

Gene Rodgers

Advocate, Adventurer, and TV Show Producer

*Interview conducted by
Trevor Engel & Sarah Rose
July 17, 2017 in Austin, Texas*

Disability Studies Minor
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Biography

Gene Rodgers was born May 6th 1955 to Robert and Mary Rodgers in Cleveland, Ohio. Rodgers grew up with two other brothers and four sisters. Since his early days, Gene showed to have an adventurous spirit; he loved going camping, fishing, hiking, and exploring around.

As a junior in high school he decided to go on a trip with the class. During the trip Gene, went hiking by himself and he does not exactly remember the details of how it happened, but he fell off a cliff. He was rescued by a mountain climber and he was transported to the nearest hospital. Gene suffered a spinal cord injury, that led him to become a C5 quadriplegic.

He attended Kent State University, where he earned his bachelors in general science in 1977. He later moved around to different states in which he worked. Gene has dedicated his life to travel around and explore every possible country. He has visited over 40 countries, and currently lives in Austin, Texas where he is the co-director of the Gene and Dave show.

Topics discussed

- Contact information.
 - Background information.
 - Acquiring his disability and the process of rehabilitation.
 - Community at Highland View Rehab Center.
 - Feelings towards visitors.
 - Impact of doctor's decision towards the electric chair.
 - Life plans before the accident.
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 - Participation at NASA.
 - Going against the law and traveling to Cuba.
 - Other traveling experiences.
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- Paragliding in Switzerland.
 - Bridge swinging in South Africa.
 - Meeting other people with disabilities.
 - Assistive technology when traveling.
 - More activism.
 - Early ADAPT movements.
 - Shell Trap and ADAPT.
 - Issues with Adobe.
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Rodgers:

>topic< Contact information>/topic<.

My name is Gene Rodgers.

G-E-N-E middle initial R, last name Rodgers R-O-D-G-E-R-S. For contact information I'm at 1941 Gaston Place Dr. Apt 122 Austin TX 78723. Phone number 512-929-7776, my email is usageno@gmail.com. I also have a couple of websites: www.genosplace.org which is much more less my life history since I became disabled and then there is the www.GeneandDaveshow.com which is all one word. Which is an 8-9-year TV show with my cohost Dave Dauber... for the web... captioned for your benefit.

Interviewer:

This is Sarah Rose and Trevor Engel interviewing Mr. Rogers on July 17, 2017.

So let's start with your childhood. Where were you born? Both names of your parents?

Rodgers:

>topic< Background information>/topic<.

I was born May 6, 1955. In Cleveland, Ohio which is really important because living in Cleveland shaped the rest of my life.

Interviewer:

How so?

Rodgers:

>topic< Acquiring his disability and the process of rehabilitation>/topic<.

I was born into a blue collar family and we had the values of hard work pranced upon us, and my parents always said I could have anything I wanted as I willing to get a job and work for it. I grew up mostly as a normal child, then shortly after my 17th birthday; June 2nd 1972; I was hiking with some friends at Whipps Ledges in Northern Ohio and we were having an end of junior year of high school celebration; just a picnic and I strayed away from the picnic to do some hiking and next thing I know is two weeks later and I'm in a hospital completely paralyzed. I have no memory of how it happened, nobody saw it happened, although somebody at the bottom of the cliff saw me as I was falling.

Nobody saw me near the edge, but they saw me falling and that person was a professional climber; they did what they could to stabilize me; of course being 1972 in a big metropolitan park... to try and get a hold of an ambulance was really difficult; to try get them to a particular place was even more difficult. So by the time I got to the hospital, my spinal cord had already swollen; damage was done, two weeks later I wake up at Cleveland Metropolitan Hospital.

I had holes drilled in my head to hold these metal tongs for something they call circle electric bed, which is a bed were they laid me down and strapped me to it, and every two hours they would rotate this bed; head over heels fashion. Imagine, a wheel standing on its edge, and just turning on its horizontal axis and that was me every two hours. The reason they did that is, it would add constant pressure to certain body parts and caused pressure sores. I was there for about a month, I had last rates like three times. When they drilled the holes in my head, they didn't do so much because they wanted me to look good on the casket.

>topic< Feelings towards visitors>/topic<.

I found out about all this later, but it was touch and go for a while. My friends visited me from high school, but it was an awkward experience, me being in this bed; sometimes when they came I was face down, sometimes face up. When I was face down, some of my friends would lay on the floor and be with me, and occasionally the blood would drip form the tongs that were on my skull, which made it a little bit awkward otherwise they were able to visit. Then after... I don't know perhaps it was two weeks after when they decided to do surgery; they did an anterior fusion where they took bone from my hip put it in my neck, from the front of my neck and went and fused the vertebrae.... 4th, 5th, and 6th vertebrae so they wouldn't move a cause damage. essentially I'm a C5 quadriplegic... C5 vertebrae so that also defines the level of functioning, so I'm paralyzed from my shoulders down; I can move my arms around but not so much can't use my hands at all, I can't use my fingers at all, but I can move my arms around enough that I can use a wheelchair.

After being in the hospital for 4 weeks, I was moved to a rehabilitation center 'Highland View Rehabilitation Center' which was just outside of Cleveland and this is where my education started. I think of disability studies; they put me in Highland View because it was an old tuberculosis center but no longer needed for that; it was being transformed into a rehabilitation center, it was quite old. They had radiators exposed to the rooms, some of the windows didn't shut all the way; and the winters in Cleveland temperatures can get subfreezing, but definitely subfreezing, sometimes subzero. The room could get so cold around the windows, I was in a floor of spinal cord injuries; folks almost all male and majority of them black, the majority of them being a result of gunshot wounds. I remember one or perhaps two white women that were in that floor one time but most part it was all guys. Many of them coming from a rough background, same as the kinds of friends that would come visit them (interviewer interrupts).

Interviewer:

What was the community like in that facility?

Rodgers:

The community...

Interviewer:

Yeah, like the interactions between all of you.

Rodgers:

>topic< Community at Highland View Rehab Center>/topic<.

I was roommates with Frank and Bill; it was really us in one room. It was really tight; you can imagine each of us requiring hospital beds and wheelchairs; it was pretty tight. Bill was going blind from retinitis pigmentosa and he was C4 quad; so he had less movement than me, he could barely move his shoulders. At one point, they were trying to teach him braille with his nose; because they knew he was going blind, that turned out not being so successful. Early on I remember just coming there, being in bed for a number of weeks and they would put me on a striker frame; which I still had tongs on my head for four weeks, strained and strapped to the bed only one I got turned it was from side to side.

Laying down, turning left to right and again they did this several hours and I still didn't grasp my situation. After a number of weeks, they got me up in a wheelchair; slowly because I hadn't been really been pumping blood through my body so if I tried get up... sit up directly I would've fainted. So they gradually got me up in a seating position and I remember moving around and seeing myself in the mirror. I was really astonished because I had lost quite a bit of weight, I was getting acne, my beard was starting to come in... but I didn't recognize the person that was in the mirror. I pretty much kept myself at that time, I was in a room all by myself initially as time went on, they moved me to another room; I think there was only one gentleman there... a black gentleman; I remember one time going to the room and he had his kid going through my drawers, I just thought that is so wrong; I didn't know what to do... I learned that when people get desperate they'll do anything.

I learned to start being careful with things. I remember one day a paraplegic man, stole the medicine cart took it to the elevator... the medicine cart is probably two by three foot, and stands by four-foot high and the nurse puts on it all the medicine she needs to take for a wing; to give out to all the patients, so somebody got a hold of it and... they weren't very happy about that.

Interviewer:

He had a good time?

Rodgers:

Did I have a good time?

Interviewer:

Did he have a good time?

Rodgers:

>topic< Impact of doctor's decision towards the electric chair>/topic<.

I don't think so... I think he was angry and he just needed something to do. and I remember that I was there, five months; and they got me my personal wheelchair. They actually got me two; a manual wheelchair and an electrical wheelchair. I tried to roll the manual chair from my floor to where PT and OT was every day; and I would sweat up my whole upper body it would just be drenched and it would take

me over an hour to go that short distance; it was good exercise. I got pretty mad when the doctor decided; that I should go and use my electric chair, and I'm not sure why he did that; here I was a 17 year with tremendous amount of energy, and the only way of using that energy was with my electric chair and there was nowhere to go really, you were really in the middle of nowhere, so I just kept roaming halls. Which is was really drag, I would never forgive that doctor... that bastard.

Interviewer:

What were you planning; in regards to high school... before the accident?

Rodgers:

>topic< Life plans before the accident>/topic<.

When I was a junior in high school; my life was pretty mapped out. Even though I was taking college prep in high school, I planned after graduation to serve in the military for one term and then to do home study in Alaska; I already had the papers for home studying I was just waiting to be 18 to submit them. I could start the property and I could start the property and prove on while I was in the military and when I got out, I would have whatever benefits were available from the military and I had a few bucks saved up to live on the Alaskan wilderness. I planned to live the rest of my life alone and when I became totally disabled, I knew that I couldn't live a day without interacting with someone, so it was a total change for me.

Interviewer:

Wow. What got you interested in living in Alaska?

Rodgers:

>topic< Interest and love for nature>/topic<.

Growing up, my father liked camping so he would take us camping; taught us fishing, he wasn't really much of a hunter, but had us join the south huguss sportsman association *** rectify 18.44-46. Which is comprised of fisherman and hunters. We would... my brother mike and I we, both had bows, we would go out to the archery range, we practiced every weekend. I eventually got a shotgun, I also bought a rowboat with one engine; we would go out fishing at whatever lake we could; whenever we could get my father to drive us out there; we started young and we really enjoyed it. I remember I was going to go camping with some friends one time; and I got to the campsite as early as I could; so I went ahead of them. I used to go camping alone... I loved being alone, so from there I started thinking about home study in Alaska; I started getting all sorts of books, papers on it and I was hooked.

Interviewer:

So that we have them, we want to make sure; what are your parents' names?

Rodgers:

>topic< Background information on parents and siblings>/topic<.

My father was Robert William Rodgers a WWII veteran sergeant; he passed away in 1995 of cancer, perhaps at the age of 58. My mother Mary Rodgers, remains in Cadbury... she's still alive she's 90 years old.

Interviewer:

What's her first name?

Rodgers:

Mary.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Rodgers:

Lives on assisted living program in Columbus Ohio. I have two brothers and four sisters; I'm the second oldest in the family, I have an older brother Bill and a younger brother Mike and Mindy, Pamela, Robert and Ron. And if you subscribe to Adlerian psychology you would know that the second ordinal in the family constellation is a bit rebel; that's what I am... that's why I think I joined the civil rights. I spent one month in the hospital and eleven in rehab, not knowing what to do; but I knew that I needed some kind of edge; and I knew education was the way to go. So I talked to one of the counselors and highland view hospital and he said, "you know there are a lot of guys that are going to Kent State" which is in Kent Ohio, which is just outside of Cleveland and I said, "Well alright sign me up!" so I got enrolled in school....

Interviewer:

And what year was that?

Rodgers:

>topic< Pursuing higher education at Kent State>/topic<.

That was Fall 1973, and they had a really neat program at Kent State they matched up people who needed money or wanted to work study or wanted to work as attendants; just to pay their way to school. And I was lucky and got myself pretty good attendants that way, my attendant and I we were both in a dorm; I'm going to say maybe... 20 foot by 16 foot ... I don't know how accurate that is, but they usually had two bunk beds in there and two desks. We rearranged it because I needed a bigger bed; so we were in there pretty tight and to use bathroom facilities, I had to go down the hall. They had an accessible bathroom in 1973 that was pretty amazing.

Interviewer:

Do you know how the accessible bathroom came about?

Rodgers:

No, I don't know how it got to be accessible; apparently it had been for a few years before I got there.

Interviewer:

So there were a lot of people already on campus or a fair number?

Rodgers:

>topic< Disability Experience at Kent State>/topic<.

Yeah, there were a fair number of people with disabilities on campus. My neighbor next door was Bill Schouls; he and I end up doing a lot of traveling together. He was a quadriplegic as a result of breaking his neck; wrestling in school, I think that at the age of 16 perhaps, maybe 15. And then there were another couple of guys down the hall, that had disabilities, that were on wheelchairs. Gary was perhaps a low... C7 quadriplegic meaning he barely could use his fingers; he was on a motorized wheelchair and then there was another guy who was a hemiplegic as a result of an injury during the Vietnam war.

Interviewer:

Where there any other people with disabilities besides mobility impairments or was it largely mobility?

Rodgers:

>topic< The role of Handicap Student Services in Rodger's academic path>/topic<.

There was ... I think they called it handicap student services office on campus; it served a number of students with a wide range of disabilities but in our particular floor... dorm I don't really remember perhaps 4 of us mobility impaired and of course there were other people... blind students, deaf students, representing other disabilities. The handicap student services office was really important to me; there were times let's say, I was in English classes where I was assigned to write a paper; not being able to write, I would dictate it to a tape recorder, and somebody at the handicap student services office would transcribe it for me and I would go ahead and turn it in.

My academic career continued I started taking classes that included calculus and physics and although early perhaps earlier science classes such as biology I could take them.... I could take the test with a proctor and I could just tell that person the answers, they would write in, and they would do that; but when I started taking calculus, physics and some chemistry courses the people from handicap student services office weren't acquaint with that; so I started taking tests with the secretaries of those specific departments. That way if I wrote a mathematical equation; the secretary was already familiar with that nomenclature; and they would write it down.

Interviewer:

How did you finish high school? Cause you were a junior? Did you earn enough credits?

Rodgers:

>topic< Path to completing his high school degree >/topic<.

At the end of my junior year in high school I believe I had 17 and a half credits... and I believe I needed 18 to graduate. When I was in the rehab center; a tutor came out to tutor me English and I don't remember what else. All I remember is that I just needed half a credit to graduate although English was mandatory; and after a while my tutor noticed I wasn't into studying and he just passed me; and that's how I graduated and was able to go to college.

Interviewer:

Okay. And were you interested in school before?

Rodgers:

I like learning and I definitely like reading, I wasn't a great student... I was a good student. I was conscientious of what I was doing; and what was in my future really.

Interviewer:

What did you major in college?

Rodgers:

>topic< Choosing a major >/topic<.

So I started college majoring in chemistry; and the first quarter the elective and the lab; I think perhaps the first year they let me in the labs and I just observed what other students were doing and I would write my own conclusions. The following year I took organic chemistry; which is a bit more dangerous; they wouldn't let me in the labs... they said it was too dangerous. And I would have to make up my lab hours and my chemistry courses and since then we were in the quarter system instead of semesters, the first quarter I got an A on organic chemistry, second quarter I got a B without having the benefits of the labs, and on the third quarter I got a C and at that time I was just going to switch to general science.

I ended up majoring in education to teach comprehensive science and that got to be difficult too and I had to student teach. Because back in the early 70s there wasn't such thing as a personal computer, but I still had to type lesson plans, so the bureau of vocational rehabilitation of Ohio, bought me a computer... sorry bought me a type writer. I learned to put paper on a type writer by myself and I would type by putting a pencil on my mouth and typing away that, but if I made I mistake I would have to take the paper out put a new paper in, and start all over again... all this throughout I was student teaching; and I would only get three to four hours of sleep. I realized this was not going to be a vocation for me. When I did graduate with bachelors, I decided to get my master's in education in the area of rehabilitation counseling. Thinking that, that is more talking and listening and less writing.

>topic< Traveling around the United States with his friends >/topic<.

In the meantime, as I was getting my bachelors one of my dorm mates would become one of my best friends; Bruce Campbell suggested we went to Florida for spring break. I was still getting used to my new body, but I really didn't want to go home for spring break, even though we lived in a beautiful house it wasn't accessible getting in and on was very difficult. Once I got in the only place I could go... the dining room was very crowded, but I could stay in the living room; I couldn't see being stuck there, all the time.

I borrowed my father's van, and my mother told my father, that if he didn't let me borrow his van; she was going to divorce him... she was very protective my father let me borrow it anyway. We went to Florida for spring break and we had a great time and I realized we would have to do it again; I ended up buying my own van. My friends from high school had put on a play as a fundraiser "Bach to Rock" because I was in the theatre group in high school, so they performed this play had a fundraiser and with that money I was able to buy a van. And I started traveling a lot, by vehicle... Bruce always had plenty of ideas where to go... we went to Canada, Toronto, part of the eastern part of the country. during the summer my friends Bruce, Dwayne, Nate Nicklovich, and my friend Bill Schouls who was a quadriplegic; we would travel the western states; over a one-month period we did a lot of traveling; and this van didn't have a/c and we ended up going down to Mexico, I thought one night out; it was really horrible... the heat was so oppressive.

We got out of there and I remember going to Quaker lake in Oregon, and coming back through we went to the Grand Canyon ... we met there... no I think we met... yeah, yeah, at the Grand Canyon with the bus drivers of Kent State; and he was telling us about Las Vegas and after what he told us we just had to go. I remember we ran out of money or really low on money... somewhere in Idaho we stopped to eat at a little café and all we could afford for the four of us was a bowl of chili and someone saw that and they bought us each a bowl.

Interviewer:

How were you doing with accessibility on this trip?

Rodgers:

>topic< Accessibility in the late 60s early 70s >/topic<.

Laughs. Bill and I ... there was no lift in my van, so Bill and I we were both on manual chairs; we had to get lifted in and out of the van every day; this was before the rehabilitation act of 1973, long before the ADA. Really there wasn't any access if we wanted to go anywhere... we would have to get up the curve; pop up the wheels, lift back in the back; steps it would take two people to get us up and down the steps. We didn't really think about access because nothing was accessible... we just wanted to be roaming around and that is what we did.

Interviewer:

Wow. How did going to Kent State and being around other students with disabilities, having attendants how did your identity start changing from when you were in the rehab center to being in college?

Rodgers:

>topic< Disability and personal identity transition and shaping >/topic<.

When I got to college I was still trying to get used to my body and trying to figure out ways to adapt to be part with other students. To write I had to wear a big writing brace... I think they call it a prosthetic... well I don't remember what they called it. It was big it was metal and it secured all my fingers together it went halfway up my forearm it was heavy but I was able to write when I did physics and calculus homework. I would have my attendant put it on me and I would stay up all night doing homework; had a little coffee pot in my dorm room and kept tea there; some students would pop up say hello and that's how we got to know each other. My friend Bill Schouls who was also a quadriplegic; he was a bright guy. We only had one class together; he seemed to sleep through it, and I had to record the lecture go through it, read the book over and over and we both got A's; only that I had to work so much harder. I realized that in a lot of courses I was going to have to work a lot harder than other people; and I had to find ways to do that. It seemed like I needed help with all my tests; it took someone to write down the answers and I realized that could be helpful to me; knowing that I was going to need someone to help me all the time.

After my bachelors... well... while still an undergrad; as a group we were traveling every break somewhere between Canada and Mexico, through the states, central America; all through central America down to Guatemala. We had an idea that we could drive from Cleveland to Bogotá Colombia... well to eastern panama and we could take a ferry over to Bogotá and so we tried three different years. The first year with the van we had an accident we totaled in Mexico; the second year we were also getting on an accident, but we got to panama... we were a lot closer to Bogotá, but because we had to stop for repairs, we didn't have time to look for a ferry boat that would take us to Colombia... and again this long before the internet and the world wide web. No computers, so getting updated information was very difficult, so we weren't even sure there was a way to get to Colombia.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Rodgers:

The third year we tried, got in an accident in Kentucky and a couple of people decided that we were bad luck. Bruce it didn't take so much convincing on his part he suggested that Me, my friend Gaston and Mariam we just went to Europe for the break, we still had time... we had our passports so we went to Europe; started in England and went down to ... spent some time on the trains went to Spain and France down to Morocco; did some camping on the west part of Morocco.

Interviewer:

Oh wow. I did have a question about Kent state, how were the classrooms and professors like in terms of access and accommodations?

Rodgers:

>topic< Accessibility and Accommodations at Kent State>/topic<.

At Kent state it was like most schools; it was still an evolutionary process of becoming accessible. Both physically accessible and programmatically, Kent state was still in the rust belt... we had quite the snow during the winter; and they realized they had to transport people on wheelchairs from one campus to the other, so they had basic vans, ramps and they would come around at the pre- scheduled times to pick people and take them to their classes. In the summer time when there was no snow; we really didn't need the vans, so it was a whole lot easier to get around; there were elevators everywhere and in occasion we would want to sign up for a class that was on the second floor and the building didn't have an elevator, so we would ask if they could move it to the first floor.... which they would do so. So that worked out well, the other thing I realized pretty quick was... I needed to get notes for every class; so I would ask the professors if I could get a copy of their note.

And they never provided them, they would always say they got them from the top of their heads, which otherwise was not available maybe on a rare occasion and I was able to get some notes, but for the most part I was on my own. For the most part I would go up to a pretty girl in class and ask her if I could get a copy of her notes and we would go to the library; and we would Xerox her notes. But still being a quadriplegic it was hard to handle hard documents very well; it was helpful but it wasn't the solution. They were constantly evolving though... they would have section 504 of the rehab act or type of facility at the institution we were at... they were trying to make everything accessible; they wanted to make sure they would have a committee that was inclusive and representational and they went nonetheless Alaskans, Native Americans, Blacks, Orientals, Americans... I should say Caucasians they were trying to represent as many people as they can... so I guess they get points for that, still it was a long effort; we never got accessible mainline buses...

Interviewer:

In Kent state?

Rodgers:

Yeah in Kent State, at least not before the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Interviewer:

Were they trying to implement section 504 before the federal government had issued regulations in 1977?

Rodgers:

I remember them setting up a committee... I do remember when I was working on my MBD and Rehab counseling in 77' they announced it had finally passed... but I'm thinking my memory might be noted that....

Interviewer:

So you might be talking about when you were a master student?

Rodgers:

Yes.

Interviewer:

So you got you BA in 1977?

Rodgers:

Yes.

Interviewer:

And your masters?

Rodgers:

>topic< Experience as a graduate student>/topic<.

In 1977-78. I think it was 78. I went to get my masters in rehab counseling I had the impression that what they were teaching us; it wasn't the reality of the situation; and there were two professors there didn't particular care walking in the program... so they didn't give me credit for doing my internship, I went to work one summer at a camp for the deaf and blind; I don't remember the name of it, but I spent a summer there. But also a friend of mine, Mark was partially blind or legally blind... he was there; and he got credit for being there... so I never really got my masters in rehab. After that I went home, and I realized I couldn't stay in Cleveland, so I called a friend of mine... Brian Miller and asked him what he was doing in the summer and he said he was open, so the two of us hopped in my van and we went through the states again; this time I was looking for a place to settle down.

>topic< Moving out to New Mexico>/topic<.

We eventually, found a place in Albuquerque, New Mexico were a friend of mine Ann Meager was staying at, and I decided that... they had paratransit there... you would call out a day before to schedule and they would come with a van with a ramp on it; load you up and take you wherever you needed to go. Since I couldn't drive I really wanted to be there; after Brian and I finished touring the states and I went back to Cleveland... I tried to figure out how to do it... I think that a month or two later I tried to call a friend of mine; John Gurdy asked me if I could move out there; I knew my mother wouldn't allow it, so I just loaded some stuff in my van, by this time I had traveled so much in North America that she was used to me traveling, but... my electric chair and my manual chair we put that in my van lined with whatever clothes I could take, we hit the road and ended up in Albuquerque.

I was looking for an attendant and I found someone, who was not only willing to be an attendant but also share an apartment with me. In the two weeks that we were gone, I found an attendant a place to live; John moved me in there, left the van there and took a bus back to Cleveland and he got back to Cleveland, called me and said, "Geno you didn't tell your parents you were moving?" (interviewer laughs). I said, "Oh yeah, I forgot" so I called my parents and told them I had move out to New Mexico. That's when another unfortunate thing happened to me.... I met another friend of mine, David Cohen in the Vietnam era vet, and he belonged to the paralyzed veterans of America and through him... I learned about another resources, reasonable housing and just other programs; that was truly amazing... that was another big help to me.

Interviewer:

I was curious you were traveling all around the states in the 70s when it wasn't necessarily common to see people with wheelchairs on public access issues; what were the reactions like? When there were two of you?

Rodgers:

>topic< Reactions of society towards wheelchair users traveling>/topic<.

Some places... people would give us a second look... in the south where they were over combed by progress... I remember some elderly folks saying, "Look him there... he's all crippled up" or something like that but that's the way it was back then. I didn't take any offense to that, it wasn't unusual and for people to see us on wheelchairs in public, but for us to see anyone else on wheelchairs. The problem was largely because there was no accessible infrastructure; there were no ramps, there was no accessible mainline buses, just very little of accesses at all. We rarely saw anyone else on a wheelchair.

Interviewer:

What about Mexico and central America in terms of disability?

Rodgers:

>topic< Disability & Access in Latin America>/topic<.

In Mexico, I had traveled there a lot ... although I don't remember specifically seeing anybody on a wheelchair; I think their attitude is different. They knew that if they wanted to live their life they would just have to do it, no matter how inaccessible it was. Some people made their mechanisms to drive their cars, the hotels we stayed at were more accessible than the ones in the US; in terms of the shower, rather than having a bath tub it was just an open shower with a curtain around it, so I just could roll under the shower and it made it really convenient. Again not so much with the elevators, I think that if we did I would've been afraid to get out of them (interviewer laughs). We didn't see much interactions in the 70s in terms of other people with disabilities.

Interviewer:

While in New Mexico... did you get another degree there? Kind of regarding the entrepreneurship?

Rodgers:

>topic< Living in New Mexico>/topic<.

So while at ... in New Mexico... well I decided to make it my home... well I ended up getting a pressure sore which put me in the hospital. I was there in for a number of weeks... when I got out I got into a new living situation; I think it was city housing at that time, the veterans help me to... I was looking for work and I found a job up in Santa Fe with a living center, so I met the folks when I went to the interview... some of the folks in charge there were living in Albuquerque and I ended up getting a ride to work everyday; the director Carol, so I eventually moved out to Santa Fe and lived there for several years. It was a really small organization; and the only way I was going to move... there was no way I was going to move up, because at that time the director was Han Winnegar and it looked like he was going to stay there for a while, so I decided to go back to school to get my MBA and got accepted in the University of New Mexico, moved down there to start my MBA and assisted management and within a month of the program; someone came into one of our classes and announced that they were getting away with that concentration.

So I thought great, I left my job moved to another city and now I can't get to the concentration I wanted; so I talked to my counselor and told them that I wanted to do something with general management. I just wanted to get out of there with an MBA and before I graduated; I had a promised job at an investment banking for ... they sponsored me to take the serious 7 and sixty-three test which were tests to work for financial management at the state and federal level. So I passed those without problem, but then some of those had a bigger bank firms with turner so I moved over there and was there I'm trying to remember... maybe for a year when the market... tentatively 87 when the market crashed; and not able to generate any sales. I ended up leaving there and ended up finding a job at a living center in Albuquerque. And this is when I started becoming active on civil rights.

Interviewer:

Okay. What were your two jobs at the independent living centers... in the Santa Fe and Albuquerque?

Rodgers:

>topic< Work & Activism at Independent Living centers >/topic<.

Albuquerque I did public relations for the independent living center; I was trying to promote the program with the city and finding out what resources were out there and sharing their information with people with disabilities and families that had a family member with disabilities in Santa Fe. In Albuquerque, I was a manager of the independent living center there; and so I thought... well if I want to be a manager, I want it to be the best independent living center in the country and to do that was to model it after the best, so I started talking to people asking around what's the independent living center and by far everyone said the one in Denver, Colorado.

The independent living center in Denver, Colorado was run by a guy name Wade Blank; so one day I called Wade and said, "Wade here is my situation managing and independent living center, I would like to get some ideas from you on what I can do to improve it" so he said, "Why don't you come up here and stay with me for a couple of days, and I will show you around and we can talk about it" I thought what a great opportunity. So a friend of mine from Santa Fe drove me up to Denver and stayed with Wade and he started talking to me about civil disobedience and passive resistance doing protest based on the work martin Luther king did and Gandhi did.

Interviewer:

Do you know what year this was?

Rodgers:

>topic< Wade Blank's activism in McDonalds >/topic<.

This would be in 88 or something like that 89. It was definitely before the ADA. At this time, I wasn't particularly sure about the idea of protesting and being loud and possibly getting arrested. He explained to me a couple of things he did... for example McDonalds they had a big announcement they made their bathrooms accessible for people with disabilities but they didn't make their eating center accessible for people with disabilities ... but they did their bathrooms so they did good press. Wade did this and told some members of the press to meet him at a particular McDonalds at a certain time. Bought some meals and took them to the bathroom... the press came in, and took pictures of them eating in the bathroom because that was the only accessible place for them to eat... in the bathroom.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Rodgers:

So, Wade was able to make some changes; and I realized that we didn't have any wheelchair accessible transit in Albuquerque.

Interviewer:

You had para transits or not?

Rodgers:

>topic< Public Transport Protest in New Mexico >/topic<.

We had a paratransit but no mainline, Wade said, "Do you have ten dedicated people in wheelchairs that would be down to get involved in the protest?" and I said, "I don't know about ten." He said, "What about three?" I said, "Well I don't know if you can count me in... but I think I can find two others" so he said, "Alright, find housing for us, and we will bring ten guys with us and we will have a protest" and I said, "Alright". I talked with some of my friends and they made room in their houses, and Wade said to

pick a spot for the protest; so he's giving me a lot of autonomy when I've never done this before, but I knew we had to do something and I picked up a spot in front of a federal building, a major intersection.

The morning of the protest We got a news chain going again there was no email going, but people would call each other and say, "Hey we are going to do a protest at such and such intersection" and actually we all met at a meeting place and nobody knew where the protest would be until the day of the protest at one meeting spot we said, "Alright this is what is going to happen at this intersection we are going to go and block the buses" so everybody got the transportation they could and we got there and blocked the buses. There were two lanes of buses going in one direction, and we blocked those two lanes and two buses down that were blocked and then there were two buses that were perpendicular to this street, so we had six buses blocked. We waited until the police showed up and we said we would wait until the mayor came cause' we needed to tell him we needed accessible transportation.

After being there a couple of hours, once city hall agreed to meet we dispended; in the mean time it was great seeing other people getting involved. We had an elderly woman, maybe in her 70s or 80s and she used a walker and she would get on the streets and police men would tell her to get back to the side walk; which she did and then she would get back to the street and he went up to her and said, "Ma'am how many times have I told you to get off the street" and she said, "by now we are double the number". (Laughs).

It galvanized people with disabilities there, it was a good protest and the end we ended up going to the meeting but instead of having the mayor there; they sent someone else there and we never really got what we wanted.

Interviewer:

Was this after the ADA?

Rodgers:

I ended up, taking another job in Santa Fe and I moved away from Albuquerque still before the ADA, but still active civil rights protests and such. And I think we went to Washington DC a month before the ADA before the Congress and did a large protest there. I was one out of one hundred people that got arrested there at the rotunda; in the capital.

Interviewer:

Oh... is that the big protest that was about enlarged living... where people put chains in their wheelchairs?

Rodgers:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

We've seen footage of that.

Rodgers:

>topic< Protest in Washington DC>/topic<.

I was sitting at the rotunda, and people were in big circles there... there were rows of us in wheelchairs there and the guy in front of me, Michael Winters reached in the back of his wheelchair and picks up this big chain. I swear it must've been an anchor chain, and it a lock on it... and said, "Okay here we go" and started connecting the wheelchairs to this chain and I thought, "This guy is pretty serious". And they started telling us to move out and we started screaming, "ADA, ADA".

Interviewer:

Wow!! Was this before the capital stall crawl?

Rodgers:

It was the same week. It might've been a day or two before the crawl, I can't remember.

(Phone rings in the background).

Rodgers:

Damn Sarah.

Interviewer:

Laughs.

Rodgers:

>topic< Capital Crawl>/topic<.

Okay, after the capital crawl. I was living in New Mexico and Wade calls me and says, "Listen we have someone coming through New Mexico, and he needs a place to stay ... can you put him up?" and I said, "Sure". I had no idea who it was, but when Wade asked me to do something... it was an honor to do something; I mean he was known throughout the disability world. I said sure, a woman shows up with her two daughters, Kaylee and Jennifer, so they spent the night before getting to Denver. Now fast forward to DC, perhaps other protests I would see Jennifer and her mom there, but while in the capital. I don't know if Jennifer started this or someone else did, but Jennifer had cerebral palsy and was about nine years old at this time... got out of her wheelchair and started crawling the steps of the capitol. Actually there were some people ahead of her, and one guy had stopped cause' it was so hard to get up those stairs, but he saw that Jennifer passed him and he kept going... so he kept crawling. Tom Mullen, probably the most famous photo journalist in the disability rights movement; took some pictures, and he took some pictures of Jennifer and that later became known as the capitol crawl.

People would... well it appeared on the newspapers, so people were calling their congressmen and saying why did that little girl had to crawl up to the capitol... but we did end up getting a lot of attention that way.

Interviewer:

Were you getting pulled away by Wade Blank or other organizations like ADAPT at this time?

Rodgers:

>topic< Participation in the disability rights movement>/topic<.

At this time, Wade was the head of that disability movement called ADAPT. At that time, it was American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation and the reason they were focusing on transportation was because... (interview is interrupted).

Interviewer:

So you were saying about ADAPT and Colorado where there was activism in New Mexico too?

Rodgers:

There was little activism that what I can recall of in New Mexico at this moment. Because I was trying to improve independent living centers and I contacted Wade; that is how I was introduced to ADAPT.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Rodgers:

Again, they were focusing in transportation although we knew we wanted our rights perhaps even today it is something difficult to grasp. Transportation that is pretty concrete, we are talking about buses... nothing else but buses. We can focus on that, Wade ended up doing protests all around the country with ADAPT and he would take folks in chairs, to other cities because most cities didn't have what Wade was doing or did not know how to do it; so they would need help in that... and Wade would help them. In fact, when we did our protest in New Mexico; Wade said that he got a phone call from someone that saw us in TV and Wade said, "The battle is about to be won, because New Mexico just got involved" otherwise you never did something like that before, so this was pretty neat. Wade was definitely the leader there and without him... I don't know, what would've been of the disability rights movement.

(Part 1 ends)

.....
(Part 2 begins)

Rodgers:

And Gene is the stunt double for Brad Pitt.

Interviewer:

Were we left of was... right, you participated in the protest in Washington DC and the rotunda; the ADA passed.

Rodgers:

>Participation in the Disability Rights movement>/topic<.

And I remember we filled the rotunda, we started chanting and a couple of congressmen came down*** inaudible 00.55-57 came down, who has a deaf brother; so he was definitely on our side, but when the senators came down most, well I did recognize them and I suspect a lot of folks in our group didn't recognize them, they kept chanting, when the rest of us are trying to say, "They are no longer with us... they are on our side, let them speak". After a while, they calmed down and they were able to speak; **Sandy Oyer*** rectify** was there a lot of folks didn't recognize him either. Yeah, then they began to talk.

Did you interview Tom Mullen?

Interviewer:

No, but we've met him. About, two years ago.

Rodgers:

Tom Mullen as far as I know, probably the leading for photo journalist of the disability rights movement. Tom was away from the crowd trying to take some pictures of the crowd, and there were senators at a perimeter encouraging us to... well to enthusiasm about the ADA, so we didn't find this out until much more later; actually I didn't find out until the Gene and Dave show, that interviewed Tom Mullen, about his photo journalist history. There was a great time, we formed a circle... several concentric circles actually, the number of people on wheelchairs was pretty obvious, but there were people with canes, there were some deaf folks signing to each other... it was obvious, a variety of different disabilities represented there.

Just in front of me and of to the side a little bit was, Michael Enterns and Michael was a pretty stoop guy and he had a pretty heavy duty wheelchair and he reaches into the back, he had a bag in the back of his wheelchair and I see him reaching to his bag in the back of chair, and he pulls out this big heavy chain. It looked to me like an anchor chain, and we used to carry... with a heavy duty lock on it, and he says something about, "Let's start locking the chairs together" and I realize, this was going to be really serious now. We started years ago and we used regular chains, they used bulkers to cut those chains, and we got bigger chains they got bigger bulk cutters and on and on it went. I'll never forget the image of Michael with that heavy duty chain.

>topic< The police reactions, treatment, and imprisonment >/topic<.

Security announced that if we didn't leave they would start arresting people; and I hadn't been arrested before but the ADA was pretty important to me and I had read a lot about Martin Luther King and a little bit of Gandhi and the importance of filling the jails sort of speak. You are using nonviolent passive resistance we just stayed there; and it is very hard to arrest someone in an electric wheelchair if they don't want to cooperate because the police didn't know how to turn on a chair and drive it, in most cases. Each of them had a different type of engaging and disengaging clutches, so if you just roll the chair... it was pretty difficult for them

Interviewer:

Plus, the weight.

Rodgers:

Oh yeah the weight. there is a tremendous amount of inertia there, for the police to move a chair or to pick up one with someone it; it was an onerous task. They eventually got us out, we were happy that the press was outside; Tom Mullen got some good pictures. My memory is not real clear so I don't know if the arrest at the rotunda was the day before. There was also something, that later became known as the capital crawl...

Interviewer:

Yeah, you told us about that last time.

Rodgers:

Okay, then I don't have to repeat that again.

Interviewer:

Yeah, you don't need to repeat that.

Rodgers:

Alright.

Interviewer:

So, did you get arrested at the rotunda?

Rodgers:

>topic< Experience of getting arrested and going to jail>/topic<.

I did get arrested at the rotunda, they took us to the booking area; they got everyone's names, vital information, and they either got my fingerprints there or at a later demonstration. They were trying to get fingerprints from some folks and it was taking forever because a lot of us like myself, I'm a quadriplegic, and I can't use my hands, my fingers are contracted and I just can't extend my fingers, someone forcibly can extend my fingers. It is really difficult to do, so to get fingerprints from a quadriplegic or any other muscular affliction can be really tough. I remember at one point saying, "Guys, do you think any of us are going to leave fingerprints in something? You can check to see if it's true."

Interviewer:

Maybe tier tracks.

Rodgers:

I think tier tracks would be better. So they quit doing finger prints and the processes became more rapid, also later in a week; something which later became known in history as the capital crawl happened. Where someone... (interrupted).

Interviewer:

That's what you told us about last time, are you going to go back and give us a different angle?

Rodgers:

No, I don't remember what I gave you last time, it would probably be the same angle...

Interviewer:

Yeah, it was a pretty good account.

Rodgers:

Okay, good. So do you want me to skip past that?

Interviewer:

Yeah, why don't you skip past that.

Rodgers:

Do you remember what....

Interviewer:

We talked about the capital crawl and the protest, I don't think you told us about getting arrested last time.

Interviewer#2:

You stopped right as where you were saying, the chains were being brought up...

Rodgers:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah chains, the senators coming out and Tom Mullen.

Rodgers:

Yeah, that was new information to me...

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Rodgers:

That interview.

Interviewer:

So did they actually keep you in the jail?

Rodgers:

How long did they keep us in the jail... it was still late hours, that they kept us in the jail but they really didn't have the facilities for people to lay down, and pressure relief is really important for some of us. Get off our butts cause otherwise we can get sores; with all this information they had and our health and the facilities, they let us go ... they released us, but we were still on record, we were still to be notified by the judge or the court; if we appeared to do a PFI, or the eventual fine. Anyways it was quite an experience.

Interviewer:

Sounds like it.

Rodgers:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

So did you hang out in DC at that point?

Rodgers:

Yeah, we were in DC for at least a week or 10 days of protest, going to different offices, different official places to make our presence known.

Interviewer:

How were you staying with?

Rodgers:

>topic< Group traveling and accommodations>/topic<.

The group of folks of ADAPT had one main hotel; and it couldn't hold all of us, we ended up spreading into several hotels, I don't remember the names of those hotels. We spread around town.

Interviewer:

I was just curious, cause hearing about ADAPT raising money to go to DC, a couple of weeks ago; basically how was all of that financially possible even; since it's a large group of people going to DC.

Rodgers:

Yeah, it was pretty incredible. I remember paying plane fare, I don't remember paying hotel. Some people who had been active... very active, with fundraisers and stuff, they got their hotel paid for. In New Mexico we didn't have many actions, so... but it was worth every penny to go out there.

Trying to remember the other activities we did out there... When several wheelchair folks show up to an office, we have the advantage again because, although by this time the capital police were already accustomed to us. They had a little better idea on how to deal with us, but the people in the offices; would just loss it, they couldn't push us out, easily had us arrested and even the police did arrest us to move us from one building to the jail was a whole adventure for them.

Interviewer #2:

I guess the police doesn't have accessible vans (laughs).

Rodgers:

No, they didn't, I think they kind of dared with a city bus or a school bus that had a lift on it. It must've been a school bus since the ADA hadn't been passed, they didn't have public transportation.

Interviewer:

Yeah, the metro was accessible *** **inaudible 14.39**. I don't know about buses in DC.

Rodgers:

Yeah I kind of thought of it, so maybe.

Interviewer:

That's pretty funny.

So did you come back to New Mexico at that point?

Rodgers:

>Topic< New Mexico after DC protest participation>/topic<.

After we finished a week off educating congressmen, I returned to New Mexico ... I think. I was the only delegate from New Mexico, we just hadn't built our base ADAPT membership in New Mexico yet. Most people were from Colorado, Texas, and around DC. I came back and I think that at that time I was working at the developmental disabilities state office; they were happy to hear of my participation.

Interviewer:

That's cool.

Rodgers:

Yeah, that worked out well.

Interviewer:

So, what were you doing for the office?

Rodgers:

I was doing grants management for the financial part of it. Mostly just working with members, spreadsheets and things of that nature.

Interviewer:

What kind of technology were you using? In terms of adaptive technology back then?

Rodgers:

>topic< Assistive Technology>/topic<.

Yep. Back then this is 1990, I had a track ball instead of a mouse, since I couldn't push a mouse around. The track ball is essential a mouse upside down. I would roll my hand around and the mouse would then move the cursor; the track ball would move the mouse around in the screen, then to do a click or click around I would hit two buttons. I would also put a stick in my mouth to hit the keys on the keyboard, that's how I typed; that's how I was able to interface with my work environment. Using the phone, I was able to dial, using my stick as well. Yeah it was a pretty good come back there; really there wasn't a plethora of adaptive technology for quads at that time.

Interviewer:

Yeah, where did you go from there. That job.

Rodgers:

Okay so that was 1990, and then I was recruited by the New Mexico technology assistance program which was a federally funded office in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Andy Winnegar, was the director of that program...

Interviewer:

Can you spell his last name?

Rodgers:

>topic< Other job opportunities >/topic<.

Yes. W-I-N-N-E-G-A-R and the program is NMTAP. Andy and I had worked together years earlier in a different program; once he found out I was back in New Mexico, he recruited me to work on his program, so I worked there for a number of years. Then I decided it was time for me to grow, so I applied for a director position of technology programming at the university of Texas at Austin; which I got and I just didn't fit in well; I left that and went to California and I came back to Austin, really... talk about accessible, it's got an accessible bus system. Transportation is critical for me and a lot of folks on

electric wheelchairs; taxis weren't accessible at that time, the only way to get around was with bus or a private vehicle that had a lift or ramp. Austin... plus the weather is wheelchair user friendly; no snow, rain is predictable is not as torrential as up north; the politicians... the political environment is more liberal here in Austin as other places. They think of people with disabilities when they do programs or architectural modifications.

Interviewer:

What were you doing in California?

Rodgers:

I was also looking at a technology program there; with the University of California Northridge.

Interviewer:

California State University Northridge? Okay.

Rodgers:

Yeah. Cal State Northridge.

Interviewer:

CSUN.

Rodgers:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Has a long history of accessibility, technology, and stuff.

Rodgers:

>topic< Working at Cal State Northridge>/topic<.

Yes, it was surprising because they were more analog than any other program I've been to. They have great history, or I should say, they were known for their technology, but in Santa Fe, we had more technological advanced programs.

Interviewer:

Interesting.

Rodgers:

So I thought it would be fair and easy to work at Cal State Northridge; but it was all analog.

Interviewer:

There deaf and interpreter program is well known. So that could be where they are more focused.

Rodgers:

Okay. This was at a time were the web was just getting a presence; and people were just beginning to be aware of it. Even though the internet had been around for a few years already; that too was still new to many folks, so to tell someone about a webpage you might be introducing them to a whole new technology. When we did programs, we were communicating with people by phone or either phone messages, and not everyone had email addresses it was difficult to do and writing. For me someone that can't use his hands at all and to handle a stack of papers, it was just not gonna work.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Rodgers:

So I left the rehab plus I didn't like the vibe in LA, everyone was a stranger; and getting attendant help was difficult, although that's true... in a lot of places.

Interviewer:

Is it easier in Austin?

Rodgers:

I'm sorry?

Interviewer:

Is the attendant help easier in Austin?

Rodgers:

>topic< Moving to Austin>/topic<.

Yeah it's difficult to find a good attendant here in Austin. You can find attendants but finding a good one; is difficult to do.

Yeah. So I came here, I got a fellowship... a one-year long fellowship from the department of ed. to study community based rehabilitation and a lot of that studied rehabilitation in a lot of other countries; we wanted to see what we could play to rural areas here in the US. After that I became an entrepreneur; I made some big bucks and became a self-made millionaire, but after I did that it was like, "Okay, it was kind of game"

Interviewer:

What did you sell?

Rodgers:

>topic< Becoming an Entrepreneur>/topic<.

I bought Ensool stocks, financial security, so I had MBA and I had worked in college investor bankers in Texas years earlier; but then the market crashed in 87', so after that I got into independent living and with ADAPT and with other disability programs. After the disability programs I became an entrepreneur, made a lot of money and once I did... that was a lot of hard work; sometimes I would work four to six hours a day. After I made a bit of money there, I traveled around the world and I decided to take a break and then realize that it was a dumb thing to do and watched my investments loose value by the time I got back into it, my assets were really devalued.

Interviewer:

That's too bad.

Rodgers:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So how was the season that you spent traveling around?

Rodgers:

It was actually ... I traveled around for several years...

Interviewer:

Can you tell us about those travels?

Rodgers:

>topic< Traveling experiences>/topic<.

Yeah, every time I wanted something to do... I found my best at setting goals. When I first started traveling, in college I realized that as a person with a severe disability I could actually do it. I started planning it out and decided... one goal was to go to all 50 states; which I did early on when I started travelling, to go to every country in north America, we ended up driving to every country in north America. There's about 9 countries there, and then I wanted to go to every continent, so I would pick up a country.... Let say Europe pick a country there, then Asia pick one there, Australia, Africa, and from there it was a matter of... in tv and books you see about mysterious places; places that have been populated for thousands of years and you just want to go see them; Egypt, you want to see the pyramids, the Jordan, you want to see the place where they filmed Indiana jones, the treasury there.

The hardest part was finding a good attendant to take time as the same time I did, that I would enjoy traveling with. Traveling can be really difficult for anybody, it can be very trying especially; I've got special situations and accessibility is a major concern and health ... but yeah I kept traveling. then I slowed down here in Austin and became involved in with Actual Lives; which is a performance group made up of people with disabilities and then one of our participants Dave Dauber, got together and created the Gene and Dave show and now we have public access, we have a web presence at Gene and Dave show. com. We decided early on to make it as accessible as possible, all our videos are captioned,

we have some experts make our page accessible, we won accessibility awards, media awards, we've been having a good time with that.

Interviewer:

What about actual lives?

Rodgers:

>topic< Participation with Actual Lives performance group>/topic<.

Actual lives, was the performance group; we are composed of all people with disabilities, a lot of people with mobility impairments. I think Frankie Freedman is deaf; I'm trying to remember... people with cerebral palsy, some other neuromuscular diseases that I don't remember; pretty much a mixed bag. We would tell our own actual stories from our actual lives. We started out writing them and we would read them, to audiences; later on as we grew as a performance group, we performed those stories. That was important for my growth, to be able to tell my story and share my history with other people.

Interviewer:

Definitely.

Rodgers:

We did a lot in Austin, but we also went to San Antonio, we went to DC, we went to Georgetown which is close to Austin... I'm trying to remember where else we went... Dallas I believe; we got a chance to travel so it was good.

Interviewer:

Can you tell us about some of the ventures you had that are in the wall?

Rodgers:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Like ship sailing.

Rodgers:

>topic< Ship sailing & Scuba Diving >/topic<.

I love being underwater and in the water I also scuba dived... (motorized noise in the background).

A friend of mine, actually... when we go scuba diving; we have a policy we don't dive at the last day of our diving adventures because, the blood has so much nitrogen dissolved in it, that we are not sure of the effects; being able to fly, on the same day that we had our ears and bodies pressurized, but we have a day when we do activities. So the last day we were looking for something to do, so we got a sail boat to rent, we went out in the water, big catamaran and my friend Daven Cordell who is now a doctor, has been sailing most of his life.

One day he sends me an email about this tall ships, they are accessible and this tall ships... let me see (points at picture in the wall and counts) 1, 2, 3 tall masts; they are wheelchair accessible so they were able to harness me up to the crow's nest almost to the very top of this one-hundred twenty-foot tall mast, I was able to get to also right up to the helm; the big steering wheel, in the ship I was able to use that even though there's no grip in my hands I was able to use my forearm to move the wheel around. There was a compass there; a talking compass, we had a world war II veteran with us named, Herb who was totally blind we would tell him to maintain a course of 180; as he turned the wheel the compass would read out 180, 181, and by hearing the compass setting he was able to steer the ship all by himself. That was pretty cool to have a blind guy steering a big tall ship.

Interviewer:

Yeah it is.

Rodgers:

I've been on other ships; a guy named Trevor Jones from the UK, who built an experimental ship, the sails were like the airplane wings set vertical, and there be three of them, in a triangular configuration. Trevor was able to use computer controls to manipulate the sails, since each would function like an airplane wing, he was able to move those around to get the ship moving; so that was a really cool accessible experience... oh but the ship out of the tenacious... out of the UK, you can find more info. on it at JSTUK.org. or JST.org/UK. Something like that look for the tenacious wheelchair accessible ship

Most interesting part of that is, that it was wheelchair accessible and I talk to people around downtown and they tell me why they can't build accessible features in a building and I tell them, "I was on a tall ship that was accessible" you can't tell me that making your building is more difficult than making a tall ship accessible; I like having that story in my back pocket all the time. Also probably noticed (interrupted).

Interviewer:

Is that Jordan over there? (points at picture).

Rodgers:

Yes, yes, that's Jordan ... that's a picture of me sitting.

Interviewer:

Sorry to interrupt, but since you mentioned him earlier.

Rodgers:

Oh yeah. Yeah I got a picture of us sitting in a camel in front of the treasury building in Petra, Jordan; is a structure carved of solid stone (interrupted).

Interviewer:

That's featured in the Indiana Jones movies right *** **rectify**.

Rodgers:

Right, right... there has to be at least a hundred and four feet tall.

Interviewer#2:

And then the one right above it, is you at the Sphinx and one of the pyramids.

Rodgers:

>topic< Personal philosophy about traveling, history, and relation to disability movements>/topic<.

Yes, yes. It's important for me to go to places that have a long of history, but also because, the buildings were somewhat mysterious and that they were able to be built in the first place, so I'm thinking anytime that we talk to people; we can't build this or it's going to be too difficult to build this... I like to tell them, "People built the pyramids a thousand years ago, and they didn't have anywhere near the technology we have, so don't tell me that". In Petra I don't remember how many hundreds of years that was built, but at least 2000 years ago. The whole city was carved out of rock; that couldn't have been easy, but people got together and decided to make it happen and so they did.

>topic< Adventure to Mt. Everest>/topic<.

In 2003 the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities here in Austin, decided it would be a good idea, to get a group of people together to go to (Up to your right shoulder Sarah) an expedition kind of like space camp and to have one person with a disability make it to the summit mount Everest; I applied for that , put my application in, set my money for myself and two attendants; eventually there were ten of us going, ten of us with disabilities; we flew in my attendants and I think that one or two other people had attendants with them, then we had a support group of like 40 Sherpa, they only carried supplies, and each and every single one of us that were in a wheelchair, for the most part they would take a side of our wheelchair put us in basket called doka; it kind of looks like a laundry basket only that taller and then they would stretch the basket in their back with just one strap.

They would put up their strap over their forehead; only one strap if at any time that strap broke, certainly there would be injuries. There were certain places, they were done, we'd be on a trail and a Sherpa would decide to take a rest and he would turn towards the mountains, so he'd had his back towards the valley with us on their back. They would sit down on a stone, that would mark the edge of the trail; and we would be hanging over the edge, facing the valley if that strap broke, we would probably still be rolling today (laughs). Going over those foot bridges, narrow foot bridges... if they stumbled and that doka went to the side... it would've been an Adios!

Interviewer#2:

Did they had you write a will before you went?

Rodgers:

Oh yeah. There was a lot of talk about it... we had to do a lot of fundraisers before we went, pretty expensive venture. There were a lot of people that didn't want to fund this because they didn't want to fund a tragedy... (interviewer laughs).

>topic< Getting sick during Mt. Everest adventure>/topic<.

They had that on their radar; scared that someone wouldn't be coming back. Actually we were... for most of us to go was base camp; I was perhaps within a couple of hours when I had... something happened with my gut; intestinal blockage, something like that; all this was while I was conscious because there was a period of time that I don't remember what happened. my brother told me later that there was blood coming out of my mouth... yeah. So the team doctor said, that I would have to go back down to the hospital in Kathmandu, but we were too high for a helicopter to reach us, so a Sherpa had to take me down to a low elevation, but even then the air was so thin, that they couldn't take me and one of my attendants, so they threw me in a helicopter took me to a lower elevation, tossed me out, went back to grab my brother... I recuperated in Kathmandu for a couple of days, until I was well enough to travel.

Interviewer:

So this is Dennis Boroughs idea right?

Rodgers:

Yeah, yeah Dennis came up with this idea.

Interviewer:

It's kind of promotional.

Rodgers:

>topic< Goal behind the Mt. Everest expedition>/topic<.

To promote the abilities of people with disabilities (distant peeping...interviewed paused).

Interviewer:

Hey, you are live again.

Rodgers:

Also when I was up on Everest, Dennis was promoting our adventure (interrupted)...

Interviewer:

He didn't go did he?

Rodgers:

No, he didn't go.

Because it was that year and the cycle when the legislation was meeting and talking about all kinds financial things and different types of funding; offices and such, Dennis went back to work the legislature... it was great because a lot of legislators would ask him, how's your group doing at Mt. Everest, so the topic of disability was within their face. Dennis set us up with a Dallas morning news interview; in one of the cities it might've been shaped bizarre just a tiny remote outpost on Everest, we did a settlement, did an interview and was able to send it by satellite and the folks here in Austin, that was pretty cool...

Interviewer:

I bet it is.

Rodgers:

Talking about the needs of people with disabilities...

Interviewer:

How long was the expedition?

Rodgers:

For most of us it was about 4 weeks, Gary Gunnher *** rectify who'd lost an arm in a climbing accident years earlier went to the summit. I think he took another four weeks to do that...

Interviewer:

For adjusting.

Rodgers:

He to go little by little to acclimate; the thin air...

Interviewer:

What were the relationships with the Sherpa's as you guys were going through small towns?

Rodgers:

>topic< Impact of the trip>/topic<.

A lot of people, had never seen somebody in a wheelchair before; there were other checkers in the trails from other countries and they were really supporting us and some of them were feeling a little ashamed to themselves because, they were waiting for all the extraneous activities and they see all of us with disabilities, so they thought "wow, shouldn't be complaining" (Laughs).

Interviewer:

Who else was on the group?

Rodgers:

I think there were about 5 of us in wheelchairs, my brother Robert was bipolar, Kim Smith had a hip dysplasia it made it really difficult for her to walk, other neuromuscular afflictions I don't remember exactly, mobility was the noticeable.

Interviewer:

Did you have anyone that was blind or deaf?

Rodgers:

Oh, yes!! I did... thank you for the cue. We had a deaf person with his smart go ball; Mark taught at the school for the deaf, so the minute we knew about the trip we got an interpreter for him. I think about half way through the mountain, when the war started in Iran and or Iraq; the news was pretty disturbing to him, he wanted to be home with his wife, so he left the group when it started and went back home. I don't remember anyone with a visual problem.

Interviewer:

Did you meet anyone that had any kinds of disabilities *** rectify?

Rodgers:

>topic< Meeting other people with disabilities in Nepal>/topic<.

We didn't meet ... oh when we first arrived in Nepal, they knew we were coming so they had a delegation of folks... a disability organization meet us, we met one man; who I believe his arm was paralyzed am thinking, he got bit by cobra. Everyone knows Nepal is up in the mountains, but part of Nepal is jungle, and they got elephants there, tigers... so they might've had a poisonous snake I don't know, maybe it was a different type of snake. He's arm was paralyzed, but he made the track with us, an elderly gentleman.

Interviewer:

That's pretty cool.

Rodgers:

Yeah, yeah he joined us for that.

Interviewer #2:

Did ya'll had interpreters or did most people speak English... how was communication between the Sherpa's and everybody else on the trip.

Rodgers:

>topic< Relationship and communication with the Sherpa's >/topic<.

So this is another story... Ten years previous to go to Mt. Everest Space Camp; I'd gone to Everest to visit a friend of mine that works with the united nations, and he said, "Let's go tracking" "Okay how?" I said. We got with the Sherpa's and they showed us, how they could do it, so me and my friend John Shulman got carried by the Sherpa's. The Sherpa's were accustomed to carrying children in these little dokas, this is their first time they carried adults in these dokas. At that time, I met a Sherpa name Tsering Sherpa. Sherpa is the name of a geographical place where all these Sherpa's come from; vast majority of the last name Sherpa (interrupted).

Interviewer:

How do you spell his first name?

Rodgers:

(Most have done some kind of facial expression... because interviewers laugh).

Just like it sounds there...

Interviewer:

How about that transcriber *** rectify 52.34

(Everyone giggles)

Rodgers:

I'll have to get the spelling to you... although you can go to Genosplace.org which is my personal webpage look at the story of Everest and see how the name Tsering Sherpa is spelled...

Interviewer:

I think that all work.

Rodgers:

So then what he.... He was a Sherpa; now fast forward ten years and Tsering shows up at our group and all of the sudden I feel better because this guy is sharp, we had a child with us; me and my friend ten years earlier and that child wanted to go everywhere, and Tsering had always eyes on that child, he spoke English and Nepalese, and he always made sure the other Sherpa's kept that kid in between the mountain and the edge of the trail; that kid was never in danger. Tsering, was like a lead Sherpa when we went up Everest; so being able to speak English and Nepalese he interpreted for us. I think there might've been one or two others Neemadow, spelled just the way it sounds... and another Sherpa(Laugh).

Interviewer:

Can you repeat that slowly?

Rodgers:

Neemadow might be N-E-E-M-A-D-O-W; that's a close approximation of how you would spell it.

Interviewer #2:

I think that sounds about right.

Rodgers:

>topic< Participation at NASA>/topic<.

I don't think anyone is going to say it was wrong (everyone laughs) ... but there was a great trip to be added... a number of years later, NASA was doing a diversity program in Houston; and they invited us down to go speak to that at their programs. Oh!! Which reminds me Danesh was with us; his one leg was amputated as a result of cancer when he was a child. I think some woman ended up having some endocrine system problem, so it was a mix bag of disabilities, but it was good to see their story being carried afterwards.

Interviewer:

What was the reaction like when you got back?

Rodgers:

A lot of support once we got back...

Interviewer:

That you actually returned (laughs).

Rodgers:

Yeah, that we actually returned (laughs). Some people had doubts that we were returning, but we made it. A job man here in Austin a filmmaker; Andrew Cockrum made a movie called... (noise in the background), "Team Everest, a Himalayan Journey" again its "Team Everest, a Himalayan Journey" it's a great movie and might be available in different places **** **inaudible because of the background noise**. Four-week adventure Gary Guller is in it, if you want it kids it's out there.

Interviewer:

I'll inform special collections.

Rodgers:

Yes, but I got a number of other places.... Like 44 countries even went to Cuba before it was legal so...

Interviewer #2:

How did you manage that?

Rodgers:

>topic< Going against the law and traveling to Cuba>/topic<.

Years after Everest, I had met a guy a wheelchair user on our Everest adventure.... And I don't know if you'd want me to say his name.... so I won't say it was Marky Souse from North Carolina... but years later I said Mark, I'm thinking on going to Everest... well he said, " I think you should cause I did" ... and I said, "Wow, tell me how you did it", what he did is... he booked a flight through a Canadian agent, that's exactly what I did; so I contacted the Canadian agent and I was able to buy a voucher, for a ticket to go to Cuba, so I decided to fly to the Bahamas and once I got to the Bahamas, I used a voucher to exchange for a ticket from the Bahamas to Cuba; because it wasn't legal for us to buy tickets from the states, so I was able to buy a voucher and that's how we paid.

Interviewer:

So, what is Cuba like?

Rodgers:

Cuba is one of my favorite places that I have ever visited; the people which is so warm and friendly there, it was incredible, people we talked to... they weren't happy about communism but they didn't want to talk about it either; they were afraid of possible repercussions, but they love Americans... of course they love American money, but the tourism industry is huge in Cuba, so they love everybody... very friendly people there.

Interviewer:

What about the other 43 countries I guess... we heard you talk a little bit about Nepal, which are the other ones, that stand out in line... just the country or disability stuff.

Rodgers:

>topic< Other traveling experiences>/topic<.

When I travel somewhere, I pay my stuff early on and friends travel with me and act as my attendants. Later on it was hard to find someone that would do that, no one who could afford to travel like I did; so I paid for their travel as well, but I had one friend Jeff he actually paid for his travels ... we went to Peru and Bolivia; me, Jeff, and his father Don. Jeff said, "I'm not hauling your ass through all those mountains' alone, so I finally found some guys... two Peruvian teenagers who hauled me around. And these guys didn't speak any English, but I could point which direction I wanted to go and I could say left or right, and had an idea of how to help me. What stood out my mind was, these guys; we would say Machu Pichu which is one of the most famous Inca sites in all Peru, or in Cuzco this guys would only point out to certain things, and of course they were speaking Spanish, and I couldn't understand any of it, but I could tell that they were swell with pride when they would talk about their ancestors and what they were able to accomplish... even though I did not understand a word, I really enjoyed that.

Interviewer:

Any others?

Rodgers:

Puerto Rico, stayed at an Airbnb there; Victor became my friend right away. He knew someone He told a friend of his there... Dilka about us and she wanted to meet us and she ended up traveling with us a few days and she is just the sweetest woman in the world... look up Dilka in Puerto Rico basketball player; she is a wonderful lady although after the hurricanes, you won't find anything in Puerto Rico anymore. The tall ships and the tenacious, the Lordnelson **** **inaudible because of noise** people there were amazing.

Interviewer:

***inaudible because of noise.

Rodgers:

>topic< Paragliding in Switzerland>/topic<.

Oh yeah, paragliding in Switzerland, I saw something on national geographic about paragliding and I thought I got to do that... and I was so concerned on getting it on video the first time; that I didn't even

realize what we were doing... I did it again, once I found the video was good; I did it again, and it was kind of sub training in the flight and it was a bit scary we were up... we had to be up over 1,000 ft. the highest; there is not so much holding us up there.

In fact, the first time I did it; the buckle ... the strap that went up my thigh; the buckle broke and we didn't realize until we landed, and one of these guys noticing... the pilot started talking in Swiss or German to the other pilot, and all though I could not make up what they were saying, but I'm pretty sure that if you translate it would be like, "What the hell!!! Look at that... you realize how much trouble that could be if someone died... a tourist in our group ...we'll never hear the end of it.. we got to make sure that doesn't happen again", but that was a great experience.

Cliff climbing in New Mexico, skydiving in New Mexico and Texas, bridge swinging in south Africa.

Interviewer:

What was that in south Africa?

Rodgers:

>topic< Bridge swinging in South Africa>/topic<.

Bridge swinging... to show the power of the web, when I was scuba diving I post pictures and some videos, then I wasn't able to post videos ... at least pictures, so a gentleman; paraplegic in south Africa, emails me and says, I'm also a diver and wheelchair user; come down to South Africa we can dive with white tip sharks or something like that ... anyway really dangerous sharks in cold water, and I had gone diving with nurse sharks, but they are harmless and I wrote back, "yeah, I don't think so". Cold water with dangerous sharks... no... whales you got, so he wrote back, "We got bungee jumping and bridge swinging" and he sent me a video of him bridge swinging and I was like, "This I got to do".

I forget how many miles... maybe 5,000 here from Texas to Cape town South Africa... I went down just to go bridge swinging, they put me on a bridge attached me to a rope to another bridge, and they pushed off the one bridge vertically, at least 10-15 ft. and then felt the tension of the rope and I was able to swing under the other bridge, and it eventually lowered me to the river below. Actually the other reason why I went to south Africa, to visit Johnny Rogers who did all the statistics and organizing trip to mount Everest space camp... it was years earlier...

Interviewer:

Okay.

(Part 2 ends).

.....
(Part 3 begins).

Interviewer:

Okay, so other adventures.

Rodgers:

>topic< Meeting other people with disabilities>/topic<.

The opportunity I did have traveling around the world was to meet people with disabilities in other countries; some make their own statistics now... I think I was in Bolivia, and I met a gentleman that made his own hand controls, for his car; and I'm trying to remember if he was using a standard transmission or not; of course if you are in the US everyone has an automatic. I'm 99.9% that people have automatic transmission; even here the assistive technology for vehicles is highly regulated, but in other countries people make their own and there's no regulations for it. In Nepal I went to a rehabilitation center that wasn't wheelchair accessible (interviewer laughs).

Then in Bolivia I went to one, a great example of what a rehab center should be like and that was back in.... no, it was the Philippines, that I went that they had a rehab center ... a great example of how an accessible rehab center should look like. You never know what you're going to find; I tried before the web, was known widely; I would write to the journal of rehabilitation, or maybe it was just rehab ... Oh no! it was handicap news, back then... now I don't remember the name of the magazine; anyway I had to do some writing and research to find out what organizations disability and handicap related were in other countries. I did find out that in the UK, every taxicab is wheelchair accessible; (interviewer interrupts).

Interviewer:

They include lifts too... in them now. *** rectify 02.53

Rodgers:

They had a listening device in the cabs and I didn't know understand how it worked. Do you remember?

Interviewer:

Well I think the UK and Europe in general but especially the UK; they are used to reading lips, so hearing t-coils would switch on, and it basically amplifies what the cabbie is saying; so it would directly do an input unto your hearing aid.

Rodgers:

Oh wow, I never knew that (astonished).

Interviewer:

So a lot of taxicabs have them and a whole lot of public venues in the UK.

Rodgers:

OH.

Interviewer:

I went to a conference in Wales, and there were some pickups cause' it was a really old building, and basically the idea is having the mike and you don't need... basically it's a way of amplifying for a lot of people... but you have to build it into the walls, UT Arlington has looked at it for classrooms, but they

literally have to rip out the walls, so they are going with alternative technology that does not require rebuilding ... buildings.

Rodgers:

Ahhhhh (amazed).

Okay. Yeah that was an experience that, every cab was wheelchair accessible... I should say every cab had a wheelchair ramp on it, but I think that it was a little bit taller I wouldn't have been able to fit in some of those cabs.

Interviewer:

(Scoffs).

Rodgers:

A lot of people today are on big wheelchairs and a lot of scooters, so we may have problems with that, so I don't know about the safety issues involved; it's interesting to see how people with disabilities adapt in other countries.

Interviewer:

What types of assistive technologies have you used? You talked about some of your earlier ones.

Rodgers:

>topic< Assistive technology when traveling>/topic<.

Well, whenever I went sailing I had... it started many years ago, every time I travel I use a manual wheelchair, so I went with a friend of mine to Mexico; who was not very strong and struggled picking me up from the chair to put me in bed, so I figured if I put this legs in the back of my chair and fold down, you can take the wheel off the chair and slide me unto the bed. So when I was in Mexico, I stopped at a place and I had them make... they just call them wheels... leg... like another leg for the chair, it was detachable so I used that a lot on that trip. And then also, when I wanted to go sailing, I would drop that leg down so... (background noises... interview paused).

Rodgers:

So what was I talking about again?

Interviewer:

Mexico and...

Interviewer #2:

The detachable leg.

Rodgers:

Oh yeah, yeah....

I used that quite a bit with sailing, because I wanted to keep the chair so I could flip it backwards. I have pictures of it front and back so that's how I used that quite a bit. As a matter of fact, I kept that done my chair when I sat in the back of an elephant. We took of the back wheels of it, and put those seat legs down and I had them hold my chair in the place where people normally would sit in the back of an elephant. I used that in a riverboat in Thailand instead of seating on the bench seating of the boat on the narrow part of it, I just had them take the wheels off and we lifted the whole chair up and attached it to the bench sit; that was really helpful.

Interviewer:

What about like with computers? Or technologies?

Rodgers:

Yeah, with computers I use a track ball to move the cursor, and mouth stick. A stick I just picked from high bee store, it's about 12 inches long it looks like a drub**** rectify 8.34. like a syringe like a barrel of a really small syringe and I put it down there so I wouldn't be bunting on wood all the time. Then a friend of mine I told him, that I was stuck in bed for a while, so he built a device that attaches to the wall and suspends the computer and I was able to grab a different head set to which with my head motion I could move the cursor and then with a tube stick in my mouth and by blowing in that I could click or drag any function of the mouse; and I had a virtual keyboard, that was nice, I could type in pages and click that was nice.

Interviewer:

Do you use dragon, or you just do naturally speaking?

Rodgers:

No, I tried voice dictation a number of years ago, and even though we are in 2017, a couple of years ago I still had problems. Apple came out with voice dictation standard on every computer now, and it's much improved so I have been using that a lot, still I end up editing the dictation and end up typing. Maybe I can go back to voice dictation, but it works best if you have software that stands alone for that, the software can learn your editing, part of that bulls of editing system, the voice file gets sent to cloud and then the cloud they will type or digitize your speech as text. So my name is Gene, so if I sign something now, it will default it to Jean, but it can't learn to always put Jean every time I say Gene.

Interviewers:

Maybe you should go with Eugene?

Rodgers:

I could, except that's not my name.

Interviewer:

(Laughs).

Rodgers:

I'll try it to see what happens. Yeah probably I should change my name.... maybe I should do that. (interviewer laughs). That's the software I use, like I said for the Gene and Dave show we caption like in the movies; sometimes we send it out for it to be captioned; sometimes Dave and I we would do it ourselves, using really affordable software called movie captioned.

Interviewer:

What about being involved with ADAPT here... like disability rights activism here in Austin; since you came back here from California?

Rodgers:

Let me start even earlier. When I was in college my father made these blocks for me, to raise the table high enough for me to fit under (interviewer interrupts).

Interviewer:

Like what you have here?

Rodgers:

Like what I have here, only that smaller than the ones I'm using today. I took them everywhere I moved; they were great blocks, in fact I still have them back there, but when I got a new wheelchair it was higher up, so I had to get blocks made; they are great because they have little borders on top of them to keep the lead slipping from the top of the blocks. And I was used to travel with ADAPT for actions around the country, every time we went to an airport, somebody needed their chair repaired because chairs Electrical chairs weren't as durable back in the day; in the late eighties and sometimes they would take the batteries out from the chair, but now a days, makers are a lot more travel savvy and they build wheelchairs with batteries that can stay in the chairs. That was a nice change to see.

Interviewer:

Yeah. So what kind of actions have you've been involved with ADAPT?

Rodgers:

>topic< More activism>/topic<.

Mostly here in Austin, but some in Dallas, and DC. Other cities... we would do is get attention of whatever company or organization we had accessibility issues with. For example, in Dallas; is the headquarters for greyhound or I hope I'm saying that right... at least it is important for greyhound. Greyhound did not want to become accessible when the ADA came out... even suppose before the ADA, they let it be known that, they did not want to be accessible because of the huge initial cost of making a big bus accessible. So we would get people in wheelchairs to block the buses, keep them from moving, and then they got the attention and they had meetings with us. The other thing we would do, one person would get on the bus... but they would have to be very down to get on the bus, so the driver would have to stop everything, pick the person up, and at the next stop somebody else would want to get in, so the other person got off, and someone else would get on and then they would just keep doing this stop after stop.

Interviewer:

**** Inaudible 16.07-16.08

Rodgers:

I'm thinking this might have been... I'm trying to think if this was metro... if it was metro, I don't know why we would be doing it...

Interviewer:

Yeah, it would be *** inaudible 16.25

Rodgers:

Yeah, so I'm thinking... Jake you can go ahead, and put that out.

(Jake in the background says, "Alright").

Interviewer:

Maybe DC or DART in Dallas or something? Seems like a strategy.

Rodgers:

I'm thinking it was greyhound, so people had to get carried on and off and the drivers got so tired of it; they complained as well, so blocking the buses, getting off and on the buses, drivers complained, people couldn't keep up with the schedules of complaints. We eventually were able to get greyhound, to file the law somewhat... even today, I don't know if they are completely accessible. We had to call 24 hours ahead, that we were going to go from this city to that city and make sure they had an accessible bus available.

Interviewer:

What about ADAPT'S move... more towards independent living, nursing homes, and institutions once the ADA passed?

Rodgers:

>topic< Early ADAPT movements>/topic<.

When ADAPT was first formed, am trying to figure it ... I guess the 80s?

Interviewer:

Yes, 83.

Rodgers:

ADAPT stood for... it's an acronym for, "American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation" after the ADA was passed, the acronym became, "American Disabled for (interviewer laughs)" I forget. But we started off... we wanted to target transportation, because this was something identifiable; this was something people understood... was transportation. But if you talk about services in general, people did not understand that, so transportation was something we fought for.

Interviewer:

Yeah, cause Bob and Stephanie were telling us that they are moving just to ADAPT even though they focus often on nursing homes and getting people out of nursing homes and institutions; ADAPT is just the acronym...

Rodgers:

Accessible programs today.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Rodgers:

Making disabled for accessible programs today.

Interviewer:

Okay, so did you still are involved in the new focus on? *** rectify 19.30-19.41

Rodgers:

So, right after the American with Disabilities Act was passed we had a meeting, we got together to decide what should be our next focus and we decided to be attendant; help people who wanted to stay in the community, to stay there; rather than having to go in the nursing homes.

Interviewer:

I'm actually wondering if attendant is actually in the title... for attendant programs today.

Rodgers:

No, for accessible programs today.

Interviewer:

Okay. So we did that.... (checking online)

Rodgers:

Maybe look it up on Wikipedia.

Interviewer:

Is actually "American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today".

Rodgers:

Wow!!

Interviewer:

Or was for a while... and then it changed to... yeah... because PACT is part of ADAPT.

Rodgers:

Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer:

Okay.

So tell us about, what were you involved with?

Rodgers:

>topic< Shell Trap and ADAPT>/topic<.

Right after the ADA was passed, there was an organizer from Chicago named, Shell Trap. He got involved with us, and he is an expert on community organizing, and he said this is what you have to do, "you pick out an idea that you want; what you want accessible and then you give yourself a timeline and you break it down in identifiable parts that you need to do; to reach that, who you need to reach and go from there". We thought we could do it in 5 years, this was in 1995... we hadn't done anything in five years... its 2017 and we are still trying to make that happen.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Rodgers:

It's tough, some things are more receptive than others... some states... but I'm a quadriplegic, am paralyzed at my four limbs, I just couldn't go to another state; without knowing their programs. In fact, if I would've moved out of state... *** **inaudible**... there is a huge waiting list for attendant programs here in Texas, so ADAPT is paying for my own attendant care. Which I was doing for many years, because I was working, but now that I'm no longer working; I wouldn't be able to afford it.

Interviewer:

Other things you think we left out, that you would like to talk about?

(Jake talking to Gene in the background)

Hey Gene, do you want the new Vietnamese coffee, or the Cuban coffee, or the orange coffee for the second batch?

Rodgers:

Yes.

(Interview paused).

Rodgers:

>topic< Traveling experiences>/topic<.

I don't know where we go from here... still trying to adjust people's attitudes towards being more receptive with people with disabilities. I know Martin Luther King said, "You can't legislate... integration, you can only legislate desegregation" true integration willingly will come until people truly accept each other as brothers and sisters something like that... it's very close. We can legislate desegregation in terms of architectural barriers eliminating them but we can't legislate with acceptance. I think that will come when people with disabilities are more out there in the community... more people without disabilities get used to us and accepting of us. Right now my goal is to be out in the community more; I've traveled to many countries were you are just... I was in Rio de Janeiro; Rio has I don't know how many people and there are certain people with disabilities there and the infrastructure was so horrible for access in a way; the streets, lack of ramps... it was just really tough. It was just as bad in Rio as it is in Austin to try and get an accessible taxicab, but if you don't need an accessible cab in Rio; they are never away than just like 4 min. I called them from my hotel and told them I was in a wheelchair, I never had to wait more than just 4 min.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Rodgers:

But then it wasn't accessible either. And in japan the buses have an accessible symbol on it, and what it means is the driver will stop... this was years ago... the driver would stop the bus, get out and would help lift the person in the wheelchair get up the stairs of the bus, so that was a different view on accessibility.

Interviewer:

Yeah definitely.

(Part 3 ends)

.....
(Part 4 begins)

Rodgers:

>topic< Issues with Adobe>/topic<.

I just want to say, the software company Adobe, really sucks... (Everyone laughs).

I bought a software, from them and as the infrastructure of the computer changed; they were able to make it so I couldn't use it again, because they went from a buy once to a use always software program into a subscriptions service. Now if you want to use adobe software, you have to pay a subscription service, well I bought professional acrobat program and acrobat is a software program in which you can take a word document digitize it, so anyone ... a MAC or PC can see the document without any changes in format. So no matter how many different programs are set to cross, the format stays exactly the same. They also had a way in which somebody with a disability or anyone could sign a document; and it was recognized, as being legal ... a legal digital signature. Now that they've changed it to a subscription

service, if you want to have a legal digital signature you have to pay them every month, even if you only need it once a year.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Rodgers:

Adobe sucks that way... thank you!

(Part 4 ends)

