**Rosalind Pearson Extracts Joined**

**R:** it’s funny when you look back. Did I knew that I was a lesbian or didn’t I? There’s a terrible tale of one of my friends who in fact was a lesbian. I didn’t know she was. We were inseparable. This is when we were about 15. She didn’t go to my school, but we were inseparable. We did all sorts of things together and she was really beautiful and I think I thought at the time I looked a bit like Twiggy , and I thought she looked rather like Cathy McGowan, and you know, ‘cos she had this lovely, lovely, long hair and ... and beautiful eye make-up. And just before I went off to uni, she obviously decided that wanted to tell me that I was a lesbian …er, that she was a lesbian, and maybe she thought I was too. It would have been easier if she had just kissed me, I think, or something like that, but she took me to the most sordid pub in Blackburn, just off Blackburn Boulevard, called The Railway Tavern, and we were a little drunk – so obviously she had been building up to this, and we go in there, and I’m thinking “God this is a really awful pub” and it was awful, because we used to go to some seedy pubs as well, I have to say, but this was really the seediest. And she sort of like disappeared and suddenly I found myself, back against the wall and a bus conductor came up and was like really, really, close and I suddenly realised that in this pub they were all women, and it just so shocked me that I didn’t know what to do.

And I looked over and I saw her and I sort of went “Oooh, oooh” and I went running out. She came running after me. I wished she’d kissed me then, but she didn’t. What happened is um, I said “Why did you take me in there? Why did you take me in there?” Which obviously horrified her, and we never really spoke about it after that, and I went away to uni, and then obviously the penny dropped and I thought “Oh God, I must go back and tell her I’m a lesbian” and I went back and couldn’t find her anywhere. I saw Rowena and I said “Have you seen Roisin” and she said “Ah, no, I don’t talk to Roisin any more, she’s a lesbian”. And the worst thing is I’ve tried all my like to find Roisin to say I was really sorry about this and only about, not that long ago, four or five weeks ago I was on Find my Past and I found her…

**A:**  Wow

**R:**  But she had died. She died in her mid thirties, so ...

**A:**  Ah how very sad

**R:**  But there you go.

**A:**  A bit of unfinished business

**R:**  It is. I would have loved to have told her, and at least I feel better now because I just always, always, always, wanted to tell her.

I went into lots of women’s groups. I started by being a socialist feminist obviously because I'd done my Marxist theory of alienation and that was … that was really interesting, and some of the people in those groups I still know, but I think I realised that they were a bit too hard line and rigid for me, so I moved into a more into being a radical feminist. And that’s where … where my heart actually lay.

**A:**  Were you part of the radical separatist feminist lesbian …

**R:**  Absolutely.

**A:**  Groups, no men?

**R:**  Yeah, I mean I didn’t, I didn’t think there was anything particularly wrong with that at all. Partly because if you look at where I came from men had always been peripheral to my life. Apart from my Dad. I loved my dad very much and …

**A:**  It’s a very comfortable place to be for you?

**R:**  It was fine. It was, you know, I was happy and um, I ... it’s interesting now when I look back on my life that even the women I went out with then are still my very close friends, so there's been a sort of continuity of friendship too.

**A:**  Really enduring close friendships?

**R:**  Which is wonderful, and I think there’s maybe only … I don’t know, less than five women I’ve been out with who I don’t know any more, probably three, and everybody else is still part of my life in some form.

**A:**  So some important intimate relationships during that time …

**R:**  Um, and I think it's ... I always felt even then that if you … if you fall in love with someone, and have a sexual relationship with somebody that, heterosexuals just seem to walk away from that and negate it all, and I've always thought that if you love somebody that much, how could you walk away and lose it all, leave it all behind? There had to be some way of working it through, and

I think, you know, I've never … I’ve never had unhappy endings either in my relationships. I mean I think I've probably lived a charmed life's that way, but yeah, it's always worked for me.

**A:**  It's a sort of common story that women at that time, have ended up now in our sixties having a very strong network of women friends, some who have been lovers.

**R:**  I mean my dad always used to say to me things like, I mean he was … he was very supportive of me being a lesbian, and when I made the film Women Like Us on the television he phoned me up immediately and said “Ee Fox” he used to always call me Fox, “Ee Fox” he said, “When the adverts came on I didn't want, I didn't want to see the adverts, I loved it so much.” And that was just like one of the nicest things really, so, but my Dad always worried: “I don't want you to be lonely when you get old”. And I said to him “Actually I think you're more likely to be lonely if you're heterosexual” because, you know, my mum died when she was 52, so my Dad was on his own. I mean he had friends, but he lost his sort of soul mate really when my mum died, and I think I've got lots of people who I would think are my soul mates in some form or another.

. All these people phoned in. The phones didn't stop ringing, with people saying how wonderful it was. So then the producer was going like “Oh, I've made a terrible mistake here” and they liked it so much that it had to be shown again, and so then they commissioned us to do a follow up, because people wanted to know to know what happened so Women like Us became Women Like That, ‘cos what we did was Women Like Us was really looking at the women's lives in retrospect about being, coming out as a lesbian, what life had been like for them, what the lesbian movement was like, how you met other women – ‘cos a lot of women thought they were the only lesbian in the world, um, until things like Arena Three came along when … and they started to meet and things. And so Women Like That was about them looking forward about their lives and where their lives were now, which I thought was really nice as well and er, and we took … that was then half an hour, and so we took half of those women, and I think when we look back on it now, and we showed it not long ago, a couple of weeks ago to people, and these films have really stood the test of time. I'm so proud of these films, you know, they are the best things I have done in my whole life.

**A:**  The pinnacle of your career?

**R:**  Absolutely, and everyone was saying “God, you know, they could have been made today” even though we were talking about, you know, ageism and what it's like and what will you do if you go into a sheltered home and nobody knows you're a lesbian and shouldn't we have lesbian shelters homes and whatever …

**A:**  All the stuff that's still around?

**R:**  Absolutely, and so a part of it saddens me to think “Well, we're still actually there”, um, but yeah, so I really, really, loved those, and now when young women see them, it really heartens me that they actually really like them as well. And we'd be talking … and that was the latest technology at the time. This took us like two hours to do this which you can do in the blink of an eye now, with new technology but er, but it still, they still, they don't even look old either, which surprises me.

**A:**  They still look modern?

**R:** the lesbian pantos had always been a phenomenal thing at The Drill Hall, and so we did lots … we did Peter Pan, we did Treasure Island, we did Alice in Wonderland. All sorts of things, and I loved The Drill Hall and there's something really amazing about that performance space. It saddens me to this day that we lost it, because standing on that stage, and it held 200/250 seats, and … they'd be full, full to the rafters to come and see us, which is “Wow, this is really, really good…” because I'm not trained in performance. I'm just a show-off I suppose. Um, er, and we loved it. We …we loved the story telling thing. They were stories about our lives, five minutes long, that we perform and again, get a wide variety of people who … young women who were thinking, “Oh God, these… these are these old women…” We were diverse in age, from 20s to 60s, you know, just talking about different experiences.