

## **Danny Saenz**

### **Wheelchair Football Athlete, Activist for the Rights for People with Disabilities through ADAPT.**

*Interview conducted by*

*Sarah Rose & Courtney McKinney*

*August 26, 2018 in Austin, Texas*

Disability Studies Minor

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### **Biography**

Danny Saenz grew up in Corpus Christi, Texas playing wheelchair football with mixed ability players. All players used either a power chair (motorized) or a manual chair. Not all players were wheelchair users.

In the late 1980s Saenz moved to Austin, Texas and became an active member in ADAPT, American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today, where he traveled across the United States as an Activist for the Rights for People with Disabilities.

### **Topics discussed**

- Wheelchair Football Athlete in a Power Chair
  - Playing Wheelchair Football with Earl Campbell
  - Move to Austin and Living in his Own Apartment
  - Bus System in Austin, Texas – late 1980s
  - Beginning experience with ADAPT and Capitol Crawl
  - Movie Theatre protest
  - ADA Anniversary Lawsuits/ Greyhound
-

**Rose**

This is Sarah Rose.

**McKinney**

and Courtney McKinney.

**Rose**

Interviewing Danny Saenz at 3200 Slaughter Lane West Oaks Rehab (West Oaks Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in Austin, Texas) on August 26, 2018. Do you want to start with adaptive sports or Tom Olan or just whatever?

**Saenz**

<topic>Wheelchair Football Athlete in a Power Chair</topic>

My adaptive sports is not very...there was once when I was in Corpus, my dad was going to organize a team, a basketball team (wheelchair), but something happened and we were going down the road and we heard something weird with the tire. We said we have to go back home. So I didn't go to the thing.

**Rose**

Oh jeeze

**Saenz**

But it turns out those guys, turns out I became good friends with them. We actually played wheelchair football. I think it was 6-man wheelchair football.

**Rose**

This was in Austin?

**Saenz**

No, in Corpus Christi, my home town. There was a, how would you say, mixed abilities, because people had more strength and there was people who used motorized wheelchairs, power chairs. It was an interesting concept. It was thought of somebody in a power chair, said yah we want to be involved too. We had our play book and a coach. Yeah, I run into the coach here. He's a constable and he went to UT and he got involved in their adaptive sports.

**Rose**

Do you remember his name?

**Saenz**

Yeah, Adan Ballesteros

**Rose**

Ok

**Saenz**

Adan Ballesteros – The two L's are pronounced like a Y.

**Rose**

OK

**Saenz**

It's Spanish.

**Rose**

Ok, we'll get it. Was this like in high school?

**Saenz**

Yes, it was like in high school. 1970? Well, I know exactly, because my Dad was driving and he died in 1976 so it was 1975 or 1974. Then afterwards I didn't really get...but the football yeah. The football was great. We toured. We went all around South Texas playing in the valley. What the teams, our opponents would be...first it started like one of the paraprofessionals at the school, the special school, son was in football and so she asked him if he wanted to play football so we scrounged up some wheelchairs so they were playing football. Then I don't remember exactly how we got the Eagles (thinking and searching for a word).

**Rose**

The benefits

**Saenz**

Yeah, we got them to buy us some wheelchairs, just regular wheelchairs not adaptive or not sports.

**Rose**

That would have been before there were sports wheelchairs

**Saenz**

Nah, Nah, Nah it wasn't that. That is what our opponents would use, because they were able bodied.

**Rose**

That must have been pretty funny to watch them?

**Saenz**

Yeah, it was.

**Rose**

Trying to figure out their wheel chairs

**Saenz**

and get plowed with a power chair

**Rose**

(Rose laughing)

**Saenz**

<topic>Playing Wheelchair Football with Earl Campbell</topic>

We actually played with...one time there was a telethon in Corpus and Earl Campbell was just starting his professional career. Earl Campbell went to the University of Texas and he's a star there. He went on to be a start in the NFL, National Football League. He was just starting out with the Houston Oilers. He came with us

and played with us a few, like an exhibition and then took a few pictures and everything. It was interesting, because I ran into him years since I was here at a concert. I asked him and he said “yeah I remember that. It was fun.”

**Rose**

That's cool.

**Saenz**

That's so cool, yeah. So all the stuff he'd been through and I think somehow he has some kind of disability himself it think.

**Rose**

A lot of football players

**Saenz**

Yeah, but that was cool.

**Rose**

Wow, so who were you playing? How did you guys travel?

**Saenz**

What I remember it had to have been basketball teams, because like I said as far as we knew. There was not internet. It was like a small world so we would play the basketball team, which was part of the football team. The basketball team had contacts. So say you want to play us, we went to the valley – I don't remember what city, McAllen. We went to San Antonio, Beaumont, East Texas, and so all around there. We would play in parking lots.

**Rose**

Where?

**Saenz**

In parking lots

**Rose**

Wow

**Saenz**

Yeah, and in San Antonio in one of the malls.

**Rose**

Where you playing wheelchair basketball teams or just able bodied basketball teams?

**Saenz**

Nah, they were wheelchair basketball teams

**Rose**

OK

**Saenz**

Because the guys weren't really thrilled about getting their wheel chairs rammed by power chairs.

**Rose**

(Rose laughing)

**Saenz**

That's why it really didn't take off with them. Yeah, it was pretty fun. We had rule, referees. Guys with just simple rules. You could set up with the protection of the...you had to be touched. I forget - by the chair - probably by the chair. Touch, make contact - that was the tackle. So if the quarterback went back, and the motorized wheel chairs positioned themselves around him. Nobody was going to touch him. We had a seven second rule, you had to through the ball within seven seconds. So there was a referee counting. Yeah we had picture and hopefully ... I don't know if I have it, but we had a play book.

**Rose**

Wow, if we could get our archivist in touch with you.

**Saenz**

Yeah, the person was an artist and he drew the mascot – we were called the Kilowatts.

**Rose**

(Rose laughing) Were these all power chairs?

**Saenz**

No, we had cheerleaders and everything.

**Rose**

Woow

**Saenz**

(giggling)

**Rose**

I'd love to see photos.

**McKinney**

Umm hmmm

**Saenz**

I don't know if they are around. I'm not in touch with the guys. I don't know if about body has any photos.

**Rose**

Maybe newspaper coverage.

**Saenz**

There is some.

**Rose**

Oh, do you know which papers?

**Saenz**

Corpus Christi Caller Times

**Rose**

Ok

**Saenz**

I know they covered it the time we played at the Eagles Lodge.

**McKinney**

Did Earl Campbell play with y' all or was he like coaching?

**Saenz**

He played with us. He got in a wheelchair and tried it.

**McKinney**

You said there were pictures probably taken?

**Saenz**

Yeah, there were pictures, I don't know if there were publicity printed or anything

**McKinney**

Very cool, that would be very cool to get.

**Rose**



Yeah and the play book. So how many people on your team were power chair users?

**Saenz**

I remember three.

**Rose**

So half the team?

**Saenz**

Yeah, me, Billy, and Tim. We called Tim, Mad Dog. (Rose laughing) They all had significant disabilities. They were using the power chairs; it was cool. I don't know if they were associated with an independent living center, if they called themselves that. I don't remember the funding; I was just playing. (Saenz laughing) But, you were asking earlier and I guess we would just find people who had vans and get in them and take off.

**Rose**

Did you ever hear of any wheelchair football teams in Texas at that time?

**Saenz**

No, not at that time. Now from social media, I learned there is a league in California, but I haven't really followed the league or team.

**Rose**

Wow, Do you know how the principal or teacher found out about wheelchair football?

**Saenz**

What?

**Rose**

The person who started your team

**Saenz**

yeah

**Rose**

How did they find out about wheelchair football?

**Saenz**

They just thought – I don't know where they got the idea. They thought we could do something like basketball.

**Rose**

So you could be more accessible in a wider range.

**Saenz**

yeah

**Rose**

That's very cool. So you said you played here at Saint David's here in Austin or played around?

**Saenz**

We tried at the REC Center. I got in a big chair and the same thing going up the corner and coming back. That was the most involved I've been in sports was like that. I think I went to a basketball team here, practice. I didn't have the strength to do all that pushing.

**Rose**

Did you ever want to try like sled hockey or power hockey I guess?

**Saenz**

Yeah, I did at the REC Center. I tried that too. I kept busting balls. (All laughing) I don't know if they were beach balls or whatever. They had something in front of us too kept balls from going under our wheelchairs.

**Rose**

Oh yeah

**Saenz**

Like a cow catcher

**Rose and McKinney**

That was really funny.

**Saenz**

We tried that. I don't remember how many times. That was fun. That is pretty much it. I don't know if there is a basketball team. I'd like to go see some of it, there's two guys. You've talked to Bob, right? To Bob about

**Rose**

Yeah, we have talked to him.

**Saenz**

Yeah, so

**Rose**

We want to talk to the Turning POINT (a nonprofit that helps the physically challenged develop confidence through outdoor adventures) people and Shorty Powers wife too. (Michael "Shorty" Powers and wife, Nance Baumann Powers in Terrell, TX)

**Saenz**

There is a big history of wheelchair sports not just protesting and carrying on.

**Rose**

Yes, UTA (University of Texas at Arlington) has a national championship winning teams. Let's go to your discovering ADAPT and you moved to Austin and we stopped there.

**Saenz**

<topic>Move to Austin and Living in his Own Apartment</topic>

I moved to Austin and the place I was staying at the transition living facility. It sounds like a big place, it was a house.

**Rose**

Yeah

**Saenz**

There were five people with disabilities and they were in charge. For a lot of us that was the first time That was a big thing for us, I was like 27.

**Rose**

What year was that?

**Saenz**

1986 October 14<sup>th</sup>. I remember that. So doing and directing all these things and being aware of these things. The rules – you have to sign in and sign out – I hate that. I hated that, but it hadn't been to long before I realized I was going to stay here. It was miles, centuries ahead of Corpus Christi. To this day, I'd never been on a city bus at Corpus. That was the first thing I...

**Rose**

<topic>Bus System in Austin, Texas – late 1980s</topic>

Did the busses her already have lifts?

**Saenz**

Some of them, partially, you had to call. So the bus next to us you'd call and say I want to go north say downtown. More or less I'm going to be 2:00 o'clock. What time will your bus come by your bus with a lift? So they would tell you. I don't know how we would do it on the way back. (Saenz laughing) I just thought of that. We just kind of, I don't know

**Rose**

showed up?

**Saenz**

Yeah, before cell phones and all that. That was very cool, but there were also the mechanical lifts and they broke down a lot. A few times it broke when I was in the up and out position in like this kind of weather.

The lady still remembers it, the bus driver. A couple of people say, "I remember when you got stuck on Highland Mall and we were stuck out there". Everybody is pissed off, because they aren't going. We actually had it think somebody call the ADAPT office and they left a message or something about why do people use special transit to paratransit

**Rose**

Wow!

**Saenz**

Yeah...The funny thing was before that when I had just gotten here I had used paratransit. There was a bus driver who would always talk about the lifts, the lifts on the buses. I finally told him, "Look quite doing that. I'm not interested right now. Quite trying to sell me on that". It was so annoying, because he would mention it every single time that there are lifts on buses and you can go anywhere you wanted and any time you wanted.

**Rose**

But I am already...was that in Corpus?

**Saenz**

No, here. Now I think I've kept my eligibility – signed up till sometime in the 1990s. Now they have requirements and you have to demonstrate that can't use **\*\*\*inaudible 16:55-59** I meant to...

**Rose**

Can you explain that a little more the requirement?

**Saenz**

You have to demonstrate that you can't, for whatever reason, get to the bus stop. I was think I should sign up for it I with my manager I can't push it that far. I need to get the application in and they tell you they will take you down town that is where the office is to get evaluated and they will actually come pick you up. So riding the buses and that kind of leads into ADAPT.

I think it was fall of 1989...I kept getting the post cards, I don't know why so I decide to go to a meeting. They were talking about how people with certain wheelchairs weren't being allowed to board because some of their

tires weren't fitting in the clamps that the bus system was using at the time. We were going to have a demonstration in front of the capitol. One of the guys in a wheelchair goes up on the lift and stays there – half way, he doesn't get all the way on. So he is effectively locked and the bus can't go anywhere. (All laughing)

**Rose**

And you just turn off his chair and put on the breaks.

**Saenz**

Yeah, the bus driver is frantically calling their supervisor and there was some kind of... the top executives were at a funeral so the people kept getting pages about a demonstration going on. Then after everybody got off and on another bus so we would lock a bus. There is pictures of that in the American Statesman.

**Rose**

Was this in 1989?

**Saenz**

Yeah, one of the history that the reporter was using for, slash history kind of everything reporter, a picture of me being dragged by the sheriff's department.

**Rose**

Wow

**Saenz**

I told Stephanie we made the big one – again. (All laughing) We tweeted it, I forget the guy's name.

**Rose**

What were you doing between 1986 and 1989?

**Saenz**

Well, they offered me...they asked me what I wanted to do at the transitional independent living center.

**Rose**

ARCIL? (Austin Resource Center for Independent Living)

**Saenz**

Yeah, what do you want to do and I couldn't think of anything. You have an opportunity and you can go volunteer what they called then the Zachery Scott theatre, community theatre: so I started doing that. That was pretty cool. I don't know how long I did it, I no longer had to ask. I knew the answer to most of the things going on. That was every cool, because you could see them setting up for the next production, the stage and everything. I got comped, me and my friend would go. They were doing real traditional stuff like Christmas Carol, Arsenic and Lace (Arsenic and Old Lace), the stage production of that. I don't remember how long I did that, not very long.

**Rose**

Was it the terms of your dad's pension? Was it because you couldn't work?

**Saenz**

I couldn't find anything.

**Rose**

I was wondering if it was discrimination, barriers, or if you couldn't get a hold of it.

**Saenz**

Actually, I don't remember if I looked? Then one day I did have work experience? In 1987 for three weekends I worked for yellow cab. Ok, here's the story. On my first day I hadn't worked anywhere doing anything so I'm answering their phone. I was to answer the phone and write down where people want to go. My voice...

**Rose**

You're doing good.

**Saenz**

So I would write it down so that I could remember, then I would write it down so that dispatch could read it. (Rose and Saenz laughing) In ten minutes I got called into the supervisor office and I was too slow. In this ear I have hearing loss...Work Rehab sent me and I got tested, so they got me a head set. I could use my right hand and I didn't have to hold the phone up. Then it was actually around this time, the calls went through the roof.

The University of Texas moved in and the guy says tomorrow we're going to get slammed. Sure enough everybody is calling and I don't remember how many call there were in an hour. I don't know if computers would have made it easier. Then Sunday I'm totally naive, stupid never worked in my life and I said why isn't my name on the schedule? So I called and they said, we're not going to need you anymore, thank you. (Quiet)

**Rose**

(sigh) too slow

**Saenz**

so

**Rose**

and before ADA

**Saenz**

Yeah, there's a couple times I also got this gig stamping phone books with AT&T. The salesman for the yellow pages, it would have the ads the national companies would give discounts, subsidized ads. What we would do is have a model we would copy the print so the salesman could use it, the air conditioner guy will pay part of your ad if you put the thing on it. That is what we did. It wasn't very long and I did it two different times. That was like 1988. I think it was 1987 or 1988, because I was still living South 1st and Barnsprings. I was paying rent out of my pocket before my housing voucher came. When I got it the company wouldn't take it and so I had to move. It was a really cool place where I lived needless to say in downtown Austin.

**Rose**

Oh wow

**Saenz**

Yeah, I was looking and I had some friends moving too, we lived next door to a duplex off Northeast **\*\*\*inaudible 25:17-25:20** I remember getting a check from the company. They wrote or I wrote something that made it look like South 1<sup>st</sup> look like 51<sup>st</sup> St. I asked someone was one too close or something so I hadn't gotten my check or they misread the company so that's why I remember that I still lived at South 1<sup>st</sup>. Where's my check? It ain't much but...

**Rose**

Yeah, it's a check.



**Saenz**

After I got involved with Arcil, I mean ADAPT, I got offered work contract with Arcil doing a training for peer counseling

**Rose**

Oh cool

**Saenz**

I set up a training for that. That was a little friendlier, I knew people there. My immediate supervisor was a little uptight about ADAPT. I'm not doing nothing. I don't mention where I work or nothing. They just. The other guys I knew were fine.

**Rose**

Yeah

**Saenz**

Yeah

**Rose**

So were you involved in ARCIL in the 1980s?

**Saenz**

Yeah, we had a thing and they ran classes. We went to that: life skills or whatever. I did that even after I moved out I would go to that, it was something to do and that was ok. They went from South Austin where I'd come for the interview for my program. Then I moved up to North Austin so I remember going there. I didn't live too far for me there were times when I would row to work, because it was more convenient catching this bus then going to this bus and then coming back.

**Rose**

Yeah, this is to go to work at ARCIL?

**Saenz**

Yeah, I remember a coworker giving me a ride home and turning on the radio. We listened to the radio at the time and announced Stevie Ray Vaughan had died, that was 1990. That is why I remember. I remember both.

**Rose**

Yeah, you have a good memory. What happened after your first ADAPT meeting? What was it like? Do you remember what it was like going to your first one?

**Saenz**

<topic>Beginning experience with ADAPT and the Capitol Crawl</topic>

The meeting I don't remember the meeting so much. I remember when we went to the regional action from around there. I think some people from Tennessee came. Dallas, there was some kind of convention in Dallas. The people from Denver came.

**Rose**

Ok, was that a greyhound protest?

**Saenz**

Yeah

**Rose**

Those are right before the ADA?

**Saenz**

Yes, it was, because that was my first trip to with ADAPT in the spring it was either December or January, then in the spring –what was it called – Wheels of Justice?

**Rose**

Yeah

**Saenz**

March and rally and all that

**Rose**

and the Capitol Crawl. Tell us about Dallas?

**Saenz**

Dallas. I felt very comfortable. I was totally comfortable with the people, the tactics, nothing was too much.

**Rose**

That just made sense to you?

**Saenz**

That made sense, yeah., because I think I had been reading some Dr. Martin Luther King. I saw similarities in not being able to and for reasons of being excluded for being different. We had this discussion and someone would say, "that is different". (Saenz response) "No, but still you cannot go because your different. You can't get in there, because your different". So we did that in Dallas. That was a very cool plan.

One of the cofounders was a nice guy. We got arrested in Dallas. There is a picture, I don't know if it is the Fort Worth or the Dallas newspaper. Then we went back, because I think we had to do court. I think we went back. I think there is a picture, if you go to the ADAPT Office. It was after the action in D.C. because I had the t-shirt from there. Maybe, I don't know.

**Rose**

We'll check or something.

**Saenz**

I think we went back. Yeah, go into the first national trip.

**Rose**

As long as that is the D.C. one?

**Saenz**

Yes,

**Rose**

One more question about Dallas. Is that where **Tomalin 30:57** go the photo of you?

**Saenz**

Yeah, the photo of me in the white sweatshirt being carried off

**Rose**

You were being carried off?

**Saenz**

Yeah, it was cool the weather was cool because I had my little hat and a long sleeve sweatshirt

**Rose**

What were you doing on the ground?

**Saenz**

We just threw ourselves in front of the tire. That was it.

**Rose**

Out of your chair

**Saenz**

Yeah, I talked to people and say I was a lot younger and I'm not going to throw myself out of my wheelchair. (Rose, McKinney, and Saenz laughing) Now, it's going to take 6 guys to get me back up. I think there is a picture of me in a t-shirt crawling up at the **service 31:48** D.C.

**Rose**

Wow

**Saenz**

Trying to get under the barricade

**Rose**

Wow, tell us about D.C.

**Saenz**

Ok so we went again in a caravan. We drove I don't know how many people but we had a lot of people from Austin. There was a guy from El Paso, I think he came to that. I was in his van. We got into D.C. – different but I felt very comfortable and sitting with eight people and talking, different speech patterns and stuff, but still feeling very comfortable – my people.

I went to something Sunday morning, because we got there on Saturday. Sunday morning, I went rolling around I don't know why I went to the New York City Cathedral, some kind of historical thing that I went too. Anyway, I saw this guy passing out, and bumming cigarettes. I went back and it turns out he was one of our ADAPT people. Guy just rolling around.

**Rose**

So you went to the Wheelchair Justice March

**Saenz**

Yeah, we went to that and the people did the crawl. The thing that strikes me is that the next day is when we took over the rotunda and there are pictures by Tom. There was 104 people surround it and we stopped the US Government, the US Congress. The Speaker of the House came down and some of the leadership came down, because the ADA was stuck. It had passed the Senate, but they were dragging their feet in the House of Representatives and that was March. It passed in and then the President, the first Bush, signed it.

**Rose**

In July

**Saenz**

In July, right. We talked about it, because I was working at ARCIL.

**Rose**

OK, what about the rotunda protest? I've heard Bob and Stephanie's version

**Saenz**

Yeah, to me that was the most awesome

**Rose**

(Rose laughing)

**Saenz**

That is the thing that will sticks out of my mind, because that is so fucking powerful.

**Rose**

Yeah

**Saenz**

You stopped the government. Crippled people stopped the US fucking government. (All laughing) Yeah, that's pretty awesome and again screaming and yelling was natural. There was echoing so it was even louder. That was like totally very natural to me. I'd never done anything like that in my life, but I felt very comfortable doing that. Again the people...I remember it was a long day, because they arrested us. Then took us down to somewhere under the parking garages somewhere and processed us, that took a long time.

**Rose**

Where you in the inner circle that agreed to be arrested?

**Saenz**

Yeah, I was arrested. Wow

**Rose**

They were telling us about exact people. People that didn't want to get arrested and people who were willing.

**Saenz**

Well, I got arrested so I don't know where exactly I was. There's a big picture in the ADAPT Office you'll see that.

**Rose**

Sometime we'll have to talk about **\*\*inaudible 35:51**

**Saenz**

Long day getting processed for the first time. Like I said a lot of people from Austin or as it turned out a lot of people that moved to Austin. I met them there. Did you talk to Gene Rogers?

**Rose**

We've done a couple interviews with him? Yeah, he's fun.

**Saenz**

He was in New Mexico then.

**Rose**

yes

**Saenz**

That was awesome? Then you learn you have to deal with the consequences.

**Rose**

Which were?

**Saenz**

Getting processed. I don't remember how late it was, but it must have been midnight or longer so we started out somewhat early in the morning I guess. It was a long day.

**Rose**

yeah

**Saenz**

I was going back and in my way. We were in group of people that knew where they were going back to the hotel from where the police held us. I think we went to court the next day, that was another first for me being processes like that

**Rose**

So after that?

**Saenz**

After that – I don't know I think it just kept on going with ADAPT. I don't remember what we did after that we used to alternate going to D.C. and going somewhere else.

**Rose**

Donna went over the actions with me. Just actions

**Saenz**

We went to Atlanta. I remember that was after the ADA got passed, then we met in Denver to discuss the next steps so that is when we decided to attend the services and the issues

**Rose**

Do you remember much about the discussion?

**Saenz**

No, not really. I know we wrote it down somewhere. That sort of made sense to get people out of nursing homes.

**Rose**

Yeah

**Saenz**



There were a lot of steps to get another guy. That was pretty cool. I think even later we made a couple of trips, I think to Denver. We just kept on. I remember, before I got involved with ADAPT. I went to the community college.

**Rose**

Oh, yeah.

**Saenz**

The person teaching a math class and the person happened to know ADAPT with Bob and Stephanie. I forgot his name but he mentioned their actions I think in Atlanta. It was really cool.

**Rose**

The one in Atlanta was before the ADA and there was an intervention by Bush (President Bush) and other people into occupying a federal building.

**Saenz**

When it was really cold? NO wait, when it was really cold was in D.C.

**Rose**

Ok

**Saenz**

They brought blankets for a couple people that were outside. I don't remember exactly

**Rose**

We didn't hear about that. So you were getting kind of intrigued by it.

**Saenz**

Yeah, and John Gannon hearing about that. I had some issues with my personal stuff from depression so during that time I was going to therapy, then I went to my first action. When I got back, the therapist said I notice that you look different. You look totally different, your face...I was on the stuff (pauses and trying to think of something)- I was on zombie pills in 1990. I think it's been proven too that during protests - helps get that anger issues out. That was cool

**Rose**

And finding community

**Saenz**

Yeah, exactly. That was the thing too, because I think I mentioned about one of the things I was getting mad with is that you talk a lot about us and them, this and that, separation of people with disabilities and not.

My therapist had mentioned too that, he's a real cool guy, everybody does that. They tend to go toward their own group so they tend to feel more comfortable with their own group. It was like yeah. Anyways I did feel more comfortable, there were times when I would go because I got too bad, my depression but most of the time I went none stop to actions.

**Rose**

So you went to all the national actions?

**Saenz**

Yeah and then there was stuff her with ACCESS and follow up on the ADA.

**Rose**

What are some of the national actions that you remember?

**Saenz**

I don't remember if it was the first – I think it was because I can tell by the t-shirts. I think the first serve/action was in Atlanta. So there is pictures with people and their old t-shirts with “No Barrier” and we had. The newer logo was afterwards. I don't remember when that came around.

I went to Atlanta and getting arrested was no question about it. That has changed over the years. (Rose and McKinney laughing) Again besides throwing myself out of (my wheelchair) I think how late can I stay up. People always want to know and you start to say but then no, but yeah – you could be released in two hours or they keep you till midnight.

**Rose**

Or two days

**Saenz**

Right, so I can't tell you it will be this way. Then one time, I think it was the second time – I don't remember the year but we actually went to – the enemy was American Healthcare Association., that is a nursing home lobby. We were after them to support for community based services. I don't remember if it was the first one or the second we did an action. I don't remember exactly how it got started, but we went to 11:00 (pm) o'clock at the Peabody Hotel. I think it was the Peabody Hotel.

**Rose**

Memphis?

**Saenz**

No, it was Atlanta so whatever? But, we did do Memphis later. It ended around midnight so they didn't release us until 6:00 in the morning. I remember they gave us a sandwich and my stomach can handle pretty much anything. The sandwich was (clapping sound). The bologna was turning green. I just ate it and I took a few bites and said, nah. We get to the hotel, it's 6:00 o'clock let's get six hours sleep and meet up at 12:00 (pm) o'clock and ready to go. Open mouth – Ok. There was no time to sit around and wait. I forgot what we did but we went somewhere and did something protesting.

**Rose**

What were you doing currently with the nursing home lobby?

**Saenz**

We wanted to change the way it was funded. Breaking down of funds going to nursing homes vs going to community services and getting to support that.

**Rose**

Oh, Ok.

**Saenz**

We chased them for a couple of years. We also chased the Health and Human Services sector over the different ones – the Bush and Clinton. We did everybody, we didn't take sides.

**Rose**

Equal opportunity

**Saenz**

Yeah

**Rose**

You mentioned Memphis too.

**Saenz**

We went to Memphis. I don't remember details. I'm sorry but

**Rose**

I think when we meet again after talking to Bob and Stephanie and some of the actions we can come back to you with the list and we'll know more then too

**Saenz**

Yeah, I don't know what I was going to tell you?

**Rose**

Was it Memphis or ARCIL or national

**Saenz**

It was about the national action finding out with there was anybody coming that was related to the issue. I forget who it was, was it Secretary of Transportation? The ADA were dragging their feet on (trying to remember)

**Rose**

Let's talk about local stuff

**Saenz**

Local stuff?

**Rose**

I don't know if that would be easier? Work with ARCIL?

**Saenz**

The work with ARCIL was supposed to be a five-month contract, but it was delayed so it was just two and a half months.

**Rose**

Oh jeez

**Saenz**

Yeah and so then that was it.

**Rose**

(laughing)

**Saenz**

That's the way the contract worked.

**Rose**

So, what did you do after that?

**Saenz**

I think I did a couple of phone book gigs. (laughing) But, nothing every came up. The way of dealing with all this stuff as we mentioned with the depression I didn't feel very...

**Rose**

Yeah

**Saenz**

We got more involved with ADAPT and organizing and having it take up my day, so. We worked on ADA, compliances, going around checking

**Rose**

Were you one of the people going around with a short survey?

**Saenz**

I think we did that and then we did actions on downtown 6<sup>th</sup> St, because a lot of places have one step.

**Rose**

Was that like the enchilada place, a Tex-Mex place?

**Saenz**

Taco Maria?

**Rose**

Yes, that was on 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Saenz**

That was later, but I didn't go to that one.

**Rose**

What were the other 6<sup>th</sup> St. ones or other down town ones?

**Saenz**

There was a place called Pecan Street Café. Then there was a place called Paradise where it was ok, not very level. They had carpet that made it a little easier. That was our celebration that is where we would go because they were accessible.

**Rose**

So you were trying to patronize them.

**Saenz**

Yeah, we would do there after the restaurants. It was funny, because we joked about it afterwards, “you know what, we’ve never gone to the restaurants. We have gotten our food for something like that. I don’t remember doing arrest actions here in Austin. Well, I take it back – at that time, at that time.

**Rose**

Is this like early 1990s?

**Saenz**

Arrest actions there (thinking)

**Rose**

Is that what ADAPT calls them or what you call them – the arrest action?

**Saenz**

That’s my term (Rose and Saenz laughing) to distinguish between just protesting. They got more arrests related to the state issues, the budget with Human Services and stuff.

**Rose**

Ok, what about later did you go to the Mayor’s Meeting for People with Disabilities or some Council Meetings?

**Saenz**

We went to a City Council Meeting, I forget exactly, I think we’re trying to get them to support like a local thing to enforce the ADA – I think. We stopped this, we got them to leave the diners. We stopped the government again. (Rose and Saenz laughing) They walked off and didn’t come back after that. They there was a paper something about a coop. It was one of the alternative newspapers.

**Rose**

Oh, that’s great too.

**Saenz**

There was an ad up on the wall.

**Rose**

We interviewed Nancy Crowther. I got one account and want to get more for more of the local stuff – a narrative. I know more about the buses, about reinforcing what she was doing. She would let ADAPT know when there was an important meeting. She worked for the city.

**Saenz**

<topic>Movie Theatre protest</topic>

Yeah, we would go to Capitol Metro over the years for different things: bus stops not being accessible, pennies at Capitol Metro. We threw pennies at Capitol Metro, because they did not have enough money. So we threw pennies at them, here's your money.

Oh, I have to tell you speaking of that. We went to the movie, the theatre when they started to have the seats that were really close to the screen and that is where the accessible seat was. So your sitting there with your neck up to see and not comfortable.

**Rose**

yeah

**Saenz**

They wouldn't budge on moving it. So we went out to a place where there were no buses so we caravanned and we paid with pennies.

**Rose**

Everybody paid with pennies, right?

**Saenz**

Yeah, everyone paid individually.

**Rose**

(laughing)



**Saenz**

Count them out. Now your next. So whenever, "Wag the Dog" the movie with Dustin Hoffman. I've never seen it but I remember that was one of the pictures so if you want to chronical that find out what year that came out.

**Rose**

I think Stephanie told us about that, so we'll cross reference.

**Saenz**

<topic>ADA Anniversary Lawsuits/ Greyhound</topic>

I'm trying to think if there are any actions related to the theatre/cinema. I don't remember. I think people filled lawsuits. That was another big thing that started out with lawsuits too when we started with the Texas Civil Rights Project. We started a lawsuit for every year for the ADA Anniversary. So if were the 6<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, we would file six lawsuits. We would have press conferences and not protests, but press conferences.

**Rose**

That's great.

**Saenz**

I've sued Greyhound.

**Rose**

Oh really, tell us about that.

**Saenz**

I used Greyhound a lot going to visit my other so there was a time when I could not walk up the steps. You had to call to tell them when you would show up. Would you mind if someone who doesn't work for Greyhound helps you? I always envisioned them picking someone off the street, but they did do that once. There was another times in the morning I kind of hurt my knee on my dominant leg to push up/climb up the stairs, because there weren't lifts yet. I couldn't do that so they were trying to carry me and they couldn't figure out how. They grabbed be by all fours and got somebody who was working there, they got me up and I got on. I lost it. I was moved like a piece of furniture.

**Rose**

yeah

**Saenz**

That was pretty bad.

**Rose**

So you sued Greyhound then?

**Saenz**

Yeah

**Rose**

When was that?

**Saenz**

I don't remember.

**Rose**

At least the 1990s

**Saenz**

I'm not sure how many times, I think only one time but I was like they would say...They were dragging their feet. Now I can actually make my ride on an app on my smart phone. There's is an option, that was one of the little not nit-picky things that you couldn't reserve your ride on an app and so we got them to do that.

**Rose**

Oh that is cool.

**Saenz**

You have to remember to do that. Austin they have people that are great, but other places can be tricky.

**Rose**

What happened with your lawsuit?

**Saenz**

I don't remember. We made settlements.

**Rose**

Oh

**Saenz**

Nothing in court. I don't remember going to court or nothing, just settling. I'm sorry I can't give you more detail.

**Rose**

Oh no, no, no. This is great. It's colorful stuff.

**Saenz**

Well you mention the **Westill 57:22** had some health issues. I'm in the rehab in the nursing home trying to get my strength back. It's funny how surgery can really zap the strength. I couldn't...my handwriting, it wasn't the greatest, it's still kind of funny. I still couldn't do that (sounds like he is showing Rose a movement). I couldn't feed myself. I'm working on getting my strength back and personally my independence. You think of other issues that have been general, but I have to think of myself.

**Rose**

Totally

**Saenz**

I have to think am I going to be able to get in bed by myself. They keep asking, "how do you normally do things before you came?" and I can't do that yet.

**Rose**

yeah

**Saenz**

I've stood up and my legs are too wobbly. I've been told possibly next week, but I don't think so.

**Rose**

Where do you live now? In what kind of setting?

**Saenz**

I still have my apartment in South Austin, my duplex.

**Rose**

Oh, the same place you've had for a couple decades.

**Saenz**

Yeah. It's cool my rent is paid. My bills are paid. My friends have been helping me with bills and stuff. I've actually been here, not here, but the whole process/my journey one month.

**Rose**

You have an attendant coming in?

**Saenz**

Yeah, my attendant would come in for four hours during the week and 2.5 hours on the week end. We're evaluating if I'm going to need more hours, probably.

**Rose**

yeah

**Saenz**

Because there have been times when I had mobility issues, my back where I couldn't move. I couldn't even get myself into bed. I will get you out of bed. That's to me that is a big thing – getting myself into bed.

**Rose**

Definitely

**Saenz**

I got to go sorry it's 7:00 o'clock.

**Rose**

It's not that many hours a day.

**Saenz**

Nah, nah just kind of thinking about out it, building that in to see where or not I need it. Or other stuff I'm going to need like a body change. This is a pretty good place here. I've had people who have been here before.

**Rose**

That's good.

**Saenz**

Yeah, I'm getting kind of stir crazy.

**Rose**

I can imagine.