

Kent Gardner

Administrator at the University of Texas at Arlington from 1967 until 2005.

*Interview conducted by
Sarah Rose and Trevor Engel
in 2016 in Arlington, Texas
Transcription by
Nichole Sheridan*

Disability Studies Minor
Special Collections and Archives
University of Texas at Arlington
Copyright © 2016 by University of Texas at Arlington Libraries

Biography

Gardner grew up in Southwestern Oklahoma, got his teaching certificate and taught at Stillwater high school. He started at UTA in June 1967 and throughout his time here held about three or four different positions within the university. Before he took the position Vice President of Student Affairs he went back to school at North Texas and got his doctorate in higher-ed adult education with a minor in student development. He was head of Order of Omega, and advisor to student Congress and was in charge of housing. Gardner played a key role in making the campus accessible and providing accommodations for students with disabilities.

Topics discussed

- Background
- UTA atmosphere and job history
- Funding for accessibility issues on campus
- Handicapped administrators day and campus awareness of disability
- Cooper Street and Regents meeting
- Contact from other schools about accessibility
- Defining diversity and the role of students
- How UTA started accessibility
- Resistance from the community and solutions
- UTA's impact on disability and accessibility

- Athletic scholarships for disabled students
 - Harrison and Nedderman administrations
 - White House visit
 - Experience with people with disabilities at school
 - Traveling with wheelchair basketball
-

Rose

This is Sarah Rose.

Engel

And Trevor Engel.

Rose

<topic>Background</topic>

Interviewing Dr. Kent Gardner on January 13, 2016 for the Texas Disability History Project about his work in student affairs from the 60s **until the odds** at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Let's just start with your basic background, where you were born, family?

Gardner

That goes way back! I grew up in Southwestern Oklahoma, small town. One of those places where you do everything, you're in athletics, you're in band, you're in vocal music. You didn't have kids that specialized, everybody had everything. We weren't very good in anything but we did everything.

Then I went to Oklahoma City University on an athletic scholarship and did my bachelor's degree there. I was going to go into law, history, political science, pre-law. Then my former high school principal became the principal at Stillwater High School. I'd also gotten teacher certification as a "fallback" as they say. He called me and said he had an opening for a teaching and coaching position at Stillwater, would I like to come up there? I thought "Well, it would be kind of fun to see what it be like to coach and be on the other end of the bench." I went to Stillwater and started teaching and coaching. I did my Master's in student personnel psychology. I got so interested in students, you get hooked on students, teaching, and everything, coaching, that I never got back to law school.

I graduated there, and then there was an opening here. Then it was just changing from Arlington State College to the University of Texas-Arlington [UTA]. The Dean of Students then, **Dr. Bob Dollar** had done his doctoral work at Oklahoma State [OSU]. They had a new, very low-level entry position created. He called OSU and asked for a recommendation of someone for this position. They gave my name. I came down and interviewed for it and thought it would be neat to start doing some college interviews. They offered me the job. At first I turned it down because school was about to start in the fall and we'd already started football practices, two-a-days. I could've probably gotten out of my contract but I didn't feel like it was the right thing to do. Maybe two or three weeks later they called me back and said "We really want you to take this job, if you agree to take it we'll hold it open for you until first of January or the first of June." I said I could be out of my contract by the first June, so I took the job and came down here in June 1967.

I was thinking I would be here about four or five years, and forty-five, fifty years later I'm still here. UTA was growing and changing so much that I actually had probably three or four different positions all within the university as it was changing. Our first Student Affairs staff, you could put them all around a very all conference room, there were two or three different departments or areas to work with. That ended up to my being the Vice President of Student Affairs. I have no aspirations to become a university president anywhere, so that was my ultimate career goal. I loved every minute of it. I never didn't look forward to going to work. Some days are better than others obviously; it was never a dull moment. You knew what you thought what you were going to do, but you never knew for sure.

Rose

So you got a doctorate along the way?

Gardner

Yes. I did. I came here and had a Master's degree, and while I was working I decided I needed to have that final degree if I was going to move up to a VP. I had been a finalist in several vice presidential searches, and if you are the only one that didn't have a terminal degree, you're not gonna be the one selected. I wouldn't select me either with that competition. I decided to go back to school and went to North Texas and did my doctoral work at UNT, in Higher-ed Adult Education and a minor in Student Development. I waited until my kids almost got out of high school and then did my doctoral work. It took me almost ten years to do it because I was working full-time.

I took one year off because I was on the committee to the self-study for the university. Besides our graduate jobs, that was another full-time job. I enjoyed going to class a lot, but took me forever to do the dissertation because it was so hard trying to block out large blocks of time...this was back before computers... You had paper and I wrote most of my dissertation two blocks of time.

One was which I was called for jury duty in Fort Worth, and back then you sat there for a whole week. I took all my stuff with me and I never got called on jury, I sat over there for five days, just totally oblivious to anything else and just worked on my dissertation. Then my wife and I went to Las Vegas one weekend and while she was gambling I stayed in the hotel room and finished writing it, most of it. It was interesting.

I think part of the reason it's good to have some time--at OSU at the time you couldn't go right from your bachelor's degree to the Master's program without some experience. Having taught for a year or two before you do the program, I think it's a good idea. I've done my doctoral work, had a job where I had more experience and some of my faculty members that were doing the courses, so I found out real early that I was going to talk a lot in that class or not much at all. Some of the faculty really liked me having practical experience to share with other students, and some of the faculty members were intimidated by me having that practical experience that they didn't have. Real early on you decide "I'm gonna do a lot of talking here or not gonna talk much at all in this class."

Rose

What did you end up writing your dissertation on?

Gardner

It was match comparison of academic performance of Greeks versus non-Greeks, fraternity/sorority members versus non-fraternity/sorority members. One of those typical good news-bad news dissertations, that there was no significant difference in their academic performance. It didn't mean they were hurting anybody, but it also didn't mean they were really helping anybody.

Some groups did better than others, I did like twelve different comparisons. It did show that some of the organizations that actually put an emphasis on academic preparation by study buddies or big brother/sister by majors, some of those kinds of things. Their organization did have significant difference in academic performance. It gave us a place to go from sometimes. I have worked with fraternity/sororities forever, and you always say you always brag about having better grades than the average student, but does that mean you are just letting people in that are smarter or are you actually doing something that helps them have better grades? The reality of that is they're probably letting people in the have better grades to start with. In the main, no significant difference.

Rose

You said you have kids?

Gardner

I have three children and five grandchildren. Grandchildren range in the age from twenty to seven.

Rose

And your wife?

Gardner

My wife and I just celebrated our fifty-fourth wedding anniversary in December, December twenty-third.

Rose

Congratulations! What's her name?

Gardner

Nancy, we met in college. She was nineteen and I was twenty. We were much too young to know any better, but it worked out alright

Rose

<topic>UTA atmosphere and job history</topic>
Sounds like it! What was UTA like when you arrived?

Gardner

Small, or smaller. At that time there might've been around seven or 8000 students, maybe a little less than that. It was just starting to really grow. The change from Arlington State was part of the **Indian system** as I said, moving to the UT system was a really fortunate move I think in some ways. It allowed us to recruit some faculty members that probably wouldn't have come to UTA, but being in the UT system gave us an extra credibility--although what happens in Austin, they don't really give a toot about UTA anyway. It all happens at UT Austin for the region's and everything else.

It was interesting from the standpoint, there were a lot of students that came to UTA that were very bright and very good students, a lot of first-generation college students and students that were from this area, seven county area primarily. They could've academically gone to a lot of places, but financially they couldn't so they came to UTA. A lot of them still lived at home, a lot of them still had a job so it was a struggle to get a student involved in their education endeavor. They're all excited to be there, so it was a good time.

I was not much older than them, some students were older than I was. I was probably twenty-four, twenty-five when I came. I had some students that were older than that in student government and some of the fraternity/sororities. It was growing and student affairs staff was very small. It was not nearly encompassing all the areas of what you think of today as the "traditional student affairs division."

As an example, one of the early presidents that I worked was a MD, a MD, Ph-D, Dr. Harrison. Health service has been part of student affairs, as a MD, he wanted it directly under the president's office. It didn't make a whole lot of sense organizationally, but it did from his standpoint. That started my quest in terms of seeing that most organizational charts are based more on personalities than they are on reason and logic. That some of the changes they placed.

Rose

Can you tell us a little bit of the Order of Omega?

Gardner

Yeah, it's a national honor society for the top three percent of the fraternity and sorority population on campus. If UTA had a thousand members of fraternity and sororities, they could select thirty members out of all the groups. They had to be juniors and seniors and it's based on their academic performance, their service to their own organization, to the campus, and then to the community. The leader should grow within those areas. We have about 500 campuses around the country and Canada. Probably about seventy percent of them go on to graduate or professional school. It's a really good group of students to work with.

I was asked to take it over from Pat Halloran who was director of our Greek Advisory, University of Miami in Florida where it began. We had about the eighth or ninth chapter here at UTA. He was getting ready to leave to be an Executive Director of one of the national fraternities, and he wanted it to stay on a college campus. He called me and asked if I would take it over. I didn't know any better, I said "Yeah, okay, I'll do that." A week later I get a cardboard box with ten file folders, four of which were inactive of the ten chapters and a checkbook with ninety-seven dollars. That was the organization.

For years it was the help of a lot of good professionals I got to volunteer and then we finally established a board, became a 501c(3) nonprofit corporation and started the student scholarship and now given over \$1.3 million in student scholarships. Until ten-twelve years ago it was all done with volunteers. I finally

got some bigwigs, hired some full-time staff, and in 2006 built the office here. It's been a great thing to be a part of.

Rose

Going back through before we focus on some disability stuff, can you walk us through your career, positions you had from '67 on and some **real/reel** highlights.

Gardner

I'll try to, I'm not sure if I can remember all... The first position was the title Assistant to the Dean of students. Part of that position was to help develop the Greek community at UTA. Texas A&M did not allow fraternities and sororities at that time, they since now do, but then they didn't. We had local organizations that were basically fraternity/sororities, but not by name. They had funny--I don't know where some of the names came from. One of them was **Avalontea**, I can't remember...

Anyway they were all going into affiliate them with national organizations. My job was to help all those local groups make affiliation and set up the fraternity council and paneling council. This was before we had the NPHC [The Nation Pan-Hellenic Council], historically black groups or the multicultural groups which are mainly Hispanic and/or Asian, depending on where you were in the country. That was one of the main thrusts of the position.

I also worked as the advisory to student Congress. That was where that connection came in. Then because nobody else either wanted it or had any background, I was the financial officer for the division, budget officer...being promoted to a level of competency. I'd have one semester of accounting as the undergraduate so now I'm in charge of budget...which was actually a great fortuitous kind of activity because once you know about the budget you know where everything is and is a good way to get a feel of the bigger picture.

Later I inherited housing as the person who is in charge of housing... We still had Dean of Men and the Dean of Women back then. The Dean of Men left, he was in charge of men's housing. The Dean of women's at that time unfortunately died at a young age. They thought that would be a good time to do away with Dean of Men/Dean of Women and be more modern. I inherited all of housing except at that time housing had a split. The financial part was in the business office, all the rest of housing was in student affairs, which didn't work very well. We finally went to the president and talked to Dr. Nedderman and said "Give all of it to business, or give it all to us. It can't function very well if we can't control everything." He put it all in student affairs.

As you go through different phases of being assistant to the Dean, Assistant Dean, the Associate Dean, and then the Dean of students. Then assistant and associate VP, one of those times was interesting because we had a combination of academic and student affairs, so my title was "senior associate vice president for undergraduate academic and student affairs." You couldn't even get that on a business card, so that structure didn't last a very long time. That was when **Bob [Robert] Witt** was president. They changed it around, and he asked me if I would be a vice president. A vice president of administration, and I said no I wouldn't do it unless it was student affairs. He changed it back to student affairs, so that's where I made my last career move. All that time is you're doing these things, I've had direct responsibility for every office and student affairs division except financial aid. I'm glad about that because financial aid was one area I never really wanted to have. It was fraught with potential problems because you could be doing the best job and the feds or somebody change the regulation and you may not even know it, but you'd be out of compliance. That was one area I didn't worry about.

Rose

What was the accessibility situation like when you arrived?

Gardner

There really wasn't much of one. I'm trying to think that, that was one of the questions you sent me... The best I can recall, we might've had a couple of vision impaired students. I don't recall even having mobility impaired students on campus.

Rose

Students who used crutches?

Gardner

Might've been, but they weren't very visible. If they came to campus, we probably had no handicap parking. They might come and go to class and be gone. There was no awareness of any of the disability population, probably not until Jim arrived on the scene.

Rose

The first evidence that we found is from 1970. Really early.

Gardner

Jim came before that.

Rose

In 1971.

Gardner

Yeah. He was student vice president for Tarrant County. One of my real good friends...

Rose

We're speaking with Joseph **Roe/Row** tomorrow who was part of this..

Gardner

This was in...

Rose

<topic>Funding for accessibility issues on campus</topic>

1970. So what it was they were using Senate Bill 111, which was the Texas version of the Federal Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. It said anything with state funds has to be accessible.

Gardner

504?

Rose

This is way before 504.

Gardner

Alpha Pi Alpha service fraternity had some wooden ramps that they had for mobility impaired students.

Rose

Do you remember those?

Gardner

I do, I do.

There weren't curb cuts yet, but what they would do is they would take the wooden ramps, little small wooden ramps up to the curb... Go from street level to sidewalk level and they would start to replace those things with concrete ramps and they would probably have a drainage pipe that would run through it for the street guttering system.

Rose

Interesting. You are thinking those are more street ramps rather than building ramps.

Gardner

They were street ramps.

Rose

Okay, that actually makes a lot of sense. Sam Provence was on campus, and Joseph Rowe had polio.

Gardner

Sam I remember, Joseph I don't.

Rose

His arms and his chest were paralyzed. He drove with his feet. I think he may've used a ventilator, he was in an iron lung, he and Sam Provence were similarly... The polio rehabilitation community at Berkeley was incredibly important at getting consciousness going. We're wondering if that might've--they had that experience on campus...

Gardner

It might've because I think Sam was probably the one that first dropped the kernel of having a student organization for disability.

Rose

Handicapped Students Association.

Gardner

He may have actually started that dialogue before Jim even came over from Tarrant County. Jim was vice president of Tarrant County, and I had a real good friend that was Pat Razook who was student activity director at Tarrant County and worked connected with Jim as student vice president. He said he came over to UTA, told Jim that. That's how Jim decided to UTA was from my connection with Pat Razook. Jim came over in... He transferred '71.

Rose

How do you spell the name of that person?

Gardner

R-A-Z-O-O-K. He was student activity director of Tarrant County-South campus, which at that time was the only campus, which was the first of TCC campuses. Part of TCC was very new about that time, probably a lot of the newer buildings, I wouldn't say they were accessible, but they were probably a little easier. Ground-level entries and that kind of thing, they probably had ramps and other kind of things. It'd be better than having older buildings like some of our older ones here that weren't close to being accessible.

Rose

26:32 Which the Movin' Mavs still play, the campus was all built in the late '60s

Gardner

That's part of what was happening at UTA, we were growing and developing. As we were developing a consciousness of disability services, it became easier, again, before the law required it, to start to build things this way. You probably come across from talking to Wayne, but one of the interesting things-- in '74 apparently...

Rose

That timeline you found? It's from the minors actually.

Gardner

Jim was very very assertive, in a good way. He was trying to elevate everybody's consciousness, but especially the administrator's consciousness. He asked president Wendell Nedderman, Wayne was probably vice president of him, but he might've been Dean of students, and several other administrators, **Elwood Price** maybe, asked them to go from Davis Hall to the University Center. This would've been in old Ernest and **Ginnings** wheelchairs, not the highly mobile ones of today... Go from Davis Hall, cross Cooper, go over to the University center, get a drink from a water fountain, go to a restroom, and make a phone call. This was before cell phones, so pay phones, none of which were lowered. Bathrooms didn't have wide door stalls, no curb cuts, and none of them made it to their accomplished goal of doing those things. That one thing caused Wendell Nedderman and Wayne to say we have an opportunity here as the campus is growing in terms of our new buildings and the physical structures, to not do what the law is going to say eventually, but what's right. Here's a population of students we could attract that is being out of the mainstream. Their foresight was very important in terms of coming up with things like the curb cuts and wider stalls.

Eventually we took Brazos Hall-- at that time we only had Brazos, Lipscomb, **Patial**, and Trinity residence halls. Trinity had no elevator, and Lipscomb about the same way. Brazos had common bathrooms, and we didn't want to do that. Brazos was also the best located, in the middle of campus, was built on the ramp system. We could take the first floor ramp rooms, with very little adaptation, especially from the south side was ground-level basically. We could make those rooms mobility impaired accessible. They shared a bathroom with two rooms. That was our first targeted area for housing.

Rose

That was men only?

Gardner

No, we actually made it coed. Having a bathroom in between two rooms, you could have two women's rooms and they had no connection. That was in the time the late 60s early, 70s when the students are pushing for coed housing anywhere. It was the time of free loving. (Laughs). Drugs were a very common occurrence. If you are male you had a one-way ticket to Southeast Asia. It was an interesting time for a lot of reasons. It was another reason we made it where you could put two groups, or four students in a quad room that way, or in a duo room that way-- the least amount of things being done to it would allow us to do that.

Rose

Who pushed for that?

Gardner

I don't know that there was a lot of pushing being done. It was Jim and Sam, people coming to me and Wayne and saying "What you think about this?" We said "That makes sense. Let's try this." I can't remember a time-- there must've been a few things that had a price tag to it that we had to probably look at in terms of...

Rose

A **delegated banker/someone Baker [32:30]** was, there was a little bit of cost stuff early on? But Wendell Nedderman was very clear about...

Gardner

Back then--I'm gonna sound like "back in the day talk" to you, which I hate, but we also had--it was much more collegiate environment. The campus was small. Everybody knew everybody. The director of physical plant was a wonderful guy... I'm trying to think of his name...

Rose

Everett Shrine/Strine?

Gardner

Everett **Strayhan**. Everett would somehow find money in his budget that wasn't budgeted for some-- like curb cuts and stuff like that. He was very supportive too.

Rose

Do you happen to know where he's from? I found someone in the white pages with that name, and a son with that name but it was about seventy miles from here.

Gardner

I'm pretty sure that Everett is deceased, I don't know for sure, but I think he's deceased. It was one of those deals where you say "Can we do this on the cheap?" They would say "Yeah, probably." That's how these things were done. I can't remember a lot of external funding to tell you the truth, I'm sure we got some grants and some other stuff.

Rose

There was one grant in the '70s after the Rehab Act, Jeremy found this out...The Rehab Act 504 wasn't enforced until the protests, so that's all over the country. Sam Provence was at the Dallas sit-in apparently for 504 in 1977. You guys got a grant from the Rehabilitation Act.

Gardner

I think we did, it's in here early on. In '75 it talks about the grant money from Texas rehab-- no, that was when we started...Jim was hired as the coordinator of the program. We might've had a grant before that...Texas rehab gives a grant in '73.

Rose

It's from the federal act in 1973.

Gardner

<topic>Handicapped administrators day and campus awareness of disability</topic>
Yeah. It's hard to involve them in the mobility impairment.

The wheelchair basketball team was probably the single greatest factor in enhancing awareness of students with disabilities in general. They became very visible on campus, they had accomplished a great success in their national championship runs. Student body got behind them greatly, we had more people at the wheelchair basketball game in Texas Hall than we had at a regular basketball game. There weren't as many of them of course.

One has kind of a funny antidote for you...we didn't have a wheelchair basketball team then, we had some wheelchair students that wanted to play, and we had some community people who were mobility impaired and got together with them. They formed a team, I think they were the Free Wheelers before they were the Movin' Mavs. They challenged us, us being the administration, to a basketball game. In fact, two things to remind me to come back to later, I have got a picture somewhere of the wheelchair basketball team in the White House with President Clinton. It would be good to have to put in archives. They challenged us to a basketball game.

The majority of the administration, Wayne Duke, Will Parker, myself, and a few others, **Jim Garrett**, who recently died, we got together and said we'll play a game with them. It would be good exposure, and we said "Let's not beat them too bad! We're trying to help them with their self-esteem." We didn't know how to play, we didn't know how to pick the ball up, put it against the wheel to get to come up to you, to have a shooting position or anything else. There was a small gymnasium in the middle of campus, but it's not there anymore. We had this game in there, and Jim had set this up with the UTA Police Department so we were being introduced. One of the UTA police officers came out and gave me a speeding ticket for going too fast in my wheelchair. Then we started playing.

They spotted us about twenty-five or thirty points, and at the half it was like forty-five to twenty, we haven't scored yet. They spotted us another twenty-five or something at the half, and still beat us like crazy. We said "To hell about us being nice to them, we're trying now!" Until you experience that kind of thing, we didn't know much about what was going on, but then-- one of the first wheelchair exhibitions that was in Texas Hall, where we played basketball until the new special event center was built. Sometimes they'd get rough in the games. One of the students who actually could walk, he wasn't confined to a wheelchair, but was eligible to play in a wheelchair...they're playing and two chairs hit together and he falls out of his chair. You could hear and feel the audience's gasp and everyone was like "What do we do?" He gets the up and walked to his chair, and in every body's mind all the kids were

playing were mobility impaired and so they had to be in a chair. Some smart aleck in the audience said "It's a miracle he could walk!" so it just shows you the sick mind of college students. (Laughs)

Then the process began to increase, and then the exposure to actually get more students. Then a wider variety of the disabled student in terms of other disabilities, hearing impaired, visually impaired. The office started really growing and developing at that time.

Rose

One of the things that really struck us with reading the model campus proposal, that Hayes and Provence put together in the early '70s. Illinois started in 1948, Berkeley came up in the 1960s and particularly people who needed attendant care to do daily living stuff, but it's all mobility impairments. Jim really early on was talking about blind students, deaf students, he had a very broad vision of disability.

Gardner

Yes and no. Yes, that became part of the package because of Jim's own injury. He probably was much more in tune with the mobility impaired community, not that it detracted from doing his job, just human nature that if you're a history faculty member, you're going to encourage someone to be a history faculty or history student. You think everybody should be.

I think too about that time there was more community awareness, when I say community, I mean the larger Arlington-Dallas-Fort Worth awareness. As we had started this process more students and family members with students who were not thinking about going to college would say "It's not too far over to Arlington or from wherever they were in the metroplex. Let's try and give this a shot, and see what happens." Sometimes the parents of the disabled students were very protective. It's hard to let go even more so than the helicopter parents of today. That also added to how we got into the loop.

Rose

Interesting. Going back a bit. Apparently there were actually two handicap administrator tours. The one that you told us about, we've never heard about the official challenge. But Wayne Duke was the only one who showed up the first time in 1972, and apparently he fell over on this icy ramp outside of engineering, which was the only building that had a ramp at that point, the loading dock ramp. He fell over and he got really angry.

Gardner

That sounds like Wayne, he might've even torn his suit if I recall. I thought that happened at the same, I don't recall there being two of them. I'm not saying there wasn't, but I remember the one with Wayne and Wendell. I did not do it for some reason, I don't know why I didn't, but I do remember the one with Wendell and Wayne, maybe a couple of others.

Rose

The Handicapped Student Association was trying to figure out who work with, but he was the only one who showed.

Gardner

That sounds like Wayne. He was very interested in all of our students, because none of us knew anything about... One of the things probably that was tangential to this thing was the wheelchair basketball students, especially became very prominent on campus, involved in student government and other kinds of things. Students who had no experience with disabled students began to-- "How do you get hurt? Why are you in a chair? Tell me about your injury? Have you always been sight impaired?" It made the comfort level of the regular student population much more likely to see them as collegial peers. They asked questions and therefore became more themselves or educated themselves. A lot of our mobility impaired students were veterans back from Southeast Asian war, some were victims of gang shootings, **Randy Snow** was a name you probably come across, one of our greatest mobility impaired athletes, a bell of hay fell on him when he was working on the family ranch in East Texas. "Hey man, which your story?" It was a great educational environment for everybody.

Rose

Disability was just part of the diversity of UTA, but it's really not...

Gardner

They were limited by classes because even then some of the disciplines, the buildings weren't all accessible. When Jim came over he always used to say he had to be a history major because it was the only one he could take the classes by being on the first floor.

Rose

History and accounting. Do you remember the process of updating the classroom buildings?

Gardner

As newer buildings were built, the first group of buildings was right along the mall. From College Hall, University Center, Ransom, Preston, Science Hall, and then stopped at Cooper Street. Then engineering on the other side of the mall, which had been a street. The rest of the new buildings that were built were all done with elevators. As they all had their elevators, then of course mobility impaired students could go anywhere. The disciplines, the classroom disciplines became less centralized and more-- if you're in engineering, your classroom is going to be in one of our twenty-five engineering buildings... that's a joke. A little facetious there. (Laughs).

Rose

Did classes ever get moved early on?

Gardner

That's a good question. I think maybe they probably did. That in between stage we probably did move some classes to accommodate students who had to have course as one of their requirements for

bachelors in something. I can't give you a specific, but you're probably right some of that had to happen on a case-by-case basis.

Rose

Do you remember anything about the Handicapped Students Association? We found little bits and pieces... you know more than me, but it's a very—[points to Trevor].

Engel

Just a few of their minutes and stuff like that.

Gardner

It was a very small group. Sam and of couple others being the real movers and shakers.

Engel

David Brock, Rena Williams, a few of those names.

Rose

You recognize those names? Here's a list of others.

Gardner

I do. David Brock, I remember that name. Those don't ring too many bells [referencing a list supplied by Sarah Rose]. John [Dycus] came here...I'm not sure when he came to UTA...

Engel

I wonder if it was '72 or '73?

Gardner

He came in as a student, then he started working in the student publications area, working for Dorothy Estes. She was director of student publications. [John] Very visible on campus, both as a regular staff member and had one of the early vans that was driven by hand controls.

The Handicapped Students Association had a split role with the community. They were working with the Arlington City Council and the city as well as the University, and the city's approach to getting into the disability services arena as well.

Rose

Sam Provence was here twice...A business major before campus was accessible, and then came back as a history of master's student. His brother and sister said that he was one of the biggest pushers as far as wheelchairs, but at one point he got administrators in chairs and said "You push me around, you make it as bumpy as possible" and it was when they were going up and down stairs. 50:50 Apparently he also went to the middle Cooper to protest at some point but we don't know when.

Gardner

<topic>Cooper Street and Regents meeting</topic>

That I don't remember. Cooper was just starting to become an issue as we built the Fine Arts Building on the west side of Cooper. The Physical Education was over there, the swimming pool--Davis Hall was one of the first major buildings to consolidate the administrative offices-- my first office was in College Hall. Student affairs was in College Hall at first, which made a lot of good sense because it was right across from the University Center, it was where the student action was.

It became real worried about it because the pedestrian crossing, and students wouldn't go to crosswalks, they would just go. People think the street got lowered because one of the handicapped students got killed there, but it really wasn't. It had been in the mill for some time to do it...

Rose

Since the '60s, right? We've got discussions dating back to the '60s.

Gardner

I'm trying to see when he got killed... Andy Beck...

Rose

'89.

Gardner

'89? That gave it an extra push. People don't know this and it doesn't need to be in the story or archive, but I think Andy had been in the pub at the University Center before he was killed crossing Cooper Street. He may have been a little impaired besides just the mobility impairment. That may be antidotal and maybe not be true, but that was always just one of the stories I heard.

The difficulty was that Cooper Street is also a state highway, it's 157. We had to get the University Board of Regents involved, the state legislator, and the state highway department. Can you imagine three major bureaucracies to agree on what day it is? It was really difficult and long process.

In fact, the original project was to make it a gradual burn starting from where the flagpoles are in front of the library and a wide pedestrian walkway that would have a low grade to peak in the middle of Cooper Street and then come down to the front of Texas Hall. You wouldn't have to have the elevators or the curb ramps to get across that we have now. For some reason, and I'm not sure why that didn't...it totally evolved. Now we have the depression of it with the walkways over it. I thought it would've been aesthetically more pleasing to have the gradual burn and wide walkway anyway. It was going to be

almost as wide as the mall area between the Science Building and classroom building. Just like having ramps on the buildings, you find people without disabilities walking up the ramps because it's easier than the stairs. That would be the normal thing to crossover to the other side of the campus.

Rose

One thing that we found really interesting was that Hayes and Provence contacted the Regents. We have a letter back from the Chancellor to Nedderman and we haven't been able to nail down if they actually met with the Regents, but they requested. If you have a larger context of this too [showing Kent a letter].

Gardner

Let's see. I don't recall this. It doesn't surprise me. **Dr. Lamater** was a medical doctor. He would probably be a little bit more in tune to...

Rose

Oh. That's interesting. We haven't gone through all of the minutes of the Board of Regents meetings, it's a lot of boxes. Why don't you explain? Since it's your theory? [Addressing Trevor]

Engel

It's been a while.

Rose

Basically, it's that Senate Bill 111 has passed and that requires state entities to make things accessible. The federal level has no enforcement at all. It's really state-by-state. California has a lot of activists, and is more...

Gardner

The feds are really good about requiring things and not funding them (laughs).

Rose

That was federal things. Of all the states, Texas was one of the last four states to pass an architectural barriers act. We didn't find the higher education coordinating Board for the Regents saying anything about accessibility until 1975. What Trevor came up with, and was wondering if Hayes and Provence and UTA get the UTA system and coordinating board, become aware that this law exists.

Gardner

I think they made them aware of it, obviously it did because of this memo. I don't recall them going to a board meeting, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. My guess is the response here in my quick review here, fairly administrative border play response kind of thing. It's like the Chancellor saying to Wendell, "Do what you think you need to do." I don't recall too many projects or things that went clear to the Board of Regents for approval. They may have...

Rose

In 1975 if you renovated a building or built a new one, there was a form that said it was going to be accessible in this place. There's nothing before that. Do you remember Jim Hayes' fifty-two page proposal model campus plan? It's undated. It's probably in 1970, 1973 maybe 1974, right around there. We're wondering if that's a part of what was produced.

Gardner

This might have been what they were talking about in the letter. Who is it addressed to? It doesn't say does it?

Rose

No. There's even drawings of accessible toilets.

Gardner

No. I don't recall this. It doesn't mean that I was in the loop either. I think I would've remembered this. Jim may have written this with the intent to go to the Regents and whether he did or didn't, I don't recall.

Rose

We're certainly curious about what role UTA played in educating the rest of the system. UT Austin had a handbook...

Gardner

Did Wayne recall this?

Rose

We may not have had it then. I can email him. The Provence siblings think that there may have been a Regents meeting. We're waiting to get a file box from the Office for Students with Disabilities. Apparently he saved everything, but the records are really scattered.

Gardner

I don't recall the document itself, and/or the meeting. I do recall the other components in the system were not as far along as we were in some of the early kinds of things.

Rose

504 protests, we've had a few articles from like El Paso...

Gardner

That's what I think it really started to take effect. We never had to worry about being in compliance with 504, because I think at that time we were already down that road a bit. Of course the ADA came in after that. I don't recall us ever having an issue. Obviously, there were things we didn't do, couldn't do, or decided not to do, but I can't recall any time there was a threat of somebody was going to sue us because we didn't do something.

We had a couple of students that came in, one female student, I can't remember her name right now... That I had a great deal of round and round this with... That had her support dog. She tried to take it to the Board of Regents meeting that was on our campus, I told her that I would need to have some documentation that this was actually a support dog, and had been trained. She said "Well, I trained him." I said "Well, show me where you got the credentials to be a dog whisperer, and trainer." That's where the conversation ended. The point was, I can't remember too many really contentious kinds of things. I know there must of been things that we didn't do, as additional students came with different kinds of different disabilities.

There was a really active hearing impaired student, I can't remember his name right now. He was here for a while, he went to North Texas, may have came back here, but was never really satisfied with the kinds and amount of services we were doing for the hearing impaired...how can I forget his name? But I did. There should be something in Jim's records about him. He was always angry about something that wasn't being done. Those students were few and far between.

Rose

<topic>Contact from other schools about accessibility</topic>

Did you guys get contacted by other schools in the system or elsewhere? Like how did you do this?

Gardner

We did, mainly through student affairs, through our state association and some of our regional/national association. They heard what we were doing at UTA, and we would have some, do a program. Jim would be with us, and many more like "Here's how we evolved" and "Here's some of the things that we can think of if we did over again we would do differently." We just shared some of our history of where we moved, and how we moved to some of these things.

Rose

Do you remember when that started?

Gardner

In the 70s, early to late 70s.

Rose

It was really very early on. UTA was spreading the word.

Gardner

Yeah, I think we were. As Wayne was always fond of saying, it was the right thing to do...somewhat selfish too, because it was a different group of students for us to have, and we were thinking about student diversity in a lot of different ways back before diversity was a topic.

Engel

<topic>Defining diversity and the role of students</topic>

That's also something that we found, the student congress or some organization defining diversity, including disability as diversity, which doesn't happen very often.

Rose

In 1975 Student Congress Committee on Minorities.

Gardner

I was the advisor then.

Rose

Right there, the first part of it [showing an article to Kent Gardner].

Gardner

Yeah, this just shows that students picked up on the awareness.

Rose

There's a lot of back and forth that student congress would pass resolutions saying "It's inexcusable that this hasn't been done yet, or shamefully few resources." There was also a petition in '89 or '90 about additional mobility access. Were you the liaison to student congress? Did you actually talk to them about this kind of stuff?

Gardner

Yes, for a long time. Not just me, you may be getting a sense of one of the things I'm most proud about my time at UTA student affairs was how inclusive we were. I mean in a very broad sense, we felt like students needed to have a voice. They're part of the community, and up until that time frame--student congress and student government as it was called in many places, would raise money and put the bench on the mall with their name on it with "Class of '52" but we felt like the students needed to have a say.

For example, we have students on every university community, most of the decisions where decisions are made, other than tenure community. It shows their involvement, and we wanted them to be involved. They heard the same dialogue, they were involved in the same kind of discussions we had. Student body president would come to our staff meetings. The resolutions and things were written, somebody wanted to get their name in the paper, it's political just like in regular politics. What I'm saying is they did it not only for their own exposure, but some genuine feelings about stuff. Only thing we required them to do is make sure they did their research, so if they passed a resolution they didn't look silly by-- for example, asking for a stop sign on a particular corner when there was already a stop sign there, which had happened. I have to defend you! My good friend **Bill Banker** who was the academic vice president was always giving me hell about congress resolutions. My retort to him was "Okay, I'll take all the student congress resolutions for this year and you'll take the faculty Senate resolutions for this year and let's compare them. We'll see which ones crazier!" He said "Nevermind!" (Laughs)

Engel

Students just want their pub back, right?

Gardner

They did, and I supported them in that. What happened to the pub, it actually went away because the drinking age changed, it gradually got back to twenty-one. The majority of our students weren't twenty-one, so we either had to turn our eye to fake IDs or try to run something that wasn't... It always been set up that it had to pay for itself, we wouldn't subsidize the pub. When the vast majority of students couldn't use it, and they knew we would check IDs, you have to do actually look like the picture on the ID, it wasn't a fiscal feasible thing to do.

Rose

These presentations that you guys are doing about UTA and accessibility, any ideas where there might be records? Which organizations? Publications?

Gardner

There's a state association called TACUSPA Texas Association for Student Personnel Administrators or something like that. That would be one of my target areas. Then there was the SWSPA [Southwest Student Personnel Administrators], Southwest, which would've been a four state Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, a four state region.

Rose

How do you spell that?

Gardner

Texas Association of College University Student Personnel Administrators. That acronym. It's still active.

Rose

The other one?

Gardner

Southwest Student Personnel Administrators. If there's minutes of that timeframe, actually, it would be programmed. It would be a copy of programs, that's probably the best place to find it.

Rose

Once we go through the Jim Hayes' records, his sister already donated some, and is probably going to donate more.

Gardner

Jim might've saved some of those, I betcha. He was a saver too. He might've kept the conference program with him being on a panel. It ties back to the timeframe when and where it was.

Rose

<topic>How UTA started accessibility</topic>

Do you have a sense of what led him to start the FreeWheelers? We're going to talk Ron LaBar who was at the first practice, tomorrow, what was your sense?

Gardner

I think two things, Jim's competitive nature and how that tied in to showing the students ability versus disability. Then again, I think wheelchair basketball was just coming on the scene. It had been around for a long time, but many young men mainly coming back from Vietnam, back from Southeast Asia without an arm or leg, whatever, looking for a sports outlet. That's what really started to get a national presence, and the national association and magazine. Some of those things were just getting in the mix about that time.

Rose

We haven't been able to figure out where he found out about it. He wasn't physically connected with disability rights groups very early on before the accident...

Gardner

He may have been more than you think.

Rose

We'd like to find the connections.

Gardner

I think Jim was blazing some new trails, so I think he may have reached out to some of the national groups, or may have been reached out by the national groups. Jim was kind of a loner in some ways, if you hadn't picked that up in some of the interviews. He would not be unwilling to do some national kinds of things, later on he did a lot of that in terms of the veteran's games...Jim had a little bit of fear of losing control by having a national directives... That's just my own take on Jim that might've slowed that process down a bit.

Rose

Some of the other disability historians have asked is UTA a direct outgrowth, was it through the polio community? Is this basically homegrown with Jim, and there happened to be people here, or are there connections?

Gardner

A little bit of all of them, probably more homegrown in terms of homegrown being the metroplex and Jim as an individual, Sam as an individual. They were educating the rest of us.

Rose

Interesting. Were you still in charge of housing in 1978 or so?

Gardner

No, I think Will Parker was.

Rose

We're still not quite sure about the Provence versus Hayes connection. Provence and Dycus and Hayes had set up the Arlington Handicapped Association in 1976. Provence was working on the apartments that eventually became Pearl Street Independent Living apartments that he lived in. Then in 1978 there were seven students who got student aides to help them with daily living tasks. They could live on campus then.

Gardner

Some of them did live on campus, yes.

Rose

What do you remember about that?

Gardner

I remember we did use Brazos again, and maybe the first floor of Lipscomb. We helped, we being Jim, helped recruit some of the aides, to have several different aids for one student to have one individual with them twenty-four hours a day. We had some students with attendants, some moved in, some would come real early in the morning and be with them during the day, come to class, and leave at bed time.

I don't know when we started the next group of apartments. Trinity was never accessible and **Pacial** would've been, but the common bathroom was an issue. We didn't cross that bridge. It was a long time before we built our first group of apartments which was right across from the tennis courts there, Centennial Court on what's Greek Row now. That would've been in the 80s. By then, everything we built, a percent of the rooms would be handicap accessible.

Rose

That's interesting. It seems like in the 80s there were people coming from Kansas and Indiana to go to UTA because it was accessible. It's from newspaper articles.

Gardner

It may have been, at that point a lot of the disability community had a great word-of-mouth system. Especially the hearing-impaired community, I found had a really great word-of-mouth community.

Rose

Hearing-impaired or **Deaf-sign language using** would you say?

Gardner

Both, especially the **Deaf** community. We would always see a lot of new students and when we did the admission process Jim would always be involved and make sure he looked at what accommodations we had or we could do, what we couldn't do. It wouldn't be a bad experience for the student to come in thinking one thing, and in reality be something different. Jim was also put on all the new construction on campus. He was a member of the committee that oversaw all the new construction on campus to make sure that was taken into account.

Rose

How did you guys get all the money for this early on? Even later? Interpreters are really expensive.

Gardner

They are expensive. The student service fee advisory committee was really good about appropriating some of the student's money for that.

I should remember this but I don't, because you're right, the interpreters were very expensive, so it was hard to find as we got more and more of a need for it. We were luckier because in the metroplex we had at least a little better of pool than somebody at Texas Tech. They have the largest student population or as large as ours, but much less of an interpreter pool to draw from. I think that, I don't want to tell you something, I don't want to make something up...I think the majority of Jim's budget came from student service fee. It seems there may have been some outside funding, either federal or state for interpreters. I can't say for sure, but I do know it turned out to be a fairly large amount of money because of the cost per hour. Especially as you get into engineering disciplines where it's not just interpreting what a person says, but you have to understand the concepts to be able to relay that back to the client... Basically an engineering degree and interpreting skills.

I can't remember too much of a time where the student's service fee didn't fund a request that he made, which again speaks to the students involvement in it. They would always turn down other things, I would always tell Jim "You got it made, you got the sympathy vote. You can roll in with a couple of students in chairs and everybody goes "Yeah, whatever. That's okay. That'll work."" (Laughs)

Rose

1:21:55 Mentions a handbook created by the Handicapped Students Association's that student affairs had, and UT Austin also had one. It's in the early 70s, we haven't been able to find one, but I was just curious if you remembered anything about that?

Gardner

I don't.

Rose

Or any discussions with Austin?

Gardner

Not a lot. We didn't talk to them much. We called them our South campus just to piss them off. In reality, seriousness, it's like comparing apples to horses. The resources that UT Austin had were basically limitless at that time, and the Regents would do whatever they thought was good for UT Austin legislatively, and funding, etc. This is just me speaking, but I feel like it's fairly accurate, the other components other than the med schools, like UT El Paso and later UT Tyler, Permian Basin, as long as you didn't make a lot of ripples or screw up real bad, they just kinda "Go about and do your business, thank you."

I have some good colleagues in student affairs down there, and we would share some stuff, but it wasn't as applicable as it would be for UT El Paso and us or some of the other schools in the region and us. It was like going to the University of Arkansas where you're basically screwed because that whole campus is

just one set of big hills after another, for mobility student's standpoint that would be horrendous. I'm sure we did have some of that...

Rose

There's was a lot of freedom it seems like.

Gardner

Yeah. Back then we were given X number of dollars. Obviously, there were formulas for tuition fees and the state was actually giving us money to run the place. A lot of that was marked for faculty salaries and certain things you had to use certain monies for, but locally derives money, student service fee, which they don't have any more, it was pretty wide latitude as to what you could do with funds like that. There were still some parameters on it, but that's where most of the money came from...and money from fiscal plant funds, because it was part of the growth of the campus.

Rose

<topic>Resistance from the community and solutions</topic>

Interesting. Did you see any resistance from faculty, staff, or students?

Gardner

Some from faculty, there's horse's asses everywhere, but some of them were... I hate to overgeneralize, but the biggest resistance, at first I think overgeneralized that "a student with a handicap was intellectually incapable of doing my class" kind of thing. A little bit of that, not a whole lot.

The biggest resistance came from when we started to, we could've told them, but we asked them about giving students extra test taking time. Being a faculty member myself, I understand not wanting to let my exams out of my control, out of my sight, just as you have trouble with someone taking the test early or late, you can't ever make it the same test because someone will find out about it. That kind of dynamic, but that's why we created the testing center. We really had to work on its credibility, to say "You give us your test, we will guarantee that monitoring is done for the extended test taking time. Besides that, now you don't have to do it." The law says that you're required to do those extra five hours, or three-to-one, whatever the ratio is for test taking time. "We'll do that for you, we'll put them in a safe location." Most of them came around, but there was that reluctance. It was little, it wasn't a big deal.

Rose

How did the testing center come about? We really haven't heard. Hayes kind of hints that the the Adaptive Resource Center, particularly for blind students even in his really early proposal, but how did that come about?

Gardner

The testing center came out of the Adaptive Resource Center and the Disability Services Office. As we got more students, and I don't know whether it was 504 or ADA that had some of these requirements built in about extended test taking time. We decided that whether to fight the battle with the faculty for them to

do the extended test time, if we could show them that we were on their side and create the physical location... At first we did it, they'd come over to our offices and take the test, we would have them in my conference room... Seriously. There wasn't a physical location. After all of these things evolved, we finally found the physical space, and I guess it's over in University Hall, I'm not sure.

Rose

It is. They just redid it.

Gardner

The trust level went way up. As one faculty member would do it and say "It went all right." The credibility grew. It evolved. The first idea, it was a terrible environment. Our offices were down on lower level of the University Center, a lot of us were before I moved to Davis Hall...It's noisy, there's stuff going on like a University Center should be, so here's a student trying to take a test and it was like "This isn't good." Then we would try to find space in the library, and have somebody be with them to monitor. That's when we were actually thinking, we need to find a place and make it so that that's what it's built for, a testing center.

Rose

<topic>UTA's impact on disability and accessibility</topic>

Interesting. Where do you see the national impact of UTA and disability? What are the impacts? There's nothing really I want to highlight, I'm just curious. Regionally?

Gardner

I know we were ahead the curve, regionally. There were national places that were further ahead than we were, probably back to the when the GIs were coming back from World War II that were some of the first campuses that took it seriously.

Rose

Like Illinois.

Gardner

Yeah. Our impact, I would say Texas, and especially the Southwest was our main sphere of influence.

Rose

Like how did we actually do this?

Gardner

Yeah, we had a lot of calls from our peers. It's the same way, a different subject matter but it tells the same story...When the state of Texas deregulated tuition, because of the funding issue, the president asked me to set up a model for how we would come up with the math to deregulate tuition. I just expanded the student service fee model, and put the student body president in charge, they chaired it. The vice president for finance, the vice president for student affairs were ?? 1:31:57 exafecio members of the committee. We had X number of students, X number of alums, X number of community leaders and a parent of a current UTA student, somebody who was gonna have to write the check. We were the first one to do that.

All the rest of them who were going to deregulate tuition committees were just faculty and staff, and might have a student on it. Our students started telling other students about what they were doing and that became the model that other places picked up on to say that "We need to be involved in this as well." Those are some of our proud brags that when we created these things, again we think for the right reasons... The good news is, Wayne had a philosophy that was really good. You don't suddenly change when you put the cap and gown on to graduate, students were smart.

If you took twenty students and twenty faculty members, and gave them the same set of data, they'd probably come up with the same resolution. We never thought that because someone was a "student" that they couldn't do these things or couldn't understand them. By doing that we never had any problem with a student passing what needed to be passed to get the job done, they took ownership. "Okay, this is my school, this will make my degree better." I think other places were shortsighted by trying to sneak around the corner so to speak, then causing a confrontation. I think we didn't because of our basic philosophy.

Rose

That's really interesting. Can you think of anything else? [Addressing Trevor]

Engel

Did you read UTA magazine much?

Gardner

Do you mean the current UTA magazine?

Engel

It's been going since the 70s I think. Did you know Donna Darovich? I was reading through all of the UTA magazines, all of the issues...

Gardner

Oh yeah. How exciting, you have a very dull life! We're going to have to get you out of here more!

Engel

It was special collections, one of the more exciting things I've done.

Rose

He gets paid!

Gardner

Give Trevor a more exciting life! I know, I'm just teasing.

Engel

When Donna Darovich became editor of the magazine, she really started paying a lot more attention to accessibility, so I don't know if you know a lot about her or her involvement?

Gardner

Donna was a student here. She was also editor of The Shorthorn, the campus paper.

Rose

She graduated in '71, I think.

Gardner

Somewhere around there.

Rose

I was having trouble getting in touch with her, and I wrote her at her UTA mavs account...

Gardner

She may be retired now, but she's still here in the area. She lives in Arlington. She was working for Tarrant County College, TCC.

Rose

Yeah, there being a new campus and decided to go a new direction. There were some political stuff there, so it's been hard.

Gardner

Anyway, Donna would've been somewhat a contemporary of Jim and the stuff we were doing.

Rose

And John Dycus.

Gardner

Yeah, and John was there, as a student he was probably writing for The Shorthorn in the early days of him being a student. Donna and John would've formed a personal relationship as well as an understanding way early in the time. When she went to work at UTA later on doing the magazine, I think that would've been a natural connection that way.

As a student she would've done a lot of the write ups about the basketball tournaments. We hosted the national championship a few years, like every four or five years UTA would host it. It was a big campus and community wide activity to come up with some money and take care of the athletes. Just to pay the bills basically. Did I read it? Probably not as much as I do now. I don't read it now unless I see my name in there somewhere.

Rose

<topic>Athletic scholarships for disabled students</topic>

One thing that Jeremy found was that UTA set a real standard, by starting to offer full scholarships for athletes and that that actually changed things on the national level.

Gardner

We were the first campus to award athletic scholarships to disability students.

Rose

I think UTA still has the most funding in terms of proportion.

Gardner

I wouldn't doubt that, yeah. Which also originally were all basketball players, and we had one female student who was mobility impaired, but she was a marksman and would compete nationally in some of the shooting competitions.

Rose

Monique someone?

Gardner

Monique, it was Monique.

Rose

It was also Darlene Hunter came through much more recently.

Gardner

I think she was the first non-wheelchair athlete to get a scholarship. Then we had a female tennis player. We had some male athletes, like Randy Snow that were both basketball and tennis players. In fact Randy became world-class in his tennis. We were the first, I'm very confident saying we were to give athletic scholarships to disabled students. That was funded by student service fee money.

Rose

That was right around the time the ADA being passed? Do you remember or were you involved in any of the discussions of how to respond to the ADA? Or disability?

Gardner

Yeah, primarily we left it up to Jim. Jim was director of the program at that time. Everything from bringing stuff up at staff meetings to... I'm not sure when Jim started working for me or was one of my department heads...we have a history of revolving people around to which VP they reported to...At first I think he reported to Wayne originally, and then it got to be me one time... Anyway, we would ask him to stay on top of any new regulations or things we weren't aware of. Things we needed to be planning for now for somewhere down the road, and where did he see some things going. We didn't have a clue, we were not educated enough to... We became more educated, but wasn't like we had a crystal ball. If Jim hadn't been there, or Sam, I know we would've gotten on this train as fast as we did.

Rose

Did you see a big difference between the Harrison and the Nedderman administrations?

Gardner

<topic>Harrison and Nedderman administrations</topic>

Other than the fact that Nedderman was probably more student oriented. Dr. Harrison was very academic, as a M.D. and a PhD. I don't think he understood student affairs role. That's not unusual for a lot of university presidents to look at student affairs as the fun and games portion of the University. Wendell was much more, whether he was to begin with or not or whether we educated him, he was much more aware of the importance of students and their involvement, and how that would be beneficial to him as president.

In other words, do you want to have the students be your colleague or enemy? Harrison wasn't here all that long, and Wendell was here a long time. I would say he was fairly, Wendell would be more into the "I see where you're going." I don't think Harrison would've gotten in a wheelchair and gone across campus, let's put it that way. Wendell did at least one time.

Rose

Witt was also, in the sense that he took the program and went to Alabama. They have great funding there.

Gardner

Bob, I talked to him this morning on the phone. I called to tell him I was tired of him winning all the national championships. He's Chancellor now of the Alabama system. Bob didn't know anything about wheelchair athletics until he came to UTA, and he'd been at UT Austin, the Dean of school of business there, before he came to UTA. He became very supportive of the program.

One of the first things he did when he got to Alabama--I think he actually started the women's program in Alabama first. I think they had a women's wheelchair basketball team before they had a men's team. I don't know whether Jim went out there physically or not, but I know there was a lot of conversation back and forth. I'm not sure they had much of adaptive PE or campus awareness either in Tuscaloosa until... I'm sure they did, at that point in time legally you had to, but because of the experience here, it just added to the "We needed to be a player on the other side as well."

Rose

Are there other people you think we need to talk to? We're going to come back from Dorothy Estes, and Donna Darovich, and there's one oral history with Dr. Nedderman, Gerald Saxon is trying to get us in touch for a follow-up.

Gardner

<topic>White House visit</topic>

I suggested **Dave Moritz** and Mike Moncrief.

Dave was one of the real financial benefactors from the outside community, in fact he was one of the outside folks that we invited to go with us to the White House. That was an experience in and of itself, and that was Jim. Jim had these ideas, he come up with them and I go "They're not going to invite us to the White House!" I said "Write them and see!" We got with one of our local congressman did some work and I'll be darn if we didn't get an invitation from the White House to come see President Clinton. I also said "They're going to do a security check on my background and they're not gonna let me go! They're going to say "You gotta wait outside, you don't meet the security clearance!"

This might be of interest to you, an anecdotal thing... We had access to everything. Jim and the kids seem, they all wanted to suck up to the photo ops with the wheelchair kids. We had senators coming out of the woodwork to come take a picture and "come in my office" kind of thing. A few of them you could tell were generally interested--we did some touring before we went to the White House. One of the wheelchair basketball students rolled up his chair up to the **electorate** in where the State of the Union was given, and we're all taking pictures. Which one was it? It was one of our Hispanic students, there were two of them, and they started a business building athletic chairs.

Rose

Oh, Per4Max? There was also **Tod 1:46:29**

Gardner

Yeah. It was the two kids from California.

Rose

Hernandez and

Gardner

You got the names, I can't remember which one. Anyway, everybody was being overly nice and the people that were there they said "Nobody gets to go there." We were supposed to have a ceremony in the Rose Garden of the White House. We go in and they give us a tour of the White House and it started raining. We couldn't go out in the Rose Garden, but there was a room there called the Diplomat's Room, next to the Rose Garden. They told us to go to the Diplomat's Room, and of course all the press is in there, and they're behind the press line... thousands of flashbulbs, and here comes President Clinton.

Jim and them had a jersey for them, a basketball. He makes a few remarks and then Jim gives him the basketball and the jersey. Then they usher the press out. I think that we're done, and Bill Clinton stayed and talked to every one of the students about... Without getting political, personally he's a **scroungal** in his personal life, but you couldn't not like the guy. He made you feel so important and sincere when you talked to him. It just so happened that one of the guys I played basketball with in college, **Harry Vines** ran the disability services in Arkansas.

Rose

Oh, I've met Cheryl Vines!

Gardner

Okay, Harry's wife. He was a high school All-American basketball player and was in charge of Arkansas's basketball team and disability services. Bill Clinton knew him through the time that he was governor of Arkansas. I said "Do you know anything about wheelchair basketball?" He said "I know it through Harry Vines, whatever the name of the state services there in Arkansas is." I said "Harry was my suitemate in college." He went "Oh!" Then we started talking. President Clinton walks off and the president [of the University] says "Do you know somebody from everywhere?" I said "Well, it's kind of that 6° or 7° of separation from Kevin Bacon time of thing. If you talk to somebody long enough, you're gonna find some connection. Anyway, it was a wonderful experience. Regardless of who the occupant is of the White House, it's a trip to go there. It's very impressive and you look back and "God this is pretty cool."

Rose

<topic>Experience with people with disabilities at school</topic>

Did you have any experience working here with people with disabilities? Any of your students?

Gardner

No, not students. But we had a minister of one of our churches that was blind, and as a high school student I got a little bit of understanding and he was really good about not saying it was a disability. That was my first awareness from a small little town like I grew up in. I'm sure we did have somebody who was either impaired, polio, farm accidents or something, but I was too naïve to have that register at that time.

Then when I was in college, OCU, my undergraduate at a private Methodist University, there was some blind students there with seeing eye dogs to help navigate around campus. I got to know some of those students, general collegial. We didn't have when I was in Stillwater teaching--some of the disability students were probably treated more like special ed students in the public school.

Rose

They didn't really have a right to attend until 1975, it was really the teacher and principal.

Gardner

It was more enlightened district like Stillwater would've been because hopefully because the University. I think there were probably more stuck with special ed students, if they were addressed at all, or sent to a state school. That was the model then, they would be sent to the Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

Rose

I don't know if you've ever talked to Penny Acrey about her experience as trying to go to school, it was really...

Gardner

Be sure and tell Penny I said hello. We go back a long ways when she was a student. Tell her not to tell any stories on me.

Rose

<topic>Traveling with wheelchair basketball</topic>

I can't remember if I told her we were talking to you. I remember she mentioned your name fondly. One thing I did want to ask, travel and how the Movin' Mavs got around? Buses weren't accessible, how to travel to tournaments? If you know?

Gardner

Yeah. We bought a van, actually it was more like a bus, a big RV. I'm not sure how we finagled it, but we did. It may have been through Jim's connection with Moritz. I don't know whether it had a lift on it or not, lifts came in later on the University bus system. We could get them on and off the bus, and we had a trailer to put the chairs in behind it. We had student assistants that went with them, that would load and unload the chairs.

Rose

We talked to **Brian Sims** and **Jeff Johnson** in facilities. They said some of the facilities people volunteered to go and be timekeepers and load stuff.

Gardner

They did. That's how the transportation and of it came into play. I forgot about that motorhome.

Rose

Hotel rooms?

Gardner

Yeah, it was hard to find motel rooms that were accessible. Some of the hotel/motel chains came on board faster than others. We knew where to start, which ones to look. A lot of places we went to play were smaller cities, college towns.

Rose

Are these community teams or college more?

Gardner

It was both. First it was a community team, that was the FreeWheelers. We didn't have enough to have a team of just UTA students. Then the FreeWheelers evolved into the Movin' Mavs.

Rose

I was wondering about who they were playing.

Gardner

They would mainly play teams from city recs, a team of veterans usually that worked out and played wheelchair basketball.

Rose

I'm trying to figure out how this-- Jim Hayes seems to be pretty important in developing this.

Gardner

There were other universities that would play. The University of Illinois, maybe Whitewater.

Rose

Illinois, Minnesota, a few others. **Southwestern Savannah**, just a couple others.

Gardner

This was before that even. The FreeWheelers would play community teams...and as we got to the competition on the schools came in much later, that also became an issue. Travel became very expensive to go to Illinois to play, or to Minnesota, Wisconsin. There weren't a lot of local competition. Other universities didn't come on board for quite some time after that. Arizona came in in that timeframe, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State. I think Oklahoma State, but that was way way down the line.

Rose

I think some of those still have teams now.

Gardner

A lot of those things they would come and go. Somebody would come in and start something, they would have a shorter shelf life. We had to ratchet up the budget quite a bit for the travel.

Rose

What about the student affairs versus athletics? The fact that they aren't under student affairs? Some of the facilities people said there was some tension on campus.

Gardner

There was. I'll tell you this, if you'll leave it off the record, but I'll tell you anyway, just don't use this.

[Recording breaks]

Gardner

The physical arrangement for the veteran games for the obstacle course, so our carpentry people probably built the stuff that went into the ramps and the turns. He would've done that for Jim... Some of the other things like redoing the width of the stalls and doors.

[Recording breaks suddenly]