

## **Mr. Bryan Shaner**

### **Graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington**

*Interview conducted by  
Daniel Davenport  
in 2016 in Arlington, Texas*

Disability Studies Minor  
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### **Biography**

Bryan was born in Spearman, Texas in 1982. He was raised in the nearby rural Panhandle town of Perryton, Texas. He began working full time on area farms at the age of ten while attending school. He was injured in a car wreck at the age of sixteen. In the aftermath of the wreck, he gave medical attention to other passengers in the car and coordinated efforts to alert the authorities for help. In the accident, he broke his back and acquired both a spinal-cord injury and a traumatic brain injury.

After his rehabilitation, Shaner finished high school and attended UTA from 2000 to 2005, graduating with a B.A. in Economics. He was politically involved in multiple facets of campus affairs, including advertising UTA's diversity and accessibility, fighting for oversight during tuition deregulation in Texas, and advocating for increasing campus housing and parking. Since graduating, he continues to mentor people with disabilities, works in medical sales, and fishes in his spare time.

### **Topics discussed**

- Accident and rehab
- Return home after rehabilitation, and the importance of his grandfather in his adjusting to his disability
- How his disability impacted his future plans
- How Shaner came to attend UTA
- Views on UTA needing to promote itself better
- Meeting and working with Dr. Witt
- Efforts to better market UTA as a diverse and disability friendly campus
- Working to prevent the School of Nursing from taking over the Student Health Center
- Fighting for tuition deregulation oversight
- Confronting Dr. Udoff about tuition deregulation in campus meeting
- How Shaner became interested in being politically active

- Response to being quoted and featured in the *Shorthorn*
  - Why Shaner decided to leave UTA when Dr. Witt left
  - Personal story about interacting with both students and administrators
  - The diverse culture at UTA
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## **Davenport**

This is Daniel Davenport interviewing Mr. Bryan Shaner for the UT Arlington Texas Disability Oral History Project. Today's date is April 16, 2016 and I am at Mr. Shaner's home in Arlington, Texas. I am here today to talk with Mr. Shaner about his time at UTA and his life in general. Thank you for participating in the university's oral history program.

## **Shaner**

You're welcome.

## **Davenport**

Could you give me some general background information about yourself, like when and where you were born?

## **Shaner**

<topic>Bryan's accident and rehab</topic>

General basic... panhandle of Texas... born small town Spearman... raised mostly in Perryton... it's in the very Northeast sector of the Texas panhandle... was just a country kid, then got hurt at sixteen from a car wreck... then graduated high school and went to college at UTA. Pretty basic.

## **Davenport**

Could you elaborate on your car wreck?

## **Shaner**

It was a single car rollover that happened on September 5, 1998, early morning on my way from Perryton to Red River, New Mexico. I made it in between Clayton and Minor something I don't... small, small town. Three other occupants... I was the driver... Rolled the vehicle... I was ejected... A couple of other guys were ejected... Everyone else was fine... I broke my back. Jed had a lacer... no broke arm. Phil had a laceration of his elbow. Jaren, I think, had a cracked rib; I think that was his only injury. I don't remember an hour before or six days after; they say that I did the medical triage and then sent Jaren and Phil, because they were both mildly hurt, walking in separate directions because we had one cell phone and it got damaged, and it didn't work when we found it. That's all I know. I had a cut liver, a collapsed lung, a bruised lung; I had shoved Thoracic vertebrae nine in front of

ten. That was it. I don't remember six days after... did my medical hospitalization at the University of New Mexico Albuquerque and apparently I was conscious and talking most of the time, but have no recollection... good drugs back then. That's really the basis of my wreck... Nothing else exciting... Went to rehab at Craig rehab hospital in Denver. I had the option of, pretty much, Baylor or Denver and Denver is one of the best rehabs in the country for SCI and TBI. Almost all hospitals are modeled after their model.

### **Davenport**

How long did your rehabilitation take and what did they do?

### **Shaner**

Uh

### **Davenport**

What was the process like for you?

### **Shaner**

The majority of my time was spent in hospitalization, because of the lungs; they produced... one lung was producing 1,200 cc's of fluid per day... The other one over 2,000 cc's... So I was heavily chest-tubed for a long time and then I went from one hundred... Mid hundred eighties the week before I was hurt I was at one hundred eighty three and when I got to rehab I was at a hundred and seven. So I atrophied a little bit. Rehab was awesome. It took the first day and a half there for me to be able to sit up without passing out. That was always interesting; getting your blood pressure to regulate. From that... Chair skills were one of the first things they did with you, once you were able to sit in a chair.

My granddad was a paraplegic

from a... He was an electrician... His rigging or legging had slipped on him when he was on a power pole and he slid down to the ground. He shoved... His spine broke sideways at the level above me T8 and T9 and so as a kid growing up I used to play in wheelchairs. The old E&J hospital chairs weighed forty pounds... we used to always play in granddad's old chairs so when I got to rehab chair skill day was easy because I already knew how to pop a wheelie, turn a circle, and jump a curb; do all that, ride a wheelie down a ramp... Ironically playing in granddads chairs was beneficial later in life. Rehab was pretty simple and easy... I had several people at the same time that I was in rehab who were young; Chad was twenty, then Ben was younger than Chad, then me, then Brady was the young kid. I think he was fourteen. So it was nice that we had... I had... We all had... people our own age... I mean within that high school age range of each other. We made good friends and got in a lot of trouble.

I think I was in rehab for... I think I got there in Mid October... no it was late October. Then I was... discharged back in... before Christmas. It was back in the good days when insurance would let people stay in rehab for two to three months on a para, depending on your level, how quick you caught on to things, and were able to move and go versus now it's a... you're two to six weeks if you're lucky. You're in and out the door... it's different. At Craig you had to drive before you left and get your diving certificate. You had to prove you

could drive using hand controls. Now that is an option that people have to pay for, or have DARS pay for it depending on their age or if they plan on going back to work. You can get DARS to help cover that or you're going to pay out of pocket \$1,500 to \$2,500 to get back to driving. That was included in rehab where I went. So that's about it.

### **Davenport**

Had you graduated high school by the time you had your accident? (room mate turning faucet on)

### **Shaner**

<topic>Bryan's return home after rehab, and the importance of his grandfather in his adjusting to his disability</topic>

No, I had to go back to high school...I was gone...that fall semester of my junior year... then I caught up via correspondence classes from Texas Tech to get those classes that I missed, then I went back the spring of my junior year, did my senior year and got out.

### **Davenport**

After you finished your rehab how was it like for you adjusting to your new circumstances?

### **Shaner**

To me I think it was really easy, because of my granddad, having been around it. I mentor a lot of new injuries or have mentored a lot of new injuries and still do throughout the state. I kind of see that as... People that had never been around someone in a chair, don't have a family member, or knows somebody, they seem to take longer to deal with it and get adjusted to their new life... Or coming to terms with not walking again. When you look at it that way I was of course fortunate to have Norman in my life, my granddad. I don't think it was hard.

I grew up in a small town and there were two people that I was friends with before that just ignored me and tried to avoid me like the plague, because they wanted to remember you how you were and it's... One of them I finally caught at a party and I was like, "dude what is your problem I'm still the same asshole that I was before, I just don't run and climb steps anymore." For me it wasn't hard accepting it and dealing with it. Supposedly, from what I've been told from the guys that were at my wreck, when I was conscious afterwards I was telling them that I was paralyzed and not to touch me... I made a sling out of a shirt for the one guy, for his arm,... then made a bandage out of a shirt for the other guy who had lacerations on his arm.

I don't...I don't know...I think the only time I really cried about being paralyzed was... twice, the first time was at rehab, but it was more...when you...My rehab was eight hours away from my hometown most of my friends were fifteen and sixteen, which was my age at the time, so it wasn't like they could drive up and say "hey". So towards the end of the rehab people come by less and less often... Then you start to feel isolated more than anything... heard a song that was from the album I'd bought the day of the wreck; it was Garth Brooks, Friend to Me... I don't know... It made me emotional, I guess, so I went to my room and this

one tech at the hospital kept trying to come in so I might have thrown a phone at her or something. I don't remember.

The next time I cried was... I was in my hometown. I had been driving for months. As soon as I got back I bought a new car, had it modified, put hand controls in it. Well it was a truck. I always had someone with me when I got gas or was driving around. Every time I needed to get gas somebody was there; I never even got out. I went to go make a trip to Amarillo for something and I didn't have enough gas to get there. I stopped to fill up, I got out, pumped gas, went into the store and bought something to drink and snack on, and got back in the truck and started driving down the road and just started crying... It was weird... I went on some back roads and I actually had to pull over. It was funny because it wasn't sad. It dawned on me that I had never gotten gas, and now I had done that, and I didn't need anybody anymore. I could get my gas. I could travel without having... I was like... I guess it was just the sense that I realized that I was really independent again and didn't need anyone. It's weird, but maybe in retrospect that was the moment I really got over it or moved on... realizing that this is the way it's going to be. So that's about all I have on that.

## **Davenport**

Do you think that your injury changed the course of your future as far as going to college and what profession you went into?

## **Shaner**

<topic>How his disability impacted his future plans</topic>

Oh hell yeah. My plans prior to that were to just go to WT [West Texas A&M University] in Canyon Texas, because I hated Tech. Everybody went to Tech and I just didn't like that. I was just going to go to WT. It was closer; it was just a two hour drive. I could... my thought was to keep working and farming for my neighbor. I was saving money. I had hoped to save up enough by the time I got out of college to buy a good operating farm. I was a fifteen year old kid working one hundred hours in the summer and forty hours during the school week. I was making money. I was making thirty grand a year or more since I was fourteen years old and had no expenses so I might have spent about 2 grand a year. I was saving up so I could buy a farm and be an Idiot. It's what I loved. I just loved being out in nature. I love watching the crops grow. Planting a field and watching the pheasant fly over your tractor while you're planting. Watching deer sit in the CRP while they watch your tractor go by. It was just... I don't know... I've just always been a nature guy. Some people love cities and want to see historic architecture. I'm like tear it down and watch nature come back, for the side of a Canyon... The panhandle, if you've never been there is just a flat desolate grassland with some contours here and there with ravines cut in by the last Ice Age. There are very few trees. If you see a tree it means there is a house, or a creek, or a pond. I just like it up there. It's beautiful watching a storm. I have watched more tornadoes than most people have ever seen. I just find them beautiful. When I see a storm report with chances of tornadoes; let's go get the grill, fire it up, get some steaks, and sit outside to watch it blow through. There is nothing like a tornado and a six pack of good beer.

So being paralyzed did change my plans. I didn't want to farm after I got hurt. I met a guy who still operated a farm when I was in rehab. He was a very rich man out of Ohio. He got...

Was looking at buying some land in Montana when he came over a hill and there was a horse in the road, he hit it, it came in the car, and made him a quad. He still farmed. He

had all these tractors with... a five hundred thousand dollar tractor; at that time I guess it would be one hundred and fifty. He would have a twenty thousand dollar lift to get in it. He always wanted me to, "stick with the farming idea." I'm like, "dude I can't get off the tractor and roll back there to adjust my plow or if I've got a disk gang that's not turning I'm not going to get back there and be able to break the axles loose on that gang and change a bearing anymore. You know it's over." I've always been that guy that loves to work and stay busy but if I can't do it all I don't want to do it. Its taken time to get used to that, it still does every now and then. Its like, "I need to go do that. Well shit, how am I going to get up that?" So that's frustrating but you deal with it by being a modern American and hire it done like everyone else. That's... to me that's weird. I... like I said I grew up country. You did everything on your own. If your truck broke you fixed it. You didn't go to a mechanic unless you had to pull the motor and you didn't have a motor... cherry picker... then you'd go to a mechanic. I don't know... it was just a different place and time. I sound like I'm four hundred years old. Growing up in the country is a hell of a lot different than the city.

I guess I gravitated to the city after being hurt, because you have curb cutouts, you have new buildings with restroom doors that are at least twenty four inches wide so you can roll inside it verses a twenty inch door. I guess the city is an easier place to live. The economics are easier than in the country. That would really be the only reason that my plans changed.

## **Davenport**

On the subject of your plans changing, you obviously changed your plans.

## **Shaner**

<topic>How Bryan came to attend UTA</topic>

UT was where I wanted to go. Then I got talked into UTA because it was known for its accessibility by the people that would know those things. It was one thing I always complained about when I was at UTA.... Once I came to campus and got active... UTA always failed that its marketing approach of who it is and what it is. If you look at UTA it's a great accessible campus and, of course, the majority of that can be attributed, I think, to Jim Hayes. It has always failed to market... this niche that we're extremely accessible versus... look at Texas Tech, a horrid campus when it comes to accessibility. UT is kind of a pain in the ass too. UTSA's buildings are nice but your topography out there is bad. It's hill after hill.... A&M's a fairly accessible, nice, flat, brown, ugly place.... Plus I just live with Aggie jokes....

<topic>Bryan's views on UTA needing to promote itself better</topic>

If UTA would really promote itself as a disabled-friendly great place I think it would help in that community. But I always complained because...you look at the engineering program at UTA, one of the best in the nation, and nobody knows that outside the engineers, or academic engineers. They are the only ones that know that secret. It's the same thing with the School of Architecture. It's an amazing program but if you're not in architecture you wouldn't know.... That's one thing that I always would complain about to the administration at UTA during my time. Why don't you worry about marketing that instead of talking about how we're a commuter school? It was funny because Dr. Witt [Robert Witt: former President of UTA] When he went to build Arlington Hall there were people who wanted to have him strung up in a tree because you're wasting all this money on a dorm and nobody wants to live on campus... we're a commuter school... and you have 28,000 students, or 23,000-

25,000 when I started, and of course you're a commuter school because you can't live on campus. So, therefore, you have to commute. It's a chicken and egg argument. When they built Arlington Hall, the good-old-boys that ran UTA for years and had been around since Nedderman, and Nedderman himself were mad about that. Then when it opens, is completely full, and has got a waiting list for 2 years we build KC Hall... it was the same thing. It was full before it was even built and had a waiting list. Then they started talking about building a real dorm, multi-story on the north side of the UC and the old crew up there just threw a fit. They wanted that to go away quickly, because we've got too many people living on campus. Then they're going to decide they don't want to live here, and then they're going to go away, and we wasted all this money on these buildings.... Then they started building the apartments and that was great, but it was a compromise from my understanding to get rid of the nasty multi-story dorm idea....

Being so active on campus, I got to where I fell in love with it up there. I liked to see its potential and not just what it was. It's still a great school but I think it could be better. It's getting there slowly. Like the College Park Center and the special events center, that should have been built when we tried to build it under Dr. Witt's administration. People just hated that idea. We'll build this building, no one will come to the games, no one will come to any event here, and you're just wasting all the parking spaces. So okay, let's build a parking garage. But those are a waste of money...don't build a parking garage. It's like you've got an argument against everything. Let's build, let's fix, let's make things better, and not just complain about what's wrong. But that's...I guess that's with any organization though. Nobody likes change. I liked it there. I had a good time.... I was a student that administration liked to know. So, I liked that aspect. I've always liked that aspect...even in my hometown I was Mr. Political. I hate politics but I knew who to know and I always made the right friends. But if it's a small town, and I even made Dallas my small town for a while... always know your mayor, always know your district attorney, always know your chief of police, and your sheriff. If you know those people you can get away with a lot of stuff. So, I don't know, maybe that's what I learned from a small town lifestyle.

## **Davenport**

Who were the people at UTA that you got to know, leverage, and work with? Could tell me some stories about them?

## **Shaner**

<topic>Meeting and working with Dr. Witt</topic>

Probably my favorite person was Dr. Witt. I just loved that guy. He was awesome. One of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. He really cared about the school. He cared about the students. He was just an amazing guy. There were stories about how he found out some guy was quitting school because they couldn't afford it and so he paid for their college. It was funny because I knew a lot of people who knew him and they're, "He's uptight. If he comes into your office you're only supposed to have a clean office desk with certain papers, and only a certain amount of papers, on your desk. Only 2 pens...and yada, yada." I was like, "I don't think that about him. He's a funny dude and he likes a good joke. And he can tell a good joke and likes to play poker. He's a good guy in my opinion." My experience around him was always that he was just a great guy. I got to know him by accidentally insulting him. He introduced himself and I was making fun of Kent Garner, who was the Vice-President of Student Affairs back in that day. Kent was coming to a student congress meeting and Bob was with him. I was making fun of Kent taking the day off to play golf. I was like, "I don't know why you do that. You suck at it." And Bob was laughing and he

introduced himself as "Bob". Then I, of course, told him who I was. And when he said "Witt", because I used my full name and he said his last name was Witt. And I was like, "I used to farm Witts." One of the big farms that I farmed on was the Witt land. He asked me how it was spelled and they spelled it the same way. And he was like, "I wonder if we're distantly related." And I said, "I doubt it." We talked about where he was from and stuff. Then I was like, "Bob Witt. So what do you do around here?" and he's, "I'm in administration." And I was like, "Okay. There's a Witt name I heard around here. A Robert, I think." He's, "Yep, that's me." I was like, "Why do I know that name?" Kent was laughing at me and I'm, "Oh, you're the president." And he's, "Yeah, that's my title." And I had just called him a short shit about 5 minutes ago. And after that, we became friends. From that friendship, the deans became my friends.

<topic>Bryan's efforts to better market UTA as a diverse and disability friendly campus</topic>

I went to Bob's office one time to complain about the marketing of UTA because if you looked at any publication at the time it was always the same five people in every picture. I was like, "I mean really...these are the only students you have here? Cause I'm around here a lot and I know all these people but...that's it? That's all you got? Cause I've seen a lot of other people around here." So Bob gave me the Director of Marketing, Mark Perminter, at the time, number. And he was like, "Well, go tell this guy to fix it." So I went to his office, and Mark and I didn't like each other to begin with, but we finally saw eye-to-eye. I mean I went into his office and told he sucks at his job so, of course, he's not going to like me. But eventually, Mark and I became friends as well and he would send me a text or email or phone call and be like, "Okay, we're going to do this publication. Do you think we should have male? Female? What age and race? Do you have a skinny friend? A fat friend?" To kind of get the full diversity of students that we could find. And I would find people and get them coordinated with Mark and they'd take photographs for the different publications. I mean it was like...we have such a diverse campus, why are you not getting all this diversity put in? It's like there was not one publication when I was there that was in a chair. But we're one of the most disabled campuses in the country, much less Texas. And there wasn't a picture of anyone in a wheelchair in any of our publications. And we won a national championship for wheelchair basketball in for my first or second year there. You've got that population you put in a picture. And there were no Indian kids in any of the pictures. The school is full of Indian, Asian, and Arabic. The nephew of the Prime Minister of Pakistan was at UTA studying engineering. There were a lot of Pakistanis on campus but you never any of that in the publications. It kind of pissed me off that they used the same five people when we could fix this. This is simple.

**Davenport**

How do you spell his name?

**Shaner**

Mark Perminter I think.

**Davenport**

Thank you.



## **Shaner**

Dan Himarios was the Dean of the College of Business at that time. He was a great guy.... Really cared about the school. I mean he was biased about his school, or his college, but... He was a great, great administrator. And I became great friends with him... That came in handy a couple of times when I didn't like a professor or the professor didn't like me. And the Dean of the School of Nursing, Elizabeth Poster... she was an interesting lady. That was another school that I didn't understand why they didn't market better because that was one of the best nursing schools in the nation.

## **Davenport**

How was she an interesting lady? It seems like there's a story there.

## **Shaner**

<topic>Working to prevent the School of Nursing from taking over the Student Health Center</topic>

There is. She was like this little-bitty firecracker of a lady in her 70s' when I met her... If not older. I think she retired in her 80s'. She was hilarious. She was a lady who knew how to take care of her interests. When she wanted the student health center to become the training facility for her nurse practitioner program...I disagreed with her on that. It was the only time we ever didn't get along, and she got her way eventually, but it was fun fight to get there. I just didn't like the fact that we're students who're paying for this health center and most students don't know they have access to it. Or that they don't have to have insurance to attend. And it has a real doctor. They had 3 doctors at the time. And you could go in there and get great health care. I mean, you're already paying for it and it's free so you go in there at cost minus the pharmacy. I think they ran some testing that had costs but just to see the doctor was free. But, anyways, Liz wanted to turn it into a nurse practitioner program and she didn't like the old fart that was in charge of it. She pretty much got him run out to get to her ultimate goal. But I liked her. She was an old spitfire lady but she said what was on her mind and if she wanted something she'd find a way and she'd get it. She didn't care how she got it. She'd just get it. I like her. She was interesting.

## **Davenport**

From what I understand, you seem to have been really concerned about students getting a say in the quality of services in the university. You even sponsored a resolution?

## **Shaner**

<topic>Fighting for tuition deregulation oversight</topic>

That may be talking about tuition deregulation. That I did severely disagree with. Mark Chancellor, at the time was Mark Udolf?, who eventually left and became chancellor out in California at one of those school systems out there. He pretty much wrote a bill for tuition deregulation and got it pushed through to the House and the Senate of the Texas Legislature. Tuition deregulation doesn't sound horrible but, as a freshman, my semester was like 16 hours and like \$1700. It was ridiculous. Extremely cheap, and Texas was an extremely cheap to go to college. But when tuition deregulation came through that allowed a separation of statutory tuition and...statutory tuition is the state tuition so all money that's collected from you goes to the state and is allocated back out to the school district, school

systems, or university systems via formula funding. And then local tuition could be as high as statutory but it couldn't be higher. And that tuition was what could be kept on campus and was more of a slush fund money and could be allocated out through administration. And then we had a fee system. It was a dollar per hour and it was handled by the local university. The student congress was your input on those as well as the administration. Then the administration would take it to the board of directors or the chancellor and board of directors. They'd have to get approval there and then they'd have to get it approved by the legislature. So, the fee system was fine because I few wanted to have more money for a building or athletics then we set up a fee for it. Legislature signs off, that's another new fee, and the deal about those was they were tied to what you were paying for. So you had a student health fee and that money was raised and had to be allocated to student health services. We had the athletic fees and all that money went into the account for athletics.

When tuition deregulation came around, Mark's bill would allow for the campus and the board of directors to sign off on what they wanted their local tuition to be. And by that being done, it goes into the general fund and the administration gets to say where it goes. Well that's great, fine, and dandy. It's nice to have slush fund money but how does that help the education for... if I'm going here for the college of business and if Dr. Witt and Dan Himarios aren't getting along and Dan is begging for money but doesn't get any more money... well, that affects me but I'm still paying for my business degree. But 30% of this 20% increase isn't going into the college of business anywhere then I'm getting screwed in my opinion. So I like the fee system because the college is going up \$100 but you'll have a new baseball field and stadium. Okay, cool. Or you're going up \$20 but you're getting a new library. Okay, cool. Cause then I'm paying for what I'm getting back.

I'm not a very socialist type of person I guess. I believe in the greater good but I own a house and 60% of my property tax goes to the Arlington Independent School District. I have no kids and I want no kids and, yet, I'm paying for it. It kind of pisses me off. Give me a discount. I'm not going to use that service so why do I have to pay full price? I don't have a problem contributing to education in any form because the more educated our populace is the more likely they are to get a good job and make a higher income and spend more in the local community or abroad and more comes back in whether they build a bigger house or they pay more in property tax or buy more disposable goods and so we get more in sales tax. It all back to the greater good. I'm fine with that. Let's all pay our fair share but any time it goes into slush funds where somebody else get to allocate you pay into the pot and don't know where it's coming back out of... I don't like that.

So, anyways, Mark's deal, or Dr. Udoff, was tuition deregulation and to get his little slush fund so he could build his tier 1 colleges. It's like, "What the hell is a tier 1 college?" Because people say they do research and they do this but there's no clear, "If you meet this criteria, you're a tier 1." It's someone pulls it out of their but and says we're tier 1 today. Well, how are you tier 1? What is tier 1? Nobody could give you an answer but we needed money to do that. Then, just like with any bill, it goes through legislature and you've got senators or house of reps who has got a personal interest so you tack on a few pages to the bill.

Well, Royce West who was an alumni from UTA...great guy, played football at UTA until he quit because he became Mr. Political campus man. I think he was even the student congress president even. So Royce tacked on this Be On Time grant as part of that tuition deregulation bill. And I thought this Be On Time grant was the worst idea I'd ever heard of because it sets aside 5% of the increase of the local deregulated tuition. That gets shipped down to the state to be set aside for grants for if an underprivileged person applied for or received the grant. Say, if they were an economics major or a history major in a 4 year

program and they graduated on time with a B 3.0 or better then they're college was free. Okay? Well, I'm a business major. Accounting at the time until I switched to Econ and got the hell out of there. I was business or accounting at the time. The Be On Time program...the way it really works is...so, in essence, if I have a student sitting next to me and they qualify for the Be On Time grant but I don't I'm paying 5% of my increase to a fund for this person sitting next to me to get a job. You know, to get their degree and hopefully to get a job. Say we both graduate as accountants and go and apply to DFW firms. Well, their college was free and I've got debt. Yet now I'm going to go compete against this person for the same jobs. And I don't get to go, after I graduate, to their employer and go, "Hey, I understand you went with that person and not me. But, we went to school together and I paid for their college. So 5% of what I paid was for them. So, if you'll set aside 5% of what you pay them and give that back to me for the next 4 years then we'll call it even." You don't get to do that. And I found that to be such an asinine part of that bill. I mean, that really pissed me off because you're charging the student who's competing, in essence, for the same job their classmate is. But they're having to pay for it. It's not fair and equitable. If they wanted to fund the Be On Time program, that's fine. But fund that through the general tax dollars of the state because as a homeowner and a resident of Texas... if that guy gets a job instead of working at McDonald's and flipping burgers for \$7 an hour and now they're an accountant making \$60,000 a year...they're going to pay more taxes and it will go back into the state and the state is better. So, I'm good with the state paying for that. It's a great program and I don't have a problem with the program. I just have a problem with the way it was funded.

Udoff wrote this bill and when you talk to Udoff about this bill you couldn't get him to answer any questions about oversight on the way this slush fund money is going to be spent and how it's going to be increased. How much is that increase? Who makes that decision? Is there any student input in it? Is there any local people? Is this just made up by that admin? Cause just like any politician... if I can give myself a raise then that's great but in the real world it shouldn't work that way. Unless you own the business you shouldn't be able to determine if you deserve more pay each year. So that was my biggest argument and we tried to get the UT system to just do it voluntarily. Just put together a committee... if we're not going to defeat tuition deregulation, let's put together... which there is no point in having anyways because we have a fee structure. Which means you can always get more money; you just have to ask for it. And you have to ask specifically for it and justify why you're getting it and where your getting it from and what it's going to. But if we go tuition deregulation, it's a whole different animal, because now it's a slush fund. Who's overseeing it and who's not overseeing it? What's it being spent on? How much is it being raised? Why is it being raised this much? Why do we need it? If it's just salary increases... have the professors get some more grants. Have them work on some research projects. Have them do their job and get an endowed professor... chair. There are ways that academia has these concepts out there. There was no function to that, in my opinion.

The worst part was how it was being handled. If it looks like the house and senate are going to pass it we have to get some oversight. So Josh and Warren, who was student congress president and a friend of mine who I helped run and get him his position, He and I worked together with the old football coach of UTA... who was good friends with Royce West and we all worked together to get oversight. Because, even Royce West didn't like the bill and the way it was structured. But he was as politician and he got what he wanted for his reelection need, which was the Be On Time Program. So everything else in my opinion and Josh's and some other people was on us.... The only way we were going to get any oversight or any say in what was going on was to.... We tried to formally establish oversight. UT system asked them (UTA) if they wanted to do it. They didn't want to do it. We went with a student resolution through student congress. Josh handled all the formal

UTA stuff. I went with a different approach by calling the vice chancellors of the other state institutions; Tech, Texas whatever it is... Texas State Collegiate college system... the one that runs... I think Beaumont is part of that, San Marcos, Stephen F., Sam Houston I think are all part of that... I called the vice chancellors of all those schools and they were all for it, yet the UT System just fought it tooth and nail. UTA... Bob was for it, but he could not publicly say anything... Or Dr. Whitt however you like to say it. The Austin side, they didn't want it, because that's where Udoff's office is at and they aren't going to go against their chancellor... UTSA they didn't care. It was funny that the UT system was the one pushing tuition deregulation, but yet the UT System doesn't want any oversight. To me that just tells you there is something wrong. Something smells rotten. We got the all the other... Tech system, North Texas system adopted their own plan, Texas State system... I can't remember what its formal name is... that one I liked the most because I just called them up and said who I was and what I was calling about. He's like "sounds good do you have a proposal on paper?" I was like, "here is one that were working on." They adopted that within a month, but yet... UTA was just such a fight.

<topic>Bryan confronting Dr. Udoff about tuition deregulation in campus meeting</topic>  
I was in a meeting with Udoff. A public meeting that he held regarding tuition deregulation at all the campuses and he came to UTA and talked about it. He wouldn't answer the question. He didn't want to talk about it. He didn't want to answer any questions about tuition deregulation. What's funny is so... let's just say an administrator at UTA had told me that when you get an important job at UT, you go to this class where they teach you that people can ask you whatever they want and you can answer whatever you want. You don't have to answer the question. You just say what you want. It is a free world. It's an interesting concept right. It's what most politicians base their life on. In this meeting I had this other girl ask these questions and he ignored her. So she asked them a different way and he brushed it off. So I asked Mark, "I've got a question." and he was like, "well we don't need to talk about that." I go, "look! If you want to tell me to fuck off, tell me to fuck off and I'll tell you to fuck off. Otherwise answer the fucking question." He got all pissed off and goes "look if you need to talk about this we can do it later." I was like, "why not in public are you trying to hide something? Is there something not right here? Is that what you're saying?" That was the end of that meeting. That ended the meeting. It was funny; the Star Telegram reporter who covered the UTA beat was behind me. I knew him but can't think of his name. The only thing you heard after I said that was him dropping his pen. I've never been very politically correct. That is apparent. I don't care. People like you, they don't like you, take you for who you are, right.

## **Davenport**

It seems like even though you haven't been politically correct you have been politically involved.

## **Shaner**

Yea.

## **Davenport**

What caused you to become politically involved at UTA?

## **Shaner**

<topic>How Bryan became interested in being politically active</topic>  
Probably just my friendship with Whitt. He probably started that... it really probably goes back to my home town experience growing up where I literally shot guns with the sherriff... The county judge... My dad before he started his company worked for another guy and the county judge was that guy's son so I'd known him... he actually came to the hospital when I was born. The justice of the peace... his wife was like another mother to me, so I was friends with him. I caught the district attorney doing something that he shouldn't have been doing; highly illegal. I'd caught the city manager having an affair. It's amazing what you learn driving a tractor. It's funny... the dirt I had on people I learned just driving out in the country. I just happened upon people. So I learned the value of politics easily. I learned the value of knowing the right people. It makes life more fun. I like that aspect of it. I guess I've just always done that. I've never... I've only used a resume once in my life. Everything I've done has always been happenstance, because I knew somebody, or knew something. It's come in handy a few times. I could come back to being in a chair. What are they going to do, punch me? Punch a cripple guy? That's going to look good! Especially when I was in college before I'd had LASIK. A four eyed cripple kid. That makes great press release! It could very well be a contributing factor. Its like, "what do I have to lose? What can you do to me?"... That's a good question... Next question.

## **Davenport**

Ok. In a Shorthorn article that was written about you, you were quoted as referring to yourself as a "can do cripple". Could you elaborate on that please?

## **Shaner**

<topic>Bryan's response to being quoted and featured in the Shorthorn</topic>  
Ugh. That was a horrible article. So the concept behind that was, I sat on the student publication committee, so we would picked the editor and chief, sorry the student editor and chief, every year... By being on that committee I was fairly active with the paper, and I thought that the paper should do more student pieces. You have people that you can identify that look like they are going to become successful. If you look at the history of the university... there are some alumni that have been successful in business, politics, or inventors. I was like, "why don't you do more human interest pieces on people like that?" Not to say I didn't want to be in it, but if you give someone an Idea I guess you have to be their guinea pig. The concept was that once a month they were going to pick a student and do that. It became an epic failure as an Idea. I think they did one or two of them back then. I know that mine was the first. I think we did one more after that. I don't know what context that quote was taken from... I think I was just talking about my attitude towards life. I'd gotten hurt, went back to school, caught up... was catching up on the previous semester... and doing the new semester as soon as I was back from rehab. Then as soon as summer came around I went back to working... I did some... farming stuff, some... I got away from it because I couldn't do everything... I didn't like it. It kind of sucked. I don't like asking for help so if I can avoid it I will. That's just a childhood personality trait. I was always that kid, "you don't stick a penny in a light socket", I'd try it. You're not going to get the damn penny in there, but you can get a fork in there and it hurts.

## **Davenport**

(Audibly Laughs)

## Shaner

Umm... So, I've always been that idiot...so when you...I guess when I got hurt I was just always like "you can't do that". It's like "why not, if it doesn't involve stairs or a ladder why can't I do that?" So I'd always do stuff that I probably shouldn't do just to prove a point. I don't know if that's just young male... I'm only thirty four now, but I think in your late twenties you look back and think why did I do some of those things and then in your thirties you still look back and think why did I do this and that and why did I waste all that time and money... then probably in another five years I'll look back at my early thirties and go why the hell did I do that and that. I guess you probably look back throughout life and think "God! That was an idiot move." I think it was in reference to the fact that if I want to do something I'll do it.

After college I got back into fishing. I fish with this other guy, Kenny Mumford a black guy that's been hurt for thirty years who moved from Boston with his wife. We made friends through a non-profit and... We started fishing. I took a few years off to have a childhood. When you start working at ten years old you really don't have a childhood; you're an old man by the time your fifteen. Which I'm glad I did, because I had more experiences than most people I know who are my age and I had those experiences by the time I was sixteen. I was like, "what the hell is wrong with ya'll people!"... When Kenny and I started fishing it was just two guys in wheelchairs on a boat. We would go to fish a tournament and people would be like, "How'd you guys get in the boat? How'd ya'll do that?" We would go fish by ourselves. It's a pain in the ass, but it's doable. It's just slow. It's like a... It's not the prettiest sight in the world seeing us operate a boat, but we did it and did fairly well sometimes. You catch a fish some days and some days you can't. Unfortunately it's called fishing not catching. You go catching the day before and on tournament day your fishing. I don't see what's so impressive about it, but there are so many people I met who are like "how do you do that?" I have a friend who is in a chair down in South Texas who is an inspirational speaker. He is a nice guy, with a decent story... When he's out doing inspirational speaking he was telling me that he started fishing these tournaments. He and I were talking about tournaments. I was like, "you need to fish this one and that one." He was like, "I will I found me a fishing partner." So he's got someone who is able bodied that he fishes with. There's nothing wrong with that, but it's just like... He asked me about my fishing partner. I said, "It's Kenny. You met him at so and so event." He's like, "Really, the black guy? How did ya'll do that?" I was like, "you're kidding me man? You're in a chair. You know how to fish." He's like, "I wouldn't know how to do that. I'd have to have somebody." I asked, "Why do you need an able body? You're on water. You know how to get up and down from a chair. What do you need an able body for?" He's like, "What if something goes wrong?" I said, "Well you have a cell phone. If that doesn't work, swim to shore. I don't know what to tell you. Tie a string on to your chair and go to shore."... I don't understand it... It's like when my water pump went out on my truck, the kid that lived down the street, who used to mow my yard, broke his weed eater one day. The pull cord had broken and he comes in and says, "I can't finish your yard. I have to go buy a new weed eater." I asked, "What happened?" He told me that he couldn't start it. I said, "That doesn't mean you have to buy a new one, let's look at it." I showed him that pull cords are fixable. So I fixed that. When my water pump went out I... instead of just paying a mechanic to do it I went and bought one and made him come down and work with me so he could learn how to change a water pump.

**Davenport**

(Laughs)

**Shaner**

These are things that I did as a child. Just... this is broken. Alright let me see if I can fix it. I've always believed if you don't know how something works to ask why or figure it out.

**Davenport**

Right.

**Shaner**

Not just. Oh it's broke. Go buy a new one. No let's fix it first. If we can't fix it, then we will go buy a new one. Because you tried... you failed... maybe you didn't fail, but maybe it's just not fixable and you have to go buy something new. Until then let's try something. You don't learn by not asking why. To me that's just what's wrong with our culture.... It's kind of like when you first get hurt people are like, I'd like to do this but I don't know how to do it. Well let's think about it. It's like when you first learn how to do a transfer, to get from the chair to the bed. At first it seemed hard, then you figured it out; someone showed you a way to do it and you could do it that way. If you sat there and thought about it maybe you could find a better way to do it, or a quicker way, or something that works better for you. Everyone's anatomy and disability is different, so if you can find a better way to do it for you, you should do it. Just because somebody does it with their left hand... maybe you're stronger with your right hand. Do it that way. Always ask why. Always fix things. Modify things to work best for you. That's one thing I encourage people with new injuries to do. It's hard if you haven't been around someone in a chair.

When you're first hurt you don't want to be around someone in a chair, because you don't want to be associated with some cripple... It's mentally strange... You don't want to be.... To this day if somebody looks really handicapped with a seat belt on, an armrest, a forty pound chair, and anti-tippers it's like... especially if they are at my level of disability I just want to strangle them. I'm thinking what's wrong with you... You don't need all this stuff. You look embarrassing. The more you look normal... the more you can do on your own... the more people are going to respect you as a person and not as a person with a disability. I always encourage that to people... If it's... It's one thing to tell people how to do something. It's another thing to show them. I've always believed in that mentality. You practice what you preach. I'm not perfect... but.... To me I'd burn this house down and start again, because I'm tired of the clutter. I just don't.... I like things put in their place and spotless. I'm learning to deal with it.... I don't care if it's in a pile... paperwork you know... I'd prefer it to be organized, neat, and perfect... but you don't always have time to do things that aren't important. So I handle it as best as I can.

As far as being a can do cripple I guess that's... the way it's... like on campus I don't like the way we market... I'm going to go find out who's in charge of it and talk to him to see if we can't fix this. It doesn't have to be my way, but let's see something different. Let's use more than five people if you have twenty seven [thousand] or twenty five. The campus is

what in the thirties or forties now? Breaking fifty if you add the distance learning and online learning.

## **Davenport**

( \_?\_ )

## **Shaner**

On campus you probably run in the thirties or closer to the forties, but when you have that amount of people and the diversity... whether they are typical college age or older... we had one guy in my marketing class that I insulted one day, but didn't mean to. I was complaining that you market for a certain demographic, but you have grandpa in the corner who wants to be cool who still wears an Ambercrombie shirt. I'm not against t-shirts, but why does it have to be Ambercrombie. You're not in the select market. You're about fifty years out of their range. Well... the older man in the class just happened to be wearing Ambercrombie that day. (**Davenport** Laughs) I think that's the reason I got paralyzed, so I could still be mobile with my foot in my mouth. I'm very good at that. But that's... Trust me that's not the only time I got in trouble, by doing stuff like that. That was one of the most memorable. That was a great professor Dan Gosset... great guy. He's dead now.... Died of cancer.... Which I find ironic in a way, because he was a health nut... always exercising... always eating right... and dies of cancer at a young age. Live life how you want it.... Don't worry. You just never know when your cards are up. It's like those people who want to live to be a hundred; why do you want to live to be a hundred? Why don't you just live your life now and enjoy all you can out of it, because tomorrow is never guaranteed.

I think that being disabled is what gave me that attitude, because I should be dead.... I should be dead multiple times from different things, but I'm not. Maybe it's just because I'm stubborn or because nobody wants me. But... if you live your life by measuring hours, minutes, days, and years, that's the dumbest way to live life. You live it by opportunities. It's like people want to take photographs of everything. I don't need a photograph. I was there. I remember it. What about when you get old and can't remember? I'm hoping I'm checked out by then. Ya'll can throw these photographs away that mean nothing to them at that point, because I don't need it. You have to be here today, because tomorrow is not guaranteed. I think that's.... I don't think I lived that way before I got hurt. I think I lived... these are the rules... this is what you do.... You grow up, you go to school, you play sports, you go to college, you get a job, get a wife, kids, and half a dog... You live the American dream. It's like, wait that's not my dream! I kind of just go by the seat of my pants and figure it out as I go. I don't have a plan anymore... before I was hurt I was going to farm, but that got thrown out the window. You just kind of do what you want.... So what else do we got?

## **Davenport**

It seems like your getting tired. You seem to be a wealth of information. (Running faucet in background) Would you mind being contacted at another point for another interview?

## **Shaner**



Yeah. That's fine.

## Davenport

Why don't we wrap it up? Let me just ask you one or two more housekeeping questions? Things like, what years did you go to UTA?

## Shaner

<topic>Why Bryan decided to leave UTA when Dr. Witt left</topic>

I started in August of 2000... Graduated May of 05... Kind of went slow towards the end. (Room mate speaking in back of house) I experienced a little burn out. It was quick up front, then I had two back surgeries while I was in school; I had rods taken out of my back and had to have new rods put in. That took up some of the extra time. That and I switched majors from psychology to accounting once I realized psychology was going to take ten years to make nothing... I switched to accounting, because I like numbers... It's not hard math... Anybody can do addition, subtraction, and multiplication. It's not solving for X or imaginary numbers. I like real things. Pennies, nickels, quarters, dollars; I can do that kind of math. I like the rules of it to. Everything has a rule, so it makes it clean... Then I burned out... and... switched to econ (economics). I went to Nancy... (Sighs) I want to say her name was Cliburn. (Room mate speaking in back of house) She was the Director of Undergraduate Advising for the College of Business. I went to her office one day and said, "Look I'm burned out. Get me the hell out of here. I'm done."

Bob had already left to take over the University of Alabama. Spaniolo (Former President of UTA 2004-2012) and I did not get along... No longer having Bob as president my political clout was all back door stuff. The administrators that I was still friends with wanted my input, but they didn't want Spaniolo knowing it was my input, because Spaniolo and I didn't get along. Which.... Any guy that lets you name a street after him while you're still and active administrator its just.... I'm not going to get along with that person.... Anyway.... I was just burned out. I was tired. I had done as much as I could for that campus and tried to change as many things as I could. I'm always that guy. I like.... The people who need to know me, know who I am, but not everybody needs to know who I am. My idea of fame would be, when your banker calls you because he loves you and thinks that you are awesome, but I wouldn't want anybody else to know. That to me is good fame. I wouldn't want everyone to know. I couldn't be a celebrity. I'd go to jail for punching paparazzi or running them over; one of the two. (Laughs).... I was just burned out. I went by Nancy's office and said, "Get me the hell out of here. I don't care what my major is. Put nothing but easy professors and I don't want to be here before 9 AM. Whatever is the quickest and easiest route?" I left and came back two weeks later and picked up my spring semester schedule from her and left. I called her the next week and asked, "What's my major?" She said, "econ." I was like, "cool."... I left and that was it. That's how I ended up studying econ. I liked econ though....

I got out of UTA and never was still... to this day I have never been formally sent paperwork to join the Alumni Association, so I'm still not an alumni member. I've never been asked. Yet, I've donated... I've donated to development since I was... a sophomore... sophomore, junior, senior... Since I graduated and left... They have paid for this new... this company to come in and update the alumni contact information and they have mixed my information with someone else, who was getting my alumni and development stuff sent to him with my name on it. I just happened to know the guy. He was an ex baseball player at UTA. So he got all of my stuff and all of his stuff, but I never... I get third party solicitations all the time.

Join National Mutual Wide or Nation Wide or something... It will get back to UTA and its like screw ya'll. If you don't want me as an alumni then fuck you. It's a bad attitude to have, but until they fix that problem, and I'm not voluntarily fixing it.... It's like with Razor's Edge when they went to it, the development software, I always told them that... Because I was on the vice president of development... I was on his advisory.... He knew me. I told him, "If there was ever a cause that I wanted to donate money or I believe in, call me I'll give you some money, but I will... never have someone call me from a local pledge drive." I said, "I'll give you one dollar and that's it for the year." That stuff angers me. It's informal. Send me a letter. I'm okay with letters, but don't ever call me and make me pick up the phone for a student worker who doesn't even know how to say my name or anything about me. If you want money, you need to know how to ask for money. If you can't accomplish that properly you better just send a formal letter and make it sound personal. Get a well written letter. They never did, so... they fixed Razor's Edge to a consulting company, which I was against, but apparently I had good standing in that they mixed everyone's name, number, and took out the notes to never call me so I donated one dollar... I don't even think I... I think I mailed it in. (**Davenport** laughs) I think I mailed them a dollar bill. It was like really this is the way ya'll are going to be? I've been giving you a thousand dollars or more every year and you want a dollar? I just... I was a bitter student by being never asked to join the Alumni Association. Here is an active student on campus... that's... I was at one time the highest nominated Who's Who on campus. I may still hold the record who knows? I was nominated by every nominating department. It was the first time anybody had been nominated more than twelve times.... No the first time I was nominated by fourteen, which beat the record. The second year I was nominated by every department.... Which I think was seventeen departments. Then the last time I was nominated... it was by fourteen again... because I knew and worked with everybody.

<topic>Personal story about interacting with both students and administrators</topic>  
I knew administration and students. It's a hilarious story to me.... I'm sitting and having lunch with the Vice President of Development, the Director of Marketing, the Associate Vice President of Marketing, and a wealthy alum. We were having lunch at the Student Union building, when this girl named Cece, who was in a black sorority, comes up to me and she goes, "Hey B can I ask a question?" I'm even dressed up, and I hate dressing up. I'm a jeans and t-shirt guy... I'm in a tie and everyone else is dressed up. We had something going on that I can't remember. She comes up and says, "Can I ask you a question?" I'm like, "Sure." I introduce her to the table. Then she asks, "Do you think this condom looks small?" (Davenport and Shaner laugh) She pulled her hand up, had this condom on her fingers and said, "I just think it looks small." I was like, "It looks like a condom to me." I'm looking at the table and everyone is just petrified. I'm like, "I don't know what to tell you Cece. I can try it on for you and tell you if it's snug or not. Is that what you need? Are we comparing this to what?" She's like, "I just think it looks small." I'm like, "Maybe it's for a small penis. I don't know what to tell you sweetie. Did it say small on the package? You know they do stretch? They have some elasticity to them." She said, "I just think it looks small." I told her, "go get another one and I'll go try it on for you. Can I call you tomorrow and let you know?" That was one of the funniest things that happened to me, because one of the guys was a big Christian guy who doesn't even cuss. He was one of the few people that I watched what I said around. I don't even do that for most preachers that I know. I just really liked this guy. He was a good guy, with a good heart. Out of courtesy and respect I would watch what I said around him, but at that time when she left I turned to the table and said, "That was a new experience for me. Any of ya'll?" He goes, "I didn't know what the hell was going on." It was the only time I've ever heard the man cuss, and I was thinking if that's what I can get out of you that's good enough. Welcome to UTA! (Shaner laughs)

<topic>The diverse culture at UTA</topic>

I just like.... I don't know. I grew up in a really small town that had Mexicans and whites. There was one lady who was Spanish whose husband was an Apache Indian and Hispanic. We had like five Chinese people who owned the Chinese restaurant. The dad had an accent, but the kids were born and raised in New York, so they had a Yankee accent. That was it.... What was so funny about growing up in that town was that there was no diversity. The first black guy moved to town the year I was hurt. He worked for a large corporation that had an office there; a field location for an oil company.... Great diesel mechanic... One of the smartest diesel mechanics I've ever known. He moved up there because he got tired of driving an hour from home every day from Pampa. His trailer house caught on fire... accidental electrical fire... so yeah, little shits.... It was that kind of a backwards country town. We ain't having no black folk around here.

For someone who grew up with little diversity, that was one of the things I really liked about campus, was the amazing diversity. We had.... My cookouts... toward the end of my college career I started having Friday cookouts. It started with four of us, but I think the last party had about four hundred people come through. One of my neighbors hated them. He would call the cops every time. Once it hit like twenty people there would be a cop show up. The cops got used to it. They would show up even without getting called. They would knock on the door, come in, get a plate of food, talk for a little bit, and go. It was funny, especially because there were college kids there. I don't know if everyone was... I didn't card, so I didn't know what everybody's age was. It's hard to keep track with that many people. It was funny when the cops would show up and people who hadn't been to my cookouts before would freak out. I'm like they are just going to eat and leave. I'd offer them a beer but they aren't going to take it, because they are on duty. It was fun. I wouldn't change my experience.

<topic>Personal story about Arlington Mayor Robert Cluck</topic>

When I first got to college before I was active, I thought that I'd messed up and should have gone to UT instead, because Austin is more fun, but their mayor's name doesn't rhyme with dumb something. I think Cluck is a fun name to rhyme. When they rhyme with things you shouldn't tell them that the first time you meet them, but he shouldn't have interrupted my conversation.... He did it twice, so then I asked him that. He remembered it for many years. The last time I saw him I asked him how he was, [how he made] mayor dumb something.... He was already trying to leave before I asked him that. That's another good thing about a chair. You always... if you... your very memorable. If there is only one person in a chair, it narrows you down in a crowd. You can use it to your advantage if you want. You shouldn't look at it as a disability.... You should look at it as... you're disabled but... now I have an easy way to be memorable, especially if you're the only one in the crowd. So, I don't know. Take advantage of what you have, right. I think that's it really.

## **Davenport**

Thank you very much. You have an excellent day.

## **Shaner**

You too.