

**Pussy Palace Oral History Project**  
Oral History Interview with Ange Beever  
Conducted on May 11, 2021 via Zoom  
Interviewed by Alisha Stranges and Elio Colavito on behalf of the  
LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory (Elspeth Brown, Director)  
Transcribed by Rev.com and Elio Colavito

Summary: Originally from England and raised in Southwestern Ontario, Ange Beever is a 49-year-old, white, queer woman. At the time of the interview, Beever was in lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, living and working in Toronto, Ontario. As a multi-faceted, independent, creative professional and visual artist, Beever was running an accessories and garment decorating company with her wife, while working as a scenic artist at a prop house. The interview concerns her experiences as a patron of the Pussy Palace on September 14, 2000. She discusses her sense memories of the Pussy Palace, her recollection of the bathhouse raid and questioning by police, her witnessing of the legal trial, her later involvement as a plaintiff in the class action lawsuit that followed the raid, and other topics. In the interview, Toronto, Hamilton, and Oshawa, Ontario are mentioned, as well as Michigan, USA. The date range discussed is 1998-2003.

Keywords: LGBTQ; Lesbian; Dyke; Butch; Leather; Police Raid; Bathhouse; Legal; Class Action.

*\*Note that Beever's initial internet connection distorted the first nine minutes of the Zoom audio and video recording. A back-up audio recording was used to recover all inaudible sections of Beever's responses.*

Alisha Stranges (00:00:02):

Okay, perfect. And so are we. This is Alisha Stranges and Elio Colavito from the Pussy Palace Oral History Project. We're here in Toronto, Ontario, interviewing Ange Beever on April... No. Is it May? May 11 of 2021. Ange, are you also in Toronto?

Ange Beever (00:00:27):

I am also in Toronto.

Alisha Stranges (00:00:30):

Ange is also in Toronto and is going to tell us about the experience of being a patron of the Pussy Palace bathhouse event on the night of September 14, 2000. Ange, do we have your permission to record this oral history interview?

Ange Beever (00:00:44):

Absolutely. Permission granted.

Alisha Stranges (00:00:48):

Thank you. Before we get into your experience with the Pussy Palace, I'm going to ask a couple questions that invite you to tell us a little bit about yourself. In particular, we're trying to get a sense of the different aspects of identity that you hold or the categories you occupy and how, at least, some of these may have changed or evolved over time. To start relatively simply, can you tell us your full name, your age, and your preferred gender pronouns.

Ange Beever (00:01:20):

I am Angela Beever. My preferred pronouns are she or they. What was the other question? Was that the only one?

Alisha Stranges (00:01:32):

How old are you?

Ange Beever (00:01:33):

Oh, 49. See how I avoided that one? I'm 49 years old.

Alisha Stranges (00:01:39):

How would you describe your gender and sexual identity today, in 2021?

Ange Beever (00:01:45):

As many people, I like the term queer. I think it has a good umbrella phrase. I'm also good with dyke, lesbian. I also... I'm married, so that's part of my identity. That's it in terms of... Butch. Butch. I question sometimes, if I was 20 years older, I would probably be non-binary or genderqueer, but from the place I came to the place now, I think queer is good, but lesbian is also great.

Alisha Stranges (00:02:28):

Can you say a little bit more about that, that if you were 20 years older, you'd probably be--?

Ange Beever (00:02:32):

Younger. Younger.

Alisha Stranges (00:02:34):

Younger.

Ange Beever (00:02:35):

Yeah, 20 years younger. You know, as a kid, myself, I really liked people like Boy George and Annie Lennox. I was attracted to, I would use the word androgyny, which now would be... There's different terminology. So, I like that in-the-middle of like, not sure. Not sure, right? I think gender's exciting that way where you're like, "Okay, there's all different types." I'm a woman, and I like being a woman. I get sir-ed all the time. I'm like, "Whatever." It's just a little bit of the way it is. I don't really... I don't really care that much. I don't care if I get called a lady. I don't care if I get called ma'am or sir. It's like, whatever because, generally, I don't really care about who's saying it to me in the first place. When I was 20 years old, I would've been like, "Nope. No, lady. No. No. What do you think I am?" And just, like... When you get a little older, and it's not like I don't have a fighting spirit, I do, but there's other things to battle at this stage of the game, for myself. I'm like, "Whatever. If you take the time to... Tall person with short hair is always male? That's really not my problem."

Alisha Stranges (00:04:04):

I hear you. What about racial, ethnic, cultural identity, or how do you express yourself through those types of categories?

Ange Beever (00:04:16):

I was born in England. My family is British, my mother and father. But I grew up in Southwestern Ontario. I immigrated to Canada when I was five years old. So, really just a Southwestern-via-England, plain old white person. You know? That's like... Belonging to a queer culture, that's where I'm like, "Oh yeah, I'm very loud and queer." Those are kind of like cultural things. The white... Sorry.

Alisha Stranges (00:05:05):

You don't have to apologize for it. It is what it is. What can you tell me about your educational and class background?

Ange Beever (00:05:18):

I come... I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts. Painting and drawing. And my parents both are medical people. My mother was a haematologist, and my father was a biochemist, so I grew up around labs and the medical profession, for sure. Solid middle class, I would say. I don't live solid middle class as a working artist myself, but that's where I come from. I think my parents came from working-class backgrounds. My father was raised in a farm with 13 siblings. My mother's father was a train driver. Her mom worked as a... She owned a candy shop. My parents were professionals, and my father has a post... A masters. My mother's college educated. So, that's that background.

Alisha Stranges (00:06:32):

Thank you. You said you don't really live a middle-class life right now. Can you say more about what you do professionally?

Ange Beever (00:06:42):

For 21 years we've been running... I'm a little bit of a hustler. We run a company called BBJ that was pop culture inspired stuff like prayer candles and clocks. We're evolving the brand a little bit to do some garments now and doing some special collaborations with people, just because we've been doing certain things for so long that you're like, "Okay, I'm not as interested as I want." One of our new ones that we're really focusing on, and it's seasonal, are memorial tree toppers. So, people like to put their dead relatives and dead pets on the tree toppers, especially Americans, so that's a focus there.

Ange Beever (00:07:29):

Now I also work in a prop house where we do all greenery for film and TV. It's one of those departments that you don't really notice until you notice it, about the trees and the leaves and the fake plants in sets, that are always there. That's been a lifesaver during this pandemic because all our shows were shut down. We're just redeveloping our website, doing some collaboration. Then I'm also a painter. I take old thrift things and redirect them. I just started doing that after not painting for 20 years. I had two art shows. Actually, the second year went really well. I went from selling nine painting to selling 24 painting at the next show. That's kind of on hold. I'm still painting, but there's no art shows for a little bit longer. Kind of live like an artist. We've done set design. At different times, when we needed different cash, we did some reality television, a couple of different episodes of different shows. Just hustle, hustle. And involved in the theatre as well. Right now, we're in a move of pivoting some stuff, even though I hate that word.

Alisha Stranges (00:09:02):

I just want to pause here for a second because we are having quite a hard time hearing you. Most of your answers, half of them, we can't hear it because of the internet connection. So, I'm going to pause the recording.

[recording paused; Beever changes locations]

Alisha Stranges (00:09:19):

We're just coming to the end here of these first set of questions. You talked a little bit about different identity categories. Is there anything else that you think would be important for us to know about how you understand the different identities you hold today as compared to say 20 years ago when you would've attended the Pussy Palace?

Ange Beever (00:09:50):

I don't quite understand. Do I identify differently than I did 20 years ago when I attended the Pussy Palace?

Alisha Stranges (00:09:58):

Yeah. You were mentioning earlier that if you were—

Ange Beever (00:10:06):

If I was a 29-year-old person right now... Actually, it's probably more like 30 years not 20 years because 20 years is still generationally pretty in the same generation.

Alisha Stranges (00:10:22):

I say 20 years because that's when the Pussy Palace happened. I'm thinking about, in the 20-year span, has anything changed about how you identify?

Ange Beever (00:10:35):

Not, not... I've definitely questioned, as I said before, about terms like non-binary and stuff. I'm fine with being butch lesbian. I was that then and still identify that way now.

Alisha Stranges (00:10:53):

I see.

Ange Beever (00:10:55):

Not really. I wouldn't change that.

Alisha Stranges (00:11:01):

I'm going to invite you now to travel back in time to the fall of 2000. Toronto's Women's Bathhouse Committee was preparing to host the Night of 2000 Pussies, fourth instalment of the Pussy Palace. How did you first learn about this particular event, the September 14 one?

Ange Beever (00:11:22):

We had previously been to previous Pussy Palaces. I think I had been to one and Robin [Woodward] had been to two previously. I can't remember if it was the first one that we went to. Within the community there was a buzz. It was exciting. It was like, "This is the party to be at." It happened once a year for four years. It was the one thing to get access to this bathhouse space. There would be like one-off parties once in a while. There was a girls' underwear party at The Barn. So, it was always, for me... I was very excited to get into spaces that were traditionally dominated by gay men because their sexuality was supported, where women didn't have those kind of accesses to things very often. When you heard about them, you're like, "Yeah. You're going." Everyone would talk about it too. Even then, in 2000, Facebook didn't exist. Those things didn't exist. I think there were flyers. I think you would see them. That's how it happened. Maybe there were email lists then, but I don't recall that. I think it's just how parties spread is like, who told who, or I think we knew some of the organizers, and you'd just find out that that party was happening and you're like, "Yeah, we're totally going."

Alisha Stranges (00:12:58):

Aside from the party being specific to queer women and trans folk, is there something about what was going to happen at the party that particularly intrigued you?

Ange Beever (00:13:18):

It was that you could let go of your inhibitions and that there was a chance to be naked in a ... It was just freeing. You dropped your clothes. You can do whatever you want. You could flirt with people. There was different scenes in different places. It's titillating. You're like, "Yeah, want to see what's going on."

Alisha Stranges (00:13:46):

I'm curious about the space and time in which people go from being someone who's decided, "I'm going to attend this event," and someone who's an official patron of the event. Thinking about the specific event that was raided, the September 14 event, can you try to go back in time, remember how you might've made your way to the club, where you were before you got there, what kind of transportation did you take to get there?

Ange Beever (00:14:18):

More than likely I think we were coming just from home that time. After the raid we would go to people's houses and have some drinks before because there was no bar, because of the raid, because of the SOP [Special Occasion Permit]. I feel like we just came from home in a cab because of, also, the outfits. I think Robin [Woodward] had a very short lingerie outfit. It wasn't like you're going to go on the streetcar kind of deal. I also have this thing, if you're wearing leather chaps or leathers, then you really shouldn't ride the TTC, you look lame. You're wearing things for a motorcycle and you're riding the bus. You're not cool.

Elio Colavito (00:15:10):

That seems like a solid—

[crosstalk]

Ange Beever (00:15:11):

I'm sure it was a cab. I don't remember going to anyone's house beforehand or setting up for that.

Alisha Stranges (00:15:21):

It was just you and Robin [Woodward] who went together, or did you go with other people?

Ange Beever (00:15:25):

Yes. We went with just us. We knew that we were meeting up with many, many friends that would be going there that night.

Alisha Stranges (00:15:37):

How long were you planning on staying?

Ange Beever (00:15:41):

We were going to just go. There was no, "Okay, we're leaving at midnight. We have things to do the next day." There was no limits on how it was going to go. Traditionally, if we're having a good time, one of the first people to arrive and the last people to leave. We left a little earlier that night. I don't actually remember the time of what time the cops came in, in relationship to us going home that night, but it felt like the party was cut short, for sure.

Alisha Stranges (00:16:26):

Before you entered the space, you're making your way there in the cab, can you recall anything about how you were feeling? Nervous, excited?

Ange Beever (00:16:36):

It was exciting. It was always exciting to go out with my... Excuse me. [sneezes] Sorry.

Alisha Stranges (00:16:48):

That's okay.

Ange Beever (00:16:48):

My beautiful wife and fool around and flirt with people and be naked. It was just that was the vibe. There was no agenda, like, "Okay, we're going to go and play in this room," or "We're going to do that." It was just like, "All right, here we go. Start the bar." Then I'm sure maybe the pool was one of the first things. You just meander with the party or what's happening. You're like, "Okay, let's go check out that floor. What's happening?" That's how we just moved through the space.

Alisha Stranges (00:17:29):

I'm going to pass it over to Elio [Colavito] because we'd like to hear a little bit more about what y'all were wearing that night.

Elio Colavito (00:17:37):

You mentioned that you might've been wearing some chaps. Do you want to take us through what you and your partner would've been wearing that evening in detail or an evening-

[crosstalk]

Ange Beever (00:17:50):

As much as I can remember. As much as I can remember because it is 21 years ago, so there's that. I was definitely wearing a leather vest with no shirt underneath. I had chaps on at some point, but I probably ended up in black underwear at that point. I'm sure when we were in the pool, we were just naked. Then Robin [Woodward] was wearing, I think it was just a bra, a lacy black bra, and then pink... It had the whatever, the things that you put your tights on. What are those?

Alisha Stranges (00:18:37):

Oh, yeah. I don't know what they're called, but I know what you mean. Do you know what they're called? Attached from your bottom, like garters?

Ange Beever (00:18:45):

Yes, garters. Yes, garters. It was some kind of sexy undergarment that had garters on it. I think maybe she had stockings on and heels. Sounds probably correct. Maybe throughout the evening stockings got left behind because I don't recall, after the police in the room, I don't remember Robin [Woodward] having stockings on at that point. I could be wrong.

Elio Colavito (00:19:23):

With this outfit, how were you trying to feel? What were you trying to communicate to other people? What was going on with that?

Ange Beever (00:19:38):

I've never really thought about it too much. We're like classic butch and femme, right? Leather and lace. Those are the kind of indicators that we're putting out there. We've done reverse drag before at Vazaleen and stuff like that. But no, it was just like, okay... Tough and sweet.

Elio Colavito (00:20:05):

For sure.

Ange Beever (00:20:05):

Sexy.

Elio Colavito (00:20:07):

Well put.

Ange Beever (00:20:08):

Definitely butch and femme identities.

Elio Colavito (00:20:14):

So, you arrive at the club. Can you describe the scene outside a little bit?

Ange Beever (00:20:23):

I don't think that there was a line-up. I feel like we got there — because we're excitable and you didn't want to wait in a line-up — kind of got there, I would say, probably within a half an hour of it opening. I think there was a few people around. There was the vestibule where they buzz you in. They make you sign all the paperwork. It had very specific that night about what to do if the police came.

[crosstalk]

Ange Beever (00:20:56):

Signed a document, you signed a waiver. Then you got a locker key. You put whatever stuff you want to put in the locker. At that point we probably could've undressed and put towels on and we're going to go to the pool first. But the night just kind of happened. We spent some time in the pool, at the bar. We'd go like, "Hey, you want to go check out what's happening on the second floor?" We'd just go around and probably were in the hot tub at some point. In fact, I'm sure we were at the hot tub at some point. Then there was a sauna. There was different things happening that kept your interest. I feel like there was a lap dance room too that we paid to have a lap dance from Kristyn Dunnion [a.k.a.] Miss Kitty Galore, and I think Blake was giving lap dances. I think that that was that night. We just ended up going looking around, seeing what happening, and ended up on the top fire escape. That's when we knew something was up. We were smoking a joint outside with a correctional officer we had met on the top of the fire escape on the very top of the building.

Elio Colavito (00:22:17):

I want to take you back a few steps before we visit the raid. What would you say the atmosphere was like in the club as you were going around checking it out?

Ange Beever (00:22:25):

People were having fun. It was great energy. It was great. The pool was filled with naked women. They were sitting all around the things. There was spanking scenes happening in the dungeon. There was naked women in the hot tubs. There was probably a little bit of a dance floor in the main thing. I never really remember it being a packed dance floor, at that point, early on in the night, but there was definitely dancing that was happening in the main room by the bar. People were just letting loose and having fun. There was a coat check upstairs as well. I think there was another bar upstairs as well, in the space. Just kind of took it in. Spent some time in the pool, spent some time in the hot tub. I don't remember dancing, specifically. The energy was great. 350 women just... And trans folks just happy to be there. Good vibes.

Elio Colavito (00:23:48):

We've heard that there was a photo room where patrons could take Polaroids of themselves documenting their night at the bathhouse. Did you spend any time in there?

Ange Beever (00:23:56):

Yeah. We have one.

Elio Colavito (00:23:58):

Do you still have it?



Ange Beever (00:24:00):

Yeah, I think so.

Elio Colavito (00:24:04):

This is exciting news for us. We're trying to locate as many of these things as possible.

[crosstalk]

Elio Colavito (00:24:12):

Sorry, the connection is making it so difficult to respond timely. Go ahead.

Ange Beever (00:24:19):

Because we went to three different ones, I feel like the Polaroid room happened more, not just that night, that it happened on other nights. So, I have a Polaroid, but I'm not sure it's specifically from that night. Only because I'm wearing cowboy gear in this picture, and then with Noelle Campbell-Smith. I know that I was not wearing cowboy gear that night. That was a different one.

Elio Colavito (00:24:47):

That's okay. Do you still want to take us through a little bit of what else is going on in the photo, just describe it for the record?

Ange Beever (00:24:54):

It's a picture of me and Noelle Campbell-Smith, and we're leaning back like cowboys, and my wife and my friend are pretending to give us blow jobs.

Elio Colavito (00:25:03):

Nice. What feeling would you say it captures when you look at it?

Ange Beever (00:25:11):

Okay, you need to say that again because you're a little bit bouncy for me.

Elio Colavito (00:25:14):

Sorry. What feeling would you say that it captures when you look at it?

Ange Beever (00:25:20):

For me it's funny. We're trying to be sexy. Our heterosexual, mama friend is pretending to give Noelle [Campbell-Smith] a blow job. It's funny to me. It's more the comedy.

Alisha Stranges (00:25:40):

Would love to take a look at it. We can talk a bit about that afterwards. Before we go into talking about the raid more specifically, I want to try a little experiment. We're trying to get a sense for the impression that the

space has made on people's senses. If I can invite you to get comfortable in your chair, soften your gaze a little bit, maybe relax your hands on your lap. You can even close your eyes if you want. I'll do this with you. Just breathe. Take a few breaths in and out. With each inhale allow your body to re-inhabit some space in the Pussy Palace before the raid happened. Keep breathing. Keep trying to return there. Don't worry too much about which space is coming to mind. Whichever one comes first is a perfect one to pick. From this contemplative space, can you look around and describe for us what it is you're seeing?

Ange Beever (00:27:12):

Can you say that last part just one more time?

Alisha Stranges (00:27:16):

From this contemplative space, look around and describe for us what it is you're seeing.

Ange Beever (00:27:27):

I'm seeing eight to 10 women, mostly naked, with black tile behind them and a hot tub where some are sitting just on the edge, some are in, and everything's steamy and sweaty and warm. Sometimes too warm. We have to jump up on the edge of the hot tub because it's so warm. Everyone's smiling and everyone's... There's some flirting happening with a couple different women in the hot tub. Everything's wet. Everything's drippy and steamy.

Alisha Stranges (00:28:18):

If you could distil this space you're describing, if you could distil it into a single colour, what would its predominant colour be?

Ange Beever (00:28:31):

I really feel like it would be black.

Alisha Stranges (00:28:38):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Any lingering odours in the air?

Ange Beever (00:28:44):

You've got the smell of bromide. A little bit of chlorine, and just hydro, just wet, the smell of wet.

Alisha Stranges (00:29:02):

If you could taste the space, what do you think its flavour might be?

Ange Beever (00:29:10):

It's not quite salty. It's not quite a sweaty taste. It's a slightly chlorinated taste. Sometimes when you get water at the tap fresh and it's got a little bit of fluoride smell or chlorine smell, that's the smell through there. Then it also smells warm. It smells tropical. It's not quite dank because it doesn't have a real musty smell, because it's been lubed with the smell of the chlorine a little bit or the bromide. That is a room that's very steamy.

Alisha Stranges (00:30:00):

What about the sounds? What can you hear?

Ange Beever (00:30:17):

Well, of course, you can hear the jet going in the hot tub. That's the bubbling and gurgling of that. And laughter. And conversation in not loud tones, not hushed tones, but people being aware that they're sharing space with one another. Friendly. Lots of smiles and lots of laughing. So, laughing and bubbles.

Alisha Stranges (00:30:45):

Yeah. You already touched on this, but I'll ask specifically, if some part of your body, imagine that it is reaching out and touching some part of the space, can you describe the texture of what it is you're touching?

Ange Beever (00:31:03):

Smooth. Smooth, wet, tile. Underneath your thighs. Along your back if you recline. Then the feeling of the tile, with water as a barrier in between, when you dunk yourself down into the warm water.

Alisha Stranges (00:31:28):

Yes. Thank you. You can let that go and open your eyes if they've been closed. Thank you for journeying there. I know that can be a little bit challenging, especially for a memory that's so long ago.

Ange Beever (00:31:45):

And, I've had two concussions since then.

Alisha Stranges (00:31:47):

Oh, goodness. Did that come through your work?

Ange Beever (00:31:53):

Yes, one of them was work, and one of them was a bike accident that I did myself.

Alisha Stranges (00:32:01):

I'm sorry to hear that.

Ange Beever (00:32:03):

It's okay. I just feel like a jelly brain sometimes.

Alisha Stranges (00:32:08):

That was a beautiful recollection of sense memory. Thank you.

Ange Beever (00:32:14):

You're welcome.

Elio Colavito (00:32:15):

I'm going to pull you away from the sense memory stuff and get back to the nitty gritty of things. You mentioned that there were about 350-ish people in the room at any given time or in the club in total.

Ange Beever (00:32:30):

It was busy. It was busy. It felt like there was a lot of women there, which was exciting too. A lot of women I'd never seen in my life. I feel like somehow, I don't know, communities outside of Toronto would hear about this too. I think you would get people in from Oshawa and Hamilton, where they're like, "Well, if we're going to come to the city, this is what we're coming for." There was a lot of different people there. Very busy.

Elio Colavito (00:33:06):

How would you describe the composition of the crowd along the lines of gender, sexuality, race, things like that?

Ange Beever (00:33:16):

I probably wasn't hyper aware of that. I would think that the majority would be white women, able-bodied, middle-class. Not entirely, but I think that would be what the majority of the population would be, my impression.

Elio Colavito (00:33:42):

The Pussy Palace has been described as a space that was publicly inclusive of lesbian women, queer cis women, trans folks. What's your impression of the relationships between these differently gendered groups at the Pussy Palace the night that you were there?

Ange Beever (00:33:49):

Like I said, I felt like the vibe was really good with everybody there. For me, everyone seemed cool with one another. That's who our community is. There was the heavy stuff happening with Michigan Womyn's Festival, not letting trans women in there. Very much was like, this is inclusive, everybody is welcome here. I feel like that kind of formed... That's just how it was. Our trans sisters were our sisters, and our trans brothers were totally welcome in this space as well. Everyone was good with each other.

Elio Colavito (00:34:51):

All right, we're at the moment. At 12:45 a.m., five men, all plainclothes police officers enter the club and stay about 90 minutes. You mentioned that you were in the Pussy Palace on the fire escape smoking a joint with some people. Can you just tell us a little bit about that moment, what you were doing right before you found out the police were there?

Ange Beever (00:35:13):

Well, we knew very quickly something was up. We're up on the fire escape looking down on the pool. All of a sudden you see one woman come in to the corner of the pool and lean down, and it was like a wildfire. Then everybody in the pool, it was like scattered. They just jumped out of it, went inside, grabbed towels. I do think as the officers were at the front that as they started going to the floor, there was a mass exodus of people leaving. The woman I was upstairs with smoking the joint, she's like, "I got to go. I can't be caught here. This is not good for my job."

Ange Beever (00:36:00):

I, having a few drinks, decide, I was like, “Fuck this.” I knew the cops were there, I was like, “Fuck this. I’m going to find them.” So, I decide that I’m going to walk through the place to find the cops, to tell them off, to them to fuck off because I’ve got this brava. Like, “No, no, no, no.” Robin [Woodward], knowing how I am sometimes, is following behind me going, “No, honey. No, honey. No, honey.”

Ange Beever (00:36:26):

As we get to the second floor, the sling room is open. We’d gone down one floor. The sling room is open, and it’s empty. Robin [Woodward] sees this opportunity to stop my hunt for the police and pulls me into that room. We’re swinging on the swing. Eventually someone closes the door. We are fooling around, having sex. Then there’s a boom, boom, boom at the door. Robin [Woodward]’s still sitting in the sling. I jump up to answer the door because I know exactly what’s happening here.

Ange Beever (00:37:03):

When I open the door, I don’t think all five were there. At least three, maybe four of them were blocking the door. They held us in there for, I feel like it was at least 20 minutes. They asked our names, they were writing notes, they asked for ID. I had mine in my leather vest. I believe we gave them ID. They asked me what the sling was. I said, “It’s a sex sling.” I’m like, “You’ve never seen one before?” Oh, then I said, “Have you never looked at Madonna’s sex book? There’s tons of those pictures in there.” Then I distract myself by going, “Oh my god, ‘Music.’” The song “Music” had just come out by Madonna. So, I then proceed to sing “Music” to the police officer standing at the door. Literally, [sings “Music”]. I guess, when I feel intimidated, my way is to disarm the situation and is try to be a little goofy and a little silly.

Ange Beever (00:38:18):

Chantelle was right behind us. She was keeping eye contact mostly with Robin [Woodward] and writing everything down. We knew that there was people behind us that were watching the situation that had our backs. Then it felt like they were on the phone. I learned in hindsight that they were conversing with the female undercover cops about some illegal activity that had happened in that room previously that the female cops had seen. They were trying to ID us to see if it was us. It wasn’t us.

Alisha Stranges (00:39:00):

When you say that there were people writing things down, is that people from the bathhouse committee?

Ange Beever (00:39:07):

Yes. Specifically, Chantelle.

Alisha Stranges (00:39:12):

Could that be Chanelle Gallant?

[crosstalk]

Ange Beever (00:39:18):

Specifically, Chanelle [Gallant] was there. One cop, two cops, three cops, Chanelle [Gallant], right there, going, “I got this. I’m writing this all down,” and verbally saying that to us too, like, “I’m writing this all

down, guys.” That was the situation. Then, I guess, by that point, it was time to go home. After they left and they couldn’t ID us to the illegal activity that was happening in the room, which was anal sex with more than two people present.

Alisha Stranges (00:39:57):

Oh.

Ange Beever (00:39:58):

According to what they were searching for.

Elio Colavito (00:40:02):

Did they tell you that outright on the spot, or is this something you found out later?

Ange Beever (00:40:06):

This is something we found out later after we went to every single day of the court case against the people who held SOP [Special Occasions Permit] license, Richard [Aitcheson] and JP [Hornick]. We went one time as support, and then we just were like, “We’re going every single day.”

Elio Colavito (00:40:30):

Understandable. I want to take you back to being in that moment because you said you tried to deescalate the situation a little bit with humour. How did you actually feel on the inside?

Ange Beever (00:40:44):

Like I said, I was filled with bravado that night. I was intoxicated, so I had confidence juice in me. I was up for the little challenge of it. I was a little bit like, “How dare you? How dare you come in here?” Not in an angry way, but it was like, “Fuck you.” I had had no reason to be afraid of police up until that point I guess, and still, luckily, thankfully. Nobody wants to get pulled over for speeding tickets, and everyone’s heart races. But it’s not life or death situation. I wasn’t really afraid of them. That’s a privilege as well, of being who I am in the world. I wasn’t scared. I was a bit of a dick. I was a bit of an asshole. I would’ve been that clown to the cops.

Elio Colavito (00:41:55):

Do you remember how Robin [Woodward] behaved in that moment while you’re clowning about and singing Madonna in the face of some police officers?

Ange Beever (00:42:06):

She remained seated in the swing because she didn’t have any panties on. She had this tiny little flip dress. She did not want to get up and show her whole ass to anyone. She would say that she was more frightened. I was not frightened in the moment. The part that became a little bit more intimidating was listening to the radio the next day and saying that police may be pressing charges against people who were there at the Pussy Palace, meaning the SOP [Special Occasions Permit], but it felt like I could get charged for indecent behaviour attending this event. That was the point where I was like, “That doesn’t feel so great.” But in the moment, I was too cocky for my own good.

Elio Colavito (00:43:08):

In this situation I want to distil how you felt about the police presence but also the male presence in the space. How did you feel about those, if you had to distil them from one another?

Ange Beever (00:43:26):

When they first came in, I was pissed off that they had crashed the party. That's why I was like, "I'm going to find them. I'm going to chase them away." This is in my mind I'm like, "I'm chasing them away. They don't want to deal with me." When they opened the door and there's dressed police officers in police outfits and you know exactly what it is and you're like, "Okay, here they are." I don't think I was really shocked. How heavy that bang on the door, you knew it was cops. It wasn't one of the organizers knocking on the door going, "Hey, you can come out now. They're gone." You knew... It was heavy. It felt overdone. It felt heavy, like these stupid men tromping through this place. I'm just like, "You look like idiots. You're stupid. These are just a bunch of women having a good time naked. Your idiots." That's how I felt about it. I still think they're idiots. Like, this is what you want to spend your resources on, really? These women having a good time? Sorry about your wives at home.

Elio Colavito (00:44:57):

Fair enough. I imagine that seems like a pretty natural feeling to come to. You said the police finally leave. What do you do after they leave? Do you leave shortly after? What's that look like?

Ange Beever (00:45:14):

The party was over at this point. I don't know how long they had been at it at this point, but from the time where ... You said the time was 12:45 a.m. when they came through the doors. They probably would've made it into the pool area pretty quickly within that. I feel like it was 1:30 a.m., quarter to 2:00 a.m. The party was done, it was over. Once we came out of the room, when they left us in the room, we were like, "Okay, I guess we're grabbing our stuff and going home." That was the feeling, like, "Party's over. That was intense," and just went home... A little bit of shocked... A little bit afterwards, you know, in hindsight, a little bit shocked that that had just happened. I feel like in the moment it wasn't as... It wasn't until afterwards that the rage and the worry about what this all meant happened. In that moment, in the night, like I said, it was like, "Fuck them. Okay, you dumb idiots." Then we just went home. We just caught a cab and went home and it was end scene.

Elio Colavito (00:46:46):

Perfect. This is the perfect lead to the next question here. You mentioned that you found out later when you were at the court proceedings about the undercover officers. How did you feel finding that there were these undercover officers surveilling the space?

Ange Beever (00:47:06):

You sneaky bitches. Sneaky bitches. I never felt anyone there... I wish I would've seen them because I probably could've marked them. I don't know if there's anyone there that had an interaction with them specifically. I just think it's dirty. I think it's shitty. That was the feeling. Like, really, this is what you want to do to other women? Seriously? Who are just expressing their sexuality and being free, really? Again, just what makes you so uptight that you want to come and bust someone's good time? What does this have to do anything with you? I think it's like, "You sneaky bitches."

Elio Colavito (00:48:01):

You mentioned attending all of the days in court after you went to your first one.

[crosstalk]

Elio Colavito (00:48:11):

Sorry, go ahead.

Ange Beever (00:48:14):

There was a call to arms to come support this, come and support: "If you were there, we could really use all the support in the courtroom." We were like, "We're self-employed. We have flexibility." We're like, "Off we go."

Elio Colavito (00:48:26):

Is that the only way that you supported or did you do other things in the vein of activism following the raid?

Ange Beever (00:48:37):

I feel like there were some fundraisers for legal fees. I don't know if our company gave stuff specifically, but I'm sure we gave something to fundraising. If that happened, I don't remember, but we also gave our physical support by going, showing up as bodies in court in support of Richard [Aitcheson] and JP [Hornick].

Elio Colavito (00:49:05):

Was there anything that you heard in court that sticks with you that you remember really well or that you had some kind of feeling about?

Ange Beever (00:49:16):

I did at the time. I can't specifically remember what it is now. The feeling that I left with was, number one, the prosecution, who was a brand-new attorney, that someone just gave her this case. She was terrible. She stumbled over trans stuff so much that, because of the fact that they were men, they were arguing that there were also men there, so it shouldn't be a problem. I remember them just not getting it, and then our team nailing it on the stand about explaining why trans people were welcome within the space. They didn't get it. That was an overwhelming feeling that they did not understand. They did not understand why trans people were included in this.

Ange Beever (00:50:20):

And the other one is that they were liars. What they said was happening there or what the... I did see the undercover cop. She was on the stand. She flat out lied on the stand. I don't know what it was specifically, but that was the feeling like, "That is so not true. That absolutely did not happen." That was the moment I kept just coming back was like, "I've never..." I've watched enough television shows, but this is real life. This is watching cops lie, point blank, on the stand. Point blank. Then as we got there too, the lawyers learned about our experience there, and Robin [Woodward] was prepped as a witness at some point. She didn't have to. She didn't have to take the stand. Frank [Addario] felt like there was enough material. She actually sat outside for over half a day because she couldn't hear the stuff that was going on, if she was going to be prepped as a witness herself. She was also prepped that way. So, liars and stupid.



Elio Colavito (00:51:33):

Liars and stupid. Let's tackle stupid first. I want you to break down, for the eventual listener one day that hears this interview, what exactly the trans issue was, what the cops were stupid about, and what Frank Addario and the defence had prepped for their stupidity.

Alisha Stranges (00:51:57):

Rebuttal. Rebuttal to the stupid.

Ange Beever (00:51:59):

I'm sure you guys have seen the transcripts at this point.

Elio Colavito (00:52:01):

Yes. I was also very much shocked by the stupidity in the transcripts when I read them. I was like, "You're joking."

Ange Beever (00:52:11):

Like I said, this was a very long time ago. They just did not get it. How they correlated cisgendered men and trans men, they just put them on the same fucking level, and they just did not get it. The crown attorney just did not get it. You have educated women, point blank, laying it out for them, and they're just missing it. I feel like the prosecution was not prepared for this, did not have enough research. It's like those people who argue with the trans bathroom stuff. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever. They just don't understand our community. I don't know if it could be even taught.

Elio Colavito (00:53:15):

We've tackled stupidity now, so liars. What kind of things were the undercover cops that you heard on the stand lying about?

Ange Beever (00:53:23):

I feel like they were talking about specific scenes of sex that were happening in the bathhouse that didn't happen. I feel like they were saying some of the things that were happening that weren't actually happening. They embellished and made up stuff about some of the sexual activities that were happening there. It played out like it was Caligula. It was just out of like... Not true. Not true.

Elio Colavito (00:54:03):

Being in the courtroom, how did you feel hearing all of this stuff, both the stupidity and the lies?

Ange Beever (00:54:11):

I was pissed off. I was pissed off that they had been there. Pissed off. I just got more and more angry about it. How could we be of support to our community and how do we don't take this? This is stupid. That's the end feeling was like, "Oh my god, you really can't trust police." That was the end. That's the end story; it's like, "Mm-hmm" (negative).

Elio Colavito (00:54:46):

How did you feel about Justice [Peter] Hryn's decision and the settlement, those kind of things?

Ange Beever (00:54:53):

Oh my god, it was awesome. It was fantastic to know. I felt bad that it was tantamount to a strip search, an illegal strip search of 350 women and the scars that some women, the trauma that they would experience through that, and how dare they do that. But I was like, "Good. I'm not scared of the police. This is the right decision." The judge was just like, "You guys were so wrong." He was like, "You fucked up. You really fucked up." Basically, that's what his verdict felt like to me is like, "You did that? That's all kinds of wrong," was the feeling that was left, was that.

Elio Colavito (00:55:46):

Last question before I hand it back over to Alisha [Stranges].

Alisha Stranges (00:55:50):

Pause for a second, before you ask that last question, Elio [Colavito]. I just want to connect this because I'm a little confused about... I remember seeing in the literature that you and your partner, or your wife, were named. That was in the human rights and class action lawsuit, right?

Ange Beever (00:56:10):

Yeah.

Alisha Stranges (00:56:13):

How did that evolve to where you are actually now involved the legal proceedings?

Ange Beever (00:56:20):

I don't know specifically how it happened, but I think that maybe because Robin [Woodward] had been prepped by Frank [Addario] that they knew, specifically, about what had happened. After the case, I'm sure once again it was Chanelle [Gallant], or they're like, "We're going to go forward." Someone contacted us and said, "We're going to go forward with a class action lawsuit because this isn't right. We need four plaintiffs to do the paperwork to do it." Since we were self-employed, there was no worry of losing a career, I think that Robin [Woodward] would say there's some trepidation of having our names associated with suing the police, but someone asked us, and we're like, "Okay. We'll do it." We'd have meetings. I don't remember the class action lawsuit as much as the criminal trial. I don't know how long it went for. I feel like the lawyers did a lot of negotiations not in courtroom. I remember on the day, actually, that same-sex marriage became legal in Ontario in June of 2013, we were still dealing with the class action lawsuit at that point, because we were in a boardroom at a hotel, signing off, finishing up the documents of what the settlement was, where the money was going. We were being held in the hotel room with Frank [Addario] and Bonnie Tough and the four of us and the lawyers that day. We were signing the paperwork that day that we were getting that money, the same day that same-sex marriage became legalized.

Alisha Stranges (00:58:23):

I see.

Ange Beever (00:58:23):

That was in June 2013. It's 13 years after the event before they got the settlement happening. Oh Sorry, no. 2003. Was that when gay marriage—?

Elio Colavito (00:58:41):

Yeah, 2003, you're right.

Ange Beever (00:58:42):

Yeah, 2003.

[crosstalk]

Ange Beever (00:58:51):

We definitely jumped aboard that and was really happy. Then all the money went to charity. I like telling people we won \$350,000 against the police. They're like, "And money?" I'm like, "Yeah." Maybe they could've given us \$100. We got a nice luncheon though. We got a nice luncheon in the hotel room that day. That was more satisfying to go like, "Here's money for a scholarship. Here's the money for Maggie's [Toronto Sex Worker Action Project]."

Alisha Stranges (00:59:26):

I see. It sounds like the class action lawsuit didn't really require more for you than paperwork. Is this right, or am I getting that wrong?

Ange Beever (00:59:37):

I feel like that was really what was... I feel like they did it. I don't remember going to the court for that. I feel like the lawyers were working with the negotiation with the police's officers because they knew they were in trouble with the criminal... That's why, I think, Frank [Addario] also used the class action as an opportunity to recoup some of his legal costs from doing a lot of work on the criminal case probably with not a lot of financial gain, but great for your resume to win a huge case like that.

Alisha Stranges (01:00:21):

When you made the decision initially to attend the event, can you tell us a bit about what you were hoping to experience and then how those expectations compare to your lived experience of it, in the end?

Ange Beever (01:00:38):

I expected to have sex, and I had sex. That was probably the expectation going in. Really simple. I didn't really have a, "Oh, we're going to find someone to fool around with." Whatever would happen, would happen. The expectation is, if you're going to the Pussy Palace, hopefully you're going to get laid. That was probably the height of my expectation, so success.

Alisha Stranges (01:01:17):

It sounds like then the experience for you of it, having to encounter the police so directly, it sounds like it was just another thing that happened that night. Is that a good estimation, or am I getting it wrong?

Ange Beever (01:01:37):

Yeah, it was. It was just what happened that night. There had been some other raids and stuff like that on The Bijou. It was somewhat expected. I feel like it was expected that the Pussy Palace would be raided at some point. It was just something that was probably going to happen. There was probably going to be someone getting spanked in some room. There was probably some group sex happening somewhere. There was probably some oral sex happening at the edge of the pool. There was probably some lap dancing. The cops were probably going to show up at some point. My thing is, they didn't need to bring the men in. Those women could've just written the tickets at the event. They could've closed it down then. They just didn't need the heavy-handedness of them stomping through the fucking place.

Alisha Stranges (01:02:44):

What do you think that was about? Why do you think they did that, if they didn't need to do it?

Ange Beever (01:02:51):

The institution of police is why they did it, to intimidate it because queer sex is dangerous. Same reason they didn't do anything about Bruce McArthur. It was like we're devious and deviant, and I think that those feelings still run deeply within the institution of policing. You know they do. That's why it's like, "We're going to teach them a lesson, those dirty, dirty dykes." It's like, "You taught nothing. You're swinging around your power, and you don't have any because you can't control these women and their sexuality." Right? And their freedom. You can try, but then we'll spend the next five years fighting back.

Alisha Stranges (01:03:48):

One of the often-cited goals of this series of events was wanting to address the invisibility of queer women's sexuality. Prior to the first Palace event, which happened in 1998, would you agree that queer women's sexuality was somewhat invisible in the public sphere?

Ange Beever (01:04:13):

Oh, absolutely. Actually, I'm thankful that we were seeing much more examples of that. There was always underground parties. There was play parties. Aslan Leather used to throw play parties. Depending on what communities you became... If you were part of the leather community, you would find out about play parties and stuff like that, or fetish parties. They've not been invisible, but they've been completely under... At that point, very underground, or very rare.

Alisha Stranges (01:04:50):

What do you think contributed to this lack of invisibility, this need for things to be underground?

Ange Beever (01:05:00):

I think that at this point, and still, it's that... Uncomfortable with women's, female sexuality. So, it's like, "Women are emotional and men are this way," and women's sexual prowess has always been downplayed. It's gotten better. It's getting better. Women don't think like that. They just play to the stereotypes, right? Right there, it's just like, "Women don't want to fuck other women." That's not true. It's just not true. But there's very little opportunities for these things, unless you start going into communities that involve cisgendered men, which you don't always want to, like swinging communities. Since those, there's not ever been anything like the Pussy Palace. Nothing. Whan-whan. I don't know now, but I feel like, for example, my co-worker. I think that she's almost... And the kids, my friends who have 18-year-olds, they're almost post-homo, which it's a little upsetting for me a little bit because it's like, "You know what, there's many places that still struggle

and there's many even small towns in Ontario that it's not safe for queer people. You feel safe. You live in a big city. You feel safe. I think that you don't see outside of your own gaze sometimes to realize what's really happening."

Alisha Stranges (01:07:03):

Can you say a bit more about this frustration or disappointment with the younger generation feeling "post-homo," and also to maybe unpack that term a bit about what you mean?

Ange Beever (01:07:28):

I just have three examples, just because I have actual direct conversations with someone who's 21, someone who's 17, and then my friend's daughter is 14. This 14 and 18-year-old, they don't want genders assigned to them. They're pansexual. They don't even really like those labels. They're just, "This is how I am." One of... My friend's child was having a conversation, "Why do we need labels? Why do we even have to call it butch or femme?" She's challenging her 45-year-old mother about these things, who is a bisexual, cisgendered woman who's just like, "I need a flag for myself, like, a butch, bisexual, woman." And her child is challenging her about, "Why do you need any of these labels because they're all social constructs." I'm like, "Yes, they are, but that's not how the world works." Those are just examples, because I'm kind of curious... And then my friends will talk about how these kids identify in the world. That's great that they feel that way but also, I'm like, "Can you acknowledge where it came from a little bit?" This 21-year-old queer girl does not know what Stonewall was. She could tell you every TikTok, YouTuber. I'm like, "If you just look a little bit and know where things came from, where you get to live in this, that's what I would like." They'll argue with me about social constructs. Yeah, so is race, so is class, all of it, but it doesn't mean that there's not this reality.

Ange Beever (01:09:26):

When I say post-homo, it's kind of like, "Well, doesn't matter." I'm like, "It really matters." I hate this, "Love is love. We're just the same as you." Mm-hmm (negative). I am absolutely not the same as you. I have a completely different sex life than you. It's through sex that makes me different. I want to not be the same as everyone else. It's like colour-blindness, "Well, I see everyone the same." I'm like, "Please don't because I'm not."

Alisha Stranges (01:10:00):

What's the most painful thing about just this experience of people not looking back and understanding where things came from? What's the most painful?

Ange Beever (01:10:14):

It's not painful for me. I just keep trying because if I put little tiny, what are they called, Easter eggs into the conversation, I'm hoping that five, six years from now, they go, "Oh, I remember when I was having this conversation with Ange in the shop and she told me about who George Michael was, and why he's important in terms of your queer history." I don't need it. It frustrates me a little bit. This could also be this person's personality. For example, her girlfriend comes in, same age, she asks questions. She is more engaged. It could be just this person as well. It's not all. I'll just throw little things here and there. Robin [Woodward] says, she's like, "I was listening to this podcast that Sarah might... It's a whole history of LGBTQ stuff." I was like, "She listens to true crime and some Dungeons and Dragons podcasts. Not going to be interested."

Ange Beever (01:11:30):

I just persevere. I just don't care that much that I'm still going to give you little pieces of information, and hopefully you'll retain it because, how lucky would I have been to be 21 and have a 50-year-old cool queer aunt who has stories, can tell you what queer trauma looked like in 1990, what the first Pride Days looked like? The kid's never been to Pride Day. I feel a little bad, she's coming of age in a pandemic and doesn't have access to these things. But like, "I am a treasure of information, and you don't even care." I care enough that I'll just drop little things. Hopefully, there's a little bit of a sponge there at some point that will give a little. So, I'm kind of relentless. I don't give up.

Alisha Stranges (01:12:26):

This was wonderful. Thank you so much for traveling back in time and remembering what you can remember. I'll just ask a final question, open-ended, if there's anything that you want to share that our questions didn't give you a chance to speak to, please share it.

Ange Beever (01:12:49):

I feel like you've gotten the feel of my experience there. It'll be interesting to see you interview Robin [Woodward] and what her experience was. I felt like doing it separate because I think our experiences were quite different from one another. We've been together for 23 years. We do well in an interview situation, like, that we know how to give each other space and stuff like that. I think it's going to be cool to hear what her retelling of that night's about, and what she remembers where I don't remember.

Alisha Stranges (01:13:26):

Really excited about that for sure. I'm going to pause the recording on our end. You can stop yours. We'll just follow up here, finish off at the end.

Ange Beever (01:13:36):

Okay. Save.