

TIM PRYOR

Extract 1: 33.22 – 38.27

TELLING MY GIRLFRIEND AND MY PARENTS

T: ... Maggie? Oh right. When I was twenty-one. I told her ... when I met ... I just thought I had to tell her, you know, I was living a double life. I was still seeing Edgar in Switzerland and all that sort ... and so, and I just felt so bad about this, I thought ... and she would understand. I knew that she loved me and I loved her, erm, so I went to her one night and just told her. We'd been to a concert, came back, she was staying in the nurses' home. I went to the nurses' home with her and she smuggled me in in the laundry basket 'cos men weren't allowed in, and I stayed the night and during the night I told her, and we spent all night talking and she spent all night crying, and that was the last I saw of her. Never ever again, you know? I was smuggled out again the next morning. Never heard a peep from her, but I now know that was ... she was a nurse then, but I now know that she trained to be a doctor, and she's just retired 'cos she was two or three years older than me.

C: And at that point did you sort of think "Now I can be completely gay"?

T: Yes. Yes. I did. I thought "Well that's it, I can, I can let go" But there were my parents of course, so I didn't know what to do. I was really upset by Maggie's reaction. I thought, you know "She's my friend" you know? Er ... "Why can't she understand?" Which was terribly selfish of me but never mind that, that's how I felt. But I had a friend er, in Goldsmith who was doing the same course, Cath, and she realised something was wrong, so she got it out of me, what was going on, and she just went to the head of department and said "Tim needs to go home, but he hasn't got any money, can you lend me a fiver?" And he didn't ask any questions at all, he just gave her the money, which was absolutely wonderful. So I had enough money to get ... and she put me on the train at St Pancras and sent me up to Sheffield. So I arrived home but my parents weren't expecting me and it was a Friday night, and I got home about eight or something like that, and I knew my father wasn't there 'cos the car wasn't around, but the lights were on so I knew Mum was in. And I went ... I knocked on the door 'cos I didn't have my key and she opened the door and said "What?" and I just started crying, you know? And she just put her arms around me, you know? She said "What's up? What's up?" So I told her what was up and she said "Yes, I know. I've always known." I thought "Fuck! Why the bloody hell didn't you tell me? What didn't you make any indication?" You know? But she said "I never thought I could talk to you about it, you know, but, you know, it's who you are, it's all right, so fine".

Then my dad came home about an hour later so I had to go through it all again, and he just burst into tears, and he said "I'm not crying because you're saying you're a homosexual, I'm crying because you never trusted me enough to tell you ... for you to tell me." And he said, "So I've done something wrong." You know? "I've not been strong enough for you to lean on" You know? And I said "Oh Dad, no, come on, don't take it back to you, this is about me!" *(Laughs)* And they were wonderful. They always were wonderful, you know? I would go home with boyfriends and they'd give us a double bed without any question whatsoever ... Nick, the guy in San Francisco, who died, I took him home to my parents. Again, he was ... he

looked awful, and my dad took him fly-fishing. He thought that would do him good, you know, so for hours they stood in the water, in silence and calm, and Nick was at peace, you know, he'd found something ... So when he died, he sent half his ashes over here to ... for us to er ... throw off the Hammersmith bridge, because when he was here, he and I would go cruising down the towpath because between here and Putney was a gay cruising area late at night.

C: Was it?

T: Oh yeah.

C: Is it still now?

T: No, no.

C: So what sort of era was this?

T: This was in the ... again, this was in the '70s, no, '80s sorry, this is the '80s, and Nick, erm you know, he was too ill to want to join in anything or do anything, so we'd take a flask of coffee and sit down there and watch everybody! And comment on everything, you know? Sorry.

So he said he wanted half his ashes, 'cos he'd had such a lovely time there and so ... but he said "Would you take some up to your dad ..." he said, "... to sprinkle on where we went fishing", so that's what I did, you know? And I don't know why we're talking about all that, but that's how it was. My parents were wonderful. Always. When they met William they treated him just like another son, you know? He was always included, still is, included in everything. I have never ever ... since then, since telling Maggie, I have never ever denied being gay to anybody. I have never proselytised it, I've never, you know, announced it, but I've never said "No". If somebody's asked me, I've told them directly. Even when I was working as a therapist. I mean you're not supposed to say anything about yourself are you in therapy? But if anyone asked me I'd tell them the truth. And I thought I don't care about all the transference issues and all that sort of stuff, you know, they have to know me as a person otherwise they're not going to talk to me. It's simple, you know? It's one human being talking to another human being isn't it?

Extract 2: 1.07:43 – 1.13:44

BEING ARRESTED FOR 'NOT' COTTAGING ON PUTNEY TOW PATH

In 1983 when we moved in here we had a huge moving in party about two or three weeks later. We invited practically everyone we knew, including Philip, this old friend who lived in Fulham, where I lived for a year. And he then was in his mid-seventies and quite dodderly, but by the end of the party, it got towards the end of the party, he said he wanted to go home, so I said "Do you want me to walk you home?" So we walked up the towpath ... It was only about half nine, ten o'clock. During the party somebody had emptied a jug of red wine over me by mistake, so because there were so many people here I just went quickly into the bedroom and put on a pair of tracksuit trousers and a tracksuit top and that was it.

So I was dressed like that. When I got to Philip's he'd been having problems with erm, piles. So I'd lent him a tube of KY to ... to help, you know, putting in suppositories and things, and he gave me the end of the KY. He said "I don't need this anymore." I said "Well chuck it away". He said "Oh no, no." I thought "Well, I might need it one day." So I shoved it in my pocket, right? So I was walking back, by this time it was about midnight, I suppose and I was walking back on the tow path and all of a sudden there's a raid. A police raid. And every single man on the tow path was arrested, including me.

C: What year ...?

T: This was '83. Including me. I was walking down the tow path minding my own business, so I knew what was going on around the bushes. There were lots of men around, I knew that, but I knew I had to get back here because the party was still going on. So I was arrested. And I was just picked up and thrown in the back of a police van with lots of others. None of us ... we were all scared and shocked. I mean I knew that some of them had been doing things but, you know, there were others like me who hadn't. And we were taken to Richmond Police station and we had to empty all our pockets of course, and of course the KY ... and of course then it was ... all the conclusions were reached why ... that ... I was carrying that and what I was doing. So I was put in the cell for the night, and the next morning I was allowed out at about five o'clock and I rang William and asked him to come and get me, and he had no idea that I wasn't here because he ... he was in bed with somebody from the party! So he thought I was in the other bedroom!

So anyway, he came to get me and in the meantime er, the police sergeant told me I was going to be charged with Gross Indecency. I said "But with whom? I wasn't doing anything." And so there was a guy sitting on the bench, he said "Him." Just like that, just picked him up. "Him." And I'd never seen him before and we were both, you know, in shock and we said "Hang on" you know? But that was it ... So he wrote down my name and then he wrote down his name and his address and thank God I've got a good memory because as soon as I got home I looked him up in the phone book and rang him up, and he turned out to be the registrar from LSE. So I knew that he was bright therefore, and so William got onto Switchboard and found out the name of the solicitor who dealt ... could deal with all these things and so the guy I was charged with, whose name I've completely forgotten now, lived in Putney. He came here, we had a long talk about what we should do, with William, and then we went to the solicitor who William had found and he was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. We told him the whole story and so he said "OK, you've got to appear in court tomorrow and so you must plead Not Guilty. But then it has to go to Crown Court. Are you prepared to do that?" We said "Of course. Yes, of course."

And I thought ... I was teaching, I thought "How in the hell ... I can't tell them I'm a teacher." So I said I was a counsellor, I was a volunteering counsellor. I didn't have any income whatsoever. And I was a volunteer counsellor. I wasn't telling a lie, but I was just, you know, being mis ... economical with the truth, because I didn't want anything to get out into the school because I thought if it did, I would be suspended. So I was ... I was quiet about all that. The guy from the LSE had to tell er, the hierarchy there and they were great, you know, they backed him up and he carried on with the job and stuff. So fortunately therefore I qualified for er ... what's it called?

C: Legal Aid?

T: Legal Aid, and he didn't. In the end it cost him £15,000. Right? It took a year for it to come to court, you know? We just had to get on with our lives while all this was going on. We managed to meet other people who had been arrested that night too, and who told us their stories and it was all very much the same stuff, and we all agreed that we would stick together and we would fight it. So ... and there was ... Richmond Police station was run by this Inspector who was known as the Red Inspector, you know? He was vile, absolutely, he was a real fascist, really. And he was the one who just ordered the raid and everything that happened after it. So the trial came up in Kingston Crown court and I had two witnesses, character witnesses, one of whom was a Canon, you know, who was one of the other volunteer counsellors at The Albany Trust and the other one was a professor, all this ... and oh, I had another one who was a doctor. So, all these character witnesses, and I stood in court and this inspector lied through his teeth completely. He said I was walking along the towpath with no trousers or underpants on at all.

C: This is ridiculous.

T: It is ridiculous. And so my barrister then laid into him and said "So well, when Tim got to Kingston ... or to Richmond, or in the van, when ... how could he have put on his trousers in that time? Because they're tracksuit trousers, they're tight. He would have had to take his shoes off to get them on, you know, when ...?" And so, I had to take my trousers off in court and demonstrate how I couldn't get these trousers on, you know? So it was laughed out of court basically, you know? I was found not guilty and so was everybody else ...