

## **Larry and Mayling Barcroft**

### **Maintenance Man and Librarian of The University of Texas at Arlington**

*Interview Conucted by  
Alyssa Christine Whetsell  
In 2016 in Arlington, Texas*

**Disability Studies Minor  
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#### **Biography**

Larry Barcroft was a carpenter and maintenance man. He moved to the Arlington area in 1955 and began his career in the carpentry shop at the University of Texas at Arlington in 1979. In this position, he helped to make UT Arlington more accessible for students, faculty, and staff with disabilities.

Barcroft met his wife, Mayling, on the first floor of the library in September that same year. Mayling began working in the UTA library in 1964 and retired from there in the early 2005 and her husband retired soon after she did. Larry, and Mayling live in the Arlington area not far from UTA.

#### **Topics Discussed**

- Remodeling UTA to be wheelchair accessible
- Wheelchair accessibility on campus
- Change in the University after becoming more accessible
- Blind Students on Campus
- Jim Hayes and the Movin' Mavs
- Librarian of UTA, Leveta Hord
- Handicapped Parking
- Changing Cooper Street
- Marches across Cooper Street
- Mud Pit at "The Mall"
- Possible future Interviewees

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#### **Whetsell**

This is Alyssa Whetsell interviewing Larry Barcroft for the UTA Arlington Texas Disability Oral History Project. Today's date is 3/15/2016 and I am at Larry's house. I am here today to talk with Larry Barcroft about re-redesigning UTA for

accessibility--people with disabilities to be accessible to the school. Thank you for participating in the university's oral history program, Larry.

**Larry**

Okay.

**Whetsell**

What was your job at UTA?

**Larry**

I was a carpenter and maintenance man, we did--when I hired on we did all the remodels, built the cabinets, countertops and all that kind of good stuff. And then we did things like put door closers on that went bad, fixed the doors that went bad. Did a little bit of everything, did a little bit of general work.

**Whetsell**

Okay, tell me about redesigning UTA to be wheelchair accessible.

**Larry**

Alright (clears throat), that was started by Jim Hayes who was wheelchair bound. And he got the vice presidents together and took them through campus and showed them how there was only one building that a wheelchair person can even get in. And so through his efforts he got them to start doing the handicap ramps and doing the stairways and stuff like that so that the wheelchair and cripple people can get in the buildings, because they weren't accessible.

Also--um--we had at least one blind person a semester that they had to take them through the campus and teach them where the buildings were and how to get in. And then, then Jim Hayes started the wheelchair basketball program and they won something like seven national championships through the years. They even flew to Hawaii for a national championship game. So, but Jim Hayes was responsible for bringing the buildings up to standard for the handicap. I didn't do it (laughs), but we did do some of the work. And that's really it, now as far as the remodel, we worked in every building. Like I say the sixth floor of the library, Carlisle Hall, Davis Hall, College Hall, Ranison Hall. At some point in time we worked on every building.

**Whetsell**

What exactly did you do in every building?

**Larry**

Okay, Davis Hall we remodeled-- we remodeled-- the president's building, in Carlisle Hall, in the student center we did the Carlisle room, which is now a meeting room for parties and stuff like that. Also College Hall we built a whole new presidential suite for [president Ryan] Amacher when he was president. And then just like I say we would just whatever as the needs changed we remodeled every building, some part of every building always there. And also in the engineering building there is a section there that we did for that astronaut that was killed in the challenger explosion. I can't pronounce her name. (Laughs) What (directed to wife, Mayling, in the kitchen)? Well anyway, there's a dorm named after that lady. She was Indian, Asian Indian. And she was graduated--she went to UTA. She graduated from UTA and became an astronaut and unfortunately she was killed in the explosion of the Challenger [Kalpana Chawla, who died in the Columbia space shuttle February 1<sup>st</sup> 2003].

**Whetsell**

Okay, so you mentioned before that UTA started making renovations to be wheelchair accessible before the United States even. . .

**Larry**

Yeah, in Fort Texas.

**Whetsell**

Could you tell me a little bit more about that?

**Larry**

Well, I'm repeatin' myself, but Jim Hayes took the vice president of student affairs, another vice president, and he walked them through the entire campus and showed them how he in a wheelchair could not get into the buildings. And made suggestions as to what they had to do to bring the campus up to a standard for the handicapped and the wheelchair bound. Basically it's that simple. It took a long time to do it, but he showed them what had to be done, and then they went from there.

**Whetsell**

Could you tell me around what time that was?

**Larry**

Let me think, it was before I got there in '79. They were-- he was already doing that before I got there in '79. So, an exact date, no.

**Whetsell**

So, what was it like making the campus accessible, the difficulties, the ideas, the process. Could you tell me about that?

**Larry**

I wasn't involved.

**Whetsell**

You weren't involved?

**Larry**

No, they had outside contractors doing all that. Now we did some, but I wasn't involved in most of it.

**Whetsell**

Could you tell me what you were involved with?

**Larry**

Mostly remodel. Doing the buildings, just general remodel. (Laughs) I know that sounds too simple, but just building cabinets, countertops, walls, sheetrock, things like that. I'm not helpin' ya much (laughs).

**Whetsell**

(laughs) You're fine, how did the university change after making the campus accessible?

**Larry**

Well, lets just say that we've got a lot more wheelchair people there. Whether it's in the activities building, the P.E. building, or the campus in general. Now more people can come that have disabilities. Now that they've got the ramps, not that they've rearranged the staircases and stuff like that, now more students can come. Last I heard it was over thirty thousand. There is over thirty thousand students at UTA right now. And now the people with disabilities can come there, whether its polio, or whether its wheelchairs, or the blind, or whatever. Now they can come and get into

the buildings to get where they need to be. Before that there was only-- like I say there was only two buildings that they could enter. Back in before nineteen--before I got there in '79 there was only two buildings that a wheelchair person can even enter. So that limited them to what classes they could take and what education they could get. Now, it's all open to everybody.

**Whetsell**

You said you had blind students at least once a semester. Could you tell me a little more about them and, you know, what it was like guiding them around?

**Larry**

They were trained. They had people that would take them from building to building and show them where they needed to go. That means some of them had tunnel vision, some of them were completely blind, some of them used canes. Some of them used seeing eyes dogs. But I didn't train them, they always had somebody that would take them from building to building and they would literally count the steps. How many steps it took to get them where they needed to be. That's how smart they were.

They had, when they came out with those electric cars they were so quiet that it was hard for them to cross the street because they couldn't hear them. They would walk up to the curb and stop and listen to the traffic and wait for the light to go across. the electric cars were so quiet that they had trouble with them. But anyway, we would have a couple of students every year and you would see them with their canes. They would navigate themselves, but they had to be trained to (laughs) they had to be trained to go from building to building. There was a separate group that did that.

**Whetsell**

Was there any trouble? You said that the blind were having trouble with the electric cars, was there any big troubles? As in accidents, or. . .

**Larry**

Well the industry had to put noisemakers on the cars so that the people could hear them because they were so quiet. So, the industry, the car industry had to make them loud enough for the blind to hear. So they've changed them. (laughs) They had to make them noisy.

**Whetsell**

Do you have any stories of Jim Hayes that you would like to talk about?

**Larry**

We had a basketball game at UTA and they let us off work. They filmed this basketball-- this wheelchair basketball game. And they let us all out of work so that they would fill up the stands to make it-- for the filming. You know, they wanted a good showing. It worked. If you have never seen a wheelchair basketball game, you have missed it. Those people are unreal. You know, if they fall out of their wheelchair they have to get back in on their own. Nobody helps them. So if they tump over they have to right their selves to get back into the game, because there is no help for them. They're totally sufficient. And it is absolutely amazing what these athletes can do, you know. I mean, I don't play basketball but could you imagine pushing a wheelchair and you then still have to bounce the ball so many times. And then shoot from a wheelchair, its absolutely amazing. And Jim Hayes was right there with his men because he knew what they had to go through.

Jim Hayes took his wheelchair from Arlington to Austin to show people that it can be done. He wheeled hisself to Austen just to show they world that you may be in a wheelchair but that don't mean you are absolutely handicapped, or that you're--or that you can't take care of yourself. Everyday he did something to show people that they were able to take care of their selves and they didn't need any sympathy. That's it, you know. Every day he showed the world that he and the other people can take care of their selves and that they weren't necessarily crippled. They was just in a wheelchair.

### **Whetsell**

How did that change the mindset of UTA?

### **Larry**

It made the people aware that those people were capable of taking care of themselves and all they needed was a chance. And it opened up the campus so that they could expand their learning. They weren't limited to certain classes. They could take engineering, they could take science, they could take physics. As long as they could get in the buildings, as long as they could get to their class, they were able to take care of it.

Mayling's supervisor had polio when she was fifteen. She came to work every day up at UTA, and she used crutches. And she took care of it, she was a supervisor, she took care of her job. When she was sixty year old she was able to go tot the Texas Lions Camp and for the first time in her life she got to ride a horse. When she was sixty, which the Lions is a whole other thing. We take care of children, crippled children with diabetes, but that's off the subject. But I am just saying that Leveta Hord worked forty years at UTA and took care of herself.

### **Whetsell**

Could you tell us a little more about her department, what she was in charge of?

### **Larry**

They catalogued any new material that came into the UTA library. They catalogued it and made sure that it got where it needed to go, which is a lot of work whether it was a magazine, a book, whatever. (laughs) Mayling is the one who could tell you about that. She did it. (talks to his wife in the kitchen) She was asking about what Leveta did.

**Mayling**

She was a librarian. Still is a librarian.

**Larry**

And what y'all's job was.

**Mayling**

Yep, cataloguing checking in materials. No, She didn't do that she did cataloguing since she was a librarian. Um but Leveta, she is one of the fifties polio kids. Before the salt guy's vaccine [Jonas Salk], but she-- her parents, actually it was her grandmother, encouraged her to go to college and paid for her college. Because she knew Leveta was going to have to figure out a way to take care of herself. And not- she couldn't really depend on her parents, but she's done it since she got that. I mean, I'm amazed at that woman. She's retired from UTA, but she's still blowing and going. She knows her limitations. She's got a big whoopy-doo van now. But, um, I've always been amazed at how she just didn't let anything stop her basically. And the library I'm trying to think with the- she had the elevator in there. I can't remember how she came in. I guess she came in through the front door. I don't remember, but she was on crutches when I first knew her. I can't remember what they call them.

**Larry**

Canadian.

**Mayling**

Canadian crutches?

**Larry**

Canadian crutches with the, brace around the arm (encircled upper arm).

## **Mayling**

I don't know if you know how the back of the library is configured now with that dock? It wasn't like that when she came in. It was kinda like that that, but I don't ever remember her coming in through the front door either way. Either way, she got into the building somehow or the other. They finally gave her a parking place at the back of the library. Otherwise she was out in the handicap [spaces] that was out in the parking lots.

There was a parking lot that sits where Hammond or Trimble Hall sits now. I don't know which one it is. And she parked out on that. But then they moved it up to the back of the library. So, she had to put up with a lot of hard ways of gettin' into that building, but she did it. She kept doing it the whole time. And I think toward the end they started givin' her a lot of problems. I couldn't believe they were gettin' away with it, but they were. She was a trouper, she still is a trouper, but she's getting' up there in years (laughs).

## **Larry**

Her van, she finally got this--

## **Mayling**

She had to be practically coerced to gettin' that ol' thing. That-- the buggy, I always called it an electric chair, but that doesn't sound right. You know those electric carts, electric carts, she had to be coerced into gettin' that because she just didn't want to give up that mobility. 'cause she said that 'I know that if I don't keep using what I've got in my legs I'm going to lose them.' But it just got to the point, we said, you keep fallin down. We can't have that. She finally gave in, and I think it's helped her quite a bit, but if you saw her situation in her home, It's just amazing how she has just brought things together to help her, on her own. Either that or she knew who to go to to get the help.

But she was up there for forty somethin' years before she finally retired from there. She knew Jim, she knew him pretty well. And he was the one always-- I think he always helped her get her parking sticker, her parking sticker. She knew him. But that's what we did we catalogued. I don't know if that means anything to ya, but that's what we did.

## **Larry**

Allan Saxe used to take Leveta grocery shoppin' and he picked the day when they was givin' out free food so he could eat lunch (laughs).

## **Mayling**

The man's a character. The stuff he's done in the past.



**Larry**

Allan Saxe is something, I don't know if you've had any classes with him. He's political science teacher-professor.

**Mayling**

Now did Gerald Saxon put you on to Larry?

**Whetsell**

Not-uh

**Mayling**

Basically?

**Whetsell**

Could you tell me a little more about Leveta Hord?

**Mayling**

There was one time that they moved the handicap parking to the street that was, what do you call it, what's that street, I think it's Third Street? It behind and kinda to the back and the side of the library (she points to the left). They call it planetarium way behind the library now. It used to be College, and I think it's Third. Well, it was on the street there because there was construction and there was one lady that would kinda park there. And Leveta just kept kinda watchin' 'cause the lady would get out of her car and just walk away. You know to wherever she was goin obviously she didn't really had an issue that was visible. And Leveta one day just one day said, 'I just gotta know, and I know I'm not supposed to ask you, but what is your handicap?' And she said 'not all handicaps are visible,' but then she wouldn't say anything after that. But then it was a funny thing because she quit parking there after that (laughs).

**Larry**

I saw that lady actually run actually around her van gettin' her books.

**Mayling**

They've had issues with people.

## **Larry**

And that one day, I asked her could you move your van up one spot. "cause we workin' on a building. She said, "I been parking here for a year I'm not movin' nothing." And I said, "if I run over your van that's your problem (laughs)."

## **Mayling**

They had to get their materials to their job and just to move a little bit, you know. I don't know there was just issues with some people in the past who obviously were just taking advantage of the area, so meh you just deal, dealt with them as best you could. And Leveta, I think that was the only time I ever know of Leveta actually just finally havin' had it and said, "I've got to know what your issue is." You are very healthy looking and moving (laughs). And there's Leveta on her crutches tryin' to find a place to park and this lady is in one. I don't know she just had it up to here (places hand above head), she was going to put it to her at that point. So, I don't know whatever I just know that she never parked over there again. We never saw her, and I don't know if it's because we called attention to her, or she finally felt guilty enough she went somewhere else.

I don't know how much handicap parking that school has now, quite a bit? Well a lot more than they did back then let me put it that way. There was one or two spots behind the library and I'm talking about in the seventies, one was for Jimmy West, who worked in the basement of the library and he was also on the crutches. I think he was, I don't think he was in a wheelchair. Him and Leveta were the only two handicapped persons in the library. We had some others off and on who they were in and out of being handicapped. They were just mental cases. But um, yeah, its been a treat. I'm tryin' to think what I was goin' to do. That's my story and I'm sticking to it (laughs).

## **Larry**

I don't think I've been much help to you.

## **Mayling**

Specifically for like Leveta, it was for a handicapped person. Basically it was intended for her if she got there first, which she usually did because she was there like at the crack of dawn. She was at the library. So, she'd usually get it. But um, there was just some kind of weirdness about that. They wouldn't designate specifically for her and I think this was basically before the days when you could reserve it, you know? By paying so much money and you would have a reserved spot. Now I think that was actually before they started that up. I don't know when that started, but it was a handicapped parking place for her and, well Jimmy West was long gone by then, but she had to get there first to get it. If she didn't get there first there were some other spots back there she could just park in. They weren't necessarily handicapped. Those were supposed to be for--what were those spots supposed to be for, visitors?

**Larry**

Yeah, but now it's all handicapped behind the library, directly behind the back door.

**Mayling**

Yeah, right behind, we're talking the east side of the library, in the back. But before that the parking was in the parking lot over there, that Trimble [Hall] or whatever sits on. And like I said on that road and elsewhere on campus. I don't really know where any more handicap parking was. I just know that there wasn't much. And they were hesitant to ever designate it for a single person. Now they've got- but I think you have to pay don't ya? To get that reserved spot extra? You don't have to if you're handicapped?

**Whetsell**

Oh, I don't know sorry.

**Mayling**

I'm just talking about the old days. What they did back then. That's what she went through. I'm tryin' to think if there is anything other than-- I could--there's some things I could say about right before she retired that were goin' on. That's what I said was kinda weird. But she wouldn't tell ya, I would say you talk to her but I doubt if she would talk to ya about any of that. She just doesn't want any connection to UTA anymore. The last few years were just kinda bitter and a lot of it was in connection to that, how people in the library treated her. But we can't talk about that. She's moved on shall we say.

I'm tryin' to think if there is any other handicapped people. I can't think of any. I know when I started there in '64 there were no curb cuts, none of that. Now when you go up there there's all those curb cuts and the designated parking form. So they really have come a long way. Plus doing the thing over Cooper, well depressing Cooper and putting the elevator so they could go across. Well, the intention at first was to make it level. They couldn't do that. Then they put the elevator so they can get on the elevators and go up and over Cooper and then come down the other elevators. It's really amazing. I think UTA is one of the highest ranked handicapped accessible campuses in the U.S. Isn't it considered that?

**Whetsell**

I wouldn't know.

**Mayling:**

You wouldn't know. What do you know? You can't say?

**Whetsell**

I'm very limited knowledge of UTA.

**Mayling**

How long have you been there?

**Whetsell**

This is my second semester.

**Mayling**

Oh okay, and this is for what course?

**Whetsell**

This is for an Oral History course.

**Mayling**

Oh, that Gerald teaches?

**Whetsell**

Yes.

**Mayling**

Oh why am I thinking that Sheena Fry, Shana Fry? 'Cause they used to have a thing at Feilder that they did about, the train depot in Arlington that used to be there. It's not there anymore. But she was on-- you're not under the supervision of Geraldine Mills or anything in anyway are ya?

**Whetsell**

not-uh.

**Mayling**

Okay, 'cause I was thinking that Gerald D Mills was the overseer on these things. So how long have you been at UTA you say?

**Larry**

She said two semesters.

**Mayling**

This is an upper level course, isn't it?

**Whetsell**

Yes.

**Mayling**

Okay, see I'm asking you more questions then you are asking me (laughs). I'm curious I can't help it. Go on, carry on y'all.

**Larry**

When they depressed Cooper Street, like Mayling said, there was supposed to be a ground level across that. Okay not its an engineering college and when they started droppin' Cooper Street when they got down to twelve foot they hit a spring. Now, they had to stop, they couldn't do it anymore so that's when they had to do the elevators and the bridges so that people could go across Cooper. And that was because we had a man, a guy in a wheelchair, he got ran over on Cooper Street. But this guy wasn't real bright, ummm, he would go and grab the bumper of a car and let them haul him around. And one night he decided to cross Cooper Street and wheeled himself out in front of a car, but he was a druggy. But that's when they decided to lower Cooper and try to make it where you could go--where you wouldn't have to cross the street you could go over it. And that was also for the handicap. The elevators and bridges.

**Whetsell**

You said that there was an accident with a guy in the wheelchair, were there any others?

**Larry**

Yeah, not that I know of, just that one. But then like I say he wasn't real bright (laughs).

**Whetsell**

Is there anything else you would like to say about either Jim Hayes, the Movin' Mavs, or Leveta?

**Larry**

The only thing about Leveta is like Mayling said, she just, she's tough as a boot. From fifteen years old to now. She's always taken care of herself. She graduated from Tarleton State in Stephenville and the only thing--

**Mayling**

Who else was in the library that was handicap? I mean, you know, like her. I said there were some in and out of it. Wasn't it Dr. Herman, or however you say his name, he got that thing started to get people access to Cooper. He had the marches or whatever. They marched across Cooper and blocked the traffic tryin' to call attention to how it was inaccessible over all to everybody because of all the traffic there was. And they were all oh yeah we shouldn't have built across Cooper a University, shouldn't have done that. I'm tryin' to think of that march he did. I don't have my annual. I got rid of all my annuals except for one and it wouldn't have anything on that. There is a world of difference from when I started and the way it is now. As far as handicap accessible stuff. And I think even using the term handicap or. . .

**Whetsell**

It depends on the person I believe.

**Mayling**

Yeah, 'cause Leveta never had a problem with the term handicap, but the newer ones comin' in are, 'oh you can't say that about me.' Oh please.

**Larry**

I really don't have anything else. I hope I helped you.

**Whetsell**

You did.

**Mayling**

Lie about anything else you need (laughs). We'll back it.

**Whetsell**

Unfortunately it's all recorded.

**Mayling**

Oh honey erase, erase, erase I got a magnet somewhere we can run over the thing.

**Whetsell**

Anything else about your time at UTA. You said it's changed a lot. Any other comments about it, about how accessibility has changed the campus.

**Mayling**

Just the whole place is changed like he said. I said the curb cuts in particular I'm amazed. Have you seen how many curb cuts and counted the number of curb cuts? 'Cause I tell you back in '64 there were none. That I know of, as a matter of fact the roads were- they still had the roads open over by the, I call it the SUB I don't know what you call it. The Hereford [Student Union]. . .

**Whetsell**

Oh, yeah.

**Mayling**

See I call it SUB the Student Union Building. The roads were still there that you could drive on. When I registered in '64--when I went back to start classes in September of '64 the roads were blocked with the wooden things then they started tearin' things up at the mall and all that.

That was a-- I would like to remember how that was when they had the mall. It was a mud pit down in front of College Hall, Preston Hall, what's that other place called Ranson [Hall]. I mean just a mud pit that way and up by Science Hall, there was a mud pit 'Cause we would walk boards to get anywhere else. To try and get over to the SUB, or to go to some other buildings to do whatever we needed to do. You were bouncing on--and I don't know, I don't remember seeing-- I know Leveta didn't get out in it in her crutches and I don't remember seeing anybody in wheelchairs obviously. They would just be mired up to their wheels in it, but that would be interesting if anybody recalls what it was like at that point for some of them in wheelchairs. I don't know who you would, 'cause um Jimmy Hayes is dead, Jimmy West is gone, I don't know where he is. He would have remembered, but I think he's dead too. They're all droppin' like flies.

**Larry**

Well I've seen pictures where there was cars parked in front of the Library. All those streets was open.

**Mayling**

Yeah, that was Yates. They closed them because they were tryin' to get the campus like down at UT I think where its always, I don't know what the term is they use, but you have these gates at different places and you had to go through gates with a security guard and you had to have a real good reason to drive on campus. Of course the workers couldn't drive on in there, whatever they had, scooters or whatever. But I think that is what they wanted to do up here but it never came to pass because the way its arranged physically with the roads. 'Cause Cooper Street used to be [highway] 157, I don't think it is anymore Highway 157.

'Cause when they made the depression 157 designations was moved over to Collins I believe. The whole thing, Collins is all 157. I think it still part of Collins is 157 goin' north. But it's started to flood back a little bit. I'm probably remembering things all wrong. I'm tryin' to think of some stories for ya. That would be interesting finding out how they handled the building of the, I call it the mall. I don't know what its referred to now where they concreted everything. But having to deal with those boards was fun. It was like a mud pit. It was a mud pit, is what it was, stayin' up on boards. What else to tell you, if you can find anybody to tell you about that and how the people in wheelchairs--maybe they just didn't bother comin' there. But that went on for quite a while, building that. 'Cause you only know it the way it is now.

**Larry**

What is O.K. Carter's wife's name? Donna Darovich?

**Mayling**

Donna Darovich, you ever heard that name? She used to be the news disseminator, or whatever it is, of UTA. I don't know what you call it. D-A-R-O-V-I-C-H, Darovich, yeah. I guess she'd talk to you.

**Larry**

She graduated from UTA back-- then she went to work with UTA. Her job was to keep contact of anything that was written about UTA. She collected every newspaper article, or magazine article mentioned of UTA.

**Mayling**

She was kinda like a press secretary, in a way.



**Larry**

And if you can track her down I'm sure she'd talk to you. She could give you more information than me.

**Mayling**

You wont get her through UTA. I'm trying to think and I don't know if they're on Facebook. I don't know, do you have Facebook, she's probably on there. O.K. Carter both, they're married. And I don't think O.K. Carter went to UTA. He used to be in the news business here in Fortworth and Arlington with the papers. He might have some stories, some information.

I bet Donna does though, with what I'm thinkin of about how people handled it. 'Cause she was there when I was there in '64. I cannot remember how people did that. I guess I was so horrified to stay on the boards and to keep out of the mud. What (asking husband near the bookshelf) oh that whatever, what was the three words.

**Larry**

I can't find O.K.'s book. It's *Caddo's Cotton and Cowboys*.

**Maylign**

He wouldn't have anything on UTA in that.

**Whetsell**

Thank you so much, to the both of you for helping me out and for your stories.