

JEAN T

Extract 1: 00.47 – 3.30

WOMEN'S AID, BOY CHILDREN and SEX SHOP ATTACKS

And so, I joined Women's Aid and the local one was Camden, so I went to the refuge there and I had moved from running an arts project which was the Liverpool School of Language, Music, Dream and Pun, really quite surreal and artistic obviously, to a hard nose feminist group with Women's Aid, mainly run by lesbian separatists with what I thought was really hard-lined politics then, probably child's play now, but at the time I was shocked erm, at the rules, and there were so many rules. I mean there was rules around me personally, like your appearance - I had long hair and make-up, and that wasn't acceptable so everybody assumed for years actually that I was bisexual 'cos I had long hair and make-up, and that worked to my advantage sometimes, but ... the other rules around boy children I was quite shocked about.

I went out with someone who had an eighteen-month old boy, Flo, and she lived in a women's co-op in Hackney and when we went visiting friends she had to leave this toddler in a pram on the doorstep because boy children were not allowed in the house. I mean that would be like a child protection issue now, but at the time ... and I was like, I couldn't believe it but I was too young and inexperienced politically to know whether it was right or wrong, so I just watched everything and took it all in thinking "This is the right thing to do" because it was ... there were so many things they were doing that were right, so I just assumed the whole philosophy around boy children was right. In the refuge ... constant meetings with residents to discuss whether boy children were allowed in this part of the playroom or to go on that outing.

Boy children were treated really differently, and erm, yeah that aspect of politics was strange and they were also extremely radical and I found myself a bit of a stranger in a strange land really, erm, watching people as they smashed windows of sex shops and gluing up the locks and putting graffiti on the bridge in Kentish Town. Can't remember what it said but there were women symbols involved in there somewhere. And there was a reason for this it, it was direct action and I'm not sure quite what it directly achieved but it was certainly very visible, and later on some of the same women were swinging into the BBC and, you know, they were doing things that did have an impact. So at the time I was just sucking it all up, and it was a strange and scary new world, but I quite liked it, mainly because it was a lot of women with short haircuts, and I was rather attracted to them.

Extract 2: 10.50 – 11.40

ACTIONS AGAINST SEX SHOPS

J: They weren't marches, they were illicit little drive-outs with balaclavas and ...

C: Really?

J: And paint, and this was obviously pre-CCTV days, and no, they were direct actions against sex shops around the Kings Cross and Kentish Town area to express their disapproval of the objectification of women's bodies and lives. Which I believed in, but I didn't really like doing criminal damage so I never actually (*laughs*) put myself on the line but I was there. So I was supporting I suppose. Is that a crime? Supporting criminal damage. I don't know. And that was ... that was just sporadic. Women would just decide to do it. Three or four would just say "We're doing it on Friday night" and go and do it. It wasn't, as far as I know, strategically coordinated, just little happenings.

Extract 3: 16.32 – 21.52

DRILL HALL, DUKE OF WELLINGTON, THE ANGEL, THE WOW BAR, ACE OF CLUBS, VENUS
RISING

J: I liked The Drill Hall because you could hear people talk and more importantly people could hear how amusing I was being! And it was a good pick-up joint so you could actually talk, you didn't have to go through blasts of music or glasses broken underfoot, and there was a touch of culture about it, and I still had the theatrical head on me from Liverpool, so it was quite nice. Erm ... people were quite earnest, and ... or spiritual and that was quite a nice balance sometimes, and they had their politics as well, as I found out when I knocked off a couple of the staff there. But um, I enjoyed Mondays, and then Tuesdays was The Fallen Angel, which for me was my stalwart 'cos my best friend, Angie, lived round the corner, and I loved Tuesdays at The Fallen Angel, and that was a very nice sort of atmosphere, more of a bar where you could talk and flit about. It was circular so you could work the room quite easily.

C: When you say Tuesdays, was that for women on a Tuesday?

J: It was women only, yes, women only was a big thing, of course. Women only nights. I didn't even look at mixed nights actually until much later. It was nice to have women only nights. Now, I'm not bothered. But yeah, Wednesdays was The Duke of Wellington.

C: What was that like?

J: Erm, it was in a back room of course. Everything was always in a back room or a basement. But that's OK but we were a little bit crowded. You had to tread on a few people as you worked the room and a lot depended - I used to try and get to know the people that ran it, so I usually had my own preferred space. And then Thursdays ... where was Thursdays?

C: What, so if you got to know the people who ran it then they'd give you a table somewhere you wanted?

J: Well, you just worked it a bit better sometimes you could use their own rooms upstairs to leave your bag and coats, 'cos there were a lot of thieves around! And that sort of thing, you know, where you'd just get offered a drink on the house. Or if you had to queue, God forbid, I actually had to wait in a queue, so I'd always queue jump 'cos I knew

the people that ran it, or sometimes I went out with the people that ran it, like at that one in Islington. Can't remember the name of the pub. There was The Rosemary Branch and The King Edward of course.

C: Oh yeah. What was the King Edward like?

J: Well that was boys, but I ended up working there, doing cabaret, so, you know, I knew the woman who ran it, fondly called Porshie, 'cos that's what she drove. And I can't remember where I went on Thursdays, then Fridays was Rackets. Saturday you went ... go in town - Ace of Clubs, that really was a hell of a hell-hole. So I liked that very much.

C: That was a night club, wasn't it?

J: It was, and ...

C: In?

J: In Piccadilly. It was quite rough and tough; there were the fights there too. Fights were always interesting because you never really knew it was a fight, you just saw a sea of movement slowly coming towards you, and that's when you'd know. So you had to be quite alert. But I usually drove everywhere, so I tended not to drink - not always though. Ace of Clubs was the exception. I've ... I've been with some very strange women there, and they had toilets that were just very slippery, so, you know, the idea of doing things in their toilets ... but you did, because it was expedient. Not everyone can come home to the suburbs after a night out! And I can't remember what I did on Sundays. Oh, it was probably the Duke of Wellie again, it was drinking. And there were others, there was Canes for late night pick-ups, and so there were a few dives and there was, in town, what was that one with fishes in a tank? God, my memory is rubbish.

C: I think a gay man has told me about that, was it a mixed place?

J: It was, and it was in Oxford Street, and I'll remember it after we've finished speaking, but yeah.

C: When did the Wow Bar open?

J: Ooh.

C: Was that late '80s?

J: The two Sues are a hundred now! So it started when ... that was late '80s I think.

C: That was in Covent Garden.

J: It started off in Chalk Farm ...

C: Did it?

J: The Wow Bar. Yeah, where Camden Market is, and I liked it there, mainly because it was easier to get home from there. But also it had a different atmosphere and then it was taken around as people had to move about a bit to cope with rent prices and other venue charges. So yeah, I've forgotten about that. I loved the Wow Bar. That was Sunday nights ...

C: Was it?

J: Yeah, and lot of places were months and months, so Venus Rising in Brixton ...

C: Oh yeah.

J: ... was once a month, and so those were really big times. When it was once a month you really had to go to capitalise on the opportunity, so I would travel to The Fridge for that.

C: And what was that like?

J: I enjoyed it. It was just ... it was a little bit more exotic 'cos women danced in cages, but obviously not in a page three kind of way 'cos that wouldn't have been acceptable. A lot more Black women and that was ... that was nice, but erm, it was a little further to travel so ... more of a hardship. But they ... I don't know what they offered that was different. I think that it was just new flesh!