Country. So I kind of lost ... I used to go and stay with them, mind you, in the holidays, and I had one other close friend who lived across Blackheath with his mum. She was a single mum, which was very unusual in those days.

So when I could get away I'd go over to Mark's place or I'd go next door 'cause the next door neighbours sort of ... well even our house you could leave the front door open, you just could, and kids ... when I was allowed to go, there was nothing that my mother needed me to do, I could go out anywhere. There was no bother. When my brother was a baby and I suppose when I was, you were left in the pram in the front garden. No fuss. And my neighbours, their back door was always open so it was open house with them. It wasn't so much with ours because my mother didn't like unexpected guests.

I don't think she really liked small children running around, because ... it was her legs that were bad and I think she was very scared of being knocked over, quite understandably, but ...

So ... there it was. And we always seemed to have people staying in our house as well. There was my grandpa and he died in our house, and then ... various adult children. One of my cousins from Holland came and staid 'cause my mother's father was Dutch so I have Dutch cousins and aunt, and Katie came and stayed for a year when she was studying in London, and there always seemed to be people around, but adults. People lodged with us on and off. And then my mother's mother came and her husband (my mother's step-father) came to stay with us. And I've got a really weird family, that it's all sort of fractured and fragmented and all bits all over the place. My dad grew up mostly in Edinburgh so I've got lots of Scottish family. None of my cousins were my age and none of them lived in London, so I didn't know any of them. I've only got to know them as an adult.

So it was like that really.

And the other thing that I weirdly got into, although I haven't done it for years, is I learned to play bridge and I played it competitively. Played duplicate, went in for tournaments, competitions, which my friend Mark was usually my regular partner, and somebody else as well. This other bloke, who was an older bloke who was obviously gay at the time as well, but in those days it wasn't so much spoken about. In the mid, late '70s.

RR: This was at Bristol?

CR: No, it was when I was a teenager, before I went to Bristol, there were places in London. We used to go and play all over the place. And then I did play for a while at Bristol in the university club, 'cause funnily enough my friend Mark went to Bristol. That was quiet coincidental I think. But I mean after about the first year we stopped and I haven't really played much since then.

But I quite enjoyed it. I still follow on the internet from time to time.

What else did I do? When punk happened I used to go and see bands all the time, from about the age of 17, and again that was something I could just go and do of an evening, once my mother had been put to bed with a wine box or a bottle of whisky or whatever she was feeling like that night, I could just go out. It was no bother where I was going. I went to gigs all over the place with my next door neighbour and a friend from school. My friend Julie. And we both came out to each other, that was really weird. After we'd left school.

RR: Tell me about coming to terms with your sexuality.

CR: I think it's 'cause I was so not used to thinking about myself, I had to consider the needs of others before me – this is my take on it anyway – but it was very hard to understand my own feelings. I think also because I'd cut myself off, 'cause my mother would be so often in a terrible state, night after night, I'd have to go and deal with her sobbing or shouting or in a state and ranting on about my father and going on about this and going on about that, from quite an early age I became an unofficial counsellor-cum-helpmeet-cum ... I almost felt like I ceased to be her son, but because it was so difficult at an early age to deal with these really strong emotions, I just cut myself off. I lived behind a glass wall, in a way. And so I was always observing and dealing with other people's feelings and I just didn't know how to deal with mine, and I fell head over heels in love with a man who was straight, but I didn't understand what was going on. I mean nothing happened, clearly, 'cause he was straight, but I used to tag along with him everywhere ... And I did have gay friends there and I did hang about with them, but I didn't really go out on the scene in Bristol – that was when I came back to London. And I made a lot of friends in London then, because I lived on an estate in Deptford, which in those days they had a hard to let scheme, and a lot of gay people moved there because they were single or they were ... young, didn't mind too much. A lot of families didn't want to live there. And I was sharing a flat with two women friends of mine and ... this gay group started up on the estate and there were loads of us. It was good actually, it was very good. I used to go out and there was a great posse of us really. Then we all drifted apart eventually, years later ... but that was a good time.

RR: And when did you start getting more interested and active in Gay Rights issues?

CR: Well it would have been about ... '84/'85, yeah, when I was 25, 26 whatever, yeah. I know what it was – it was the miner's strike. I joined this group called Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, that's right. 1984 was my big involvement. See I can't remember now, 'cause it was the heyday of the GLC and with Ken Livingstone funding all these gay groups, and I think a lesbian and gay centre, now defunct, opened ... I don't know when it was now, but it was about that time, and I know I used to go there a fair bit and I then got involved in the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. There was Act Up around that time I think, if I remember rightly. Certainly I know one of the people in the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners group, he was the leading light of it all, he died from HIV a year or two later, Mark Ashton his name was. And Jimmy Summerville from Bronski Beat, the Communards, was involved in the Miners group on and off. And Mark Simpson, the gay journalist. And that obviously was a year-long thing, so there was that. And ... I can't remember how it happened, I really can't, and I can't remember the

timing of it all. I mean Act Up may have been much later, I may have that wrong in my mind, and I may have the Lesbian and Gay Centre wrong in my mind, that may have been after the miner's strike, it probably was actually. And then of course Mrs Thatcher abolished the GLC, I think the centre staggered on for a few years and then it couldn't get any other funding I guess, I don't really know what happened. And also I think it was killed off by then by the explosion in the commercial gay scene, which really went big around that time, really big.

RR: I want to backtrack a little bit. You did [17:05 IA] a politics degree and ended up being active in gay rights. What are your politics and how did they develop?

CR: Oh, I'm a lifelong member of the Labour party and I suppose I joined ... I say life long, adult life long. I joined I think when I was at Bristol and I used to go to the labour club there and I was ... I did at one stage become an officer of the Students' Union in Bristol and we did this really dumb showey-offy thing I suppose, we did the cycle ride from Bristol to London to protest against Mrs Thatcher, I remember doing that. I didn't actually cycle, I was part of the support team, even though I cycle all the time now, I didn't then. I don't know why, but I didn't, even though I did cycle in Bristol, come to think of it. And if you can cycle in Bristol you can cycle practically anywhere, 'cause it's so hilly.

So when I came back to London ... at one stage I lived in a part of Bristol where I was in Tony Benn's constituency and I went along to meetings there and met him and was very unimpressed with him I have to say! <Laughs> 'cause I was all aireated about something. I think it was the Birmingham Six, one of the load of people who was wrongly imprisoned for IRA atrocities, and I raised it with him and he mumbled some platitude and did absolutely nothing about it, so I rather lost interest in him.

Well, I had kind of before that actually, because the Labour party was falling apart at that time. It was a dreadful time and everything, HIV was becoming news and the Conservative government was just vile, they were relishing gay people dying, they seemed to think it was great and it was all our fault, and unemployment was 3-4 million and as a direct and deliberate result of government policy, and yet the government blamed the unemployed, even though they had caused the unemployment, not the unemployed themselves. It was a really horrible time. I remember as well when I was at Bristol going to a teeny-weeny protest against the Falklands war, there were about 50 of us I think, it was pathetic, and first time I voted actually, in 1979, I was at university and I had a friend I'd met, this woman who was a medical student, and she said, 'Oh, let's go down and watch the results coming in' and to my horror I discovered that she was a Tory, so she was absolutely delighted, and I was just horrified at what was going on, even though I knew it would happen. And I actually remember I came back to London the next day and the headlines were that Shirley Williams had lost her seat. I remember that vividly because she was one of the people I quite liked so that was really sad.

When I came back to London, before I moved to this council estate, I'd lived in a housing association house that really should have been condemned. We all nearly died of gas poisoning one day and all sorts of things and it was just hideous, but during the 1983 election our house was the Labour committee rooms, so people were coming in and out and doing canvassing returns and all that sort of thing, and the MP John Silkin I think it was came round at one

stage, so we all did that. So it was minor activism. I was sort of involved in the local Labour party quite a lot, but it was also the heyday of militant and I got really put off by the militant members of the party, especially when their take on gay politics was just a disgrace. They were vile and I loathed them and it really put me off because they'd just make the meetings intolerable and then they'd jump up and try and sell you their newspapers at the end, and it was just ... didn't like it. I think also, apart from the few months I actually worked full time as a paid worker at Galop, I was unemployed a lot of the eighties, so I rather lost faith. I couldn't see the point of doing anything after that. I seemed to have done so much – as had a lot of people obviously, just what I do isn't going to make much difference – but you know, there'd been a lot of things I'd been involved in and the Tories were going from strength to strength and unemployment was getting higher and higher. It was just awful. I think I just lost heart really.

Nasty time, the eighties.

RR: Tell me about your career and how that developed after.

CR: Well, because I didn't really have much of a one I was either signing on or I was doing little jobs that lasted not very long, like Galop, or I did a bit of working on the side. I worked in a bookshop for cash in hand. It wasn't much cash but it was at least something. So I didn't have a career really, and I think maybe subconsciously I didn't really think about writing because my dad was a journalist and again I didn't want to do what he did, but eventually ... I worked for a lesbian and gay video production company, which was short-lived because I think it relied mostly on GLC funding, but I worked a bit with them and I worked with a friend of mine who tried to set up a gay film distribution company, I worked for no money for her. And while I was working for her, I started writing stuff, and eventually I sent something to *Gay Times* and that led to a lot of freelancing there, and then I got a job there in 1993 it must have been, the year after my mother died, and the year that the last person I have known since (closely anyway) died from HIV. That was the other thing – late eighties, early nineties, a lot of my friends died, which was terrible as well. And I think that, perhaps, is what took over from the Labour party in a way. Labour wasn't brilliant on gay rights. They eventually became much better, but they weren't at the time, and I think that alienated me a bit from them. I was involved in the Section 28 protests. I went on that great big march that went through London. I didn't actually go on the poll tax march I don't think, I didn't ... no. But yeah, I went on the Section 28 march, so I was still doing things like that. And then there was an awful lot of stuff, gay activism was at its height in those days, political street activism I suppose, and Outrage was formed in 1990 I seem to recall, which was partly, I think it partly came out of some of the work that David Smith was doing at *Gay Times*, 'cause he was doing a lot of stuff on policing. But also I think from Galop, I think Galop are the unsung heroes of the 1980s gay politics, they really are. Because they started in the teeth of the worst of the Tory anti-gay stuff, in the teeth of the anti-AIDS panic and hysteria, and they were doing the worst kind of work, which was they were defending gay men who'd been arrested for cottaging basically. And they succeeded in defending people, which was amazing, in that climate. They actually got quite a few men off. Not all of them, but they did ... they took up what had to be one of the most unpopular causes in that climate and that was by far the most important aspect of their work, the anti-violence stuff figured very low on the radar because it was a group of lawyers that set it up, and at least one of them,

David James, who was great, he was a fantastic person, he died of HIV in the late eighties which was just tragic, or maybe the early nineties, around that time. I know he took up a lot of cases for free, and they'd take on anything that they could, time and other commitments allowing they'd take on a lot of stuff. And it was just great. We had the most horrible offices, it was just vile. They had no money.

RR: Tell me about how you first came to be aware of Galop and then how you got involved.

<Part 2 starts>

CR: My memory on that is very unclear, I can't remember exactly how I got involved, I really can't. I think it must've been that I saw a job advert for this part time community worker post, which was only for three months, and I went for it and I got it.

RR: What year was this?

CR: If I had those annual reports I could tell you when it was <laughs> but it's in there. It's in there because I was looking the other day as to when I was the worker, but the dates are in there. I honestly can't remember whether it was '85 or '86, it may even have been '87, I can't remember. And at that time we had an office in this horrible building in Mount Pleasant, and it was at the top of the building, and it was filthy, and it was disgusting and it had a glass roof, so in the summer it was unbearable and when I started it was very hot weather. And then of course it switched in the winter to be absolutely freezing. They then subsequently got another office downstairs which was a bit bigger and a bit less grotty and didn't suffer from that problem. But I think by then I was just a volunteer then.

RR: Tell me about the work you were doing.

CR: I was mostly doing report writing and things like that. And they were producing materials like cards [1:26 and handing them out] to people about what to do if you're arrested, that sort of thing. And I helped to do the annual reports and I did take some calls, but the main case worker, David Wilson Carr, took most of the calls from men sorting out getting legal help for them. And that's what David did mostly, was taking those calls. And then they'd be regular meetings of the, they weren't called the board, whatever they were called anyway – David James and the other lawyers, Brian Stockdale, wasn't it? Or Stockton, isn't that dreadful, I should remember. John Harrison and others, they'd have regular meetings to review what we were doing and to look at the finances. There was a treasurer, David Tyler, who has cerebral palsy and he was great, he did a lot of hard work, he was very dedicated and did all the accounts and everything. So yeah I was involved, I think I may have been involved in helping prepare minutes and agendas. But then, as I say, after that I was just a sort of volunteer on the committee steering group or whatever it was called.

So that was it really. And then they did start to, I think when Phillip Derbyshire became the case worker, they started to do more anti-violence work, there was a lot more work. I think because they began to be more and more successful in challenging prosecutions, I think perhaps other people took up the work and other mainstream lawyers started to take up cases as well. And although there was a huge ... I mean I think the late '80s was the worst time

for arrests again, and for gross indecency. It was almost simultaneous with a huge rise in violence against gay men in particular. Murders, there were a lot of murder cases and *Gay Times* David Smith, who was the news editor of *Gay Times* at the time, was doing an awful lot of work on that, and he'd done some research discovering that there was a very high rate of unsolved murders of gay men. And so violence became sort of equally prominent, homophobic violence. So that became an increasing part of Galop's work, but they didn't sort of formalise it in terms of ... I don't think for a while anyway, you know having any kind of separate anti-violence helpline. It was just one worker and an answer phone really, was how it went. And of course they lost the GLC funding 'cause the GLC disappeared, so I think they relied on local authority funding. So they employed at one point Paul Burston to do fundraising. I don't think he was there for that long <sighs>.

And then I guess I lost touch with it after a while, I can't remember why. I think maybe when David James died and a lot of my friends, you know I had a lot of friends who were ill and who died, and then my mother went and died in the middle of it – I had other preoccupations I guess. But the big sort of turning point after that was in 1990 when the gay actor, Michael Booth, was murdered. And there was a big protest about that in the park where he died and a march through the local area and Ealing. Which I went to and lots of the *Gay Times*, David Smith went I think and other people I know, and it was quite a touching thing and candles were lit and put on the town hall steps and things like that. And it was out of that that Outrage was formed. I went along with the Galop people actually I think on that march, that's what it was, that's right, because I didn't really get a *Gay Times* connection till maybe a year or so after that. Yeah that would be about right. But the stuff I tended to write for *Gay Times* at that time was sort of legal stuff and policing related stuff, 'cause that's obviously what I knew from Galop, so that's where I started off writing journalistically.

RR: And tell me about your time with the *Gay Times*.

CR: Well because I'd freelanced for them and I got bits...

<Part 3 starts>

... published sort of fairly regularly, and I did several interviews as well. I interviewed Anthony Gray, who was one of the leading lights in the '60s behind the reform of the 1967 act that partially decriminalised male homosexuality. And I had a cousin who I didn't know, but who was a hereditary peer, he was a member of the House of Lords. He'd accidentally inherited the title because his elder brother had died or something, I can't remember how it went. But it was from a very distant branch of the family that I didn't know at all, and I think the hereditary period came from Lloyd George's day, because whichever relative it was in those days was a liberal. Anyway, he was Lord Rea of Eskdale I think, but in real life he was a GP. But his amazing history was that his mother left his father for a woman, and he was brought up by his mother and his mother's girlfriend. So when Section 28 came about he was practically the only person who stood up in the House of Lords and opposed it, and he made a speech about ... he referred to his childhood, to his mother. And I interviewed him, I remember interviewing him because I sort of played on the family connection and he gave me an interview – I know I've never met him before or since, which was a bit strange. And I think he may still be a member of the House of Lords because he was,

certainly when they chucked out most of the hereditaries, I think he was one of the 90 or so left. There was a time when several peers have collapsed in the House of Lords and I think one of them was a gay peer at one stage, and I think my cousin leapt up and saved his life, I know he did with at least one peer who had collapsed. So I think he's still around, but I don't quite know for how much longer. I don't think he particularly wanted to be a peer but because it was hereditary he sort of had to really, he didn't have much choice in the matter. I suppose he could have renounced it, but then I guess if he'd renounced it it would've gone to his children so I suppose he thought he should do it.

So I interviewed people like him, I can't remember if I interviewed him when I was still freelance, but Adrian Fulford, who was then a leading gay lawyer who then became a barrister and ... I've forgotten what he's doing now, but he got quite a high profile position in a judiciary now. So I interviewed him, and funnily enough I interviewed him in the old London Apprentice Pub on Old Street, the LA, which was really weird during the day, maybe because his chambers were round there. I can't remember what it was why we met there, or maybe I met him for a drink there first and then we agreed on the interview, I just can't remember now. So I did things like that. And David asked me to do news stories and things.

And then one day David rang me up and said, 'Let me take you out to dinner, I've got some ideas.' And we went out <chuckles> for this really strange meal in Covent Garden, at the end of which when I went away I thought, did he offer me a job there or didn't he? And I didn't know what to do. And then he rang me a few weeks later and ... he sort of said, 'Did I offer you a job?' <Chuckles> 'Did you get that?' And he invited me out again and then he was more clear – he basically wanted me to be his deputy, because he'd become editor by that stage, [4:01 the main] news editor. So I did, and I was his deputy for six years or so. And then he left and then I was editor for two years and then I left.

RR: What years?

CR: Well, it must've been '93 to '99. I think the last issue I did was the 1st of 2001, I think, if memory serves. That would be right? Yeah roughly right I think. Yeah I think that's right. And then I went to work for Camden NHS Primary Care Trust, well it was then Camden and Islington. And they had a gay men's health promotion department, so I worked there for five years.

RR: Now as far as I remember there was only *Gay Times* and the *Pink Paper* and miscellaneous [5:02].

CR: There was *Capital Gay*. And *Capital Gay* had offices in the same place as Galop, when I was at Galop. And *Capital Gay* did a lot of stuff in partnership with Galop and they did do a lot of new stories and stuff on the work that Galop was doing, which was very good. And the *Pink Paper* didn't exist then, the *Pink Paper* came round, I think if I remember, later on in the '80s. It certainly wasn't around when *Capital Gay* started. And I think there was a famous occasion when *Capital Gay*'s offices were fire bombed or something. And Dame Jill Knight, one of the leading lights behind Section 28, at one stage made a speech in which she referred to it and seemed to imply that it was a jolly good thing that the offices had been fire bombed and it was [5:53], a hoo-hah and a scandal. Yeah it was *Capital Gay* and *Gay Times*.

RR: And when you were working for *Gay Times* what kind of publication was it and what [6:05 IA].

CR: Well it was called a gay news magazine. However, it came out of a magazine called *Him*. Again, I knew it all at the time. The publishing company was called Millivres and I think that started out when there was a ... there was a sex shop somewhere and this accountant called Chris Graham Bell got involved in it and bought it out I think. I think they published a pin-up magazine sort of thing, one of the early gay nude or semi-nude magazines. And then *Him* came along and that was the big one – it had some news in it bizarrely, if I remember rightly, but it was mostly men with no clothes on. <Chuckles> And then <pause> god, how did *Gay Times*? I used to know all this and I can't remember. Somehow *Gay Times* came along and for a while it was *Gay Times* incorporating *Him* and then that ceased and it just became *Gay Times*. And they then opened The Zipper Store in Camden, because *Gay Times* was based in Camden, the publishing company. And they opened The Zipper Store in Camden the manager of which had been working in the original shop where Millivres started. And then the publishing company started producing magazines like *Vulcan* and *Zipper*. And that was its core business for a while, and then *DIVA* was setup, and then of course the laws on sex videos got slightly relaxed and they got into that, and they then merged with Prowler and opened The Prowler Store. And of course *Attitude* came along when I was at *Gay Times*. And funnily enough we were all convinced it was going ... we thought it would hit us really badly, but it actually did the reverse <chuckles> our sales went up which was bizarre.

And when *Gay Times* ... there was the whole problem, I know they had a big problem with getting distribution of the magazine and there was some time when Smiths wouldn't distribute it, and they eventually cracked that and got Smiths to properly distribute it and they got much better distribution of the magazine. And there was the whole sort of ... the Pink Pound became fashionable and so they started to get more mainstream advertising. And there was a period when I know in one year that they took over a million pounds in advertising revenue, I mean it was a big year, they took a lot of money then. But they made the mistake, I think, that a lot of companies do is they then try to diversify too much and didn't concentrate on their core business all the time. I think *Gay Times* suffered eventually from that – I have no idea what the circulation is now, I would be prepared to bet it's not what it was when I was there, which isn't just a boast from me, things have changed, times have changed. But I don't know, I'm not in touch with it anymore. But we were there when....

You see I must've been quite actively involved because I remember going to cover the debates with David Smith in the House of Commons when the Edwina Curry bill was introduced to equalise the age of consent at 16. And the Conservatives brought in the stupid compromise of 18. And it was an evening debate, I remember that, and there was a big protest, an Outrage protest going on outside and David and I were in the Chamber. And it was interesting 'cause Kinnock was still the Labour leader, wasn't he? Kinnock spoke I think, yeah I think Kinnock spoke, he did yeah. And Tony Blair was there, so maybe it was a bit late... no, was it '92? I can't remember now, or was it '94. It might've been '94. Yeah it must've been '94 I think, in which case it must've been John Smith was the leader. Anyway, I know Tony Blair was the home affairs spokesmen, and he made, I thought, a very good speech in favour of equality at 16. And then we left at about 11 o'clock whilst Outrage

was trying to break down the doors <laughs> of parliament. And we went back to the office and wrote the story up. And then, I don't know, we were there till one or two, and then we had to go home and get up really early in the morning and get a copy of Hansard. Because this was the days before Hansard was on the internet, because the internet was in its infancy then, so that we could put all the correct quotes in and get the voting figures to see who'd voted and how many Tories had voted for 16 and how many Labour MPs had voted against 16, that sort of thing, and who they were.

So that was quite an exiting time, and of course when Labour came in there was a lot of changes then. And I interviewed Mo Mowlam at one stage. And the other thing that was happening, the other big thing happened at *Gay Times* when I was there was the ... what were they called at the time? LAGPA, yeah the Lesbian and Gay Police Association started in, I think, 1990.

<Part 4 starts>

But they were sort of quite secret at the time. But then they got in touch with us at *Gay Times* because of the stuff we were doing, and I got to know them quite well – there was a guy called Tony Murphy who was a great guy, and he was one of the sort of leading lights of it. And so we did an increasing amount of stuff with gay police officers, and I managed to get the Metropolitan Police to agree that we could put Paul Cahill on the cover in uniform. Which we did, I think that was the first time ... I've also given you a copy of a article that I wrote for *The Guardian* as a result of that. And we did a lot of stuff on gay police officers. We did a lot more stuff on gay murders, we interviewed a lot of police officers, there was the whole Colin Ireland thing which we did a lot on.

RR: I read that it was *Gay Times* that told the police that there was a link between...

CR: No, it was Galop.

RR: Was it Galop?

CR: Some people keep saying it was me and it wasn't, I keep having to put people right on this, it was actually ... the worker here was called Paul Duffy, he was an American guy. And the first murder that Colin Ireland committed was Peter Walker, that was his name, wasn't it? And that was in March of that year. Which year was it, do you remember? Was it '93 or '94?

RR: '93

CR: '93 that's right. Well it was March of that year Peter Walker was killed and he was found, that was around Battersea I think. And then the second one was, I think, a chap called Drew Collier and he was found dead at home. And it was finally getting to the stage where the police were beginning to realise that when there were gay murders they ought to contact Galop. Because partly Galop was an intermediary so that witnesses could ring Galop rather than ringing the police, but also because Galop had expertise in this matter. And so they rang ... also in those days, I think it's slightly better now. Individual police forces in London did their own murder investigations but they didn't talk, which was stupid because if there's a serial killer <chuckles> they're not going to stay within one police district, you know? And so the police officer,

which was Albert Patrick I think it was, he got his chaps to ring Galop, and Paul Duffy took the call. And when they described the circumstances of Drew Collier's death, Paul went, 'Well that reminds me of the Peter Walker case. That sounds exactly the same.' Because there were certain things: being tied up; strange things being done to the bodies; evidence of torture, that sort of thing. So Paul Duffy went, 'That sounds to me exactly like the Peter Walker murder, do you think there could be somebody doing this?' And they immediately went off and found out about the Peter Walker murder. And by that stage Colin Ireland was killing people very quickly, because they'd been about three month's gap between the first and the second. And they still, even after that it took them some time ... actually I may have got it wrong, it may have been that Drew Collier was something like the fourth, come to think of it, and they'd been two before that. Because I know there was one guy who was the American Eire, Perry Bradley the Third, or whatever his name was, who they didn't think it was a gay murder at first because his family said he wasn't gay. And it may have been in fact that I'm wrong, but I think it was that, that it was Drew Collier was the fourth and that's when they made the link, and that's when they had this dramatic midnight press conference at Scotland Yard saying there's a serial killer on the loose.

And the next day they discovered the fifth victim, I think that's how it went. Emmanuel Spiteri. It was that sort of order of events, and then ... it turned out that Emmanuel Spiteri was the last victim but they didn't know that at the time. And I think he was the last victim because the announcement had been made that there was a serial killer and that's partly what Colin Ireland was after, because he'd been ringing the police saying, 'Don't you care I've been killing these people?' And he'd rang *The Sun* as well and said, 'Why is this not getting coverage? Don't you realise?' And still nothing happened. And once they'd made that dramatic announcement, Pride was shortly after that and I remember the Pride that year, it was full of police, full of leaflets, and of course it was all, as it turned out, a waste of time because Colin Ireland never killed again. But there was a period of quite a lot of fear and the press headlines were things like 'The Fairy Liquidator' they were calling him, which was nice. <Sighs> And of course because bondage was involved you can imagine what the tabloids did. And then eventually they released they'd found ... I think this was Galop's second involvement, that somebody rang Galop to say ... because there was a picture of Emmanuel Spiteri in the paper. Somebody said, 'I was on a train with him that night and I saw him with this other bloke.' And it was a train to Hither Green I should think because Emmanuel Spiteri lived in Catford or Hither Green, I can't remember now. So they went and got the CCTV and they found this one image of Emmanuel Spiteri with a man behind him just coming out of a door – you couldn't properly see this man but you could partly see him and it was Colin Ireland. And they released that image. And Colin Ireland a few weeks later went into a lawyer's and said, 'That's me in that picture but I didn't do it.' So of course they arrested him and then he confessed.

So it was a very strange time that. But there was an awful lot, the sort of late '80s, early '90s, there seemed to be a great spike in murders of gay men. And then I think it was '94 when there was the serial killer in North Wales, Peter Moore, which was another one where the police completely failed to realise until after he'd killed his last victim that the same person was doing all the murders. Peter Moore actually tried to sue me for defamation <laughs> I had letters from him from prison. Because we covered the case in quite a lot of detail and we sent one of our journalists down to cover the trial in ... I've

forgotten where it was now, somewhere in North Wales anyway. And that was interesting because there was no London Press there except one, I think, tabloid journalist. And of course my journalist then, they overheard ... there were two tabloid journalists, and they overheard one say to the other, 'What are we doing here? It's only poofs killing poofs.' Because Peter Moore was gay, but he said ... he got really upset that we called him gay in the paper and he said, 'I'm not gay, I'm bisexual.' And he tried to sue me for defamation, it was so funny. But of course we just told him to fuck off, I mean it was a year ... partly there was the ... it had expired. What do you call it when it's too long after the event? But also it's because the lawyers said <laughs> he hasn't got a reputation that you could defame. I mean you're not lessening his reputation by saying that. But he did, he went through a phase of writing us letters, and we actually got in touch with the prison governor and said, 'Can you stop it, it's getting a bit ... we don't like it.' And I think they're in the papers, I'm pretty sure they are in the papers that I sent to Paul Carpenter.

We also did a lot, and I followed it up over the years, was the Michael Boothe case. Because it was never sold, even though we did an investigation at *Gay Times*. It was my idea and we put an advert in the local Ealing newspaper, I can't remember, it was the *Ealing Gazette* or something. This was some years later, saying, 'Do you know anything about this?' And we got one man came in and told us, and he gave us all these names and he said, 'I know this guy and I used to hang out with him a bit.' He kept saying, 'I wasn't involved with him at the time.' And we had to believe him. And he gave us all these names and he said, 'I'm sure it was them and blah, blah, blah, blah.' And we tried to follow it up. And we, at one stage I remember Vicky Powel rang Stephen Pound, the Ealing MP, and said, 'We've just had this informant.' And before she could say the name Stephen Pound went, 'Oh, you mean blah, blah, blah.' And it was a bit like the Stephen Lawrence where those in the know knew the names of the people who did it but couldn't make it stick. But in that case there wasn't a daily mail to sort of make a big fuss about it, and they were never tried, there was never any charges brought. And it must've been in 2000, because it was the ten year anniversary, I think, of Michael Boothe, I got *The Guardian* to let me write an article about it. And then Jack Straw I think was Home Secretary and he set up the Criminal Cases Review Commission to look at unsolved cases, specifically murders and sexual murders.

And I got the police to reopen the Michael Boothe case, but <pause> there was no ... the reason the Michael Boothe case became a scandal, other than because of the nature of it, which was horrifying what happened to the poor man. Was that there was a good deal of evidence the police cocked up, and one of the things they did, much like the Stephen Lawrence when the Stephen Lawrence accuseds were seen taking out bags of clothes before the police even bothered to go round. We think a similar thing happened here, so there was absolutely no ... and the forensic evidence from Michael Boothe was destroyed, so when they went to reopen it there was no forensic evidence for them to go on, nothing. And they made this big thing and they issued ... I've given you copies in there of the sort of murder enquiry poster with the picture of Michael Boothe on, and I think when they launched that reinvestigation, Michael Boothe's brother and his wife came up to London. And that was interesting to meet them because so often one would find in gay murder cases that the ... in quite a lot of cases the murder of the gay man would be the first time the family would know he was gay. In quite a lot of cases they didn't have much family or close family and they didn't have

advocates, so the fact that Michael Boothe's brother was willing to come out and speak, and speak on his behalf was quite unusual funnily enough in a lot of those cases.

It's changed in recent years and there have been quite a few cases lately when relatives have, you know ... especially with that young chap that was killed on Clapham Common. Was it Jody his name? Yeah. And the poor guy who was killed on the South Bank, Mark, and of course the Admiral Duncan. Now the Admiral Duncan thing was extraordinary, because I was at *Gay Times* then and it was May wasn't it, of that year. It was the beginning of the May bank holiday weekend, it was a Friday night and it was absolutely scorching, it was a beautiful day. And we were in the habit at *Gay Times* of going out after work. And on the Friday ... we were finishing something off, but one of our friends there worked in the ad department, and we had agreed to meet in town and I think we'd agreed to meet in barcode. But Jonathan went ahead saying, 'I'm going to The Admiral Duncan.' And before we went down the town we'd gone to The Black Cap for a drink, and suddenly there was all this hoo-hah, and people were on their mobiles and suddenly we discovered what had happened and we realised that's where Jonathan was. And so we just legged it ... I don't think he had a mobile phone, so we legged it down and of course when we got there it was all cordoned off. And eventually Jonathan emerged and he had fortunately for him, been stood by the door. But nevertheless when the blast went off the ceiling did fall on him and he'd got part of his thumb ... bizarrely, he was holding his drink I think with his thumb out, and the blast, because it was the way the blast went, it was like a very narrow blast and if you were just out of the way of it you didn't get hit by the hail of nails and everything. So it was just basically his thumb got hit by a bit of shrapnel, but then the ceiling fell in and it just was horrendous and he was crawling out over who knows what. It was just ... and he was physically practically unhurt but he was so traumatised by it, as you could imagine. It was just awful.

So I remember that vividly. And I remember going down to the ceremony they had in Old Compton Street, a sort of remembrance or memorial service as it was. So it seems like I've been sort of vaguely <chuckles> connected with a lot of that stuff, but not since really, since I left gay journalism I've sort of increasingly lost touch with it all. But from Galop onwards I did do a lot of work on policing and stuff and I'm pretty proud of all the stuff we did, and I'm really proud of Galop, as I say, I do think Galop doesn't get the credit it deserves. It probably does now more it's better known, but in those days in the '80s it was doing this amazing work in the most difficult circumstances and defending the indefensible as it were, people who nobody cared about. They were fiddling in the bushes serves them right, you know? Well it didn't, and I'm very glad, you know? There was also the days of the pretty policemen, that was one of Galop's big sort of advances when they discovered and they had evidence to prove it, that the Metropolitan Police were sending police officers, as it were, dressed as gay men making advances to other gay men and then nicking them. And it took a while but eventually they stopping doing that and they actually made a policy statement, the Met, that they weren't going to do that anymore. But you know, we had stories of policemen hiding up in the ceiling of toilets and peering through holes in the ceiling and then going down and nicking people. It was just nuts! And we kept saying, 'Why are you wasting police time on this apart from anything else?' And they kept saying, 'Oh, you know, kiddies might've gone into the toilet.' And blah, blah, blah, blah. You know, come off it. <Chuckles> These are men fiddling with each other, they're

not and kiddies wouldn't know, and there was never any evidence that any child ever <laughs> was caught scandalised by this behaviour.

So I think Galop should get all the credit. I mean Outrage gets an awful lot of credit, but I think in my sort of hierarchy of it all in terms of changing police attitudes, and helping to change society's attitudes, and in giving gay men the confidence to not just accept that they were going to be arrested and to take it, but that they could actually challenge it. I think Galop's the first in that. Then I think comes *Gay Times* and David Smith and to some extent me, and then comes Outrage. Because that was the order of things really, and I think Galop did the heavy lifting, it really did. And I'm glad you are doing this because I don't think Galop should be forgotten. And my part in it is fairly minimal, I mean I think the real unsung heroes were the people in those days like David James, and Brian Stockdale, and John Harrison, and then subsequently Angus Hamilton, you know the lawyers who took it on and who went ... you know, and it could've damaged their professional reputation, but not only were they taking these cases on but they were out as gay men too, which was, I think, brave actually. They didn't have to do it, they could've lost face, they probably did in the eye's of the profession, but they were prepared to accept that and good for them I say.

RR: What do you think the role of Galop is today and will be in the future?

CR: Well because ever since the sort of turning point of the Michael Boothe case really, and you know Outrage and others who were protesting at the time were saying, 'Get out of the toilets and get on the streets and defend gay men, stop arresting them and start defending them.' Because murders were ... you know *Gay Times* had made the lead in establishing that there was this hidden wave of violence, murderess violence against gay men that was going on, and there was all the stuff about the homosexual panic defence, as it was called. After 1990, I think it was '88 or '89 was virtually a post war record in terms of prosecutions of gay men for gross indecency – it was worse than the 1950s even. That was partly to do with HIV and the absolute hysteria, and it was partly to do with Section 28 I strongly believe. Because I think people always forget the Section 28; there were no prosecutions of teachers at all, but it created a climate and I think that was the important thing. But eventually it sort of blew up in its face, Section 28, because the protests were so huge it sort of created a new political impetus. And that's another thing that I think Outrage came out of as well, was that Section 28 thing that created a huge ... Stonewall did of course as well. It was such a big thing that suddenly gay people found their voice again, well perhaps properly for the first time in large numbers.

But after 1990 prosecutions of gay men declined, and then there was the Edwina Curry bill and Mrs Thatcher had gone and the Tory Party sort of slightly started backtracking a bit, and the age of consent was brought down to 18 from 21 for gay men. And then sort of the mid-90s Labour clearly was in the ascendant and was going to win the next election and win it big, and they had clear policies about repealing Section 28 and equalising the gay age of consent and ultimately bringing in the human rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and to British law which was a great thing as well. Because Stonewall was taking a lot of cases that they had to go to the European Court, and of course that took forever. There was all the gay military stuff that was happening. So essentially the focus shifted, fewer and fewer gay men were getting busted so I guess Galop's emphasis would've shifted, quite naturally,

more towards other aspects of policing, and particularly violence against people, just a natural progression really. I mean I don't know how much of your work still is to do with public sex offences but I would guess it's much less of the casework now; it was nearly all of the casework when I started there.

Things have changed massively. Clearly not enough because of that poor lad that was killed on Clapham Common, but there are still people hanging around looking for gay men having sex on public places late at night and wanting to do them harm. There are still boys that think that getting tanked up and going queer bashing is a jolly good idea. But I get the feeling that there's less of that around, I may be wrong, but I get that feeling. Although, on the other hand, there's evidence that the far right is a bit resurgent, and of course that will bring trouble for gay people as well as for black people in its wake in a big way. And bizarrely of course because the far right is targeting a lot of its [22:33 ire] at the moment on what they say is Islamic fundamentalism, but clearly it's more than that. But ... Islamism of course, a core principle of that is anti-gayness, so it's a bit bizarre that you've got these two sort forces fighting each other. And of course the Christian church has become obsessed with gay people and homophobia. So there's still life in the old beast yet. And I don't know what would happen if a Tory Government's elected, because at least Labour has take the sting out of it politically, certainly in terms of the main parties and the Tory Party has sort of apologised for Section 28 but I personally find that a bit hollow. Although it was quite interesting that Boris Johnson too, when he was running for major, sort of had to court the gay community because he realised ... you know that's one thing Ken Livingston could not be accused of <laughs> is being an enemy to the gay community so. The Tory's are gradually seeing that and they've got, what's her name? Margo James, is it, who's going to be quite big in the Tory Party who's the open lesbian business woman. And they've got one or two front bench people who are openly gay, haven't they? Alan Duncan of course, who shot himself in both feet recently.

That was another thing we did at *Gay Times* of course; we did a lot of stuff on gay MPs. Because Chris Smith came out in 1984, but then he was practically a loan voice for years, and years, and years and then of course in '97 a whole load of openly gay people came in – Twig of course being the famous one, defeating Michael Portillo but, Ben Bradshaw, who's still around in government, Stephen Twig's not of course because he lost a seat. And Angela Eagle's still there or thereabouts. So that matters too I think, and I think still I'd come back to Galop played a part and changing that climate I really do think.

RR: Is there anything else you'd like to add that you don't think I've asked you about?

CR: I don't know. Well I think another thing that I perhaps haven't gone on about enough is the gay police officers; the coming out of gay police officers on mass, as it were, was a very good and big thing. And it's all gone a bit quiet on that front as far as I can see, but I know in the early days they did have problems. And there was all the stuff that Paul Cahill went through where his car was vandalised and he felt he was being targeted by other officers, because he was the sort of pretty face of gay policing, if you know what I mean? He was a good-looking lad and he got a lot of attention, media attention anyway and I think he also got a bit of a backlash. But I don't know

how gay officers are getting on now because, again, I think it was the Colin Ireland enquiry, they seconded a gay officer, Ian ... I can see his face but I can't remember his name, sorry about that if you're listening. But he more or less got seconded as a public relations exercise because he was then sidelined completely. But because the police were criticised for that and for other failings and other murder investigations, and because of the fact that Galop ... they realised how useful Galop could be and they'd made that connection. I think gradually, gradually, gradually gay police officers were more and more involved in these investigations, because they could ... I think in the aftermath of the Admiral Duncan thing, I know there was a big presence of gay officers in Old Compton Street and they went round to pubs and they were almost doing a reassurance exercise, I think following the rest of, what's his name who did it? David [27:00]. And certainly they have sort of suddenly got a much lower profile, but I think that might be good because it might mean they're a bit more normalised within the police force and they're more accepted, and they are more part of those investigations. I'm not up to speed on that but that would be my feeling.

And again, because Galop was ... you know the original name of it was the Gay London Policing Project, and then group I think it was subsequently again, but I think it was project in the early days. The work they did with the police, again, was important. They did help slowly to change attitudes, they helped to change the whole idea that police should, a) investigate these things more thoroughly and they shouldn't just dismiss it as, 'Oh it's a crime against gay men.' You know queer bashing was a big thing that they just sort of, 'What do you expect? That's what lads do. Too bad. Tough.' And with murders they were very slapdash. But now I think Galop started pressuring them and then *Gay Times*, *Outrage*, *Stonewall* I guess too, and then the gay police officers coming out on mass, it really changed things a big, big deal, a great deal. And the Met in the end in particular did respond quite well. And I think perhaps too all that stuff with James Anderton in Manchester; in the mid-80s when HIV was a big thing and he made a speech. He was a fundamentalist Christian, Head of the Greater Manchester Police, and he made a speech about gay people swilling in a cesspit of their own making, which was a huge thing and in the end he actually resigned. And then ironically it turned out, I think, that his daughter came out as a lesbian; a bit like Dick Cheney's daughter, you know? The irony of it.

But yeah, I think Galop's played its part very well and I'm sure it'll continue so to do. <Chuckles>

RR: Colin, thank you very much.

CR: You're welcome.

<End of recording>