

About Kevin Anderson (27.12.1929 – 23.9.2022)

I first met Kevin when he was about the age of 76yrs, just after Alan, his partner of 46 years had passed away. Initially it was my own partner, the late Graham Carbery, who forged our connection. Graham worked at Footscray TAFE (later Victoria University) where he was known since the mid 1970s to be active in the gay movement and founder of the (then) Australian Gay Archives. Among Graham's colleagues were neighbours of Kevin's, Pauline and Max, who provided friendship and support in many ways. After Alan's death Pauline provided meals for Kevin several times a week.

Kevin grew up in Perth. In 1956, he came to Melbourne and began work with the Commonwealth Public Service. Kevin and his life partner Alan got together in 1959 and settled into a quiet life in Alan's family home in North Fitzroy, along with Alan's mother until she died in 1978.

Kevin and Alan kept to themselves. They had no gay friends or connections to the wider gay world. But they stayed in touch with some of Alan's family (Alan was one of seven children) and with Kevin's remaining family in Perth (a younger brother and a half-sister). And in the early '80s they became friendly with their neighbours, Pauline and Max.

When Alan died in 2005, Kevin was distressed and not coping too well in his bereavement. Realising this, Pauline saw the need for Kevin to develop some gay connections and hopefully friendships, so asked Graham with whom Max and Pauline had worked for many years, to visit Kevin. He did, and they got on well, and Graham dropped by on a regular basis. Over time Graham introduced Kevin to his friends. Graham hosted lunches at his house at Christmas and Easter, and Kevin started coming along to those.

Graham died unexpectedly in 2017, and Kevin's health wasn't too good. He had major abdominal surgery that year, and his vision was poor (legally blind with macular degeneration), but he remained mentally alert. During this period until his death five years later, I came to see more of Kevin, with shopping trips, medical appointments and catchups with friends. Saturdays for lunch at Northland became a ritual we all enjoyed.

Radio was Kevin's window into a broader gay world. He had discovered Joy Radio before meeting Graham. As his eyesight failed, the radio became even more important. Joy's Saturday Magazine was a particular favourite.

Through Graham, he got to know about the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (now known as AQuA). Kevin had worked in records in the public service and preserving history through records held by the Archives was something he understood and valued.

Kevin also heard about the development of the Victorian Pride Centre through Graham and was excited to know that such a project was coming to fruition. He was thrilled that a younger generation would grow up with supports that were inconceivable to himself (and Alan) not so long ago. From time to time, we drove by to check on progress of the building construction, but sadly Kevin's health declined before being able to visit.

Kevin Anderson was a private person. Like many of his generation, he lived with criminalised (male) homosexuality and fear of being outed, and what little we know of his early life came mostly from conversations with Graham. We would love to have interviewed Kevin for the Archives' oral history project, but he was never agreeable to that. Initially he declined to have his donations to the Archives publicly acknowledged, but changed his mind in his later years, which he used to describe as his late-in-life coming out.



Kevin and Graham, in 2008 – photo by Gary Jaynes