

Monique Jannette

Artist, Paralympian, and former Civil Rights Lawyer

Interview conducted by

Mark Harris

In 2016 in Dallas, Texas

Disability Studies Minor

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Biography

Monique Jannette was born September 23, 1962 and graduated from Warren Travis White High School in Dallas, Texas, earned a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Geology from the University of Texas at Arlington in 1987, and her Law Degree from Southern Methodist University in 1992.

While in middle school and high school, she became interested in science and competitive diving. Jannette excelled at diving and traveled throughout the United States and other countries with diving teams. She earned a full scholarship to Southern Methodist University (SMU), but due to an accident shortly after graduation from high school in 1980, she became paraplegic.

Starting in 1981, Jannette attended the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), where she studied geology and participated in adaptive track and field under the direction of Jim Hayes. While attending UTA, she was selected to the 1988 U.S. Paralympic Track and Field team, and Table Tennis team in Seoul, South Korea. In 1992 she was selected again to compete with the U.S. Paralympic Team in Barcelona, Spain.

Upon graduating from UTA, Jannette went back to SMU to study law. During her time there she collaborated with architects to make SMU more accessible to people with disabilities. After graduating law school, she and a partner began to practice civil rights law, helping the communities and business in and around the Dallas area. Their primary clientele were people involved with sexual harassment lawsuits and disability accessibility. After some health issues, she had to quit the firm and concentrate on her health. Jannette then began to concentrate on art, but is still heavily involved with the community and disability rights.

Topics discussed

- Birth date
- Mother, father and siblings.
- Elementary school days
- High school days
- Accident
- Semester at SMU
- Paralympics
- UTA
- SMU Law school
- Accessibility
- Civil Rights work
- Career in Art
- Health Insurance and marriage
- UTA and Jim Hayes influence
- 1992 American Disability Act
- Involvement in accessibility around community

Interviewer

This is Mark Harris interviewing Monique Jannette for the UT Arlington Texas Disability Oral History Project. Today's date is Thursday, March 17, 2016 and I am at the home of Monique Jannette. I am here today to talk with Monique Jannette about her life.

Thank you for participating in the university's oral history program....

Umm so let's begin. Let's start from the beginning. Where were you born, year, date? (Laugh).

Jannette

Now you'll know how old I am! (Laugh). That's alright though, uh, I was born here in Dallas Texas, in 1962, September 23, so I've been here all my life except for the time I broke my neck, and lived in Colorado.

Interviewer

Um your father and mother's name and what were they like? Were they hard workers? Were they strict...so?

Jannette

Right, right, all of the above.

Interviewer

All of the above?

Jannette

Yes, my mother's name is Mamie and I got her name as my middle name, and my father's name is Harry. And my mother though passed away a couple of years back unfortunately. Really miss her. She was a really really wonderful lady. And my father is still living, and is a very tough man he taught me how to be independent, and hard worker definitely at that, and he taught about the love of nature. I used to go out with him, he was the great white hunter, and as a little kid, used to go with him and used to go out into the country. And so probably by age eight, I had guns and was, didn't really know what I was doing but I was, you know, following his footsteps and I'd be shooting armadillos and dove and quail. But we

would eat it, it's not like we were shooting for shooting, and did that until I was about twelve and then I realized "Oh my gosh I can't, I don't want to kill, this is horrible!" So I stopped that then, but that was life with my father. My mother was very caring very nurturing, she anything I wanted to do she would help me and promote that. Yes, from uh playing the piano, I started playing the piano when I was about five years old and I loved that and started sports diving at age nine. And she was at my side, traveling with me everywhere, um working the tables when I was diving. She was scared to watch me dive, she was scared I would hurt myself and so she did never really want to looked up, but she was always there and supported me in everything I did. She was wonderful.

Interviewer

Any siblings?

Jannette

I have three sisters their all older, and two live in California and one lives here in Denton.

Interviewer

Names?

Jannette

Yes, the oldest Michele, next in line Montine, and then Mignonne.

Interviewer

How do you spell Montine?

Jannette

M-O-N-T-I-N-E

Interviewer

Where did you go for elementary school?

Jannette

Elementary school? I went to Nathan Adams, and then from there E.D. Walker, and High School, W.T. White.

Interviewer

What was it like for you in your elementary school years?

Jannette

Had fun, it was close they had a great music department, that's where I learned how to play the piano. My science teacher was the greatest, I loved her, and that got me interested in science. And, it's kind of a funny story, I don't know if it's appropriate to say but, she was teaching us what the smell of marijuana was. And she had I believe what was probably called Moxa? It's what acupuncturist used to burn onto the needles to help with pain, and smells very similar to marijuana. And I remember seeing this it looked like sage or, or something like that, and she was burning it to let us know, to be aware, to be careful, not, if you smell that, to don't go around it, to whatever to just you know watch out you know, teaching us, and this wasn't part of the curriculum, of course. And the janitor smelled it, and he went to the principle office apparently, they barged into the room, and screamed at her and class like "What are you doing smoking marijuana in the class?" and she was like "Oh no it's not real, it's you know, its fake, I'm just trying to teach them to beware and to be, you know, to make sure to stay away from this and so forth!" And I just remember that moment as just laughing my head off. So that was fun.

Interviewer

Now let's talk about you high school years.

Jannette

My high school was also fun. Um I was very heavily involved in my diving and sports. And um by that time I was also on several diving teams and was doing pretty well. So um it took up a lot of my time. The swim team had to get up really early for practice. And since I already had two practices every day, I just couldn't due three, it was just no way. And but I tried the first year because the coach was like "You have to attend, you have to come." So I'm like really okay but because of that they didn't have to go to first class, first period class, so I got to not to go to first period, which is great, and because I'm not a morning person. Because of that, you know, I didn't start until second period and that was fun for me. I didn't continue with going to sessions to practice in the morning, just I couldn't because it was too dangerous for me and I was too tired, because I would practice in the afternoon plus in the evenings. So I would be training anywhere from two to sometimes six hours a day and then plus with studying and I was in the honors programs I took, I liked school, so I would try to everything I could that I found interesting.

Interviewer

And what years was that?

Jannette

Excuse me? From 9th grade to 12th.

Interviewer

No, what years like 1980 to 1990 what?

Jannette

Oh okay, yes yes well I graduated in 1980, so I guess I started in '77, '76? What that's four years from 9th grade to...yeah.

Interviewer

Okay you mentioned about your accident, can you elaborate more on that?

Jannette

Yes, as right after I graduated from high school, and was in August, and I was at a rock quarry, I was just with friends messing around, it was a popular place, it was in Celina or Calina Texas, not sure how you want to pronounce it. I had been there many years before, but that particular summer I was out of town the whole summer I was competing out of the country and I didn't realize that Texas had a really bad drought, that was in 1980, really bad. The water level at the quarry had dropped by ten feet. I didn't realize I had been gone the whole summer, didn't know, came back and the spot I had been diving from previous years I thought was safe cause I went from the same spot, I dove from the same spot. And apparently since the water level had dropped, there was a ledge at least they found a ledge, I'm not sure what I hit. Sticking out, that protruded out five feet under water. Which originally fifteen feet but this was now, five feet, and I think I perhaps struck that when I was diving, alleged. But they pulled out refrigerators, car doors, I could hit something that was floating. I really don't know. I broke my neck and I broke my arm, smashed my arm and elbow.

Interviewer

And this was during your high school years?

Jannette

It was right after I graduated high school and so it's in August, right before I was to start SMU on a diving scholarship there.

Interviewer

So you were obviously able to recover and go to SMU? What years was that?

Jannette

1-9-8-1

Interviewer

Okay

Jannette

Right, because I was in the hospital for a good five months and then I started in December. I mean January, the next semester following that year. Cause I had a scholarship and so I went just there for just that half of, or one semester shall we say.

Interviewer

During that time, you were in the hospital and working on your rehabilitation and everything, what was the family life like? Like you say your father and mother, were they sympathetic, but at the same time, hey look you have to get up and go! How were they, how was the family's attitudes towards you?

Jannette

Very supportive, they wanted me to get the best treatment as possible, and I was in a rehab center here, for about a month, and then they found a better place up in Colorado called Craig hospital. So I lived there for nearly five months for my rehabilitation. And it was really good, my sister quit her teaching job to go up there and help me. That was wonderful. I also had a friend who was a diver he went up there as well to help me. So I had good support. My mother and father would come every now and then to visit, but my father was probably, and his still the same way, he still doesn't see me in a wheel chair and still thinks I can do things that I can't (laugh), but that's fine you know...yeah.

Interviewer

So then you went on to SMU?

Jannette

I did.

Interviewer

What was your major?

Jannette

Geology

Interviewer

And your minor?

Jannette

I didn't have one, like I said, at that point just trying to get thru. I didn't take many courses just cause right after the hospital I was still learning how to feed myself, how to get dress and it probably took two years before I was independent before I could do things on my own.

Interviewer

Okay and why Geology?

Jannette

Just again my science teacher in fifth grade, she was really good and then also when I went to E.D. Walker they it was a very interesting school. My middle school and they had a fantastic science program as well as a music program. It was experimental at school to, we had open classes, if we finished our

work early, we could leave. We didn't have to stay. Let's see, I got access to all sorts of, as far as playing the piano, learning how to play the harpsichord, electric keyboards to anything, and so that was really nice. I help accompany like the orchestra and the choir and with science, we were able to just do all sorts of kind of experiments. So it was just lots of fun like Geology and interested in some of the earth sciences and that's what I studied at UTA as well.

Interviewer

Did you find the facilities at SMU, wheelchair accessible?

Jannette

No

Interviewer

It wasn't?

Jannette

No Not at all.

Interviewer

Not at all?

Jannette

No since they were a private school, they didn't have to. Yeah, no it was very hard to get around.

Interviewer

Did you stay on campus?

Jannette

No, I lived at home just because I could not function on my own. I needed help getting dress, even help me fix food yeah I was pretty weak, yeah I couldn't do much for myself at that point.

Interviewer

Okay you mentioned UTA, so when did you transfer, or when did you attend UTA?

Jannette

That following year. SO I guess it was when maybe in '81 maybe started '82, I can't remember if I waited a whole, if they let me, I probably started at the beginning of the year of '81. That seems like a long time since I was there. (Laugh) Maybe not, maybe I took a little break. I'm sorry I'm horrible with dates. It's...It's

Interviewer

No no you're doing great, you're great.

Jannette

Yeah all through the years when I first got out of the hospital it was kind of a blur just and very stressful, just, just trying to learn how, like I said, to function.

Interviewer

Okay, and maybe...

Jannette

I went part time when I went to UTA when I first started, I do know that, so perhaps that's why it took me so long to graduate. (Laugh)

Interviewer

Now when you went to UTA, did you find that it was accessible?

Jannette

It was great, yeah it was fantastic.

Interviewer

When did the Paralympics come into play?

Jannette

Well in 1988, in Seoul Korea and I then I also competed in 92 in Barcelona, Spain.

Interviewer

Nice! And what were your events?

Jannette

I ran track, my forte' was middle distance running, but I did everything from sprints to, well I didn't run half marathons, but just up to 1500 meter.

Interviewer

What was the motivation, who motivated you or what made you decide?

Jannette

Well, since I was an athlete before I broke my neck, I wanted to continue, and I um actually started swimming, and my problem though with swimming is that it was, (sigh) I didn't like, I mean I'm used to chlorine don't get me wrong, because of my diving career, but swimming you're in the water all the time, and with diving, you just dive in and you jump out (laugh). So, I did it to cross train for swimming, but that's how I started competing with swimming. And I also played table tennis, I competed table tennis in Korea, and that was pretty amazing, because that was their national sport.

Yep, and so that was fun. But as far as track, that was the most accessible, the easiest, I like it because also I could get, also, road racing not just track I could get out, I could venture the country side or wherever I traveled so that was fun to. So it was more about other aspect about being at that one place. So with the swimming pool, you are in that one place, with track at least you get to see a little bit, on the road you get to see a little bit, and that's what I appreciated about that sport.

Interviewer

And did you medal?

Jannette

I did in Korea, and I had the fastest times going into for Spain. But at that point I was having a lot of nerve pain, and so I didn't do as well. I came in fourth, I think, fifth, and sixth in my events, so it was big disappointment considering I was considered to possibly win all my events. So, but I had a great time regardless you know the disappointment, but anyway I tried, tried my best. (laugh)

Interviewer

Nothing wrong with that. You graduated from UTA?

Jannette

Yes

Interviewer

What year?

Jannette

1987, at least I remembered that! (Laughter)

Interviewer

Now SMU school of Law?

Jannette

Yes.

Interviewer

Okay, motivation behind that?

Jannette

Motivation was, the time I graduated from UTA with my Geology degree and I also minored in Biology. I couldn't find work because the big oil boom was no longer. Just even people in the industry couldn't, were being laid off and it just it didn't seem practical to even go to graduate school in Geology at that point. It was a big crisis, shall we say, at that point, I just couldn't find work. With law, I thought I could get into environmental law, I wanted to help protect wetlands from being destroyed and protect waterways to make sure they were clean. And that my reason for wanting to go to law school. But also my father was like "I pay for you to go to Law School, please go to Law School, I want you to go to Law School!" Cause he wanted a lawyer in the family. Since I couldn't find work and I didn't have any money, he was like "I'll pay for you, if you go to Law school." So that was the other motivation. Was SMU a little more accessible? Or...

Jannette

It was not.

Interviewer

Still wasn't?

Jannette

Yes, I worked with architects and actually kind of transformed the whole campus. I got in disabled parking, I got in ramps, I got elevators put in, worked with them every year I was there to try to make the campus accessible.

Interviewer

Was it the architectural department on campus?

Jannette

There were hired maybe on campus, I'm not sure. (Rubbing her hands together) But I worked with them as far as making the dorms accessible, looked at the blueprints to make the bathroom, the housing situation accessible as much as I could. Yeah, so and unfortunately they got used to me doing this, because even after I graduated, they kept wanting me to come back to do help. I'm like "Find someone else, I'm finished, I have other things to do!" (Laughter)

Interviewer

Okay and your job, did you begin working for a law firm, after you...

Jannette

A solo practitioner, I started working with Ken Carden, and we did mostly, first we did criminal law and we worked mostly appellant cases, not trial just appellant. It got to be just a little too dangerous, because we were helping defendants. (Begins playing with hair) It's like every defendant has a right to a

trial. Most of our clients were drug dealers, to murderers, to oh just you know, run of the mill stuff or high end and um, I didn't want to carry a weapon with me, because just I couldn't. Anyway, so cause that's what he is suggesting, he was like "Okay I'm getting death threats," to, his place was being broken into, so, I'm like "Okay, we are switching to civil law."

So we switched to civil, and from there I did mostly employment discrimination, civil rights, did that for a while, didn't really make that much money. BUT, I did it to help and I tried to do environmental law, it just Texas just isn't in that much into the environment. They are more like "how do we throw it in my next door neighbor's yard?" Right so, unless I worked for the EPA, that I wasn't, that wasn't accessible for one, and they were only going to pay you like \$17,000 a year to start at the EPA. So I thought well considering it's not wheelchair accessible, and they're not going to pay much, I'm not going to go, I'm not going to even go that route, I didn't really want to work for the government anyway. So...yep.

Interviewer

And then after the EPA?

Jannette

Umm after what?

Interviewer

After the EPA.

Jannette

No, I didn't work for them. I considered it to help for environmental law, because that was my big interest. Instead of employment discrimination, but it was more just to help the disabled.

Interviewer

Okay

Jannette

Right

Interviewer

You mentioned a lot of the places weren't wheelchair accessible.

Jannette

Correct.

Interviewer

Did a lot of your cases include you know civil rights and things for people with disabilities or was it more...

Jannette

It was more because of their disabilities. They needed consideration for their employment, like special features, or maybe longer breaks. I got more less put for my employment discrimination, it was, (Rubbing hands together) I got in pigeon hold somehow into sexual harassment though. I did that more so. I didn't take on a lot of cases just because it was a lot of work. Mostly what I did for the solo practitioner is I interviewed clients, to see who would be good. I did a lot of the research, and I did the leg work, and if I thought it was a case we could win; then I would recommend it to the gentleman I was working with. I did a lot of that work and then he did the trial work and I just kept the client informed and what we were doing and so forth, and that was fine with me. Just because it was just, I don't know, too much work for me (Laugh). I did that for about seven years.

Interviewer

And what did you do after that?

Jannette

Well my pain, my nerve pain, that's why I also had to quit to competing, because I was just in a lot of pain. That it got to the point where I just couldn't work either. So I elected to have surgery on my neck to try to help the pain, but instead it made things worse, and ended up in bed for about a year. Couldn't move and I had some furniture that I kept looking at while in bed like "Oh my god that needs painting." So when I got better, I started painting on it and I found out I enjoyed that. After that, I just started making birthday cards for people and little paintings for people and that's how I got into the thought well maybe this could be something I could do for fun and I started with acrylics and now I work with oil painting.

Interviewer

By this time, you started all this, you were living on your own?

Jannette

Ah-huh! Well, I had a boyfriend who was living with me. Yeah, I met him at UTA, yeah so we were together for twenty years.

Interviewer

Okay. When you were living on your own, was it an apartment or a house?

Jannette

Apartment.

Interviewer

And was it accessible?

Jannette

Not really. Well, there was a ramp to get in, but my boyfriend had to help me get into the bathtub because there was no way I couldn't reach, my wheelchair didn't fit to even get, to get into it. At that point, my parents' house was accessible which I lived there for quit sometime. The apartments where I lived at UTA was all accessible, but when I moved back to Dallas, to go to SMU it was not, and that's when my boyfriend helped me, to function lift me get in and out of the bathtub. Yep.

Interviewer

And since you're into art, what has been like some of your biggest exhibit, I mean some of your biggest pieces, most popular pieces?

(Laugh)

Jannette

Well I guess my first exhibit was a gallery called Kettle Art, it's in Deep Ellum and Frank Campana, he's very well known in the community, he does a lot of the murals here in town, he said, I met him thru his son, Frankie. Who was in a band call Spector 45, they are a Rock-A-Billy band, I met Frankie thru his music cause I'm very interested also in music since I played the piano when I was a kid. From him, I met kind of the artist community and his father who had this gallery was like "hey let me see your work", and was like great! So I had an exhibition there with a bunch of other artists. It was a group exhibition and uh it...I'm trying to think of the name of it...it was kind of like a Halloween exhibition because he said my work was very dark.

I did this one painting in particular were dried Lama fetuses, the reason for that is I had a girlfriend, if we're still girlfriends, and she climbed Machu Picchu. She said that a lot of the villages they had baskets of dried fetuses, of Lama fetuses. And they were really interesting looking, and looked very alien creature like. And she goes "I think you would like this", and she wanted to bring one back but she

couldn't, she couldn't because it was too delicate to put in her backpack and also I don't think she could get thru customs with this thing. She had pictures, images and I really liked it and did a painting of it, I had them strung up on a like, kind of like conveyor belt thing. Sometimes thru the villages, they had them strung up and you can choose which one you want or you buy several. And the reason why they had them is that when they would build construction even homes or buildings, they would bury them in the threshold and it meant good luck, it was like putting your Christmas tree up like you see on construction buildings on cranes. Well this was they would put lamas' fetuses at the threshold at the entrance of whatever building homes and so forth. Anyway so people that saw that painting, they were like "This is the most disturbing painting I've ever seen in my entire life!" So that was the, the, I got known for that making the most disturbing art. But it was supposed to be, that was the exhibit, either you had the most twisted mind or most disturbed, I've ever known.

Interviewer

You mentioned that you studied the piano?

Jannette

I did

Interviewer

Classic?

Jannette

I did, at age 5, um how the hell, I would accompany students who or maybe individuals who like played the clarinet, a girlfriend who played the clarinet and if she was in competition and she needed someone to accompany her I would do that for whoever needed it like from various schools like Hillcrest, I went to W.T. White but you know anyone that needed one around town who needed an accompany so I would do that, play whatever pieces they needed. Yeah.

Interviewer

Now you mentioned you had a boyfriend for twenty years?

Jannette

A-huh.

Interviewer

Ever married?

Jannette

No, we did not marry, because then I would be able to get help from the government. And where he worked, I couldn't get on any insurance plan. So to have health insurance, we couldn't marry.

Interviewer

Wow, and where did he work if you don't mind me asking?

Jannette

He worked at UT Southwestern.

Interviewer

And is it still, are you finding it still the same way or do you see any progression or do you seeing more regression when it comes to...

Jannette

Oh the disabled still can't marry, they wouldn't be able to get help because they expect their spouse to then pay for their disabled spouse. So I know of individuals if they're both disabled and then they get married, that's VERY bad. Then they supposedly, I can't remember the situation behind that. But I think perhaps they only qualify instead of qualify for individual which would be together, they would only qualify for just one, even if they were two people. Yeah, I'm not sure what the situation is, but yeah, so I know of individuals that had to get divorced because of that. I know other individuals who married not knowing the situation to an abled body person get divorced, so they would be able to get help.

Interviewer

Is there, since you had some background in civil rights, is there, are you involve in helping to change any these kind of decisions, or know of anyone within the community that's trying to get these laws changed?

Jannette

I don't and I didn't, it's pretty, social security has their own law. Basically they don't have to follow what's out there, I mean they can look at it, from what the justices have to say from various courts of the lands, they don't have to follow, they have their own regulations, it's the government and social security, so they do what they want to do and what's best.

Interviewer

And this is Dallas, or is it Texas?

Jannette

No, we are talking United States!
Yes.

Interviewer

Are you still with your boyfriend?

Jannette

No we split up 10 years ago.

Interviewer

Okay, are you seeing anybody?

Jannette

I am. Yes, but he lives in San Francisco. So we don't see each other that much, and um but he will be here next month. So that's exciting. Right.

Interviewer

Getting ready for anymore art exhibits?

Jannette

Yes, I will be exhibiting at a gallery called The Small Gallery, and that is in Valley View Mall and that opening is this Saturday.

Interviewer

Um and to, on a side note, do you see any changes within the community as far as being you know accessible, I guess back to my original question of do you see a progression of the community and being able to become accessible for people with disabilities and the handicap?

Jannette

I did for a while, but now I am seeing a digression.

Interviewer

Wow.

Jannette

Yeah and it's getting bad again.

Interviewer

Can you give me an example?

Jannette

Well um new facilities are not making it accessible. The individual I used to work with, with law, I'm now helping him try to get back for instance where I live right here, Lower Greenville Avenue, I've been living here since 1998 and I couldn't get around. There's no accessibility into the buildings, there's no curve cuts and so here I live a block and a half away and couldn't visit any of the businesses.

Interviewer

With all of the construction going on around here...

Jannette

Right, and they are making it accessible now, but there are still place where we have had to go in and say "Hey guess what, you are in violation, and you need to do something about this, you need to put in disabled parking." There is no disabled parking right now in any of the parking lots, that you pay for or valet, here. Even downtown as well, there is no place to park if you're disabled.

Deep Ellum, no place unless it's private but you can't park in private parking. There is no public parking for disabled.

Interviewer

And you said you keep in contact with your friend, well your partner that you've worked with

Jannette

Yes, Ken Carden and we are right now in the process of making this accessible.

Interviewer

And how is that coming?

Jannette

It's slow, but yeah people are, I mean they really don't have a choice. It's the law, was passed in 1992 The American Disability Act, and they had 20 years plus to make it accessible and so they really don't have an excuse. There's no longer have what's called the grandfathers clause, lot of people are "oh it's an old building, we don't have to." The only way they can slide and not have it accessible, is to help the mom and pop organizations which we never go after, it's only the big businesses we even approach and say "Please you need to have parking spaces, you need to have access into your buildings." So on. That they are not complying with the law but the only way they can get out of it, a business is if they financially cannot afford it and it would put them under.

Right. Again I don't go after people that I know that are trying and try to accommodate and then are nice about it, and if it's a small business, no, don't even touch them, it's just the ones that are big. But Trader Joes had just opened up around the corner they are fantastic and is all accessible. The truck yard across the street, is not, and is another place we went after. Dodie's is just right up the street to, and I don't know if you ever heard of any of these. They are establishments restaurants that have been in here for quite some time, just trying to get people to recognized that they need to be accessible, and we need to be disabled and there more than just someone in a wheelchair, there might be someone with a heart condition that can't walk. There is people that you can't tell they are disabled that still need disabled parking.

Interviewer

Okay let me ask you this. What was the biggest company you all went after?

Jannette

Complex?

Interviewer

Yes.

Jannette

It was, what was the name of it...right at McKinney and Lemmon, Magnolia Theatres there, uh this is horrible, first was Mockingbird Station close to SMU. Mockingbird and 75, had to go after them, that whole complex making that accessible. The other was right there at McKinney, gosh, something village gosh. Was it West Village? No. Yeah I think it was called West Village I believe, yeah. I'm mean we're talking building dog complex's that were not wheelchair accessible.

Interviewer

And just simple things like?

Jannette

Ramps, curbs, steps getting into buildings and at one-point the West Village, I think that's 'god I'm for some reason I'm drawing a blank. I think that's what is was called...they tried to fight us on this and they could've redone the place at least twice, if they hadn't have fought us for as a class action suit against them. I think that was the very first class action, disabled class action against a complex here in the United States that we set in motion to try to get them accessible because they were fighting us. Right, they said basically. I not sure of the exact words but they were saying "People in wheelchairs don't go to this type of complex." Because it was a very high end place, and there were saying, basically we don't have the money to go there.

Interviewer

"Sigh" rreally?

Jannette

Yeah, it was kind of they were trying to think it was to high class for us anyway. That's the attitude they were taking that people in wheelchairs wouldn't go there anyway, cause the wouldn't be able to afford it. The businesses that were there.

Interviewer

Huh sounds like you still involved a little bit!

Jannette

Yeah correct I'm still involved in that! Right! Correct!

Interviewer

Anything else you would like to elaborate on...?

Jannette

Well UTA I loved it, it was great. Jim Hayes was very big in the disabled community there, and the sports program, and he helped me become independent, he helped us be able to travel, fantastic man, got the whole sports program going. Met a lot of good people...just I don't know what all to say about UTA. Great experience, my professors were wonderful, the Geology Department was fantastic, and just many memorable memories (Laugh) Yeah it was a fantastic school.

Interviewer

Now where were you? Do you remember when everything came down in 1992 with the American Disabilities Act? How did you feel and what was your reaction, and where were you?

Jannette

Where was I? I had more less graduated from Law School and just it was great it was like, but at that point I've been in the community since 1980, when I broke my neck. So for me it was like "YAY this is great but will there be a change?" We'll see because we know it would be slow, and just I was used to, since I am a female and didn't weigh a lot, people could pick me up and get me into places and so there wasn't really any place I couldn't go because I had lots of friends that didn't mind helping me getting me to get around, and learn to ride an escalator, and most of the malls had elevators by this point, and people try to comply when the ADA first came out, so that was great, so it was wonderful.

Again as I say, over the years, there was disabled parking and then they would get rid of them. And that's what I'm finding now. Places that used to have disabled parking, since its prime parking around Greenville Avenue and even downtown, that they are painting over them to make regular parking spaces. It's just very discouraging where I get used to go to a place like "OH they've now taken out the parking spot! GREAT! That's wonderful!" Or valet has taken over, and that's another situation, they would park nice cars into the disabled parking.

Yes, they will do that, valet will do that.

Interviewer

Yes, sounds like it is regressing?

Jannette

And unless you complain or unless sue them they don't care. They won't do anything.

Interviewer

Wow. Alright, well thank you very much for everything. I really appreciate this and appreciate your time.

Jannette

Sure.

Interviewer

I really enjoyed your house, like I said being an artist, a fellow artist (Laugh)

Jannette

Great.

Interviewer

Once again thank you for your patience.