

Danny Fik

Former member of Movin' Mavs Wheelchair Basketball Team, former member of the U.S. national wheelchair tennis team, member of Dallas Wheelchair Mavericks, and Operations Manager at Per4Max Medical

*Interview conducted by
Teresa Pritchett
In 2016 in Grand Prairie, Texas*

Disability Studies Minor
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Biography

Danny Fik was born in 1984 in Highland, California. He is the second of three children, all of whom are athletes. He was born with a form of spina bifida called tethered cord syndrome. He walked with some impairment until he underwent corrective surgery at age thirteen. The operation failed and he lost all feeling below his chest as a result. This led him to explore adapted sports, including wheelchair hockey, tennis, and basketball, and eventually receive a full-ride scholarship to the University of Texas at Arlington to play on the Movin' Mavs wheelchair basketball team. He has also been a member of the U.S.A. national team for wheelchair tennis, earning multiple gold medals.

Fik earned his bachelor's degree in public relations at UT Arlington in 2008. He is currently a member of the Dallas Wheelchair Mavericks. Fik works as Operations Manager at Per4Max Medical, which manufactures custom wheelchairs.

Topics Discussed

- Meeting Jim Hayes and being recruited to UT Arlington
- Jim Hayes' impact on Fik, UT Arlington, and the disability community
- Choice of college major
- Jim Hayes' mentoring outside basketball
- Work and career after college: Per4Max
- Impact of Jim Hayes' work ethic
- Movin' Mavs at Per4Max
- Relationship between Movin' Mavs and Dallas Wheelchair Mavericks
- Jim Hayes' impact on wheelchair basketball and access to college

- Jim Hayes' death and his advocacy at UTA
 - Sports injuries in wheelchair basketball
 - UT Arlington's academic scholarships for adapted sports
 - First job after college
 - Interactions with current Movin' Mavs and Lady Movin' Mavs
 - Fik's future in wheelchair basketball
 - Mentoring and Jim Hayes' rules for players
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Pritchett

This is Teresa Pritchett interviewing Danny Fik for the UT Arlington Texas Disability Oral History Project. Today is April 27, 2016 and I am at Per4Max in Grand Prairie. I am here today to talk with Danny Fik about his experience at UTA and the Movin' Mavs with Jim Hayes and UT Arlington. Thank you for participating in the university's oral history interview program.

Fik

Absolutely.

Pritchett

<topic>Meeting Jim Hayes and being recruited to UT Arlington</topic>
We left off last time with some things about Jim Hayes. Tell me, how did he find you, or did you find him? How did that come to be?

Fik

Actually, in 2003 I was a senior in high school and I played junior wheelchair basketball for the Rancho Los Amigos Renegades out of California and we went to nationals where we were seeded...I think we were seeded sixth and Coach Hayes came up to me and.... The first time I met him he offered me a full-ride scholarship to come to the University of Texas at Arlington because of some of the other players that were currently here, and they wanted me to come and join the program and the team. And I was in shock. I couldn't believe that I had received a full-ride scholarship to anywhere, and Texas Arlington with a history of winning that they have had, or we have had at this point... I was very, very excited when he told me that. I couldn't sleep for a couple of days once he did that. That was probably one of the best days of my life where he offered that to me. It was actually in Birmingham, Alabama.

Pritchett

How long between that meeting—did you come to UT?

Fik

I...that meeting was...I think it was in March of 2003. I didn't come out to Texas.... I didn't even come out to visit or anything. I didn't come out here until August of that year. We just loaded up my dad's truck with a trailer and just moved out here, and it was awesome. I remember nights prior, weeks prior, just looking at the layout of the apartment and how

awesome it was, and I was so excited to be on my own...just to experience life. It was awesome.

Pritchett

And how old were you then?

Fik

I was eighteen.

Pritchett

Had you had more contact with Jim Hayes before you came here or was it just the one instance in Birmingham?

Fik

I only saw him that one instance in Birmingham, but we had e-mail conversations, I believe, and phone conversations, lining everything out, stuff like that. But I never saw him until I came out here...since March [2003]. I might have been nineteen, excuse me, 2003, yeah, I was 19.

Pritchett

Was there any sense of culture shock when you moved from California to here?

Fik

Absolutely, absolutely. We got here, me and my mom and my dad and my sister, we drove, I think it was like a 22, 24 hour drive. I think we stopped in El Paso. Once we got here we had to go to the WalMart and make sure I...we bought a futon or something else. Someone came up to us, like "Hey, how y'all doing? Y'all need any help?" And we're like "What in the heck is this? We don't have any money, get away from me." But I fell in love with Texas, and Jim Hayes was a great, great man, and I appreciate the opportunity that he has given me, the many opportunities that he has given me in life.

Pritchett

<topic>Jim Hayes' impact on Fik, UT Arlington, and the disability community</topic>
Name a few of those—how has he impacted your life?

Fik

On a basketball level, he gave me the discipline that I have today, and I probably don't have the best discipline that I used to have or as much discipline as I used to have, rather. But I've been on multiple national teams for the USA. I went to Birmingham, England in 2005 to represent the United States in the Under 23, where we won a gold medal. We beat them, I think we doubled up their score pretty much in the gold medal game. I was in and out of the national team, the men's national team program, as well. I went to Guadalajara in 2011 for the Parapans and we won a gold medal there. I was also an alternate for the London Paralympics.

The knowledge and the discipline, and everything he gave to me... When I came in I was just a brat-nosed kid, or whatever, however you say it, but he made me. He taught me how to be a man and not to be a kid anymore. That's just on the basketball side.

He always used to... He was one of my biggest role models or mentors, I guess, telling me not to drink and not to party, not to...to take care of life, and that basketball is a vehicle to get the education, and other things. Without him, I don't know where I would be at today. He's just a great, great man. I appreciate everything he's done for me and I miss him. I see him every day with his picture here in my office.

Pritchett

What kinds of things...did he have things he would say regularly, like motto type things?

Fik

Yeah, he always used to mess with me. I'm from California, he used to call me "California fruits and nuts." I'm like "Come on, Coach!" But he called everybody "Son." "Son, your grades are the most important thing." Just some other things in basketball, he talked about a lot of the apex above the rim. Basically, if the ball goes through that imaginary place in the apex it was gonna go in no matter what. There were multiple things that he taught me motto-wise, I guess. The biggest thing he instilled in me is this is just a vehicle you need to figure out school, and the rest will follow.

Pritchett

You said your degree was in public relations.

Fik

<topic>Choice of college major</topic>
Yes, ma'am.

Pritchett

How did you pick that?

Fik

Funny story, actually. My freshman year, first semester I came in, I wanted to be a computer science engineer. Actually, not the first semester, forget that part, but I came in as a computer engineer and I couldn't... I didn't have the discipline quite yet, I guess the time management. So I took a...I think it was my sophomore or junior year, I took a calculus class. For my degree you had to go up to Calculus 3, and about halfway through the semester I'm like, "This, I don't even know if I can pass this class." At that point I'm like, "This is not for me." I've always been a people person, I've always wanted to make people happy, and talk to people and stuff, so that was a kind of...it kind of just fell in my lap. I went and talked to some advisors and etcetera, etcetera. The rest is history.

Pritchett

<topic>Jim Hayes' mentoring outside basketball</topic>
Great. What are some ways Jim Hayes has influenced you that weren't basketball related?

Are there any?

Fik

Just to be an honest man, and a hardworking man. I mean, that's rare nowadays and I think he was a big part of that for me. I've always known what I wanted and how it worked to go get it, but he was just a huge advocate of all his players. The university was the most accessible university for his players because of him. And not only for his players but for the rest of the disabled community to come here and enjoy the conveniences, or the life that an able-bodied person would have

Pritchett

You also played tennis, was he involved in coaching the tennis team at all or was he strictly basketball?

Fik

He was strictly basketball. We actually had a tennis coach, her name was Marie. She was from overseas, I'm not sure where, but he was still running the program financially.... He was doing the funding, he would travel to tournaments with us, but he never coached the tennis program.

Pritchett

<topic>Work and career after college: Per4Max</topic>
You have worked at Per4Max for how long?

Fik

I came here in April of 2010, so it's been just over six years. A couple of my buddies, Jason Nelms, who played for the University of Texas at Arlington, and then Christopher Comer, who is from Grand Rapids, Michigan, played a year at UT Arlington. They bought into the company and asked me to come aboard and help out the company, and we've been doing great things ever since.

Pritchett

What other jobs have you had, post-college?

Fik

I graduated in 2008, in the fall of 2008, December, and my buddy, my roommate at the time actually worked at Jackson's Home and Garden in Dallas and he brought me out there just to do a little contract labor, kind of help with inventory. And that kind of progressed to, I think, maybe six months after that I was in charge of the whole accounts payable for this multi-million dollar company. The drive sucked but the company was great. I hated to leave it, but I love where I'm at now, and I love what I do.

Pritchett

What company was that?

Fik

Jackson's Home and Garden, or Jackson's Pottery. There was actually multiple companies, the wholesale, retail.

Pritchett

<topic>Impact of Jim Hayes' work ethic</topic>

How have you changed from the time you left California to now? What's changed? How have you changed?

Fik

I was immature, just like any eighteen, nineteen-year-old.... That's a tough one. I've obviously matured quite a bit. I put others in front of myself now, partially because of Jim Hayes...because he was putting others in front of himself his whole life. That was a big thing for me to learn from UTA, and from Coach Hayes.

And just, I guess, my work ethic. I get bored if I just sit around so I'd rather just be doing something at work, just to make the day go by faster, also to help efficiency, everything else. I do a little bit of everything, wherever the company needs me I'll be there and do whatever I can to help. I've put in twelve...twelve hour days when I first came here to help figure things out and get things back up and running.

Pritchett

Did he speak candidly about his own experience with becoming disabled? Or was that just something y'all didn't talk about?

Fik

We talked about it a little bit and to be honest, I don't really recall, I think it was a car accident, if I remember...I can't even remember. It's been.... I've slept since then. He's been gone almost eight years now. We probably talked about it in 2004 so it's been twelve years. I honestly don't remember. I hear so many other stories of how people become disabled, I always get 'em mixed up and combined.

Pritchett

So, that's not a taboo subject.

Fik

No, hmm. No.

Pritchett

<topic>Movin' Mavs at Per4Max</topic>

It looks like this establishment is kind of a landing place for Movin' Mavs. How many former teammates are working here?

Fik

That I played with...we have two, but all three owners are alumni or at least attended the University of Texas at Arlington. Two of which...William Hernandez, the president of the company graduated... He was there...I think he came there in 1990 [fall of 1991]. He won, I think, three or four championships there, and then Jason [Nelms whom] I played with my last two years there, and he is actually the vice president of the company. And then Chris [Kommer] came in to the University of Texas at Arlington in 2004. He was there for the 2004-2005 season.

Then my purchasing manager went to school with me. His name is Jeff [Sale]. I don't know when he came...I want to say it was 2006, and he actually just graduated, I think, a year or two ago with a master's in, I couldn't tell you what. And then my production manager went there, I think, like '98. His name is Cezar Olivas. He was there in, I think, '98. And then I have an assembly guy that I played with for four of the five years I was there, Aaron Gouge, and he won the championship with me in 2006. I think that's it for Movin' Mavs that came through the program and are employed by us at this point.

Pritchett

Your friendships from college have been long-lasting, they aren't always.

Fik

Yeah, so I have some that I talk to maybe once or twice a year, and there's some that I haven't talked to since college, but for the core of 'em, the Jason Nelms, the Aaron Gouges, the Christopher Comers, obviously, William Hernandez, we talk multiple times a week typically for those few that I was really close with. Working here has probably even gotten me closer to some of 'em and talkin' to 'em more than I would have without being here. It's good.

Pritchett

<topic>Relationship between Movin' Mavs and Dallas Wheelchair Mavericks</topic>
Have you been to any of the Movin' Mavs games since you left college?

Fik

I have. I've been to a couple. Life is busy sometimes so I haven't gotten to all of 'em, and I play for the Dallas Wheelchair Mavericks, as well, so we practice against them during the season every Wednesday night, and a lot of 'em will come out on Saturdays. And then their tournaments we play in and in our tournaments they play in. We've played against 'em in games probably four or five times a year, so we know their players very, very well. And then we scrimmage 'em at least once a week during the season.

Pritchett

What does that mean?

Fik

What does what mean?

Pritchett

Scrimmage them?

Fik

Basically it's pick up ball, you just go, you versus them, and they're being coached, we're being coached, but at the end of the day the game doesn't matter, it's just to get better. It's not going to go towards your record or towards your standings or anything else like that.

Pritchett

How would you describe wheelchair basketball to someone like myself who has never seen that before?

Fik

The stereotypical wheelchair basketball, you think it's slow, you think it's boring, but once people go out, I've seen it a hundred times, once people go out and see it they're like, "Oh! My goodness. I can't believe how fast this was," or "The talent that they had," or "How physical it is," and stuff like that. You really need to go out there and watch it to understand. It's not "Oh poor me, I'm in a wheelchair, let's go push around a little bit and see what happens." We're scoring 50, 60, 70, 80 points a game. A couple of years back with the Dallas Mavericks, we scored a hundred points a couple of times during the season.

Granted, most of the Dallas Maverick program has come up through UT Arlington and we are very successful because of that. We actually just won a National Championship, I think, three-and-a-half weeks ago, two weeks ago, something like that, where we won by one point and they had a last second shot and they didn't get it off in time. We won six...Dallas Mavericks have won six in seven years, fourteen out of the last twenty, so we're kind of a dynasty. I've only been involved with it the last, for the last six championships. But most of our players, or a lot of our players have come up through Jim Hayes and through the program.

Pritchett

<topic>Jim Hayes' impact on wheelchair basketball and access to college</topic>
So he's,...even in passing, he's still a fixture in the program there.

Fik

In not only the program, but the sport in the United States. There's multiple people that have changed the game. Tim Nugent was one of 'em. There's multiple others, some of which are still alive and some are not, and Tim Nugent just passed away not too long ago.

But Jim Hayes was... He's still well-spoken [of] in the community. He changed the game and changed—We were the first university to offer full-ride scholarships to a disabled athlete. Now, I would say eight or nine universities can offer that. But before it was, "They're doing what? You get a full ride scholarship for wheelchair basketball?" So, he was the reason that, at the time, at least—I'm sure someone would have done it between now

and then—but at the time, back in the '70s, I think is when he started the program, he was fighting for us. He was our biggest advocate. He changed the game, changed the way everything works university-wise and funding-wise, and everything. He did great work. Within the program we miss him every day, I know. I go visit his gravesite every now and then.

Pritchett

Where is his gravesite?

Fik

It's in Fort Worth, about a mile from my house.

Pritchett

In what other ways did Jim Hayes validate his athletes, the sport? You said he...

Fik

He took good athletes and made them great. Because of his work ethic there have been multiple, multiple national team members, national championships, whether it's for the United States, Canada, elsewhere, Sweden, there was one from Sweden, Mexico, all over the place. UTA is kind of like a grooming...where you develop your talent, and most of that is because of Jim Hayes and the opportunities that he had worked so hard years prior to get us.

Pritchett

<topic>Jim Hayes' death and his advocacy at UTA</topic>
When was the last time you saw him?

Fik

The last time I saw him, I was actually at the hospital the night he passed. I saw him alive but he wasn't there. Prior to that it was probably April or May of 2008. I think the last time I saw him was at the sports banquet where he gave me my letterman ring. I might have seen him one more time since then, I can't remember. He passed away in July, I think July 28 of 2008.

Pritchett

Had he been ill?

Fik

He didn't really take care of his body. He would kind of... He'd smoke cigarettes and drink coffee and that was it, and eat Snickers. He would, kind of, during the season he would kind of just let his body go and then during the summer he would go to the hospital for a month and just get everything back right and take care of his body during the off-season, just like we would.

Pritchett

Compare that description to what he would have told his athletes. Is there some cognitive dissonance there?

Fik

There is. He wanted us to take care of our bodies and take care of our mind, take care of everything, school, basketball, everything else, and I think he kind of did that because he wanted us to do our best. He sacrificed—he was up there hours and hours a day, probably ten or twelve hours a day to work with the university to help get more funding so we can travel more places, get more talented athletes to come here, etcetera, etcetera.

Pritchett

The bridges over Cooper, were those there during your tenure?

Fik

They were there prior to me coming, yeah. I think it was him that told me the story that the reason why they put those up is, I don't remember the name of the kid that got hit and passed away [Andy Beck in 1991], but I know back in the early-to-mid '90s, they had actually all played in pink wheelchairs to honor him. So, that was all there back, the year before I came.

In prior...years prior, they called the gym, the PE building gym "the Sweatbox." The summer before I got there they actually installed the air conditioner, so there was no air conditioner in it prior to 2003, so they called it "the Sweatbox." I kind of got it gravy, I was in a nice apartment there, and the gym had air conditioning, the ramps were there, so all of the hard work that he did in fighting for us I kind of took advantage of. I don't know if that's the right terminology, but you understand what I'm saying.

Pritchett

Sure, sure. Did you socialize with him off-campus?

Fik

Not off-campus, no. I would, during the week, after I would get out of class, I would get him a coffee, come hang out with him. He kind of taught me, he was a big reason why I maintain my chairs and.... He was always working on other people's chairs and I would go in there and just try and learn from him and help him out. He was in there working on chairs, working on wheels, doing this, machining stuff. He had a lathe in there that machined stuff. A couple of times—he was a quadriplegic, so—a couple of times he was machining something and he would get done with it and grab it and he would hand it to me. And it was hot! I had to drop it a couple of times, and he couldn't feel his hands so he didn't even think about it. I think he kind of thought it was funny to mess with us like that.

But I would always come out there and bring him coffee. He loved coffee, black with lots of sugar...black coffee with lots of sugar. I would come and hang out with him on campus. I know he would do a lot of fishing years prior. There were people that went out fishing with him on his boat, but I was never able to do that.

Pritchett

<topic>Sports injuries in wheelchair basketball</topic>

Sports injuries are a big deal in mainstream sports. What kind of sports injuries would you be looking at if you're on a wheelchair team?

Fik

I would say the most common injury in wheelchair basketball would be rotator cuff, torn rotator cuff, just 'cause we use our arms more than anything else, obviously. Other than that, like, jammed fingers, broken fingers, etcetera, etcetera. That's somewhat common but you can play through that. But torn rotator cuffs are pretty intense, you have to go in and get surgery on 'em and be out for six months to a year.

And actually back before I came here I had a injury—I don't know if you would call it a injury—but accident. I knocked my two front teeth out playing basketball, I think that was in '99 or 2000. I don't know if you would call that a injury or an accident. I would probably call it a accident more than anything, but that's pretty uncommon. If you see pictures of me on *The Shorthorn* or around you'll see I have a facemask on to protect my teeth.

Pritchett

So, other than your teeth you didn't have very many injuries?

Fik

No, no. I mean, I [had] sore shoulders and stuff like that but nothing really major, knock on wood.

Pritchett

Did you ever have anything happen during the game where you questioned whether that was where you needed to be?

Fik

No. No I didn't.

Pritchett

Your academic time at the school, you went five years?

Fik

I went five, I was, academically I was there for five-and-a-half, so I came in August for the fall of 2003 and then I graduated in December of 2008.

Pritchett

<topic>UT Arlington's academic scholarships for adapted sports</topic>

Tell me about the scholarship program, was it only academic? Was it a living stipend? What all did it come with?

Fik

What my scholarship came with was tuition completely paid for, we got an apartment for ten months out of the year, I think we had to pay for June and July. Or, we could've moved out. We just paid for it. That way we didn't have to buy storage, blah, blah, blah. And then we also got a food stipend. Our Mavs card had some money on it, and then also every semester we got a gift card to Spring Creek [barbeque restaurant] that Coach Hayes worked out a deal with the owner of Spring Creek and took care of us on that one.

Pritchett

Were your parents able to make it to very many of your games?

Fik

They surprised me once. My brother and my dad came out here, we had a home tournament. I don't remember what year that was, but they surprised me out here. And then my mom, dad, and sister were actually able to come out to nationals in 2008, which was in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where Oklahoma State is. That was actually my last nationals with the team. And that was actually Coach Hayes' last game before he passed.

Pritchett

<topic>First job after college</topic>
How long between your graduation did you work at Jackson's?

Fik

It was probably a few weeks.

Pritchett

So you went straight into the work force.

Fik

I went home for Christmas and I came back and I was, I mean it was kind of a one or two day a week [job that] turned into three or four day, and they liked my work ethic so there was an opportunity there. Their current accounts payable lady was leaving, I think she was having a baby, so they kind of taught me on the fly. I think I had three or four days of training.

Pritchett

<topic>Interactions with current Movin' Mavs and Lady Movin' Mavs</topic>
Do you know any of the Movin' Mavs now?

Fik

I do. I know all of them, actually. I don't know them very well, their personal life, but I am familiar with all of them. There's a couple of 'em that will hang out and have dinner every now and again, but I'm familiar with every single one of them, men and women.

Pritchett

So you work as a support system for them.

Fik

Yeah. We actually sponsor the university through Per4Max, we take care of them. They play in our product, so I'm out there. I try to go to camps as much as I can and support them. Not to mention now, I play for the Dallas team as well. We're up there every Wednesday night and every Saturday, typically, so we come out and play with us, so... I know them, their talent and their skill, and their tendencies on the court more than I know what their favorite color is or where their favorite restaurant is. Not necessarily personally, but basketball-wise I know them pretty well.

Pritchett

Are there any of those young people that you look at and think, "You need to get out of here and come work with me?"

Fik

I don't really look at 'em that way. Some of 'em do have a lot of talent, some of 'em have great work ethic, but I don't really look at 'em that way, I guess. I know it's frowned upon to hire your friends and for us it's worked great, don't get me wrong. But I think we're good with what we have. A lot of the skills and the talents that we need are fabrication-wise and they don't really learn that there. So all of the positions that someone at UTA could fill are already filled.

Pritchett

Your employee base here, how many people here are not disabled?

Fik

We've had injuries with a lot of our employees but they walk around. I had one that had a double hip replacement and one that broke his leg, has a titanium hip in his leg, a titanium rod in his leg. One of 'em has scoliosis, but they walk around so there's three, four, five, six, six out of twelve are disabled and six are not.

Pritchett

To what extent are the wheelchair sports at UTA coeducational, on the professional level up? Do you play alongside women or is it segregated?

Fik

For, like practices, you mean? Or, like games?

Pritchett

For... you tell me.

Fik

Practices...like on Saturdays we kind of just run whoever comes out. Sometimes the women'll come out, Rose Hollerman, who is a very talented athlete, and she's very, very good. So, she'll come out and kind of push us, and we'll kind of push her. And then there's some of the girls that are still kind of learning. They'll come out and, if you can play at our speed, you can for sure play at the women's speed. They kind of learn a lot when they come out.

Game-wise, there's probably a few girls that play in the men's division and they're typically national team members. At our level, there's girls that don't have local women's teams that'll play on the men's, but at the top level, the championship division which is what we play in there's, I would say, there's probably a handful of 'em, women that play with the men.

Pritchett

<topic>Fik's future in wheelchair basketball</topic>

Where do you see yourself down the road, five years, ten years?

Fik

I see myself being here. I'm not 100% sure I'll still be playing basketball. I feel like basketball, like I said earlier, is a vehicle to get what you want. I think I'll probably still be involved in basketball, and obviously still working here, but I don't know if I'll see myself playing basketball. I would still be here as long as they allow me to stay that long, which I hope they do. I don't see any reason why they won't. Just probably finding a wife, starting a family at some point, just like anyone else.... I just want to do for the most part, I don't know.

Pritchett

Actually, my next question was going to be what would need to happen for you in your life for you to stop playing ball?

Fik

There're are just these kids out here that're really, really fast and really, really good, and I'm slowing down a little bit every year. Yeah, I'm 31 and we have 21-year-olds coming out of college that.... I used to be that fast ten years ago, but their athleticism is far superior to mine just because of the age. My knowledge is still there, so I will probably still be involved with the program and stuff like that. Also work-wise, if I got too inundated here...

Pritchett

You said just a bit ago that the apex...

Fik

Yeah.

Pritchett

Explain that to me. How does that work?

Fik

There's an area above the rim, the basket that, if the ball goes through it, it's gonna go in through the hoop. (telephone rings) So it was kind of a silly thing. To me, if it goes through the apex and the apex is one inch above the rim, it's gonna go through, but he wanted us to visualize it, so we...yeah, that's about it. It's kind of hard to explain it without showing it.

Pritchett

<topic>Mentoring and Jim Hayes' rules for players</topic>

Sure. (coughs) Pardon me. Do you ever see yourself mentoring young people in disability sports?

Fik

I do see myself mentoring. It's given me so many opportunities. I do and want, will continue to want to give back to those through Per4Max. We'll sponsor some people and kind of help 'em out with some chairs and stuff like that to kind of keep them going. A lot of people can't afford 'em so we'll take care of some people, stuff like that.

Really, I tell people that, just like Coach used to tell me, that basketball is a vehicle to get where you want to go in life and to get your education and that's the most important thing. Coach Hayes would rather have us graduate than to win a championship. Obviously he wanted us to do both, but at the end of the day the reason we were there was for school and to get a good education, to get a good GPA and continue on in life.

Pritchett

<topic>Jim Hayes' rules for players</topic>

Did he enforce any kind of academic baseline?

Fik

He did. I believe it was a 2.5, which isn't that hard to get. But he did...the years we were struggling, he did enforce study hall—he would hire tutors, probably out of his own pocket, to be honest with you. He would do stuff like that for us, mandatory study hall, we had to be there two nights out of the week, or something like that.

Pritchett

Is there anything else you want to share with the Disability History Program?

Fik

Just basically to, like I said, I actually had a bet with the current coach's, Doug Garner's wife, that she told me if I went to class every day that she would buy me dinner at the end of the semester. I went from, like a 2.6 GPA that semester...I made the Dean's List, just by going to class every day, so just the little things like that, just going to class, as simple as going to class made a huge difference for me and I did that my last year. I think I kind of figured out time management at that point, three-and-a-half, four years into it, which might have been a little late.

Pritchett

Did you ever feel like your peers in the university that were not part of the team couldn't understand you?

Fik

Absolutely not. I think they looked up to us, especially those that had seen the sport and seen us play, that we can do more than a lot of other people can do. I think they looked up to us. There's certain things that people that don't deal with it daily won't understand.

Pritchett

Like what?

Fik

Just medical stuff, just personal stuff that I don't necessarily want to get into.

Pritchett

That's fine. I thank you for your time and we really appreciate you letting us have your interview.

Fik

Absolutely.