

## **Mr. Casey Gonzales**

### **Former Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Officer and current Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, the University of Texas at Arlington**

*Interview conducted by  
Christopher Stone  
in 2016 in Arlington, Texas*

Disability Studies Minor  
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### **Biography**

Casey Gonzales graduated from New Mexico Highlands University and began working at UT Arlington in 1984 in the Office of the President and Director of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and AA programs. He worked closely with Jim Hayes, Wayne Duke and others to improve accessibility for the differently abled at the UTA campus. He also helped organize events and provided support for the Movin' Mavs basketball team. Gonzales currently runs the Parent & Family Center at UTA and is the Assistant Dean of Students at UTA.

### **Topics discussed**

- Working on accommodating wheelchairs with Jim Hayes
- Supporting the Movin' Mavs
- The Movin' Mavs and Accessibility
- Accommodating people with other disabilities
- Working on compliance and accommodations
- New perspectives and pindsets
- T9 Predictive Texting

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#### **Stone**

This is an interview of Casey Gonzales. My name is Christopher Stone.

#### **Gonzales**

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And this is Casey Gonzales. I'm the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. I direct the Parent & Family Center now, but I gather we are here to talk about when I was part of the President's office and I was the affirmative action officer and equal opportunity officer.

**Stone**

Yes sir. So you first came to the university in 1984, is that correct?

**Gonzales**

That is correct. In March of 1984 I started as the affirmative action and equal opportunity director.

**Stone**

And what sort of work does that require you to do?

**Gonzales**

It requires me to look at all of the different things that are going on around campus as well as the compliance portion of making sure that we comply to the law of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

**Stone**

And when you first came here what were some of the things that you...what was the status of UTA? Were there some sort of issues that had to work out?

**Gonzales**

<topic>Working on accommodating wheelchairs with Jim Hayes</topic>

At that time I became friends with a gentleman who was...who had been here as a student and his name was Jim Hayes. He was directing the wheelchair basketball team, but he also...he and I both had responsibilities looking at the different laws and how they pertained to the university and how well we were complying to those laws. Accessibility was a big primary kind of issue. We need to make sure that chairs could get into bathrooms. A lot of the stalls and things of that sort...things that so many of us take for granted were things that were barriers and we needed to check on all those barriers whether they were bathrooms, whether they were cuts on the sidewalks so that chairs could move freely back and forth without having to jump. Elevators, doors, do the doors meet the requirements to allow a chair to come in? A lot of doors were too narrow and you couldn't get the old style chairs... in 1984...we didn't have the thinner chairs that we have now that are a little more maneuverable in that kind of environment so they need to be 3 foot wide doors.

And for a lot of people they thought this is, you know, you're really making us jump through a lot of hoops. However because the abled bodied never looked at it in...from a chair perspective, we were trying to get people into chairs and we started putting people in chairs and then we would basically have them try to get through a doorway try to get...you know...try to carry books, try to maneuver in the rain outside. We would give them a class schedule...and...a lot of the administrators, we would give them a class schedule, books and send them on their way and they had to go to the different classes and what not. They soon discovered that how we accommodated folks who could walk and get around was different than how we accommodated those folks who needed the use of a chair. And so accessibility

really improved on this campus. I have to give most of that credit to Jim Hayes because Jim was...Jim was living it. I wasn't living it, but I was the compliance officer and so I had to make sure that so much of that stuff was in compliance.

At that time a lot of the compliances were just coming out from the federal government and we were trying to see where we had to comply and how we had to comply. Yes the state does have a...kind of a clause that allows it to not necessarily make all the changes at once, but we moved on it once the administrators discovered...the other administrators discovered how difficult it was to get around on a campus like this. And we have a relatively...flat campus. Other campuses are actually very hilly, and do not allow for accommodations for basically a 1 foot to 1 inch ratio of incline, you know like a stairway for a chair to get up.

Graduations, think of all the students that were graduating that were in chairs and couldn't roll up to get their graduation (laughs)...you know documents at commencement, things of this sort. Once you put yourself in that situation you start seeing the world from a different level and a different plateau and these were – sometimes I...we like... (Stone coughs) – bless you – we like calling them...they were different abled. They were not disabled they were just differently abled.

Because Jim also taught me something I'd never seen before in my life. We were in one of the buildings and it was...the elevator was causing us some concern because it wasn't working and we were up on the...3<sup>rd</sup> floor. And he was able to take his chair and walk it down while he was in it down the stairs. It scared the life out of me, but Jim had done this before and he was used to it. Jim taught me a lot. Jim did not – One of the things I have to say about Jim Hayes he did not...he was not one of those persons who was just looking out for himself, he was looking out for the entire campus. I was responsible for a lot of the accessibility but so was Jim. So Jim and I shared that responsibility when I came here and we did what we thought was best for the campus.

Yeah there were...you know there were times that it was difficult because like all things there is a functionality of money, which is always (laughs) seems to be an issue because we are always a little bit short, but we managed, because the administration really cared about what was going on. It wasn't just about where we put them in the chairs and they went through the motions as...as a...somebody who was bound to a chair. But it was also just trying to get around campus.

<topic>Supporting the Movin' Mavs</topic>

Anything...I don't...I don't know if I can add any...more than that...other than...If you notice I still wear my '94 championship wheelchair ring.

**Stone**

Oh yes.

**Gonzales**

And I wear it simply because the—I helped the team in 1994.

**Stone**

How did you...how did you help the team...?

**Gonzales**

There were several of us. One of the things that we did was we gathered—because we wanted to host the national championship game here at UT Arlington. It was going to be at Texas Hall so we had to build ramps to get all of the teams in and out of Texas Hall. We had to have some place for them to actually, even at halftime, go and have facilities and what not. So we brought in trailers and put ramps on them and parked them out on the side.

We went and did a lot of fundraising. We were able to purchase rings for the first, second, and third place winners of the... championship. We found a lot of our sponsors here in the city and around. People who really cared, you know, whether it was—and there was a lot of great folks that came out to help us. Chris Carroll from Spring Creek, in fact his son helped us with the team, very involved. So was...at that time...Buzz Post, and—oh gosh I'm trying to think of my other car guy, over here in north Arlington—he's got something with our basketball team now...I can see him...but I'm not coming up with a name. There were so many people involved, as well as so many people involved...from campus, like Doug Kirkendall and Ryan Amacher who was President at the time, Wayne Duke was Vice-President, also their wives were extremely involved. They handled the dinner and some of...a lot of the logistical kind of pieces that we needed to have done.

The team gave me the ring as a thank you for having helped them out. And I used to...periodically I would travel with the team. I would be one of their drivers whenever we had to go to a tournament somewhere away from UT Arlington. Like when we went to Illinois I would drive them. I actually got injured...at a game there. I slipped on the ice.

**Stone**

In Illinois?

**Gonzales**

In Illinois...at the hotel and tore my quad. And the...young men on the team, put me in a chair, and had a good time with me because obviously I could not maneuver the chair near as well as they could. And then...we drove back to St. Louis to the airport, because we flew into St. Louis and then we had cars to drive to uh...

**Stone**

To Chicago?

**Gonzales**

To Illinois...yeah...to play the Fighting Illini...and anyway...

**Stone**

The Fighting who?

**Gonzales**

The Fighting Illini.

**Stone**

Illini?

**Gonzales**

Yeah, and so we...got back to the airport...and I got in a chair, and they had all the extra chairs that we had, because everybody had their regular chair and they had their playing chair. They're pushing their chairs and they took off and I'm in a chair trying to follow them. Now first of all I'm not steering very straight or whatever...and...when they take off they take off, they're fast. They know what they're doing, and meanwhile here in the back comes Casey out of control (laughs), and some of these ramps you really build up speed. But if you don't know what you're doing...you know...I'm just trying to keep from crashing and some of the guys had to basically catch me and slow me down and straighten me out (laughs), because otherwise, no telling where I'd be. I probably would have gone through one of those glass panels (laughs) at the St. Louis airport.

One of the things I have to say is Jim instilled a lot of pride in the team. We still have that pride...and you can really tell it even in our teams today...I just heard two days ago that our women's team had won the national championship. I couldn't be prouder of our women wheelchair team. But...there's always been a pride with the team, there's always been a lot of work. They got together, they don't just workout like—when we go to workout we practice and we shoot balls and do all that stuff right in basketball. But they also have to work out because they are working up their upper body and getting that upper body strength so they were constantly working out and staying on top.

The other thing though I was very proud of is that they were doing so well at the university with their studies and at the end of the day that's the important piece, because we're all here to make sure that our students are successful with their studies. We just needed to get rid of the barriers, help them make sure that they're successful. Now when you look at so many of our students that have gone through our programs, they're successful, they're doing things out in the community, they're providing a lot of community support, they've got their own businesses, they're...they're playing in...championship level tournaments still, they're paralympics, you name it...you know I couldn't be prouder. I mean if I was—I felt like a father sometimes, I felt like someone who had been adopted and brought into a really close family, knit family, and I think that that's been—One of the joys of working at UT Arlington is that students like this had really almost adopted me and helped me understand, but brought me along.

**Stone**

When did you...you came in 1984. How soon after that did you—how quickly did you meet Jim Hayes and get involved?

**Gonzales**

I got involved really...(Stone coughs and says "pardon me"), bless you. I got involved with Jim Hayes almost immediately...and...it was just—Jim was such a likeable person. And...I started doing things with—Dr. Wayne Duke really got me involved, he was the Vice-President of Student Affairs at the time, when I got here. He kind of got me involved, invited me to come on over, see what we're doing at student affairs, and what not. I had had a life in student affairs prior to coming to UT Arlington and prior—And when I came to UT Arlington I was Director of Human Resources at another university but I still had—So I was still you know...being invited by a lot of different folks on campus to become more involved with

their programs and their...and some of their issues and what not. When Dr. Duke invited me, he introduced me to a lot of his folks that were over here in University Center, and Jim had—In fact I now have Jim's old office that he used to be in originally back in '84.

**Stone**

How 'bout that.

**Gonzales**

(Laughs) It's funny how things work out.

**Stone**

It is.

**Gonzales**

But...again one of the things that we noticed was that we needed to move folks out of this area because we're in the basement and with our—When you're in a chair, and the elevator breaks down, that's a whole other issue. Now we had more than one elevator in the University Center, but for an emergency if you can't get to where you need to get if there was a fire or something that's why we were...basically looked at moving that part of the program, with disabilities, out of the basement.

I got involved right away in 1984. It was one of the best things, for me personally. I am hoping that I had some impact and was able to help in some small way, but there was such an impactful group of young men that made you want to be involved in their lives and in what they were trying to accomplish. Because it was—yes it fell on Jim because Jim was the director, however those young men in the program also made you feel welcome and invited and you were a part of their team.

I mean...I didn't play a lick when I got to Spring in '94. I helped put the program together we...I mean we had the Cowboy Cheerleaders at halftime, we had—it was the first time even at...before it was called ESPN, before ESPN swallowed up the...it was like pro...I wish I had my book in front of me but there was a...before ESPN started it had a different name and one of the things that they did was, it was the very first time it had ever done a wheelchair basketball national championship. We were able to get them here on campus. That served in getting the word out not just in this country, but in other countries. We had one young man who showed up out of...I think...I want to say it was like Zimbabwe, and the reason he showed up was that he was able to get the feed of the satellite, and he came to UTA because he didn't realize that people were playing basketball in wheelchairs.

**Stone**

That's amazing.

**Gonzales**

So you talk about reaching out, our reach has gone out a lot further. Yes we have a lot of that stuff that happens here, but even in other countries, some other countries and some other young folks are not

aware of the possibilities for them to continue to participate in sports and do things. That chairs are just a different way of doing things, it's not a disability, it's just a different way of doing things. If you've ever watched a wheelchair basketball game, it's not only exciting (laughs), it's dangerous as all get out. You can't help but get very involved and excited, because the game is fast paced, and some of the athletes that are playing are tremendous basketball players, and it just so happens that they're in chairs.

## **Stone**

The Movin' Mavs were founded in '89 correct? I think that's what I had found out.

## **Gonzales**

Movin' Mavs, yeah.

## **Chris**

'89? At that point...you know that was a few years after you first joined here. Were you—when did you first hear about the idea? Who came up with the idea? Was it Jim...

## **Gonzales**

Oh that...Jim...that was Jim. Jim was really the mover and shaker on that, and he worked with Dr. Wayne Duke. I don't know if Wayne's available for you to interview but I would say that Wayne Duke would be...somebody that should be interviewed for this program, because it would not have happened without Wayne Duke. We worked on the accessibility initially. Jim was always an athlete, and he always did things to point out the differences...but he was able to bring that forward to Dr. Wayne Duke. Wayne believed in...what was happening and...giving an opportunity to students who basically had been told they weren't going to be basketball players, they weren't going to be able to play anymore, they whatever. He gave them the opportunity to continue, to enjoy the life...that they so much deserved and enjoyed.

## **Stone**

<topic>The Movin' Mavs and Accessibility</topic>

Do you think there was a connection between the profile of the Movin' Mavs and compliance with accessibility and things like that?

## **Gonzales**

There was because one of the things that happened is, as we developed the team we had more and more folks show up in chairs. Then when we started making all the curb cuts and all of the things that we needed to do—And truth of the matter is, it's a constant. Do you ever finish accomplishing all the accessibility? No, and accessibility changes throughout the life of programs. So there is a continuous change on accessibility and access...so that continues...but I think, by having such an accessible campus it opened up the possibilities and...it was an invitation, it was...well it's not like we sent the invitations out, but it gave people the feeling that they're welcome on the campus.

We started making the campus a little more welcoming to everyone. Not just those folks with disabilities, but by doing what we did for the disability folks it also gave other people, and other races the feeling of “people want us there, people make us feel welcome at the university.” It was that welcoming, opening, open arms kind of thing. Yeah we’re not, give us your tired masses (laughs)...this is not the Statue of Liberty, however it did have that sense of feeling and it did bring everyone together. It did give you that feeling like “ok they really care about me, but they’re welcoming.” And that’s what it opened up.

## **Stone**

Sort of a, you know, this is to show you that you’re welcome here...that you can...

## **Gonzales**

Yes...you can achieve, you can achieve. You can study, you can achieve your goals, and you can still play ball. You don’t have to be just one dimensional, you can maintain that multidimensional human aspect that we all love to have. We don’t want anything taken away from us. That independence, that was the other piece is that—I think our students felt a big piece of independence that basically said “you know what, I’m an athlete, and I can play, but I can also study, and I’m just like every other student.”

There should not be a difference between those...students that are disabled for whatever reason. I know we talked primarily about chairs, but that’s kind of where it started. It started because of the chairs, and then we saw that welcoming effect, and we started getting students who were blind, who couldn’t hear. You know at some point people forget but we will all become disabled at some point and our disabilities are all different, and we all have (Stone coughs)...many of us have some form of disability but it’s a matter of how we deal with it and how people around us deal with our disabilities as well.

## **Stone**

<topic>Accommodating people with other disabilities</topic>

So what sort of—You mentioned it’s not just the chairs, it’s not just carving ramps and things. Blind, deaf, how do you address—What sort of accommodations or modifications do you make to make the campus accessible for people like that?

## **Gonzales**

There’s a lot of things because...there’s times that we needed...readers...for students to be able to stay, that needed to have readers, we needed to have different kinds of mechanisms for—Sometimes you needed note takers...because they couldn’t hear what was going on, they could—So many of us may be a little deaf but we’re watching somebody else speak and we can catch...watch their lips...a lot of us are doing lip reading. I think I’m guilty of that part of the time now. It’s one of the things that has just happened that I’ve become more aware of because I am somewhat hard of hearing. I think I had too much rock and roll in my life. (laughs) Too much loud rock and roll that probably destroyed my hearing.

So you start seeing other mechanisms that we start making available and other accommodations that we’re able to make. Whether it’s people that do signage when we invite people to campus—One of the things that we try to do is we try to put on all our posters and things that we have out there now...information so that if they need...if we need to have signage, somebody doing sign. So that we—So that they know what’s going on, they can have the same experience that anybody else can that’s listening, or that can hear. Those are the kinds of things that started...that I think the chairs started, but it blossomed into all these other areas for the sight impaired and the hearing impaired.



As I said at some point we will all become somewhat disabled. We don't always think of ourselves in that sense, and I think a lot of times a lot of students who are disabled don't think of themselves as disabled. A lot of them don't want to necessarily...put anything out there that says "I'm disabled." They don't want to be singled out, and I think if we have all the accommodations and everything in place where it doesn't feel like you're having to making an accommodation or something...there's something special to do, they don't want the hubbub or to do about the whole thing. They just simply want to be able to participate and make it look like a seamless—That's what they want, and I think that's what they deserve. You know like I said, at some point you and I will become disabled...and in some ways we both are because we're already wearing glasses...honestly I've had a couple rounds of cancer myself, who's to say. We never know from one day to the next when we'll end up in an accident of some sort that may put us in a chair, and wouldn't people be happy to know that I could still come to work in a chair and still get everything accomplished that I do now. It's just that my way of getting around is going to be different, but because everything is already set up, we're not starting at ground zero, it's not like it's going to be an imposition on anyone because we have made all the accommodations... At the end of the day, that's the beauty of it.

### **Stone**

<topic>Working on Compliance and Accommodations</topic>

When you came in 1984 (Gonzales confirms '84)...What was the first large project that you had to deal with in terms of accessibility and compliance with...?

### **Gonzales**

Jim and I took—We grabbed our notebooks and Jim said "Come with me" and I think we started in the library. Then we proceeded—We didn't have as many buildings as we have now. Now when you build a building, you put in all the accessibility stuff. It's kind of an automatic...it's something that is part of the process when you're building a new building. At the time we had older buildings...and so we were going into all the buildings and making lists of...where we could make accommodations and how we could do all that. If we had a class, the other thing that we were trying to also look at is if you had a class on a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor but didn't have an elevator, could we move that class to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor? Take a place like Preston Hall and places like that.

Those were the kinds of things that we—So we went through, we did a lot of documentation on it and looked at that. Then we got together with folks from the physical plant and Dudley Wetzel who was the Vice President of Business Affairs and what not, and we sat down to brainstorm a little bit about that. We also sat down with Dr.—Well of course Wayne Duke was in on the process all the way...all along. We also sat down with Bill Baker, who was Vice President of Academic Affairs...He did not have the title of provost because we didn't have that title back then. Basically it was Dr. Wendell Nedderman, the President, the Vice President of Academic Affairs was Dr. William...W.A. Baker. The business...the vice president of business was Dudley Wetzel. The vice president for student affairs was of course Wayne Duke. But everybody was talking, we were talking in the President's council or cabinet about how we could accommodate and how we could do things. Now that we were looking at all of those issues and all of those items. And that's, you know...when the whole idea was "how do we make things seamless to help students?"

Difficulties? Yes, because of financial, but we were able to find ways of working it out. I think...like I said the three vice presidents always being part of the cabinet, being able to talk and work things out, how we needed to be able to accommodate, and whether it was like that class that...being often on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (loud breathing) that the student in a wheelchair might need. How...would we move that down to 1<sup>st</sup> floor? So it took a lot of coordination between the entire campus, but you know once you get on that roll

and you start thinking, and start including that in your thought process it's not as—You take some of the difficulties out of it.

**Stone**

Was there ever a project or some sort of—Something that you wanted done that for financial or for whatever reason you weren't able to get done?

**Gonzales**

I don't know that we...that that was...for me was ever the issue. I think our issue was one of speed. You know...we were—How fast could we put in the curb cuts? How fast could we go into all the bathrooms...some of the bathrooms do we just remove doors? Stop and think about this, when we first—In Davis Hall there is a double door system in the bathrooms. So you'd go through the first door to get to the next door. Well in a chair, you could get trapped between doors and you couldn't get in or out, because there wasn't enough room to swing the doors open, because the chair was in the way. You'd have to pull the door and you couldn't because they swung towards each other. (At this point Stone and Gonzales talk at the same time and then both cough). There were some interesting issues to deal with because people don't think about that when they're putting in doors and building buildings, they don't think of the barriers that they're actually creating. They think they are actually making it so it's more secure and...their thought process—However they're not thinking from everyone's point of view...and I didn't realize what it was like until I went with Jim to look at some of those things, and then we went through the first door, and we're standing between the two doors and we can't get the bathroom door open, and now we can't get the outside door open because a chair's in the way.

**Stone**

How do you...how do you...

**Gonzales**

So you're locked...(laughs) so you're basically locked in basically about a 3 by 3 foot area.

**Stone**

I'm just trying to picture, how you would explain something like that to somebody who doesn't experience it or see that for themselves?

**Gonzales**

Well for a lot of folks that's where the idea was of putting them in chairs and having them live, and experience. Then it's much easier for people to understand because all of the sudden it's like "Oh, I get it now."

**Stone**

"Something has to be done about this."

## **Gonzales**

Yeah, something has to be done, and so now when you go to some of the bathrooms like in Davis Hall, you'll see they're down to one door. The other thing that we had was, if you went into Texas Hall you notice that the bathrooms have a wall door. They don't have an actual physical door but there's a wall that's built in front of the other door so that you can actually swing around behind the wall and get into the bathrooms. And so you're not impeded by having to work the door. The other piece that goes along with it is (loud inhale), where the doors are at. Not everyone—While you're in a chair you got to try to reach for the door and a lot of the doors pull into you. Where do you go when you pull the door into you?

## **Stone**

You've have to go back right?

## **Gonzales**

Yeah...your supposed to—You step back right? As a person who can walk you can move out of the way. Well you can't move a chair out of the way the same way that you can when you're actually walking. Those were the kinds of things that we had to think through and look at...but we got—We were able to get the physical plant involved with that so that they started understanding all these other issues that needed to be looked at. When you put somebody in a chair, that makes a difference. The chair idea came from Jim Hayes. He said, "people don't understand until you actually, physically, are in the chair." He said "It's not about whether you get pushed or you push yourself through," he said "at some point you've got to be able to go to the bathroom by yourself."

The other thing is that some of the chairs were longer, more elongated, and now we had bathroom stalls that they couldn't close the doors on. So you couldn't have privacy if you went to the bathroom. I know that may sound a little crass to some folks and what not who might listen to this but the truth of the matter is, you have to have the ability to go to the bathroom (Stone says "in privacy)...in privacy. Everybody deserves a little privacy...the only thing that we could do with some of the old, old stalls was take the doors off. Then they didn't have bars...handles so you could—It just was not accommodating to somebody in a chair. Now you look at every bathroom pretty much across campus, and they're all built so that you can actually get a chair in there and do other things.

<topic>New Perspectives and Mindsets</topic>

The chairs gave us different accessibility issues than other folks that are hearing impaired or...blind. Those were other things to look at, but I think what the chairs did is they opened up our eyes. When we opened up our eyes we started filtering and looking at the world around us in a much different way.

## **Stone**

Yes, so a different perspective?

## **Gonzales**

The perspective is so—Yeah because you know, everybody's reality is different and sometimes we forget that. We forget that people...everyone wants the same thing, everyone wants to have a good life, however we envision it. For some folks we make it more difficult, and what we were trying to do is get

rid of the difficulties by making things more accessible. Jim was at the forefront, and at the bottom pushing, constantly pushing. I...I don't know of anyone who didn't like Jim...so when I say pushing, I don't mean he was pushing and there was all this negative feedback and stuff. This is not like a—This was not like our political system that we're going through now. It was more about understanding, you need to understand. (Someone in another room sneezes) Once you understand that perspective from that point of view, it's amazing what you can accomplish. I think we have done amazing things on this campus. I think we have become one of the most accessible campuses in the nation. I think it's because we had that perspective and we had someone who cared enough to help us, bring us to that point.

I can't say enough...I can't say enough good things about my friend Jim. I still feel like—I know he's gone now but I still feel like he's still around, because I see the impact he had on this campus.

**Stone**

The culture or the mindsets?

**Gonzales**

The mindsets...the mindsets. But I can also—When I go into a bathroom I think you know we wouldn't have that, we wouldn't have that, we wouldn't have the curb cuts...we wouldn't—Would somebody else have come in and helped us understand? Yes people will do things because it becomes the law of the land and you've got to do things, but sometimes the—To give you an idea, have you ever gone to—you're on a sidewalk and you'll see a telephone pole at the corner and then they've got a curb cut. Well they're meeting the letter of the law because they've got a curb cut, but you can't get a chair between...you can't get a chair without falling off the sidewalk and into the street because there's a telephone pole planted right in the middle of that, but they've met the letter of the law because they've got a curb cut. So what good does a curb cut if you can't get...(laughs) you see the...impracticality?

**Stone**

I see what you're saying yes.

**Gonzales**

So we not only did the right stuff but we saw the practicality and the necessary use of it. We looked at the practical aspects, we didn't just go in there just for the sake of meeting the letter of the law...I think that's where Jim was so helpful because he would look at stuff and he was realistic and say "look, this is the letter of the law, but you can't get a chair through there." We need to be realistic about how we do what we do.

**Stone**

Were there any cases like that where you came in and said "well look this meets the letter of the law but you can't get a chair through there." Were there any particular cases about that?

**Gonzales**

One...I remember we built a ramp (Stone coughs), I'm trying to remember where it was. The ramp was not to federal specifications, it was too steep. The issue that we had was that we did not have a place that could...where we could make enough turns in it to take the steepness out of the ramp. That was one of the...I remember that issue...(Gonzales sets coffee mug down next to recorder).

Bathrooms, some of the things that we even did with some of the bathrooms initially because we couldn't afford to do all of the bathrooms at once. I remember doing like odd floors with bathrooms that could accommodate until we could afford to do the whole thing. Yeah there were baby steps that we took...If we'd of had the wherewithal to make all the changes at one time that would have been nice, but the reality is that as a state university we did not have that kind of funding.

It was easier on a new building, because a new building...they would come with specifications. Even on new buildings, when people are designing buildings, a lot of times once you get into the building you see the impracticality of certain items. So you have to readjust those...items. We found ourselves even going into the new buildings and saying "this is what they're trying to accomplish because that's what the law says, but we don't necessarily just need to worry about the law, we need to worry about the practicality of being about to utilize that by a chair." (Stone says "yes").

Yes so we did run into some of those in some of the new buildings and what not but once we would point it out, we would bring in a lot of times the architect back in or bring in the person who was building and say "look, this isn't working...we need to make some modifications." We were able to make some of those modifications, but again it was by working through our vice presidents...a lot of this was done at a vice presidential level because it was so important.

## **Stone**

I actually wanted to ask you about that. You mentioned earlier about the older buildings, having difficulty with, you know, when they were built these standards weren't in place, these things were not a concern, but with the newer buildings you...said there were also problems there. When they come up with a plan for a new building, with a blueprint saying "this is what we want to do" was there any involvement, with Jim Hayes or with you in looking at this and going "I don't know if this is going to work" or was it only after the building is created that you can go in there and say "I see what they were trying to do here but this does not work"?

## **Gonzales**

You're talking about the old buildings though right, the ones that were already in place?

## **Stone**

The old buildings yeah we—I'm talking more about the new buildings, after you build them, because you said...you mentioned earlier that the new buildings are built with these things designed into them (Gonzales says "right"), things to help with accessibility but were you or were Jim or somebody else involved in looking at some of these things and saying "What about this here," you know "we need to think about these things here?"

## **Gonzales**

Jim got more involved at that point, Jim was getting more and more involved with those aspects because we were making sure, also that—Because he also became the accessible...the accessibility director, he was responsible for that. So he would sit down with architects and make sure that when we looked at incline for ramping, that it was...that it would meet specification with the new buildings. Architects would build something or design something but they wouldn't always look at all of the pieces in it.

**Stone**

Yes...and different perspectives again. (Stone clears throat)

**Gonzales**

Again your looking at, how much of that—What is it going to do, and is it going to drive the cost of the building up, and how much will it affect? It's easier to do it on the front end than it is to try to revamp the building or...deconstruct and then reconstruct because of a lack of planning. So we spent a lot more time planning on the front end making sure that things were to spec, but spec that was realistically useable. Not just spec because it met federal guidelines. Jim got more and more into that and its...its why we have a lot of the buildings that we have now.

When I had an office in Davis, and we—That ramp as you walk into the basement wasn't there. You had to go up to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor originally in a chair then you could go down to the basement, in a chair but it didn't have a way of getting in from the outside. So we built the ramping, and then put that ramp into the basement level at Davis Hall.

<topic>T9 Predictive Texting</topic>

And people look at that—You know it's funny because it's like technology...even some of the technology that we built on this campus that—To give you an idea, I don't know if you are familiar with T9 Predictive Texting, you probably know it as autocorrect. (Stone says "mmhm") Do you know why it was created on this campus?

**Stone**

Why?

**Gonzales**

You know we created it, we own the patents at UT Arlington.

**Stone**

I did not know that.

**Gonzales**

One of the reasons it was created, this is talking to the Dean, and years ago to Dr. [George] Kondraske who was really the architect of that. If you had a phone and I had a phone, first of all we had flip phones.

**Stone**

I remember that.

**Gonzales**

I would have to send you an email. It would go to an email server and it would bounce over to you and we might be sitting across from each other like we are now. Then you would have to write me an email in response back to my email and it would go to the server then it would bounce to me. It would take forever just to have a conversation when we are sitting across from each other, but you have to remember I don't have the ability to speak and you do. So in order for me to talk to you, I've got to send—Well because of the flip phones...and the phones that we had when you were trying to send a "C" you had to hit the number "1" three times. So what we were trying to do is speed up the ability for non-verbal speakers to be able to communicate. That's why it was created, that's why we put that algorithm in there. We...that's the royal we, that's the university. Dr. Kondraske and his group in computer science and engineering, they put that in so that it would help people communicate faster.

**Stone**

And that's like autocorrect?

**Gonzales**

Yeah that's what people call autocorrect but autocorrect doesn't exist, it's T9 Predictive Texting and its on every cell phone around the world but that's the reason behind it. So we were already doing things to accommodate folks. Think of that, the university was in a mindset. "How do we help other folks who cannot communicate?" Does that give you an idea? (Stone says "Yes") That was patented in '87. Right along the same lines, you see where the university mindset-there was a lot of stuff going on at that time and it's still being utilized today. Patented in '87, still being utilized today, but it was for people who could not speak, so they could have a way to communicate.

**Stone**

That's amazing. That's amazing I did not know that.

**Gonzales**

But you see how all of this ties together?

**Stone**

It is the mindset that was created.

**Gonzales**

That the university...the university was driving these kinds of issues, and you had professors who really cared and could see how they could impact and have an impact, and they continue to have an impact now because we spend all our time texting. (Stone says "yes, yes") We use our phones more for texting than we do for making calls. It was for nonverbal to be able to communicate. How cool is that?

**Stone**

That is fascinating, that is very fascinating yes.

**Gonzales**

That happened in '87.

**Stone**

At UTA?

**Gonzales**

At UTA...When you're on Microsoft Office Word and your typing, have you ever seen a word get changed? (Stone says "yes") It's the same software that's in your phone. It belongs to UT Arlington, not Microsoft.

**Stone**

That would be very interesting to know.

**Gonzales**

There's a lot of stuff like that the institution is responsible for, that UTA's responsible for but, you know, it's a matter of perspective again. Look at how we were already thinking about helping people communicate.

**Stone**

Not just follow the letter of the law but to help people yes.

**Gonzales**

Yes. Yes, because at the end of the day that's what was important. Does that help kind of tie up some of the pieces? Yeah the chairs were going on for accessibility but we were also looking at accessibility on communications and other things. It was the university that could see what needed to happen.

It's stuff that we take for granted, and where I started with this whole conversation on this part of it was that think of all the students who take all of this stuff for granted. In other words they think it's been



around forever, it hasn't. This is stuff that has evolved and grown. We didn't always have computers, we had typewriters, and just think, they don't call it "typewriting" anymore they call it "keyboarding." Why do we have the particular keyboards that are built the way they are? That's the way typewriters were built, not because keyboarding. They don't know what a typewriter is. Stop and think about it. How many of the students...know what the old technology is about or how it was even used? Reel to reel decks, 8 track tapes, all those old stuff? They have no idea. They just have come to expect it.

They don't realize that people like Jim Hayes, and Dr. Kondraske, and some of the other folks on campus have had a real impact on helping people with special needs or disabilities. I think they're special abled people, to be able to have a life like everyone else. I think this university is a prime example of what universities do to open doors to continue the dialogs and helping people to be successful in life.

**Stone**

Alright.

**Gonzales**

Anything else?

**Stone**

I think that's good. I think that's good.