

## Julia Grant

[00:00:00]

**PARTICIPANT:** My name is Julia Grant. I come from the northwest of England, but I was born in Blackpool. Manchester was the nearest major city to indulge, if I was going out on the gay scene. Because I believed I was gay, before I discovered my trans... things. I made a series of films for the BBC. We've made five one-hour documentaries. The first, second and third film were called *A Change of Sex*, which was filmed before, during and after the surgery, and then there was a follow-up film in 1995 where I was at the Hollywood Bar, and another film made up in 1999 because there was still the public interest. And I think one of my claims to fame is, I think the third film in the first three actually knocked *Coronation Street* off the top of the viewing [figures]. I think 19.5 million people watched the third film, which included the surgery. So that was quite daunting at the time.

[00:01:34]

**INTERVIEWER:** How was that for you? Given that interest, and the reception of it? How did that feel at the time?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, it was a bit of a shock that there was so much interest. The press... nobody slated it or slagged it off, it was pick of the day and pick of the week on most newspapers. The TV shows were well received, like I said, millions watched it. But I think it then opened the door for the trans community. I remember, I was patient number 332 at Charing Cross Hospital. And I saw the doctor, maybe about six months after that film was transmitted, and the numbers had jumped to over 6000. And they've never dropped below 6000 since, because it became the maximum number of people that could be handled by Charing Cross.

[00:02:46]

[Break] - long silence

**INTERVIEWER:** So-

**PARTICIPANT:** And I've always been an activist as far as trans issues have been concerned. Around the time where I was going through surgery, in Manchester, in the Gay Village, I think people said, she's the only trans in the village. And it felt like I was the only one. The only thing you had was Northern Concord, which was a transvestite group, that met at the Rembrandt, of all places. You had leather and denim downstairs, and guys in drag upstairs. And it was always very contentious. Many years later when I was a bar owner in the Village, the Concord moved to the Hollywood, and they've always supported it. I've always supported the police, you know, I'd have people coming to me because I was well known in the village, and the police would come and say, we picked one of yours up on Deansgate in full drag, can you come down to the police station? And I'd have to take some clothes, get them dressed in their *male* attire, and get them back to the bar, away from any trouble. Now that's gone, 30, 40 years down the line, and we're fighting for kids, you know, and all the mental health issues, and I think that's always been an issue with

the trans population, is, we're listed under mental health, and as far as the hospitals are concerned, so I'm not given the best of welcomes. And it's difficult.

[00:05:06]

**INTERVIEWER:** How's that been for you?

**PARTICIPANT:** For me? I've been fine, and I've never regretted having my surgery. It's coming up to forty years in a couple of weeks' time since I had surgery. And as I said, there weren't many of us around then. So I was, yeah, especially around the Village area, was outspoken and made sure that trans rights were alright being followed, and fighting the cause.

[00:05:47]

**INTERVIEWER:** And what kind of responses and reactions did you get within the Village? Because sometimes it's not always seen as a trans-friendly space.

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, when- forty years ago, it was a lot easier. As I say, I was the only trans in the village, so there wasn't many of us around. I think there were only two or three people I knew at that time. But around the Village, it was the place for the old drag queens - Roxy Hart, Diamonds L'Amour, you know... they were all around... and Foo Foo Lammar, who was a bar owner. It was a good time to be around, and it was safer in Manchester than it was in London, really.

[00:06:48]

**INTERVIEWER:** OK. You mentioned beforehand – and obviously we can talk more about the activism side of it, I'd really like to hear more about that – but just going back, you mentioned before we started, about, when did you first hear about this new virus, or this HIV, or this new new thing that was...?

**PARTICIPANT:** I had a friend who... I had moved to Manchester. I had a friend who came to visit me, but he moved to Germany, and he opened a bar in Cologne. And every time I visited it, I knew there was something wrong. And he would say, you know, he'd got flu, or something. But it came out more that the symptoms of AIDS... We had the Lesbian and Gay Foundation, as it is now, operating Body Positive, you know, the George House Trust were all operating... and because I was part of the scene and outspoken, there was this whole thing where you'd into a pub and you'd get people stood to one side because they were HIV, and other people totally ignoring them. And I was thinking, you two-faced bastards, you know, that you're doing this kind of thing, and you're not even giving people a chance.

I admired, at that time, Body Positive, because Body Positive was the kind of group that, although it was being run on donations and charities, um, around the Village. They actually provided, I think- I went to the shops a couple of times, where we bought a hundred sets of bedding. And people said, what do you need bedding for? Because when you've got AIDS you sweat like a pig, and they need to change their bedding during the night. And so they needed two or three sets of bedding to be able to survive. That was daunting. And there were more and more of my friends...

took hold of the epidemic, and it was... it was awful. Every year, I hated the first of January, because it was when I was setting my new diary up and I would be crossing out names of people that'd gone that year. The first couple of years of AIDS, I think I lost about forty or fifty people. We all lost people. But some of these were close friends. You never heard of HIV with trans people, or the drag queens... it was just a terrible time. And somebody would be here today, gone tomorrow. It was frightening.

It was around that time that the Campaign for Homosexual Equality was quite active in Manchester. The three main charities... We then had the parents' groups, and more and more different groups were set up to help people. And it was important that they were there at that time, to support people, because it wasn't the person that necessarily died of AIDS – they suddenly left a group of people that didn't understand it, didn't know how to comprehend, why them? They weren't known to be frivolous or frisky or going around the scene sleeping around, and there were quite serious people that were being struck down. But it was sad.

[00:11:37]

**INTERVIEWER:** You mentioned – I'm not sure if I understood you, or heard you – you mentioned trans people and HIV. Was that something that was very visible at the time, or not so much?

**PARTICIPANT:** No, not in them days. If somebody was trans, they weren't necessarily out, and they hadn't had surgery, there were only a few of us around that could actually speak the patter, and live the life. But it's in later years... now, it's frightening. I don't think that trans people realise, there are certain pubs and clubs that the trans people go into, and because the Village has changed over the years, it's been... there's been a lot of straight guys who don't want to admit to being bi, or going around the scene. And it was easier to cop off with somebody who was trans. They wanted to try it out, you know, see what a man-made girl was like, rather than, [missed] [00:13:01], so... I think the trans population has suffered from that, because there's been so many straight guys have gone from one to the other if it's something they've enjoyed, and that's caused the problems that we have today with the HIV community, you know, the trans community has sort of said, it's never going to happen to us. But they're more vulnerable than anybody else. And never think to go and get tested.

[00:13:44]

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember, going back to the eighties, do you remember the campaigns that the government did – things like the Don't Die of Ignorance campaign – and what did you think of those at the time?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well the campaigns they were running, I think Manchester was a bit louder and a bit prouder of promoting all the different sexual problems that were around than London and Birmingham, for sure. I thought the Town Hall in Manchester got behind the population, and realised it was a big part of Manchester. And they had to do something to protect us, really. And hence the Village popping up, because before the Village became a reality, the gay scene was spread around

Manchester, from one end to the other, you know, it's a... Little pubs, little clubs; they weren't necessarily... most of them were run down pubs and clubs, which just fed the gay community. And it took some big changes to make the Gay Village rear its ugly head and become what it is. But then it was a downfall of the gay community as well.

[00:15:36]

**INTERVIEWER:** OK. Something we'll come back to... You mentioned that Manchester was louder and prouder, in a sense. What do you remember about those days in terms of, maybe some of the campaigns or some of even the conversations people were having, or the media, or any stories in the press, things like that?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think a lot of the stuff- again, the Town Hall was very involved with what was going on when it was coming up for the age of consent. Manchester spoke louder than any other part of the UK, and was well-supported by its town hall. The Gay Village had just started raising its ugly head, but it was loud, and I think people felt safe, that they could come to Manchester and become part of it, and be, you know, hidden away, and... it was important. It was important that you could [live] your life the way you wanted to live. And you could do that in Manchester easier than anywhere else in the UK. Manchester was very loud and very proud.

[00:17:16]

**INTERVIEWER:** So you've obviously been quite a figure, and instrumental in the scene in Manchester. I was wondering if you could say a little bit about that, your own history in bars and clubs and how you got involved with that?

**PARTICIPANT:** I don't know if you've heard of the Phoenix Centre? The Phoenix Centre was- the first couple of bars had started opening on Canal Street, I think the original scene when I used to go drinking before we announced that there was a gay village, you had the Union which was gay men and prostitutes, you had the Rembrandt which was leather, and drag queens upstairs, you had the New York New York, which was just a fun pub- that was then run by, oh his name's gone now, but I'll come back to him. He was a big player on the gay scene. And then you had the lady that opened Manto's and Manto's was the first gay bar, which had glass windows where you could see in, and gay people were quite happy to go in there and dance. So Carol Ainscow, who opened Manto's, there was a group of them. It was quite liberating. And then suddenly, Canal Street became Anal Street, and every building became a bar. And it was just a nightmare. And it was the beginning of the end.

I remember before Manto's, if you were in the Union and you'd come out of the Union because you wanted to go to the Rembrandt because it was a bit rougher and seedier in the... as you were walking through, the doorman would say, tuck your gold away, love, don't just walk up the street - because somebody would batter you to get your gold off you. So you took your gold in, and you'd run like shit from the Union to the Rembrandt. And back then, as I was saying, you had the drag queens and the trans Northern Concord people that were the Rembrandt, running down Canal Street

with its cobblestones in high heels, wasn't much fun! And then there was a casino bang in the middle of all of it, which was really really strange.

[00:20:01]

**INTERVIEWER:** What was that like, the casino? Did you ever go in?

**PARTICIPANT:** I used to go in because it was the only decent place you could get a meal. You could get steak and chips for about £2.50 I think. But it was... yeah, it was different. It was in between the Union and the Rembrandt.

[00:20:28]

**INTERVIEWER:** So when did you first start getting involved in your own bars?

**PARTICIPANT:** I first got involved- it wasn't in bars actually. I came to the gay village and there was a gentleman who had- there was a bar with a nightclub underneath it, and he didn't know what to do with the rest of the building. And he decided he was going to open a shopping centre. Well, I was a ceramicist, and I had a ceramics shop where you could paint your own pottery. So I took one of the first shops, and it was the start of something that really happened. It was busy because it was something where you paint your own gift for a friend or whatever.

I'd only been there about four or five months, and the landlord came in one day, very distressed, because upstairs he'd built the Phoenix Centre, which was around 10 or 11 shops which had a cafe bar right in the middle of it. And he said, the people who are running the coffee bar have just walked out, I don't know what to do. I said, that's my game, I'll take it over. I asked him what the rent was and everything else. I said, well, you're going to have to drop that rent if you want anybody to operate. And so I opened what was the Hollywood Cafe.

Now, the Hollywood Cafe opened, I think, in the May of '96. And I had a really strange visit. I'd been open about two weeks, and this guy came in and said, it's Mardi Gras in a couple of weeks, can you help us out? I said, what do you need? And he said, look, we've got people who are counting the money that is collected, and we really need to feed them before we send them home. But it'd be about midnight to about two o'clock in the morning. And he said, there's about forty of them, but they'd need breakfast or something, could you do that? I said, as long as I can have the public at the same time, it's fine. So this guy said, "fine, you open". And so the Hollywood Cafe Bar suddenly became 24 hours.

I remember the opening about two or three days before the Mardi Gras started. We had floods of people coming in. Because you've got to remember in them days, the bars closed at 11, the clubs closed at 2, and there was nothing after. So eleven o'clock we'd get a rush of people on the way to the clubs, that would call in and have a coffee and a piece of cake, and when the club closed, they'd come in at two o'clock because they didn't want to pay for a taxi home, so they'd sit and have a couple of coffees and get the first train in the morning. And that's how it started.

So over the first Mardi Gras, the Hollywood Cafe was very very successful. And this guy [from before] came and said, what did you think? I said it was brilliant. He said, I came in every night, it was always busy. I said, if only we could do this all year round. And he said, why can't you? I said, well if you think them dickheads at the Council would give me a 24-hour licence, I don't think so. And he said, I think if you put an application in, I think they would. And I said, how do you know that? And he said, well I'm the licensing officer. So suddenly the licensing officer was there. He disappeared, came back a couple of hours later, I had my licence, and the Hollywood Bar became the Hollywood.

[00:24:51]

Downstairs there was another bar; the club was in the basement. There was a bar which Manchester University opened as a gay bar for the students, not on Canal Street, but it was first bar that was there, next door to the New York New York. I think in the first year, they came up to see me, and they said, how's it going? [I said,] Great, we're doing really well. They said, well we've lost £100,000 this year, so we have to close. So the landlord came in and said, I'm going to have to close the bar, you know, they've walked out. So I said, I'll take it over.

And so the Hollywood Bar was born; the cafe was upstairs, and we had these twelve shops, that made up the Phoenix shopping centre. There was a beauty shop, a video shop, a trans clothes shop, a couple of men's clothes [shops], a hairdresser's, but they were all struggling because it never really took off. And as one closed, I'd take it over and make it a store room, or make it something else. And I ended up with the Hollywood Bar downstairs, the cafe bar upstairs was half the building, and I ended up with the two other halves as well. So I opened the top floor as a piano bar, which was then, for its day, outrageous. We had a guy singing along on the piano. We used to get people from theatres, all the shows that came up would all sing around the piano, and then we had a games room downstairs. And I think it made the Hollywood, at that time, the biggest bar in the Gay Village.

But the day I opened the Hollywood, people said, how are you going to compete with Canal Street? But Canal Street was suddenly starting to change. So I just said, well, if you're not gay, you're not coming in. And people looked at me as if I was absolutely mental. And I stood on the door for close to three years every night with my doorman, and if you weren't gay, you didn't get in. And we made it a member's bar. So if I gave you a membership, the doorman knew you, you could get in. If you were a stranger, you had to be questioned before you got in. So I'd have- because the Council didn't want "gay only" bars, they wanted them to be mixed. I could see what damage it was doing on Canal Street, so... I'd get two women come into the bar saying, can we come in, and I'd say, are you lesbians? [They didn't know what to say.] Well, are you lesbians? Which other clubs do you go into? What magazines do you read? If they couldn't answer me, I'd turn them away. So I'd turn a hundred people away a night, every night. Just wouldn't let them in. But the people that came inside realised that they were safe. And the Hollywood was the Hollywood.

And I'd had that for about two years, and there was a bar across the road on Princess Street, which was on the wrong side of Princess Street. The Gay Village was on the left hand side of Princess Street, and nothing ever worked on the other

side. And I remember the brewery coming and saying, would you take this bar over? And I thought about it... yeah. And what we could do is have, the Hollywood would be gay only, and the Manhattan as it became, became a gay bar, but you could take your straight friends in there, as in Canal Street. And I was quite open about that. And what we were doing, if you were a member of the Hollywood, you were a member of the Manhattan. So we had the Hollywood and the Manhattan.

I don't think people remember when we opened, because Princess Street was a nightmare to actually cross, with the flow of traffic. People said, how are you going to get people to cross the street? I said, don't worry. We got to the opening night. Everybody knew to be outside the Hollywood at eight o'clock, and we were going to open the Manhattan. I had two drag queens, they were both about 24/25 stone, they were huge guys, dressed as lollipop ladies. We opened the door, the music blasting out, all drag queens working on the bar, and they worked out with their sticks, their school [crossing/lollipop] sticks, and they walked into Princess Street, stopped the traffic, and beckoned people across. And that's how we did it for the first three or four days, was people flooding across Princess Street, not believing that these lollipop ladies were getting them into the bar, then it was all drag queens on the bar, a drag DJ, and the shows that we did at the Hollywood, the staff would come off stage at the Hollywood, go round the back, run across Princess Street, and then do the same show at the Manhattan. So they were singing the same shows in both venues. And there was one set of staff running the whole thing. But it was unbelievable.

I think the Hollywood... on our third year, we had something like 90,000 members, and nobody could believe what had happened. And then, another premises, the International Hotel, facing Piccadilly Station, was closed, and came up on the market. I knew the guy that had been trying to sell it. Another guy had bought it, realised he'd bought a building in the wrong part of Manchester, it wasn't going to be anything unless it was gay. And underneath it was the old Rocky's nightclub on three floors, which had been closed by the police, and the police said, it would never ever be licensed again. Well it just so happens I was the chair of the Pub and Club Watch [?]. And so I said, could we get a licence on it, and put plans through. The licensing justices said, well if this is where you're going to do it, and you can run it like the Hollywood and the Manhattan, fine. And so they granted a licence on what became Legends.

Remembering that fifteen years earlier as Rocky's, it had been closed by the police for all the lewd activity that happened, especially on the ground floor. And our friendly police officer raided the club, and I think a hundred men were caught in sexual flagrante in Rocky's. And that was run by Michael Snailham, who's now over in Gran Canaria, running bars just as bad. But Rocky's was something different. And he already had Rocky's in Leeds and Newcastle, so to have a Rocky's in Manchester was a big thing, well-supported by the community. But to reopen as Legends, it was lovely to see everybody back in. And it actually dealt with the older crowd, and the people that had been through their HIV status and everything, were all in there, where Canal Street was very very young.

[00:33:10]

**INTERVIEWER:** What was the bar next door to...

**PARTICIPANT:** Chains.

[00:33:15]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**PARTICIPANT:** Chains. I opened... as a bit more... risqué, than the others. You've got to remember, at that time, Combi Bar [?] [00:33:34] had opened, the Eagle had opened, the police were sniffing around because [mock outrage] sex was happening in these bars and it wasn't very nice. So I used the same entrance as Legends, but once they were inside, they could go off to the left and go through, so Chain's still had the locks on the doors, and looked closed, but was open, inside the Legends complex.

[00:34:03]

**INTERVIEWER:** And did both spaces have darkrooms, and... or how did it work?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, Legends was full of darkrooms, because it was such a big place. I think there may have been fifteen or twenty spaces where darkrooms and activity was happening all the time. But if you walked round, they saw me coming, they'd sort of lay off a little bit, "Julia's coming, be careful!" So they'd all stand back, and I'd say, you're alright lads, just make sure you're safe. By then we're promoting free Durex packs and everything else, which was good, and was pushing that, but then Legends linked to the hotel above, and a lot of people thought it was very controversial. I think we had sixty bedrooms at the International Hotel. And on the top floor was a banqueting suite. Who needs a banqueting suite in the middle of the Gay Village? So I put an idea together and I called the police and said, look. See this big room. What I'm trying to do is help people that are walking the streets after two or three o'clock. So I'm going to make it into the stables. And I'm going to put twenty partition rooms, and literally put a single bed, lamp, a door that can be locked, so if somebody wants to stay, instead of paying £30 for the hotel, they pay a fiver or ten quid and go into the stables. And the police went, well it's a good idea. And the stables were full every night. Well, the activity that went on there was a little bit risqué, but people left at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, safe, to be able to just walk across the road and get a train, and go back home to Blackpool or Preston or whatever.

[00:36:32]

**INTERVIEWER:** You mentioned that you had safer sex packs in some of your venues-

**PARTICIPANT:** In all of them.

[00:36:43]



**INTERVIEWER:** When did that come in, and how did people respond to that? And how were you involved with that?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, it was, I think, Paul at the Lesbian and Gay Foundation, as the CEO, everybody was talking about safe sex. And I think there was a bar in London that was giving condoms on the door. Somebody mentioned it at a meeting, and then suddenly they wanted people to pack condoms and lube into these packs, to give to the gay community. But then, we had to be careful because they were putting boxes in the bars in the Gay Village, but then the prostitutes were grabbing handfuls, which was a bit daunting. But they worked hard, giving the [safe sex packs]. And you couldn't believe how many condoms they were using.

[PARTICIPANT has a drink of water.]

[00:38:11]

**INTERVIEWER:** So in that sense, do you feel like it had an impact, it was successful in doing what it set out to do, or...?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, I think the safe sex packs were important at the time, because it made people stop and think. At the Hollywood, as people were leaving, everybody got a condom, put it in their hand. I think we got seven or eight cases a week from the Foundation, and just made sure that people used them. I'd be quite vocal about it, as we were calling goodnight, "see you tomorrow/see you at the weekend, take your sex packs on the way out!"

[00:39:17]

**INTERVIEWER:** How have you seen things change over time, in terms of obviously, that was quite a significant campaign. Do you feel like attitudes have changed towards safer sex, or not so much, or... and towards HIV?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, the problems that were happening around the time was the Gay Village was changing. There's only one way to describe it. The original Village, which had four or five- [coughs]

[PARTICIPANT drinks some more.]

When the first bars opened in the Gay Village, it was gay people that really were responsible for the change. There was only one girls' bar, all the rest were men's bars. And then you'd have gay men, they tried it at the Hollywood, to fetch their straight friends in. And we used to say, no, it's a gay venue. "Well why won't you let my friend in? I work with her." And the gay guys were fetching girls in from work, because there were loads of good-looking men in the Gay Village, and the music was brilliant, and the drag queens were brilliant, and the atmosphere... and it was safer than Deansgate or other parts of Manchester. So some of the bars that were struggling would let people in, and bring a couple of girls from work in. But then the girls from work the following weekend thought, well, I'll take another couple of girls and we'll go down to the Village. And what happened, you got a balance. It was gay men and straight women- all the gay girls were up at Vanilla.

But it was just a strange, strange thing. There was a bar around there, it was always [missed] [00:41:47] straight guys were coming down to those, saying, can we come in? No, no. Why not? I said, it's a gay bar. "Well we don't mind." Well I'm sorry, you're not coming in. Go and try the Union, try the New York New York, it's fine. So people would stand looking at me at the door as if I was mental, with a queue of fifty people waiting to get in. And if you got your membership you were the first in. But then, the common thing was, wherever you go in Manchester, there's no women - they're all here in the Village. And that was what was happening, is so many straight women were in the Village, you then had straight boys to get to the women, would come and pretend they were gay, to get in to the bar, and then they'd go and cop out with the women. And the women are thinking, I've converted a queer, you know. And it was weird, but there was this change. And then the balance became slightly untipped, where there were more straights using the Village than there were gays. And it became dangerous. You couldn't go out the Village and... you know, walk down Canal Street, and you'd smile, and meet someone, and you'd follow somebody or whatever, but you couldn't do that with so many straight people around in case somebody thumped you. And it became a dangerous, dangerous place. In fact, I would say, around that time, it was one of the most violent places in Manchester.

[00:43:36]

**INTERVIEWER:** What kind of time are we talking about, what kind of years?

**PARTICIPANT:** Um. I would say the early nineties to 2000 was when we saw the big changes. Everybody was always supportive, you know, Mardi Gras had been successful until they decided, the Council decided there wasn't going to be another Mardi Gras, because they'd lost money. And it was nice to see the community, the bar owners, as they were then, because you've got to remember, the bars that were opening in the Village were all privately-owned. And then suddenly the big breweries are having a sniff: "let's open a bar, there's this building free on Canal Street." Then it would become another gay bar, but it was then run by straight people, run by the breweries, who would then let anybody in, and that was the total turn of the Village. You then had hen parties coming down and getting in, and places you thought that would never happen, like Via Fossa, would suddenly be full of women and you'd think, oh god, you know. And you couldn't get away from it. So although the Hollywood was a street back on Bloom Street, it was even more successful because we had the "if you're not gay, you're not coming in". And people said, oh that bitch won't let you in. That was fine, they called me a bitch, but it was fine.

[00:45:41]

**INTERVIEWER:** You mentioned Mardi Gras. Earlier you were saying about how the Council said that there wasn't going to be another one. What was your response?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, Mardi Gras was run for several years. Prior to that it had been the Village charity that had made money, and the whole thing of that weekend was, it made money for friends, for George House Trust, Body Positive; they all needed some income. They were all charitable events. And, um, you know, stuff was needed, but the Council made it into such a big event, they called it Mardi Gras. And

they started putting top acts on, you know, people that were in the charts. It was a long way from the drag queens from around the country and people that we knew.

But they did that, and I think [in] 2000, or 1999, they lost about £175,000, and they called a meeting for the community because... they said there wouldn't be another Mardi Gras. There were about five of us turned up at the college [meeting] just above Canal Street, and we're all sort of sat there. And certain councillors got up and said, you know, it lost money this year, there won't be another. And I stood up, and everybody's looking at me, because I was the gob for the Village anyway, and I said, who are you to say there won't be another Pride? You don't own Pride. We own Pride. And everybody was cheering, "go on Julia! Give it to them!" And this councillor stood up and said, well, who's going to run it? I said, well, it comes to it, I'll run it. And they all started cheering, and all the bar owners were saying, good on you Julie. And we walked out the meeting with, I suppose, a new life. About ten or fifteen people got together, formed the committee, all the bar owners came to meetings, every month we talked about what we were going to do.

Unfortunately, over the weekend, the Village was never big enough to cope with the gay festival, especially on the Sunday, because everybody came from all around the country. And there were events like Treat on the Streets, where they took over Granada, Coronation Street, and they put a funfair behind it. They put a stage, and they took people onto the stage. They had Coronation Street, the bars were open. We had the Sherlock Holmes room, there was a layout of Baker Street that was permanently at Granada, and we turned that into a disco. So inside we had five or six DJs working different areas, and we sold tickets, and we had a couple of thousand people turn up. But then at the same time we had, Manchester University would open all their entertainment complex, and do University Challenge, and so that was gay... we had Treat on the Streets, and we took stuff out of the Village, and the Gay Village became Manchester for that crazy time.

[00:50:09]

We took some money, but we made sure that the money went to the right people. And they were small groups. I singled out Body Positive, the Foundation, and George House Trust, that they'd each receive a block of money, and then the fourth block would then be split between maybe 20 smaller groups, which we did, and friends, and different other people got a bit of money, which helped them - the Black community got some money - and it was great. But the Council didn't like it at all, the fact we'd done it. And it caused so much publicity in the UK and in the States, that you know, a group of bars had taken the Pride back, because everybody was running corporate Prides.

We were then asked to go to Europride, and I went along. I was telling people there, with people from Germany, Holland, all over, where they'd held Europride, and they'd never held it in the UK. And Manchester came up and we put a bid in. But I put that bid in, not Manchester City Council. And then two years after [was] when we had Europride. But if I hadn't done the initial work, we'd never have got it. It brought an extra 50,000 people into the Village.

[00:52:07]

**INTERVIEWER:** Which year was that?

**PARTICIPANT:** 2002, I think.

[00:52:13]

**INTERVIEWER:** Great. OK. I'm just aware of the time, because we're coming up to an hour now. I'm just wondering if there's anything else that we haven't covered that you would like to cover, before we finish.

**PARTICIPANT:** Well there's... you know, people don't remember much about the Gay Village before it was the Gay Village. When it was just a cobbled street with derelict warehouses all down it. And Foo Foo Lammar had, on Back Piccadilly, Foo Foo's Palace, which was a drag venue which straight people went to. He opened Unit 1, which was the first gay sauna in Manchester, where, because he was a drag queen, they ran a very strict, you know: if there was sex, it was in a cubicle, it was out of sight... always trying to be closed down by the police. That was the first gay sauna, I think, in Manchester.

And then he opened another club called the Picador, which again was Back Piccadilly. These were all derelict buildings that normally you wouldn't walk into. And it was straight on the ground floor, lesbians on the first floor, and gay men on the top floor, and what of it? And then mixed on all three floors were the gangsters. They times for Manchester, they really were. But then the Gay Village changed all that. There were places like Dickens Club on Oxford Road, Stuffed Olives – these were all bars that were dotted around the town all. There was one round the back here called Hero's, on John Dalton Street. I think the first time I went to Hero's was to see Divine, when Divine was over from America. And top-class acts were going to [misses] [00:54:44] and the crowd. And then Cruz, when it opened, was the first giant nightclub. It was bigger than any other club in Manchester, in the heart of the Gay Village, and again it was Frank Lammar, Colin, and Melvin who opened that, who were all really established in the Village, but they run it as a gay venue for gay people. And that's what made it so special. I can tell you, Monday nights were busier than Saturday nights, where they did the golden oldies, you know, the 60s and 70s. And people came from London, all over. They came in coaches, to enjoy the scene in Manchester. And at the same time, we still had the AIDS epidemic going on, and... you know. You had to be careful.

[00:55:47]

**INTERVIEWER:** OK. Thank you for that. Just to finish, is there anything you'd like to say about looking back, any reflections that you have? You've talked a little bit about your activism and also trans people today. Is there anything you want to say about that?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, I think that... when we went through the first AIDS epidemic, and everybody was frightened and worried and were fearful of their life, I don't think people see, in the trans community, we're going through that now. And it's the trans community that's now at risk, because the Village has become so widespread and so

accepting of straight men coming into bars and clubs who, they come in and they see these good-looking guys dressed as birds and think, [missed] [00:57:02] my friends [missed] [00:57:03], and so then having sex... and for the girls, most of them are working as prostitutes, to be able to fund their lifestyles, to be able to go through with surgery, they're putting themselves at risk. And then trans people are not thinking to go and get AIDS tested. And it's so important now, that they should get down to the Foundation, it's a pinprick. Get tested.

At the end of the year when we have the AIDS memorial day and different things, and we [have the] Trans Day of Remembrance, and we read a list of the hundreds of people who have been murdered or committed suicide because of what they're struggling through... AIDS again is there. And that's now killing more people, AIDS is killing more trans people than the first epidemic round, and it's frightening. So I don't want to lose any more friends, I'd rather they go and get tested. And I'll go with them anytime.

**[00:58:25] End of transcript.**