

Texas Disability History Collection, University of Texas at Arlington

Dorothy Hill

Headhunter and Disability Rights Activist

*Interview Conducted by
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*Disability Studies Minor
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Biography

Dorothy Hill spent most of her life in Ft. Worth. During the 1950s, Hill worked as a headhunter. She worked alongside with other disability rights activists like Anne Harris, Ronald Ballard, and Jack Kishpaugh. Hill also established a wheelchair accessible church called the Crusaders Chapel.

Topics Discussed

- Early life
 - Hospitalized for polio
 - Returning home
 - High school education
 - Warm Springs
 - Faith
 - Family
-

Hill

<topic>Early life</topic>

Where do you want to pick up where we left off? About where we live? When I was born, we lived three houses down. My house here, the corner of the next corner of the next house was where I was born. So I'm a world traveler. I went from that house, down that street, to the corner of my street to the corner of where my dad built us a beautiful home and married and moved here. So that's my little triangle! (Laughter) And River Oaks just knows me like...it's funny 'cause the mayor. They tease me. My best friend, that we've been friends since third grade, Jodie is one of the city counsel people. And she and Herman the mayor, they know things that I like and don't like and they just tease me and say, "You think we need to go talk to Dorothy first?" (Laughter)

This is a joke, of course. I'm just like a fixture.

Rose

That's great. So what kind of things were you into as a child?

Hill

I was very athletic. My doctor said that's why I lived through the polio I had because I had it so severely. But I was an athlete. I was, as time grew, in school. I was on the baseball team. It was softball team. I was in gymnastics team. I was a swimmer. I was doing my...I had just passed my intermediate swimming test to become a lifeguard at twelve. And I was...my mother had me in dancing. Tap, ballet until I was three years old. She put me in piano. I played the piano. She kept me busy 'cause she knew I'd be in trouble if I wasn't.

I've always been curious. Terribly curious. And I think that's just why she just kept me busy. And then I got into ice skating. And that's what I really liked. I had hoped to become a star of course. And I had passed some test, what they called Preliminaries, here at the Ft. Worth Figure Skating Club I was in. Hoping to move on up into the Jr. Olympics. But I had polio shortly after that, so I didn't get very far. But I passed Preliminaries here, I did do good.

Rose

So can you tell us about when you caught polio...?

Hill

<topic>Hospitalized for polio</topic>

1949. And I was a Rainbow Girl. You know what those are? You know the Eastern Star? It's a lodge. Well my mother had been the Eastern Star. And the rainbow girls are like the children of the daughters of that. And then like the DeMolay Boys. You know the Shriner's. The DeMolay Boys...it was the DeMolay Boys and the Rainbow Girls. And...so there was a convention they were having in Houston and I was getting ready to go. And the evening after we got there, there was a big banquet dance. Everything. My mother made me a gorgeous dress. And I was trying to get ready to go, but I didn't feel well. And my mother adviser...we all said [Moms were named "mother advisers"]. And Ponder Lee Brown. And I said, "I just don't feel well."

And she said, "You want to lay down?"

I said, "Yes."

And so that's when it started. And it just went so fast. I got sicker. It was like terrible flu or something. I got sicker all over. I hurt, started massive headache and nauseous. It was just awful. And she called the hotel doctor and he called my parents and said "You know, we either you need to get her to Ft. Worth quick or I need to hospitalize her here."

So my mother flew there and got upon a train. By the time she got there, I couldn't sit up that fast. And they got a train to lay me down to bring me home. And our doctor, family doctor. Back then, they were friends as well as doctors. He went and meet us at the station. And he said, "Take her straight to the hospital."

They got me into the emergency room and he had two others. Two doctors waiting there that he suspected polio, but they were the big ones in polio at that time. Dr. Sealand Blanche Terrell, the husband and wife team. And then when they saw me and he said, "Take her straight to the third floor."

That was the polio ward.

Rose

And which hospital?

Hill

City County. Or what used to be City County. Um-hmm. That's the only place that would allow him. 'Cause of insolation. So there I was and by night time, I was in an iron lung. It went that fast.

Rose

Was that all the same day?

Hill

Um-hmm. Two days. Twenty-four hours. It started one day at night in the iron lung. Pretty fast. But I told my kids. I said, "You know, you see those little fish that eat the flesh off your bones? Do you see how fast...they eat? It's like crazy. Well it's kind of how the polio virus works. Only it gets into your horn cells that activate your muscles from the nerve. And that goes activate those cells and it's just is fast. When it stops? You don't know.

Rose

So were there a lot of other people there? It was during an epidemic?

Hill

Oh yeah, this was the epidemic. That's why they were allowed on that floor 'cause it was an epidemic. It was just rampant here. It was after the flood, the big flood here in Ft. Worth that went thirteenth floor through the Montgomery building on seventh street. And it was really huge. And it was after that, you know they still don't know what causes polio. Everybody's got the virus. It's in the foot on your spinal collar. The virus is there. But what activates it, nobody knows. They always thought it was something ingested. I don't know. But after the flood, we kids played in the ditches,

kind of kids do. We had fun in all that dirty water the ditches playing, so it maybe something ingested 'cause it was a bad epidemic.

Rose

So how long did you at?

Hill

It was nearly two years. Can't see your family. I saw them through a window down on the sidewalk. They had a mirror on the iron lung I could look at them and see them. But I see my mom and dad. But literally, they had isolation robes, hats, and everything...come see me. But my brother and everybody else, I had to look through the window and everybody else on the sidewalk.

Rose

So was that in the during the full two years?

Hill

Um-hum. Yeah. Nobody allowed that isolation unit.

Rose

So did you get to know some of the other people?

Hill

Oh yeah. I got a picture. We had fun really. It was a fun thing. Nurses were great. Therapists were great. You know, they did all kinds of crazy stuff. My cat I had to leave at home, Kinsey cat. I know I talked about my cat. And so the nurse I remember, Bea, she said, tell my mother, she said, "Bring me my fellow."

Mother said, "You want me to get in trouble?"

So they went down stairs with a big, paper sack, put Kinsey in the sack, and brought him upstairs! (Laughter) They choked my cat. And they were fun. We had a lot of fun. They were really cool.

Rose

What kind of things...?

Hill

Oh, well they would bring up music. I remember one girl was partially paralyzed. But they were getting her up to walk. They brought music. And I remember one of the therapists said, "Lock your arms around my neck."

Locked her long-legged braces, put their feet on his, and they were just dancing all over the floor. I mean it was really fun in areas. Of course, it's painful. You know that. The therapy was very painful 'cause you're like ripping shredded threads of muscle apart that were what's left 'cause they bind up and tighten up. Then you got to tear them all apart again. It's very pain...

Rose

Did they use heat treatment and stuff too?

Hill

That's the only thing they did. Was the old-timey heat cloths.

Rose

So did you wind up staying in touch with some of the people you met?

Hill

Uh yeah. For a while. But I'm the only one left now. There's one, not the person, but Clyde Lustey, his wife Doris, they were very young. Much younger than me. But they married later on. And he passed away couple of years ago. I think I'm the only one left...I think. Who knows.

Rose

I'm curious 'cause we've run into Joseph Roe and Sam Province both were down in Houston at the Pulmonary Polio facility there. It seems like there some was kind of some networking family facility that helped drive them.

Hill

Sam was a friend of mine. Yes, I knew him.

Rose

Did you know Joe as well?

Hill

No.

Rose

He still has his iron lung.

Hill

I knew of him. I didn't know him.

Rose

We actually saw his iron lung.

Hill

Did you?

Rose

He still sleeps in it.

Hill

Do you know Paul Alexander?

Rose

No.

Hill

Well Paul's a fabulous person too. And Paul is still in his iron lung.

Rose

And where was he?

Hill

And he's a lawyer. He's in Dallas, but he's cool.

Rose

Okay.

Hill

He did go to the University of Texas and he did graduate, which I do not like him for. (Laughter)

Rose

He went to UT Austin?

Hill

Uh-hmm. And he graduated there. That's where he got his law degree.

Rose

Do you know about when he graduated?

Hill

Uhm-nm. I don't know.

Rose

Okay. So we've just been curious about the fact that Ed Roberts lived in California, Sam Province, Joe Roe, and you knew a lot of people who had pulmonary polio who wind up becoming activists.

Hill

What amazes me is that we're still here a lot of us. And we had it so much more severely than others. Why is that? And I thought about it. I know my parents were extremely cautious with me in everything I did. They didn't want me to get sick 'cause of the breathing issue. Because when you can't breathe, you get a little snuffle. You can choke to death trying to cough. And I know Paul said his parents were very watchful and careful about everything. But I thought about that and thought, "Why is it that? That we're here and the others that didn't have it nearly as severely, they're gone?"

Rose

So why are so many of you activists?

Hill

Activist, yes. Paul is....

Rose

Because it is notable that many people...

Hill

Uh-huh, I know. Paul is too. He was very big in what's that club? Not the Moose Club.

Rose

Elk's Lodge?

Hill

Something Lodge.

Rose

One of the...

Hill

Yeah, they raised a lot of money because they did a lot of good work for like my parents. My dad was a Shriner and my mother, oh my goodness. She had sewing things at my house...our house. And make those little blankets for the children's hospital, Shriner's Childrens Hospital. I guess...I don't know. I think it comes naturally to us. Probably to Sam and there are others too. Probably think there's one that was in Houston. Can't remember his name.

Rose

You can always e-mail us...

Hill

Dr. Jackie. You know, Dr. Jackson in Houston. He's not a disabled person, but he used to be the person that traveled

the areas for about iron lungs. I mean, Sam knew him, Paul knows him. He's retired now, but...

Rose

So he's basically an iron lung provider?

Hill

Yes. He was head of the place in Houston that provided all of the iron lungs.

Rose

I heard that it's now here.

Hill

Uh-mm. Yeah, but that was the only one there who used to. It had all of the equipment. Respiratory wise.

Rose

And what was his first name? Oh, but you said something...

Hill

I don't know. We just always called him Dr. Jackson.

Rose

Dr. Jackson?

Hill

Yeah. And we all know him because they came to your house, changed your iron lung, everything. Every three months.

Rose

Wow. So who wind up paying for all of this care...?

Hill

<topic>Returning home</topic>

Well, the parents did the care. Like I say, Bertha was with us. The black lady I told you about. And I was not the baby. That was my...I was not the baby. And she...and I called her "Momma Bertha" because she was so good. And oh my goodness, if she thought they would happen me, she would die. My mother had my mattress renovated while I was out for the day. And she got somebody to bring her to work from her house. And my bed had no mattress, no nothing. And mother and I gone to the store. And we came in and Bertha was sitting on my stool on my vanity in my room just crying, "Oh no, oh no."

And we went and she jumped up, "I thought something done happened to you! I thought you done died. Where's your mattress?"

And I had good care. She was wonderful. And I think somebody took care of Paul. His mom. My mom. We all worked together. You know, we just took care of our own.

Rose

How about getting an iron lung and what kind of wheelchair?

Hill

From the iron lung to the wheelchair?

Rose

Say what?

Hill

From an iron lung to a wheelchair? Well, I went from the iron lung to a bed. I still couldn't get up for a while...rocking bed. I still got it in my room.

Rose

What's a rocking bed?

Hill

Well, it was designed during WWII by Colonel Burns to actually do circulation for wounded soldiers before they could get to them. And it was to keep them going until they could get their turn for care. And they accidentally discovered that it was a respiratory aid because when...it worked like a see-saw. And then when the head went down, the body weight pushed the entire lungs, but when the head went up, it stretched your rib cavity cage, stretched the diaphragm, and it helped you inhale. And then they just learned accidentally that it was a good respiratory aid.

And then they developed it according to design where you can set it through the breath rate, how deep it needed to go

down the head, how deep the foot, and put it on a bar. And that's how they developed the Respire Head. I went from the iron lung to the rocking bed.

Rose

So when was that?

Hill

1951 I think.

Rose

So when about when you came home? So did you have an iron lung in your house?

Hill

Um-nmh. Came home to the rocking bed.

Rose

And then when did you get your first wheelchair?

Hill

It was probably...well the first year, it was the old wooden chair where I could lay down 'cause I couldn't even sit up. I've got pictures of that somewhere. I'm trying to remember when that was. Not too long after I came home. It was the old wooden you that you could lay in way back. And it was probably about the same time, maybe about six months ago after I came home.

Rose

Wow. Do you know where your parents got it?

Hill

I have no idea.

Rose

What about your first power chair?

Hill

Oh my.... that was after I married. My husband said the worst things that's ever happened was that he didn't know where I was anymore. (Laughter) But it was really neat. But it's been like...oh my. Maybe in the '70s. Late '70s.

Rose

Well, so what about like school and....

Hill

<topic>High school education</topic>

I was in high school. My first year of high school, I had polio as a sophomore. I was...what do you call it? I wasn't a majorette. My girlfriend Margaret, ended up being my sister-in-law, was the majorette. And I was training under her. And I filled in.

So the instrument I played in the band was like a skill because you have to play something that you are not needed to be a majorette. I really wasn't needed anywhere. I wasn't in majorettes yet. My lighting skills wasn't that needed. But I was there. And I was a part of a lot of activities. But I was a mid-semester person. In other words, I went from junior high mid-term to high school. So it's kind of off-beat there. But I was fourteen and after that first., it had I started to feel ill in June. That was when I had polio. Just before school was out. The school was...I went to Northside High School and my first thought when I woke up in the iron lung was, "Mother, we need to get me out of here because high school starts and I got to get back to school. And I have to go early to practice for band and majorette stuff."

'Cause I just thought I was sick. You can't see yourself in an iron lung. But I thought they had me sedated or something like it. I couldn't move. I said, "They need to do something about me being here. Because I got to get out of here."

And so they tried to explain to me. The doctor who told me said, "I don't think May will be going back to school just yet."

But when I did go back, after I was home, the high school here was not here. But teachers from this school district came to my home and tutored me. And then I went through Northside. Mr. Sellers was the school principal and Ms. Hooper was the girls' counselor. They helped me, the teachers from there. Then there was the things I had to go over and be present for, like if you were supposed to speak or say something or speech or whatever. They'd come and get me and help me go. And it was upstairs. That was a wonderful treat because the football boys would carry my chair up the stairs. So I kind of liked that, but that's just kind of the way we did it. We just, whatever you have to do, you have to do. And then I graduated from Northside in 1954. And I was a National Honors Society graduate. Still, I had scholarship opportunities. Still didn't get into college. Too many steps. So, like I've said, that's been my heart's desire and I haven't made it yet. I'm 82. My grandson, he's so cute. He works like a Trojan and goes to school online 'cause he wants his college too. And I used to tease him and say, "Well I'm 71 and still I haven't got my college education." And now he's starting, "Well, now I'm 23 and I haven't got my education yet." But he's trying to work, trying to do it all. And he's doing good. He's got straight As. So he's doing good. Any time I try to complain about my job, my work, anything, or anything where going forward was going to be rough, all you heard was, "If President Roosevelt could run a country, why do you think you can't do this little thing?"

I hated that. We had no excuse.

Rose

That's really interesting because there's been a lot of scholarship on Roosevelt. Read a book written by polio-survivor Hugh Gallagher in the '80s called *FDR's Splendid Deception*. A lot of people, sort of the general population, apparently thought that he didn't have much paralysis at all. They kind of knew he had polio, but...

Hill

But he did.

Rose

Yeah was it... 'cause your dad was a lot more clued in than most people.

Hill

Yeah, oh my dad was being a lawyer I guess. He was in the firm and was in politics a lot.

Rose

So they knew that behind the scenes, it was a lot of management of access.

Hill

Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Rose

Did you go to Warm Springs?

Hill

<topic>Warm Springs</topic>

Yes, I was there a year...because of FDR and my dad. No, when I got to the point for good rehab, I went from high school. I told my parents, "I think you just want to get rid of me."

Because they loved me dearly. They would do anything for me. But I went from high school straight to Warm Springs. And it was one of the hardest things I ever did because I went all by myself. My mother went with me, but she had to turn around and come home 'cause they didn't have the money to stay. And, number one, I actually in rehab then, they didn't want anybody to be around. They didn't want parents, anybody really. So either I was in Georgia and everybody here. And my dad put me on the airplane and I started to cry and said, "Dad, please don't make me do this. Please don't send me away."

And he just reached over and hugged me and patted me and kissed my forehead and said, "Honey, I really believe this

is going to be the best thing you've ever did."

And it was. 'Cause I had to take care of myself. I had to be at that conference table with all the doctors, therapists. When the time came, for discussions on my own. I mean, it was, it was. I learned really how to be independent.

Rose

What kind of skills did you learn there? Besides...

Hill

I learned management. You've got to learn to manage everything. And at nineteen, you had that dropped on you completely all of a sudden. But I did. I learned how to manage everything. All my business, my money. My parents sent me so much each month that they could afford and I learned how to manage everything: my care, limitations...that's what they teach you...You have to know your limitations to go forward on your abilities. When you know your limitations, then you can just grow your abilities every way you can. And I think that was one of the greatest things they taught me. Just do what you can do, but do it good.

Rose

What about like physical skills...?

Hill

Oh we had a lot of physical therapy and the day of the standing court, when they had me in long leg races. I can't use my arms. They put some splint-type crutches things and I fell backward on the standing court out there and hurt my head. I got a little concussion, but that was one of those conference table things. Then we have the meeting and we sit there and the main doctor said, "Dorothy, we need to talk about the standing thing."

Of course my parents' dream in my mind was I was going there in a wheelchair, but when I came home, I'd be walking. And we had this conference and he said, "I think you need to understand that whatever you planned to do with your life, what direction you planned to go, we need to start now."

Thinking about that. We need to think about it from a wheelchair point-of-view. And so that was that was that. I said, "Well, Mother and Dad aren't going to like this." (Laughter)

Rose

What was that like for you?

Hill

I think that was just my outcome 'cause I was very disappointed. But it's one of those things that you accept or don't accept. And I just accepted it so that started to teach me little things that you know, like sewing. Using a sewing machine. To learn mobility, because you can get hurt with those thin needles. You can't use your arm here. You can use these fingers, but you can't use the hand. But if you lay this here, just teaching me how to manipulate papers and

anything that might be in front of me that you can't reach out. It's got to be right here and just for function, daily function.

Rose

Have you learned some of that stuff before, like when you were in high school? How were you writing?

Hill

My dad made me a big board and put it on my chair and it slid on with clamps. And I had my books there and I'd study them, write, do all my work.

Rose

And you said you can use your legs some...?

Hill

Yeah, I can a little bit. Little bits here or there, which is nice.

Rose

So what was like the community at Warm Springs?

Hill

It was fun. At first, maybe three weeks, I thought I was going to die. But after about three weeks, I met a lot of people, had a great roommate, we became good friends. Her name was Sarah N. Arnold. Her boyfriend at that time was Bob. And Bob was in college to become a doctor. And Sarah was my roommate. And it was Sarah N. Maxwell was her maiden name. So we called her Sam. S-A-M. (Laughter) But Sam, we became very good friends. And she was taken to the hospital with polio on her wedding day. They froze the cake. They froze everything. And one year later, they had the wedding.

But...and he did become a doctor. Became an administrator at one of the hospitals. But it was fun. We had fun. And of course we were always...it's kind of like a college campus. And we did things we shouldn't do to get away stuff. We'd sneak out at night. Bob would bring a fan and we would go over...drive over into Atlanta to look around and get in after hours and get in trouble...after curfew. We were just kids. But it was okay. It's kind of like a college campus.

Rose

What was...like what did they teach you about disability, navigating the world outside?

Hill

Well, to be honest with you, the thing...the neatest thing they taught me was how to go to the bathroom. That may sound weird, but we are totally paralyzed. The main thing you think about is parents lifting you as you get older and bigger and you not wanting to hurt them. And so the method they taught to go to the bathroom. I was just amazed and my parents when I came home. They thought it was just wonderful, but they taught you the sliding, 'cause I can't even transfer and Mother has had to pick me up. So they teach you, whether girl or boy, you sit in front of the commode...facing the commode...And you had the commode modified. Being the same height as your wheelchair. And then all they do is slide you on there. After you're on there, they help you with your clothing. Kept bars on both sides that are functional for you to either lean on the bar, lean this way or that way, and where they can handle your clothes. And then same thing for coming...get your clothes straightened up. Just grab the belt...you know where they put the gate belt. They're gonna put you back in the chair. No lifting on Mom, which is good and I always thought that it was just the most wonderful thing because it saved my mom.

Rose

Yeah, that's pretty impressive.

Hill

It was. That's very important.

Rose

Yeah. Makes it a lot more feasible.

Hill

Um-hum. So we still do that here today.

Rose

What about how encountering discrimination or access issues? What did Warm Springs? How did they approach that?

Hill

They just taught me never to be bothered about asking for help. Oh, never let that bother you. And that never did and I never, after I came home, after I went to work, the building right there. It didn't have doors for handicapped people. But I never, I don't think encountered one time. I remember that I said, "Would you please help me with this door?" or "Would you please open the door for me?" I was ever not responded to in a good way. I can't remember a time.

Rose

Wow, and did that building help direct doors, like were there any stairs?

Hill

The door went straight to the elevator. She has a schedule too. Would it be a problem to make it another time?

Rose

No.

Hill

<topic>Faith</topic>

Are you sure? Things came from ministry like I told you. And I really became a Christian when I was a child. I wanted the Lord in my life. But when I had polio is when I really became to know the Lord because the iron lung next to me...it was an iron lung.... Remember it was the two rows of iron lungs on both sides of a big, long room. Like eight to twelve iron lungs. And the one next to me, they brought a young woman in, put her in that iron lung, and her name was Peggy Maxon. And Peggy and her husband Jack were missionaries in Africa. And she was pregnant when she got polio in Africa. And immediately, she wanted to get here because her family is here. And so they started in the United States, had to stop in Britain for her to have this baby, and then she had the baby in Britain. And then brought to the United States and placed her in the iron lung next to me. And I really didn't not know the closeness that you can have with your Father in Heaven until Jack and Peggy because I remember that every day and many times. And very quietly, other than the iron lung. They would pray together. You know, it was the first time I really saw what they call that sweet, sweet Spirit between people. And that's what it was. And it was so sweet and so loving as I watched them every day, it just affected me. And I was...felt differently after that. When I was approached by Ronald about this, but Elizabeth said, "Okay, we'll do it." Then he called me and said, "Would you help me?"

And I said, "Yeah, I think I'd like to do that."

So, but that's really where it all started. My desire to give back, give back.

Rose

I think I have something I want to ask you about. What kind of expectations for your adult life did the hospital or Warm Springs or your parents have? How did you adjust?

Hill

Like I say, I think my greatest disappointment was I had these thoughts and ideas about going to college. I worked hard through high school. Like I said, I graduated with the top ten and I had scholarship. I wanted to go to college, I wanted to be a lawyer, and my parents would have loved that too, especially my dad. And it's just like things just kept sending me in other directions. And I always learned that when you are sent down another pathway, you just have to make the best of the pathway. So that's what I did all through the years.

Rose

What about...?

Hill

And I really had a good career. I ended up, the last six years of my working days, the elected president of my industry.

Rose

What was the association you were president of?

Hill

The Fort Worth–Dallas Private Employee Association.

Rose

What about...getting married? Not...

Hill

<topic>Family</topic>

That wasn't my plan either. And I let him know that right away. (Laughter) No, he was the sweetest thing and we were just very good friends. We liked musicals. We liked musicals.

Rose

How'd you meet?

Hill

I was the president, but we used to call it the Fort Worth Handicapped Association. It was a little thing we organized. It was at the Botanical Garden. We met in a room where they could come and just social outlet. We played dominos, games, and we had punch and cookies.

Rose

When did you start?

Hill

Well Ronald and I started that too. I don't remember when, but it was just one of those things where it's something you would like to do and there's no way that you can do it. And you knew others who would like to do it. And there's just no way to do it. So why don't we just find a way to do it. And that's what we did. And then we started to organize a little group. We organized a little program and a little club we called the Fort Worth Handicapped Club.

Rose

Do you remember about how many people were in that club?

Hill

Probably twenty or thirty.

Rose

Fifties and sixties?

Hill

Um-hmm. And anyways, that's where I met Louis. My husband and Charles, his best friend in high school, was a cerebral palsy victim. And Charles came to meetings. And Louis, they lived...they were neighbors. And Louis was going out one evening and saw Charles by his car with a hood up. And he stopped and said, "Sir, what's wrong. Do you need help?"

"I don't know. This thing won't start."

And he said, "Where you going?"

"I want to go to this meeting."

And he told them about it. And he couldn't start the car and said, "Well come on. I'll take you."

So that's how I met him. He brought Charles.

Rose

And you haven't planned on getting married at all?

Hill

Oh no.

Rose

Was that something you were told to expect?

Hill

I was still thinking that I need to go to school. I forever thought I need to go to school. But now, I hadn't thought about it. I really thought it would probably not be a part of my life. So I didn't think about it.

Rose

How come?

Hill

I don't know, except I was busy. And I thought...it really didn't enter my mind. I had lots of boyfriends before I had polio. And my mother used to write my love letters while I was in my iron lung. (Laughter) All the guys I was involved with. And my mother was so funny. And she said, "You really want to tell him that?"

"Yeah." (Laughter)

She was wonderful, my mom was.

Rose

So when did you get married?

Hill

We dated about a good...forever. 'Cause I never even thought that would be a part of me. But we married in 1970. And then we married at the chapel because Louis became involved in that work too after we met. And he worked. He loved the kids. I did all the children ministries. And I loved the children ministries. And he worked with it too with me.

Rose

And so you weren't expecting to have kids either?

Hill

No, but we had her. We went we adopted her. And she's wonderful too.

Rose

What's her name?

Hill

Judy. Judith Dina Louise...Judith Dina Louise Hill. All those names. 'Cause she wanted to keep one of her original names. But we asked her, "Do you want this name?"

And Louis's name is Louis Edward Hill. So I thought...she thought, "Maybe I'll be Louise Dina."

I said, "You really want that?"

So she ended wanting Judith Dina Louise Hill because Judy was her original name. Judith.

Rose

How old was she?

Hill

Three. We kept her for a long time before we adopted her.

Rose

Foster care?

Hill

No. Louis's mother was her babysitter and the mom was...I don't know. I really can't say. I didn't know the lady. But she would leave Judy and was supposed to be back by ten o'clock. And she made it back three days later. So what happened was Mom would need to do things, shop or whatever. And she'd go say, "Could y'all watch her while I do this with her?"

So we're really kind of babysitters. And then some things happened with the mom. When they did, we went to court just for temporary custody to take care of here. And we got it. And later we just adopted her.

She's a neat kid. Smart Aleck. She's too smart. She really is. She can do anything. She can. Creative. Oh my...she can take a house apart and put it back together and make it look like a mansion. She put a transmission in her own car. I mean Louis was trying to make a boy out of her. And I put ruffles all over her to dress her. Poor child. But she can...she can do...I don't care if it's flower arranging, decorating a house, putting a transmission in the car. She can do it. She can. She's a mess!

Rose

And she is...she had some grandkids?

Hill

Um-hmm. This is one of them. And then the other grandson I told you about that's working and going to school. That's her two boys.

Rose

That's great.