

John Dycus

Co-founder of UT Arlington's Handicapped
Students Association and
Arlington Handicapped Association,
former advisor for the UT Arlington *Shorthorn*

*Interview conducted by
Christopher Malmberg
in 2014 in Arlington, Texas*

Disability Studies Minor
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Biography

John Dycus was born in 1949 and grew up in Arlington and Fort Worth, Texas. He obtained his K-12 education in Fort Worth, attending Paschal High School, class of 1965. Between kindergarten through eighth grade, Dycus attended special education classes, which were not offered when he reached high school at Paschal High. After graduating high school he attended the University of Texas at Arlington and graduated in 1970.

While in college, he met the charismatic Sam Provence and Jim Hayes and advocated with them for independent living and other disability rights in the Arlington area. He was one of the founders of Helping Restore Ability (HRA, originally the Arlington Handicapped Association). He served as president of the board in the 1980s. In 1997, HRA named him their Man of the Year. In the 1970s, Dycus served on the Texas Developmental Disabilities Council, which is a governor-appointed committee that advises the state legislature on policies related to disability and people with disabilities. In 1974, he was given a Governor's Citation for his work on the council.

Apart from his activism, he worked for thirty-five years as student advisor for the UTA student newspaper, *The Shorthorn*, and a copy-editor for the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*. Most recently, in 2010, Dycus received the prestigious Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Professional Member Award journalism from the Society of Professional Journalists; Dycus also served two consecutive terms as president for the organization's Fort Worth chapter.

Topics discussed

- How he began working for the University of Texas at Arlington *Shorthorn* and the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*
 - Sam Provence, Helping Restore Ability (HRA), and independent living initiatives
 - Jim Hayes and his activism at UT Arlington and on behalf of Helping Restore Ability
 - Evolution of accessibility at UT Arlington
 - Service as President of the board of Helping Restore Ability
 - Dynamics of state funding for attendant care
 - Independent living via home attendant care versus living in an institution or nursing home
 - Work on the Texas Developmental Disabilities Council
 - Access to education and work, and the lack thereof
 - Advocacy for in-home and community-based care
 - Gay Vandiver and gradual involvement in disability rights
 - Coalition for Texans with Disabilities
 - Sam Provence's and Jim Hayes' legacies
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Malmberg

(ticking noise from wall clock) This is Christopher Malmberg interviewing John Dycus about his role as a disability activist at his home in Arlington Texas. Thank you for agreeing to the interview.

Dycus

Sure. Sure.

Malmberg

I just wanted to start out by asking you about some biographical information.

Dycus

Okay.

Malmberg

So if you would like to tell me about maybe your life, where you were raised and born.

Dycus

I was born in Crazy Hotel in Mineral Wells. I think the building still exists. It was turned into a, that's where the clinic was, so that's where my mother went. That's where the doctor had his clinic. Crazy Hotel 65 [years of age at time of interview]. Grew up in Fort Worth and Arlington, went to Paschal High School and UTA, class of 1965 and 1970. Accounting major UTA, never wanted to do accounting, but that's what the counselors put you in back in the '60s because you could do it sitting down, which is probably racist [ableist] now but it is logical you can do it sitting down.

<topic> How he began working for the University of Texas at Arlington *Shorthorn* and the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*</topic>

The lady I worked with for 26 years was hired to be Director of Student Publications in 1970. It was the summer of 1970 and I had graduated in the spring of 1970 and did not have a job. So some of my student colleagues who were still on the student paper said, "You ought to get this guy." She had no money so she needed someone who was pretty good and cheap. It was me. So that is how we created a career. I stayed there for twenty-eight years, she was there for twenty-six. Then I went back and did ten more years and did part-time. I was paid fully from UTA for student publication full or part-time for thirty-six years. How is that?

Malmberg

And when did you retire?

Dycus

I guess I am still editing books and things and still copy-edit the UTA magazine so if you want to argue I never left UTA that is true. But I left student publications years or five years ago. If I retired in '98 and worked ten more years that would be 2008, which would be about five years ago.

Malmberg

And you also worked for The *Star-Telegram*.

Dycus

The Star Telegram was Friday nights. I replaced a woman on Friday nights that negotiated with the boys for years so she could get Friday nights off so she could go see the Lewisville Fighting Farmers play football in the fall and they finally gave her Friday nights off so I got her spot. So I copy-edited on the news side on Friday nights for about six years. The last one being, I want to say 2008. Something like that. 2005. When you are sixty-five.

Malmberg

You mentioned that when you got the job with student publications they needed someone who was cheap?

Dycus

Dorothy is a brilliant and innovative woman still in her eighties. She had an extensive background in teaching high school and junior college journalism. She needed help. She did not want to be the director and advisor and somebody the students put out their paper and management and bureaucracy and all of that so she needed...programs like this customarily have a director and an advisor. If they are lucky then they have a business person so maybe you have three adults. Dorothy really needed someone to help her with the newspaper production side. Helping the students say what they want to say better and help them find stories. That kind of thing. I did not know anything.

I was a kid right out of high school—out of college—just graduated. I mean I copy-edited a little and reviewed movies, which is what I did as a student as well as copy-edit but she was kind of desperate and we hit it off and she would tell you she saw something in me that would be worth cultivating. To say she was desperate and needed someone cheap that is pretty...desperate is maybe not the right word, but cheap was sure right. She had very little money to pay. I was happy to have employment, did not know where it would take me. I was living at home and did not have big expenses so I gave it a shot. Thirty-eight years later I quit.

Malmberg

Then you got involved with the HRA in 1977, but before that when you were in college or even before college were you involved at all with disability activism.

Dycus

Not really.

Malmberg

For rights and things before that point [1977].

Dycus

<topic>Sam Provence, Helping Restore Ability (HRA), and independent living</topic>

I was not an activist and I would still probably not be considered much of an activist. I am not sure I ever was. Now HRA, Helping Restore Ability, likes to identify me as one of their founders. My name is on the articles of incorporation that is true but the founder was a charismatic young man with polio. The urban legend is that he was the last polio [victim] in Tarrant County. The last polio victim in Tarrant county. We were colleagues at UTA, I think he was younger, he would have been younger. In an iron lung, slept in an iron lung at night and in the morning he would get up in his...he wore a numa belt, which is a big chest thing that fits on your whole chest and moves your diaphragm externally. That's how he breathed and made it through the day. It was Sam's idea to create the—Sam Provence—what began as the Arlington Handicapped Association I believe is what it was called. Then it had a Handicap Resource Association I believe, then Helping Restore Ability so they could keep HRA in the letterhead. Sam's idea.

Sam was a visionary and he could see what this agency could become, the people it could help. Sam being in a wheelchair, very limited physically, he wanted or envisioned a shared attendant program where you have a cluster of apartments, maybe duplexes, or apartments where people like him would always have access to an attendant. So let's say Sam has a date. So someone would be there in the afternoon to help him get dressed and ready for his date and his date would come, however that would work out, she would drive his van and he could come home at 2 am and there would still be an attendant there. You would have an attendant on duty, three eight-hour shifts, three attendants per shift. He could always come and go and he lived long enough to see that happen.

There were apartments on the east side of Arlington. They are now underneath where one of the parking lots are for the pleasure dome [Dallas Cowboy Stadium] that's where this shared attendant...it was the only...It was right in the ghetto, in the east Arlington ghetto. There was a big light outside Sam's window and someone asked him once, "Well you must like that because that ought to give you safety, your van must be safer," and he said, "No, it just gives them light to take out my radio." He lived long enough to see that happen. My name is on the article on incorporation for the same reason several people's names are. We were there, Sam needed us, and I was certainly not opposed to what he wanted to do. I helped him do some of that stuff. I was not the firebrand that Sam was...Sam Provence. I was not in his league when it came to activism.

Malmberg

So I was told that Sam was someone who would go into a room and ruffle up the feathers and then it was you that would come in and calm things down and get the conversation kind of moving. Can you speak at all to that?

Dycus

That does not sound quite right. Sam was more in your face and I was not in your face at all. I suppose you could kind of squint back into the mist of time and see that happening,

sort of, but I do not see Sam as being the type that would anger people. I would be the type to maybe say "How come you boys cannot get along?" and Sam's would be...if Sam thought something needed to be done, like any activist, and I do not care if you are in Crimea today or the Ukraine, or wherever, Venezuela, if you are an activist by nature you are going to get in people's faces and make demands because you know you are right. You KNOW you are right. And Sammy knew he was right, and Sam was right as it turns out.

Sam, I want to say that he led a protest once on Cooper Street and this was before Cooper street was recessed. Cooper Street did not used to be this canyon where you have a big wall here and a big wall there and you drive under the bridge. There was no bridge and that was at grade level and Sam lobbied for curb cuts and maybe a light because they had crosswalks, had stearies [slang term for cars?] on the street. I am pretty sure they had a light there but at the light change then sixty people would all march across the street and Sam wanted more access to that. I am not sure if he did a sit-in exactly, I do not remember. But Sammy was quite a character. That's getting off your question, but I do not remember the incident you described but it is not outside the realm of possibilities. Who said, it sounds like something Allan Saxe would tell you. It does not matter.

Malmberg

It may have come from...I did not hear it directly from him, but it may have come from him in a roundabout way.

Dycus

Dr. Saxe was a huge fan of Sammy's and taught classes with him, or Sam was in his class I am sure. Yeah that sounds like a Saxe quote to me.

Malmberg

The attendant building. So now it is a parking lot. Were those ever replaced somewhere else.

Dycus

No sir. As a matter of fact, the agency struggled its entire life until...it is doing better now financially, but in dealing with the state and legislator and governing bodies like that you are never safe. You are never secure and the state...this agency is bringing in a ton of money now as compared to what it used to be, but I would not call it secure by any means. Back then it was not bringing in a ton of money and it was even more insecure. It was always a struggle to make it work.

These apartments, somehow we arranged, they were the only apartments that would rent to us. We did have some others. I am not sure if it was before the...I think it was called the Peach Place, Peach Place or Peach Tree. Then for a while we had this program down on the banks of Johnson Creek. Do you know where Johnson Creek is?

Malmberg

No.

Dycus

It is that little creek that runs through the middle of town. It would flood and we had some little bitty wooden apartments down there right on the banks and I still remember one day it flooded and the nature of a flash flood is it...the water rises about a foot, and it stays in the house for maybe 30 seconds, and it ruins everything, and I can still see in my mind the paramedics and the fire trucks coming down there to haul the handicapped people out of harm's way. There was always that kind of...

Everybody said, "Yeah for you but we do not want to rent to you," and I think that is how we ended up in east Arlington because those were the only apartments that would rent to us. The agency sort of phased that program out. The apocryphal story that they used to tell was that one of the attendants got a call one day from one of the clients. The client had dropped a piece of paper, this is a guy in a wheelchair, "Hey can you come help me", "Sure what do you need", "I dropped a piece of paper" and he could of got it but he was too lazy to do it. That kind of hit us like a wet wash rag.

I think at that point, somewhere around in there, the philosophy began to change, maybe we have created a Frankenstein, maybe we have created a system where they are too dependent on us. So for whatever reason, I do not think that after we left the eastside...I think that program kind of came apart. Now what the agency does is provide in-home service where you are instead of everyone living in a cluster around an attendant, the apartment in the middle, they come to you and that seems to work pretty good.

Malmberg

So was that attendant system still institutional?

Dycus

What do you mean?

Malmberg

Well there is a move from institutional facilities to in-home care?

Dycus

No it was much more in-home then a nursing home because you were in your apartment, and then you were in your apartment, and you were in your apartment, and the apartments were all side-by-side as opposed to what we are doing now, where I am right here and the next client maybe half a mile away and the next client may be in Decatur. We take the help to the people now, where they are.

Malmberg

So this system works better?

Dycus

Yes. I think so. I really think it is a lot more flexible and I have got a friend in a wheelchair who is a client. He lives about four minutes that way [pointed north]. We do not have the same attendants or anything but we are on the same agency, HRA. If we were living, and we talked about at one point, maybe trying to buy houses next to each other, but did not do it. For us and almost everybody, I would think, it works better for the attendant to go where you are as opposed to making all the people live within a quarter mile of each other. That would be easier I suppose but that is not going to happen. They come to us and it works really good.

Malmberg

So you lived in those apartments?

Dycus

No. I never did. I never did. Sam did and a bunch of others did but I never did.

Malmberg

Was there dorm living available for people with disabilities?

Dycus

<topic>Jim Hayes and his activism at UT Arlington and on behalf of Helping Restore Ability</topic>

That is a good question. I do not—there must have been, yeah—there must have been. I do not know when it started. Now another champion of that movement was Jim Hayes, if you have heard that name. Jim has been dead now for two years, three years. Jim and Sam, not I, Jim and Sam were the two firebrands, motivating, make it happen characters and they had high respect for each other. Greatly differing abilities.

Jim was a paraplegic with, I am sorry a quadriplegic, but with an indomitable will. Sam was polio with an indomitable will, but Jim had more muscle mass to work with. He took that and made himself into a world-class wheelchair athlete and you could not tell it by looking at him. You know the look of a quad and the look of a para is dramatically different. A quad you think of being somebody, motorized chair, little upper-body, arms cannot do much whereas a para you think Vietnam vet, double amputee, strong as an ox from the waist up. You look at Hayes and you would say he was a para because he pushed his own chair, he was a great wheelchair basketball player until the doctors made him stop, he ran some track. But Hayes was a quad and you could stick a pin into his bicep and he would not feel it. So he made the most of his situation and Sam made the most of his.

Malmberg

Was Jim Hayes involved a lot with the HRA, the beginning movement?

Dycus

Jim did. Jim was interim director for a while, one of our bleakest time. I was board president for a few years in the eighties. Coincidentally some of our worst times. We survived my leadership. Jim was our director for a while, we lost a director, and he came in and tried to help us, and did help us in many ways, brought some organization to it. So yes he...Jim had a soft spot in his heart for HRA and a bigger soft spot for Sam.

Jim Hayes pushed his chair from Austin to Arlington or the other way around, I think that's what it was. Now picture that. He would push all day, sleep, push the next day. There was much fanfare and the cameras came out and everyone cheered. He did that to raise money for HRA, if I recall, because he had that much respect for Sam and believed in what Sam was trying to do. That's a good story. You can find a lot of clips on that. If you found me on the internet in that DD [Texas Developmental Disabilities] council. Somewhere at UTA. Go over there and see Doug Garner. Do you know Doug Gardner?

Malmberg

No.

Dycus

He is a basketball coach. The wheelchair basketball coach. This is the job Doug Garner was born to do but he could not do it until Hayes died. Jim died suddenly and everyone was crushed and the thought was we would never replace Jim, and they did. It is my understanding that Doug is doing a very good job.

So he, I bet you, would have a shrine to Hayes somewhere in his office and you could get your clips. I have seen Jim's wheelchair pushing gloves, the gloves he wore to push his chair from Austin to Arlington, in a shadowbox. So there is going to be some stuff on it if you want to do some interesting reading on it. He was quite a guy, quite a guy. To answer your question he was a big supporter of HRA, a big supporter Sam.

Malmberg

In the early years when HRA was developing, can you talk about some of the first obstacles that you all had to work through to get that up and running?

Dycus

<topic>Evolution of accessibility at UT Arlington</topic>

Well on the campus, UTA has always been a very good campus for awareness, even when I was a student there and I started in '65. There was no mall then, it was all streets. So between what is now Woolf Hall, the old engineering building, and Ransom Hall, that was a street that was not a mall. So you have curbs and Alpha Phi Omega, which was a service fraternity, had all these wooden ramps over all these curbs.

UTA would always move a class if you needed UTA to move a class. There were buildings you could not get in. Preston Hall and Ransom Hall did not have elevators, neither one. So if you have an English class up there, they would move it for you. UTA's attitude has always been very good. Sam tackled that kind of thing. I am sure he did some dormitory modifications, but I do not remember. I am sure he lobbied for that kind of, but I do not remember. I do not remember what was done.

I do remember Disability Awareness Day that he talked to the vice-president of student affairs. A man named Wayne Duke, who is still alive and living over there about ten minutes. He might, as vice-president of student affairs...Jim Hayes and the types of things Sam wanted to do would fall under his area and he would have a much better memory. I do not think he would mind me telling you, suggesting you contact him. He might or might not want to talk. Who knows. But he would be in a position to tell you where Sam and his organization fit in and the things it accomplished, that he helped them accomplish.

We had a Handicap Awareness Day, I think we might have blindfolded Dr. Duke, let him go to class like a blind student. Dr. Nedderman was the president. We ran a classic picture in *The Shorthorn* sitting in his wheelchair. He was in his suit of course. He was a big man, is a big man, sitting in his wheelchair with his knees kind of up because the wheelchair was not big enough for him and he was at a urinal and he had a look on his face of, "Well, well what do I do know?" So from the very top down, the university worked with Sam and I assumed they believed in Sam trying to help that group move and get the things done that needed done. Sam had big wishes, but they were not unreasonable. He wanted what was right. He wanted a chance to compete. He wanted to even the playfield a little bit, if necessary, if we could. The university—it is my memory—that the university tended to go along with that helping him do what he wanted to do.

Malmberg

Outside the university with the City of Arlington and even the greater Metroplex area, how did HRA work with the city and government officials?

Dycus

I do not remember anything specific but I suspect it was pretty...I am sure Sam took his case to the officials, and I used to say that every curb cut in Arlington had, should have, Sam's name on it. That is no longer true because we now have so many curb cuts. But the original, the ones that brought awareness of that kind of thing to Sam, the person who brought that kind of awareness to the city was Sam. I guess it would have been the Arlington Handicapped Association. It had an effect, it did have an effect.

Again, he would go up to any, he would call up any official, and arrange a meeting and go in his iron lung wheelchair, not iron chair but he got this numa belt and someone is pushing him, someone is driving him there, someone is helping him get out of the van, and someone is helping him get in. None of that slowed Sam, not even a little. I cannot give you specifics on what he did with the city, but I would think they knew he was there and they were listening, and where they could I am sure they, because like I said the curb cuts came and other building awareness things, I am sure.

Malmberg

<topic>Service as President of the board of Helping Restore Ability</topic>
Can you speak to your own period as the President of the board of HRA?

Dycus

Well we were a mom and pop board. There was one woman who belonged on a board. No one else had any business being there, including me. I was the closest thing they had to a

leadership package. Articulation, knowledge of the game, willingness to write the letters, make the phone calls, do the...So I wound up being the board president because there was no one else to be the president and I have told people I have blocked it out because it was so stressful. I do not know how many years two years; three years; six years; I think it was five, but we survived that and our leadership pool at the board level strengthened. Other presidents came along that moved us ahead.

Agencies like this, if they survive, they generally take a step over here, and a step forward, and another step sideways and forward, and then two back and then you know...I think UTA, or HRA, was put here to do a job and the people associated with the agency work so hard and their mission was so sound that HRA was allowed to prosper. God smiled on HRA because of the work that would be done at some point. Not only the work that was done back then but the work that is being done now. You can see little turning points.

I went on a fundraising mission with the Sid Richardson Foundation in Fort Worth one day wearing my grey shirt and my lucky tie and we snagged \$64,000 out of that, not that day, but I mean six weeks later (clock in room chimed the hour) and that kept us alive. It kept the agency alive, paid a lot of bills, paid some staff. I went to another, one of the executive directors; she and I went to a line of credit meeting with a bank, dear man down on Cooper. He is now deceased, but he and his vice-president gave us a line of credit, which allowed us to pay our people while we waited for the state to come through. The state is easier to work with now, is my understanding, but nothing that you would call precise, or logical at times, and difficult still, but we managed. The question was what can I recall about my board days? Just doing it, just dealing with everything and somehow making it work.

Malmberg

What were the things you were having to deal with?

Dycus

My own people in some cases. A dear woman, I had a thermal fax machine where the paper is on a big roll and it would just roll off and make a noise, it is an impression on the paper. She would send me these voluminous faxes in the middle of the night and the fax machine was in there and my bed is in there. I would lay there at night and hear this fax paper coming out with the things I was going to have to deal with tomorrow. So it was the common problems you have with not enough money and not enough time. Big goals big dreams, but not enough money.

Malmberg

What were those goals and dreams?

Dycus

Trying to get a shared attendant program going, trying to stabilize, trying to bring awareness to the community, upgrading the board. Nothing unusual, every 501c3 [non-profit organization] faces the very same thing. And we just did the best we could for as long as we could and we just got better. When you were in it, it is easier to look back on it than it was to do it, you know. When you are right in the middle of it it is kind of tricky, but we came through it.

Malmberg

<topic> Dynamics of state funding for attendant care</topic>

Working with the state, you said maybe it is easier now but still difficult. What were some of the difficulties?

Dycus

One of the rules they had was, and this may still be true, is that we are mandated that we cannot turn away a client. So on the one hand you want new clients. More clients more funding. So let's say your brother's in a wheelchair and we sign him up for attendant help. We have to provide the attendant. We pay the attendant and whatever up front cost we pay all of those and then we bill the state and then the state pays us at some point. Meanwhile we are out that amount.

What if ten clients come through the door? Several thousand dollars that the agency has to pay. The state will reimburse, but that is just a strain, it is a huge strain, it is backwards. I think that was true then and I think it is still true now. Either the system has improved or the money ladies, money people, not ladies, all of them, I think they have gotten better, stronger. I know we have more of them. I think a couple of them, their job is to not let anything fall through the cracks.

It used to be with the state that you would fill out this sensitive form and if you got a comma wrong, the computer would kick it out and you would have to resubmit. There goes another month and that is why we needed that line of credit with the banker I told you about. It was not that we...we had plenty of billings, lots of billing, but we could not put our hands on the money and we could not spend it and so payroll was always an issue. I think that is better, I really do think that is better now.

Malmberg

Was it hard convincing the state and the legislature that an organization like the HRA was needed or necessary or that it should be state-funded?

Dycus

<topic>Independent living via home attendant care versus living in an institution or nursing home</topic>

I could not give you a history of that sort of thing. The argument, our argument, has always been this is where the money should go. It should not go to funding nursing homes. It should go into, because you can keep someone in a house, her house, with twenty hours of help a week getting food on the table, getting dressed, getting undressed.

You can keep people in their homes at a fraction of the cost of locking them away in an institution where the service goes down and the quality of life plummets, unless you can afford a grand a month for something and yes getting the legislature, a lawmaker, to understand that, or getting lawmakers in a group, I suspect has always been difficult. I believe that is better now than it was, but that was pioneering stuff back there and it was just not done. It was just outside, too far outside the box, that is why God gave us nursing homes.

So that is the kind of thing UTA, or HRA, worked to change that perception and I think has proven that HRA did and others entities in other states and other parts of the state, everybody this happened over here or over here and all these people are doing this so there must be something to it. But HRA was one of the first that lobbied for that kind of thing, one of the first in Texas I would wager but I do not know that for a fact but I bet it was, bet it was.

Malmberg

<topic>Work on the Texas Developmental Disabilities Council</topic>

Then was it 1974 that you got put on the Texas Developmental Disabilities Council?

Dycus

Sounds about right.

Malmberg

Was that a governor-appointed position?

Dycus

It was one of those things where someone sends your name in and someone appoints you, probably the governor. I can show you my certificate of participation. It is hanging on the wall. What that council did was review grants and we would go to Austin and for lack of three day weekend or two days, jeez that was long ago. I do not remember if my mother or

father, my father was working, so she might have been the one to drive me to Austin. Did they have the meetings in Dallas and I went to Dallas? I am sorry, I do not remember precisely. I remember driving to Austin once after I got a driver's license and a van, which would have been in 1977 so sometime...if you say I was put on that in '74 than '77 I might have still been on it for four or five years.

What we did was review grants people would send us and we would have guidelines and they would review grants to help the state who gets a grant for a project and who does not. So that's what the council, that was my involvement with the council, it may have done other things. It was a lot of fun, a lot of fun. Yeah. Yeah.

Malmberg

What sort of grants were they?

Dycus

Not unlike what HRA was doing. Assisted living. Maybe you would have an agency that was trying to start up and they wanted startup funds. In the grant writing business it is really difficult to get operations. You can get \$100,000 to market a program, but you cannot get \$100,000 to pay salaries, you know to keep the program going week to week. So we would review various projects aimed at the disabilities market. And again I do not remember the specifics on that. I was no more qualified or less qualified than anyone else. I am sure I was representing the consumer, I was not a professional in that industry, but as a user they probably wanted me there for that reason.

Malmberg

Well now it functions, and I thought it functioned then, as an advisory council for the legislature. Did you have a role in that?

I did not. The council had a director and he was paid and I think it was his job to round up these grant proposals and make sure they all got reviewed fairly and properly. He would then take those reviews and scorecards and I suppose move them downstream, upstream, to the legislature. Some would be funded then and some would not be. I think he took our recommendation and then attached his own recommendation to it to see what the council would officially promote. I think that is what happened.

Malmberg

On the council did you find that there were a lot of people who were from the medical side of things? How was the disability community actually represented in that council?

Dycus

It was probably broad representation. If I am representing disabilities there were others. I kind of remember seeing several different disabilities being represented. Maybe some polio. I have cerebral palsy. Big people and little people, I can kind of see a pretty broad...and then you would have professional medical people, the social work component, I am sure. I do not remember how many people. I am going to guess a dozen, maybe fewer, from all walks of life either representing either the professional or user, but again it was a long time ago.

Malmberg

Now the current board has quite a few MDs and rehabilitative professionals on the council.

Dycus

The DD council?

Malmberg

Yes. Were those professionals absent before from the council?

Dycus

I cannot say that. I have no precise memory of how that thing was made up. I would think it was composed how it is now and a pretty broad spectrum of medical. Whatever it is now, I am going to guess it is the same then.

Malmberg

So you do not remember any conflicts between some of the doctors and people advocating for more rehab facilities and less of an understanding of disabilities?

Dycus

I do not remember that kind of thing coming up. I think everyone on that council was on the same page. The grief aspect of that was we have twelve really good projects but can only fund four. Or this project has a wonderful need but they do not seem together, they do

not seem focused. We want to fund them but we do not think they are going to make it, but as far as conflicts between the nursing home industry and the consumer, no, I do not think that was the place for it.

Malmberg

You have been in Texas your entire life. Can you speak to some of the changes you have seen growing up with cerebral palsy and how your life has changed as ideas and opinions have changed on disability over time?

Dycus

<topic>Access to education and work, and the lack thereof</topic>

I was in public school, in special education from the first grade through junior high in Fort Worth. Then it stopped and then my freshman year at Paschal High School there were no note-takers, there were no paid little student stipend people to push you around. There was none of that. You are on your own pal. Get to know people. Ask this guy sitting next to you, Alan Johnson, "Can you take me up the ramp here to Mrs. Vanderbilt's biology class." I did not know how to do that. I was shy and if Alan was Alaina then I really could not do it. I could not ask a girl to push my wheelchair. So the best thing that ever happened to me at that age was special education ending. So at that point I had to get out and socialize and make things happen.

Likewise in college. I had to learn to ask people to push my chair from one class to the next. This is good for you to have to do that. Very good for you. One could argue that that is better than having notetakers and wheelchair pushers provided for you. So that is a change. Is that a better change? I do not know, I do not know. There is certainly more awareness now. You have curb cuts everywhere. You have a whole lot of automatic doors, these are environmental changes.

I do not know about discrimination in the workplace. I know it is illegal but I do not know if it is still done. You would have to ask someone now who is out there looking for work. Attitudes are much broader of course. I have to believe there are more opportunities. I have not been on the market since '68 or '70. The last time I looked for a job was 1970 and I am not looking now. I suspect it is hard to get a job for anybody. If you can do the work...I like to think that if you can do the work and you can get to the workplace and you are not disruptive, then you are going to have a chance even if you are in a chair, even if you stutter, even if you have some sort of physical thing that people are going to react to. If you can do all of those other things I would hope you would have a chance to get a job.

In 1968 at UTA the newspaper offices, The *Shorthorn*, were downstairs, which is where they are now, but you could not get down there. There was no public elevator. There was a bookstore elevator back in the back. Have you ever been in the Shorthorn office?

Malmberg

Yes.

Dycus

Have you? Well that entire area from edge to edge was the bookstore warehouse. The entire warehouse for the bookstore of the college was where The *Shorthorn* is now. Actually it did not even take up all of that space. Where the reception desk, The *Shorthorn*, from that area going back south, that was the counseling office, which is now a whole floor in Davis Hall. So you, do I have that right? I do not think so.

Let's go back to the first statement. I think the whole thing was the warehouse. To The *Shorthorn*, if I am going to work for The *Shorthorn*, then I am going to have to navigate that elevator. I do not have a key, are they going to give me a key? The director of The *Shorthorn*, an English professor Mr. Blakney, he was a journalism guy. He liked to play jazz piano and drink Old Crow. And he said, and this is a quote, "If you can find a way down here I will put you to work."

I would like to think that is how the marketplace is today, but I do not know. You would have to ask somebody who is looking. But I think overall society has broadened its views. It is more willing to give you a chance than maybe it would have been back then.

I do not remember ever being discriminated against. Some discrimination is a chip on the shoulder of the alleged victim and I did not have that, my dad did not have that, my parents did not have that. We just got up and did the job. Went to compete. I do not recall ever being stifled, but then I was pretty sheltered. The college environment is different than the mainstream, but I never had any trouble making it work at UTA. But I could do the job to. Do the job and I was able to get down there, found a way to get down there, and he did put me to work and that is how we are all these years later.

Malmberg

How did you end up getting down there?

Dycus

That is a good follow-up question. The bookstore did not give me a key, which is probably just as well because if anything went missing they would have come to me.

So there were two bookstore ladies, Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Harris. They each had a key and they went home at five. So after class I would get someone to push me down there, this would be like 1 or 2 o'clock and then I had to leave by 5 o'clock or so because Mrs. Thomas

and Mrs. Harris went home. So I could work in the afternoons, which I did two or three days a week.

Occasionally I did not get out in time if they went home and I had to be picked up and pulled backwards up two flights of stairs and let me see now; the stairs I do not think are there anymore. The stairs I think have been removed. But if you can picture the stairs that go from the elevator to the student center down into student affairs, it was that distance, it was two flights; it went down then did a landing and then went down, so you have right angles there.

My mother pulled me up those stairs more than once and a manual chair by herself. That is a learned skill. It is like bailing hay, you are using muscles you usually do not use. I still remember that. The editor one of those years said, "Let me help you with that, I will help you with that". He only volunteered once. He never volunteered again because that was tough but that is how I got down there and that is how I got out. Good follow up question from you.

Malmberg

About the Texas Developmental Disabilities Council. Do you still keep an eye on what they are doing?

Dycus

(Shakes head no)

Malmberg

<topic>Advocacy for in-home and community-based care</topic>

No. And so you obviously have advocated the home and community-based care.

Dycus

I did advocate that yes.

Malmberg

Before I came I looked at the last Texas Biannual Report from 2012 and what it said is that Texas is still investing and favoring large institutional facilities over community-based care. After I did some looking around I found that Texas only spent \$912.6 million on home-and community based care and Texas has a population of about 25 million; whereas, New York spent just under \$5 billion on community and home-based care with a population with 19

million. Could you speak to what you think about why Texas is really one of the last states to still be trying to hold onto this funding of large institutional facilities instead of switching to home based care?

Dycus

Too many Republicans in charge. It is too logical to do it the right way. Too many people would be helped, but we do not have the lobby and we do not have the funding to further the campaigns so there you are. We have always done it this other way and that is very cynical of course and there is some over simplification, but it is hard to get some politicians to see the logic in anything.

I can make a strong case for home-based, and at this age if it did not exist where would I be right now? I would probably be here but I would have to scramble around and find somebody to help me and I would have to pay them.

What if I did not have pretty good retirement and pretty good savings, my father's savings? I could be in a nursing home. I do not belong in a nursing home. The fact that I am not, I am still driving around putting gas in my car and going to restaurants and renting movies and paying taxes and moving—commerce still moves through this house because she and I are not in a nursing home, neither one of us. My mother will be 93 next month. [speaking to his mother who was also in the room] "What is your birthday mom? What day were you born? You remember?"

Mrs. Dycus

Do I remember?

Dycus

Yeah when was your birthday?

April. Well I should not have sprung that on you. [turned back towards me] 27th of April 1921. She will be 93 next month. Now there are lots of people who would put her in a nursing home just because she is 93, at a much higher cost, so this is incredibly logical. Why do we not do it in Texas? You would have to ask the people who are voting against it and see what they tell you.

Malmberg

Do you still do work in the community with disabilities rights or activism or awareness?

Dycus

I help HRA from time to time with things they want to do. They have a luncheon coming up in Dallas in May with Marlee Matlin who I believe is deaf but an actress [She is the only deaf performer to ever win an Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role]. We are all looking forward to that. I think I bought a table for that.

When they need me to do something I do it, but as far as being on the frontlines...but HRA are not marching at HRA these days so there is not that to do, but I do work with them on various projects. Sometimes if things they produce, the printed materials, I will look at that some, copy-edit some of that. So yes I am still in contact with the director and the staff. Wonderful, wonderful people and truly doing the Lord's work. They and other agencies like them. Cannot say enough for the fact that they are there to help people like me who do not belong in a nursing home stay out here so we can stay out here where we can talk to people like you.

Malmberg

You said they are no longer out there doing the marching. Do you have any remembrances of those days?

Dycus

<topic>Gay Vandiver and gradual involvement in disability rights</topic>

The '60s passed UTA completely by. The '60s did not exist to UTA. We went from 1958 to 1974 and that whole span, although we did have some fuss over the Rebel theme, which I did not really participate much either. There was a young woman who came to UTA, Arlington State, I guess it would have been UTA then, from Amarillo.

Gay Vandiver...and Gay Vandiver had muscular dystrophy, the killer of young adults, and she was pretty weak, but strong willed and beautiful and she wanted to go to school. So she came down here, somehow, got an apartment on Border Street, which does not exist anymore, if you know the parking lot to the activities building, Border is now what is UTA Boulevard. right? She was about a block west of Cooper Street, south side of the street on UTA Boulevard. That was all houses and she had an old rattletrap van and she was fiercely independent and she did not care much for groups of wheelchair people banding together for warmth. It just was not her and I got my early philosophy, some of that, from Gay. So I was not much of a joiner of things like that.

It was years later when I saw what that agency had a potential to do that I guess I sort of got involved. But it was a very slow start so I was not much of a, the only marching I have ever done was in the Fourth of July parade with another lady in a wheelchair where we tied PVC pipe to the side of our chair and stuck the pipe in the hole and string the banner

between us. Then we had to walk at the same speed for what, two miles, in the Fourth of July parade. Other than that I am not much of a marcher.

Malmberg

So have you seen in your life and other people with disabilities lives change at all with the passing of the ADA in 1990?

Dycus

Oh yeah. Certainly opened up possibilities. The ADA does not have an enforcement clause, however. If you see something wrong all you can do is point it out and even now elevator buttons are still hard to get to.

I had an architect explain that to me one time. He met me at UTA. He was a visionary character, do not remember his name or company, but he wanted to do a better job in this handicap accessibility business. We were standing there at the elevator in the student center right above the stairs that goes down to Student Affairs and I said, "Look at that height of the elevator button, I still cannot reach it. Why do you put the elevator button so high?" He said because the law gives you a range from here to here and that is chest high to an architect. That is why he puts it there. It is not illegal it is just stupid.

But yeah as far as opportunities, people in the employment business and people who specialize in the ADA could give you more insight into that. Again, the fact that I am not looking for work nor have looked for work for a long time may not make me the best qualified. As far as curb cuts and elevators I do not feel shut out of very few places that I would want to go now. They all have accessibility. They may not have an automatic door, which I wish they had. There is a medical facility in south Arlington on Matlock that I took my mother to get some x-rays a month ago and you cannot get in the front door. Now they can see you in there at the reception desk and if you can sit there and wave somebody will come and open the door, but they do not have a button. So is that in violation of the ADA? I am pretty sure it is. Can I make them put a button in? I do not think so. I think I can sue them and if I win they have to put a button in. I think that's how it works.

If you want an ADA expert there are ADA experts I can put you in touch with, a really good one if you want one, if you have one then they would be the one to answer that question. Have you gone to the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities website?

Malmberg

I believe so. There as a link off of one of the sites.

Dycus

<topic>Coalition of Texans with Disabilities</topic>

It is probably CTD.com or CTD.net. Those people are right there on the front lines and if you look at a picture of their board of directors it is a multi-faceted bunch of people as far as disabilities. A student of the movement would be well served to talk to those people because I would bet you every one of those folks is more of an activist than I ever was and they might give you some insights into the way it was and the way it is.

I went to Austin four years ago. Early one morning, we left here at like 4 o'clock and we had to be there to testify in favor of a bill that would give modified van companies the right to sell a new van as opposed to being forced to go through a dealer. The dealers' lobby was all wired up about this and they were wrong and they lost. The bill passed and that was what was supposed to happen. There was even then an interesting group of people with disabilities.

One little guy on a gurney in a tie, he was not wearing a suit coat but it was kind of draped over him, I do not if he was on his side, I do not remember now quite how he got around, but I think he was a masters graduate of Texas Tech. I forget what he did for a living, but he was sharp as a tack, but frail. Appearing...but he could not sit up. So he got around on a gurney and it was a gurney a big, it was not a wheelchair man, it was on four tall legs and wheels. Kind of a covered bed situation but he was dressed as a businessman because he had on a yellow tie and he had his suit coat and he had a white shirt and he was there to testify.

So I, my disability does not even count compared to some of the folks out there who are making a whole lot more of themselves with bigger issues. If you can find some of them. But CTD can put you into touch with those kinds of people if you want to pursue this. Now this is for masters you are saying?

Malmberg

I am actually a doctoral student.

Dycus

Doctoral student, my goodness okay.

Malmberg

<topic>Sam Provence's and Jim Hayes' legacies</topic>

Is there anything else you wanted to share about maybe Jim Hayes or Sam or about your role in things?

Dycus

I am sure I have rambled. They left...the legacy we leave is we do not always know what that is going to be sometimes. Jim was able to see his legacy a bit more than Sam was. Sam died a bit prematurely, although he had polio. Because he had polio his chest muscles were very weak and I think technically he died of pneumonia and I think he was a substitute teacher in the AISD in history at his death.

Hayes did not take care of himself. He drank too much coffee and ate too many candy bars and smoked way too many cigarettes. He should not have lasted as nearly as long as he did so he kind of beat himself up. But Hayes legacy was all these young men in the wheelchair program who brought awareness that look at this population.

Look at what these people can do. Us and folks who are nearly as capable of we are, give us a chance. Sam fought for the same thing. I wish Sam could know somehow, maybe he does, what this agency has been able to accomplish and it all came about because he was lying there in this iron lung in this little frame house in east Arlington dreaming up, plotting these, activities for his parents and brother and two sisters and his friends to do the next morning. We would all get up and we would all go do it because Sam was just that charismatic and forceful and he could talk you into stuff and thank goodness he was not a con man. It is great when people with that kind of ability put it to the right endeavors as opposed to hurting people. Sam used all his talents for good. He had a bunch of talents and a lot of physical hardships at the same time.

If you have ever seen a documentary on polio it is unnerving and what Sam must have gone through, and his parents, is horrible but he rose above it. Sam could not breathe and yet he had some reason to go to New York or DC Some reason to fly to the east coast for some sort of disability-related, and he did not tell American Airlines that he could not breathe so you can kind of frog breathe, you can google that. Frog breathing is somehow swallowing air and forcing it into your lungs and I suspect it is pretty hard to do, but Sam could master that and that is just one of the stories that people knew him tell. That Sam somehow flew to the East coast and back and could pretty much not breathe the whole time, but he was that determined to say or do whatever it is he though needed to be said or done. Men of indomitable will, those two guys and this city is forever in debt in so many ways because they came along. What else you want to know? Like I said, I am rambling here.

Malmberg

That is all I had to ask unless there is something else you wanted to say.

Dycus

That is fine.

Malmberg

Thank you for your time.