

Texas Disability History Collection, University of Texas at Arlington

Richard “Rick” Frame Disability Rights Advocate

*Interview Conducted by
Trevor Engel and Dr. Sarah Rose
in July 12, 2017*

*Disability Studies Minor
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Biography

Richard “Rick” Frame is a disability rights advocate. A motorcycle accident in 1999 left him paralyzed from the neck down. Since his rehabilitation, Frame experience inaccessibility and social injustice from people outside of the disability community. He soon became an advocate for people with disabilities in the Dallas–Fort Worth area.

Topics Discussed

- Early life
- Car Accident and Rehabilitation
- Employment
- Advocacy work
- Partnering with other disability rights organizations
- Higher wages for attendants
- Technology for people with paralysis
- Service dogs

Rose

So this is Sarah Rose.

Engel

And Trevor Engel.

Rose

Interviewing Rick Frame for the Texas Disability History Collection on July 12th, 2017. And we're at University Hall in the UT Arlington campus. So let's just start with some basics about where you grew up, where you were born, your family.

Frame

<topic>Early life </topic>

Okay, I'm from Massachusetts, a little town called Chicopee, Western Mass.

Rose

And can you spell that for the transcriber, if you can?

Frame

C-H-I-C-O-P-E-E. My grandfather was in politics in the city there. Owned a little diner and his father owned it before him. And that's kind of where we came from.

Rose

So you grew up there?

Frame

I kind of grew up kind of up and down the east coast. I lived there...Florida, Georgia, Vermont. Moved out to California when I was little...sorry Colorado when I was older. And then up here when I was twenty-one and have been here ever since.

Rose

Oh wow! So what were your parents' names?

Frame

My father was Kevin and my mother's Judith.

Rose

Okay. So what kind of things did you like to do growing up?

Frame

I was into sports a lot. I took martial arts and soccer, gymnastics. That's the one I liked a lot.

Rose

So how did you wind up in Texas at age twenty-one?

Frame

Well I said I was living in Colorado. And I was working for a company that made hard computer disk drives and the computer industry kind of went soft. 36,000 people got laid off in Boulder County. I was one of them. I went to work as a cook in a bar, but that didn't just pay the rent. My parents lived down here. They went down here a few years previously. And they said, "Oh, there's plenty of jobs down here."

I said, "Oh, well I just come down for a little while, but I'm not gonna stay."

That was about 30 years ago? Still here.

Rose

So how did you get into computers? Like where did you go to college?

Frame

Well I went to...my first computer program class was in high school. One of the first ones in the country back in '81. And I spent some time up in Boulder at the Colorado University up there and TCC down here for a little while. And I finally went to a for-profit school and finished up. Went to work as an engineer in the aerospace industry.

Rose

Wow! So you have a degree in engineering, in aerospace engineering?

Frame

Just general engineering. I worked as a manufacturing engineer.

Rose

For what companies?

Frame

The last company I worked for was Progressive Inc. Some contract with Lockheed and Boeing.

Rose

Yeah, so before the accident, what...? Could you tell us a little more about your life, interests...What made you stay in Texas?

Frame

One reporter who interviewed once said, "Before my accident, I led a wonderful, ordinary life."

Rose

[gasps]

Frame

Went to school, had a good job, had a house, couple of cars. Everything was just normal.

Rose

And your parents were still here in stuff?

Frame

Uhm-mm (yes).

Rose

<topic>Car Accident and Rehabilitation</topic>

Okay. So I understand the car accident in 1999? That's how you acquired quadriplegia?

Frame

I was actually on my motorcycle. I went through 60 early, Sunday morning. I got rear-ended by a car and knocked over the side of a bridge. So I fell three and a half stories to the ground below and broke everything from my neck to my ankles. I spent a year in the hospital after that. So I was in ICU for two months. I coded four times. I had a compound fracture in my left leg, compound fracture in my left arm, broken right leg, broken right arm, broke my pelvis, some ribs, collarbones, broke my back at L3 and broke my neck C3.

So the worst thing was I actually tore a hole in my heart. When I landed, I landed on the seated position, so all of my internal organs shot down. And it ripped the arora from my heart.

Rose

Wow, that's really lucky that you survived.

Frame

They took me for emergency heart surgery...said that I had a 1% chance of making it out alive. Seventeen and a half years ago, so we're good.

Rose

So which hospitals did you move to?

Frame

Oddly, the accident was on 360 on Arlington. And they took me by brown ambulance to Methodist in Dallas. So that was the only hospital in the area that could handle my level of trauma. And they did.

Rose

And were you there for the whole recovery then?

Frame

I was there for the two months in ICU. And then I transferred to L South facility over in Dallas where I did my rehab there for...I was. The accident happened in the November when I came home the first of June. I was home for a couple of months. Had to go back to the hospital September, October. So, I spent most of the year in the hospital.

Rose

So what was the rehabilitation process like?

Frame

Well, I figured you had to make a choice. You were there to concentrate on getting some motion back or getting off the ventilator. And I was vent dependent at the time. And I figured being tethered to that the rest of my life wasn't going to be a good idea. So I told my occupational therapist, "I have to give all my attention to my respiratory therapist. When he gets me off the vent, I'm all yours."

She said, "Okay."

About four months later, I was off the vents and could ___ now.

Rose

[laughter]

Frame

Never got recovery in motion, but I haven't been on the vents since.

Rose

That's great. What do you make that choice, in terms of did you not having to be tethered to a ventilator?

Frame

The five months I was on the ventilator, it was very difficult. And that was in a hospital setting. I couldn't imagine being home or going out and doing things. So, I just know that it would be very difficult for me...very difficult. Very painful. And we research...we have hospitals all over the countries were the best for me to go to. There's one right here in Dallas. They specialize getting people off ventilators.

Rose

Wow, that's great. So what was kind of the adjustment process as you were going through rehab, coming home, learning to live with a disability?

Frame

It was difficult. One of the things that really helped me get through the rehab was the owner for the company I worked for...he came to visit me a few times. Told that my job would be waiting when I was ready to come back. So that was a big burden on my shoulders.

Rose

And that was which company again?

Frame

Progressive Inc.

Rose

Okay.

Frame

<topic>Employment</topic>

And I got home. I spent at least two weeks at home getting adjusted. And then I called them and said, "Hey, I'm ready to come back to work."

He told me they no longer had a place for me there. So that kind of crushed me. So I took a few days and instead thinking about what I couldn't do, I thought about what I could do. One of the things to say, my household before was...I rode a motorcycle. So if you get a \$10 hat, you wore a \$10 helmet. So I always had expensive helmets to protect my head 'cause I may not be living.

So I figured I had a good education, lots of good experience. Shouldn't be hard to find a new job. Went to one job fair after another. I made my resume, never got a single call. Before that, I used to have headhunters calling me. So, I had to reclaim things and that's when I got into advocacy work.

Rose

Just before we move into that, what do you think was the difference when 'cause there's been some scholarship recently about signs of disabilities basically on resumes and how that changes things. Did you have resumes where they couldn't tell that you had a disability?

Frame

I didn't put anything on my resume about it. But at a job fair, you have to hang around and meet somebody. I don't think I went any further than that.

Rose

So for the assumptions?

Frame

Yeah. So...

Rose

And do you use voice dictation software now?

Frame

I use voice recognition software on my computer and I have a cellphone that uses motion software to operate my cellphone.

Rose

Oh, okay. What's the motion software called?

Frame

It's called Sesame Enabled. It's from a company in Israel. And I guess there is a quadriplegic over there. And I saw a news story that a guy invented this video game able to do motion sensing. He called and asked if he could do that for a quad and I said I could use a cellphone. They got together, collaborated, came up with this software and ended up getting...They were trying to raise money through social funding. They got a million dollar grant from Verizon to develop it. So...

Rose

So you're saying this technology...?

Frame

Yeah, sensory enable technology uses the forward-facing camera on the phone. It maps your face and then whenever you moved, left, right, up, down...it moves the cursor. The cursor on the screen. And then you put it where you want, a menu comes up. Do you want to click, drag...what do you want to do here?

Rose

So where do you have the cellphone set up when your using it?

Frame

Well, I normally use it...when I'm at home, I'm in my bed. I have a table across my bed I can put my computer on. And the phone is mounted to a suction mount on the back of my computer and it sticks over the top. So it's just right there in front of me.

Rose

That's really cool. Well, okay. You said advocacy work. What year was this?

Frame

<topic>Advocacy work</topic>

It was actually 2001. One of my first visits to my regular doctor when I came home from rehab, he sent me to a lab for bloodwork. Okay, it was right over here off Matlock. And we go to the parking lot and there were no van accessible spots. Not that they were full, there weren't any. And I'm like, "Okay, well just let me out and park the van in another spot."

And we got up the sidewalk and down on the door. There was about a three-inch step to get into the front door. Now this is a medical lab with a step to get into the front door. My attendant went in and asked if there was another way that I can come in. And she goes, "No...can't you just pick him up?"

I was in my power chair. Me and my power chair weigh about 500 lbs. So the power chair is about 355 lbs. Something like that. So she said, "Well we have another facility on the north end of town. So we go up there and there were a few obstacles there, but we were also able to get in and get things taken care of."

Well when I got home that evening, I decided to look up what the rules were, what the law was, as far as accessibility. I found out that I didn't encounter two or three obstacles, I encountered eight that day. I said, "This is just wrong."

And that kind of got me rolling. Got me started. I ended up going down to Austin to the Texas Accessibility Academy down there.

Rose

Yes, is that where you can get trained as a regular, accessibility specialist?

Frame

Exactly.

Rose

So you are one?

Frame

Well I was one. I kind of retired back in 2010 and I didn't renew my license.

Rose

How did you find out about that...?

Frame

My rehab counselor told me about it. So...

Rose

I'm just curious, what kind of advising did you get about living with a disability? 'Cause clearly, that's some good advice.

Frame

Well, when they send you home from rehab, they give you a package of paperwork and say, "Good luck."

You're pretty much on your own. But I've been lucky. I had a lot of good people around me and a lot of support.

Rose

So did your rehab counselor sounds like they were pretty key?

Frame

Yeah. My counselor was a quadriplegic also. He was a high-functioning quad. Used a manual chair, color guard. Freaked me out the first time that I saw him well after a parking lot hop to his jeep.

Rose

Yeah, I guess a lot like Jim Hayes then. Was that kind of your first encounter in terms of barriers? What kind of consciousness did you have about disability, disability rights, accessibility before all this?

Frame

Actually I mentioned this before, but I am embarrassed to say that I know as much as the general population. That was about it. I knew there were handicapped parking spaces and wheelchair ramps. It was really the extent

of my knowledge. I was thrown into a whole new world. Didn't know where to go and didn't know what to do. One of the first things we did after I moved from rehab was that me and some friends decided we were going to go out to a movie. It was one of those "get-out-for-the-first-time", wheelchair out in public and trying to start getting used to it. I was familiar with it and comfortable with it Sundance Square out in Fort Worth. So I said, "Let's go down there."

I always enjoy that. By the time we were able to find a parking space, find a path to get from there to the theater...that movie was already half-over. So we turned around, went back home. I felt like I ruined everybody's evening. Plus, it was a steep learning curve.

Rose

What makes up your community of friends? Did people generally stick around or were there certain people that did? 'Cause that's...

Frame

Yeah, you heard it before, but I know that you find out who your friends are. The people that were "my good friends" that I hung out with, did things with all the time, they all disappeared. The guy that I worked with, he was in the office next to mine. We were friends at work, but we never went out and did anything together. He became my guardian angel. He had to drive me in Dallas...wouldn't go over there for anything, he was up there in my room three or four nights a week to visit...take care of me. And ever since, the last seventeen years. Two or three times a week, he'll come over and visit me at the house. Anything I need, he gets. I have to be careful of what I say around him 'cause he will go take care of it and spend his own money doing it.

So there's one night we were in rehab and I mention how good a peanut butter and jelly sandwich would taste. He disappeared. I was like, "Where did Bob go? I don't know."

This was 11:30 on a Saturday night we were down Harry Hines Boulevard in Dallas. He went out, found a 7/11 and bought bread, peanut butter, jelly and a plastic knife. Came back and made me a sandwich.

Rose

That's pretty awesome.

Frame

Yeah, so we've become extremely good friends.

Rose

So you had these, and very, experiences with hospitals, with trying to get to a movie and you went down to Austin for training. Where did you go from there?

Frame

Well I kind of jumped in with both feet to fight the good fight and right the wrongs; which is when I found out that Disability Laws were the only place that the victim is the bad guy and the guy breaking the law is the victim. But it didn't really bother me. I didn't care. And I wasn't doing it for me. It's something that was a problem for me, I didn't really worry about it. But it was a problem that came behind me because most people aren't going to say anything or do anything that I made sure I got fixed.

Rose

What do you think gave you that mindset? Was it your family involved with politics?

Frame

I just don't know. I guess I don't like bullies. And the idea has been on the book for a long time and there are no ADA police. So there's no one to enforce it. The way to enforce it is by private citizens. And I knew that you pick 100 people out of the city that are in wheelchairs, maybe one or two have ever done anything. Most people just won't.

Rose

Did you get connected with the Mayor's Committees, the other disability rights organizations around here?

Frame

No, I got with a couple of good lawyers come from Dallas. And if I found a problem, I would document it, bring it to them...Actually, I would always talk to the company first and I learned the way. The first two companies I talked to, talked to her for two years and, "They're going to fix this. They're going to fix that. They are going to take care of it."

Until I got an attorney involved. And they said, "All you have to do is tell us."

So it's been a difficult process, but...

Rose

Can we ask what the attorneys' names are...?

Frame

Ken Carden was the first one I contacted. And a friend of his, Palmer Bailey...he's who I had worked with closely.

Rose

We've heard of Ken Garden. Maybe the other person, I think.

Frame

I think he does work with some coalition,

Rose

Yeah, so then how did you wind up filing a major lawsuit and getting a connection with **David Fullagar**, 'cause he's a big deal.

Frame

He is a big deal. We I had some trouble voting. I've gone to a couple voting places on over a couple different voting sessions. There were no van accessible spots or maybe no ramps. It was difficult or impossible. I contacted the city's attorney office, left messages, sent e-mails, sent faxes. They never replied. And one day, I was over at the hospital there on Matlock and there was a nuclear stress test. And they said, "Oh it will take us about an hour to get the results. Go have lunch. Eat something fatty. That will help get the stuff out of your system."

"Well, there is a nice, good restaurant across the street."

That would be great. When I went out the door, I couldn't get off the window or sidewalk. I couldn't get off the sidewalk. I had to go back up to the door, around the parking lot, across the parking lot to the street sidewalk, couldn't get down to the sidewalk...I had to go on the grass 'cause it was broken to get to the corner. And then I couldn't get off the corner because there was a phone pole in the middle of the ramp. 'Cause it's right there. And I have to go get my van and drive across the street.

So that's when I decided I was tired of waiting. And I actually contacted a friend of mine in Florida who put me in touch with a law firm out of Miami that actually loss their work with the first half of the lawsuit.

Rose

And this, what year was this?

Frame

2005. And they handled the suit for about five years. And I got to the point where things were stagnant and they just weren't moving.

Rose

And what was Arlington's response...?

Frame

Mostly, deflecting or...

Rose

So they did actually respond? Okay, and so there were attorneys.

Frame

Well they had to. And the other thing was, "Put on hold. Put on hold. Put on hold."

After five years of that, I decided to meet with a different attorney. And that's when I called David Fullagar.

Rose

How did you find out about them? I know he's done work in Texas.

Frame

I actually knew him through a group on the internet, an ADA group. And I knew he was actually retired. But I talked to him and he said he would be honored to take my case if I wanted him to. And I knew at that point, he was going to the Supreme Court anyway and he had already had experience hard-to-make cases there. So he was just the right match and he had the time and the ability to it. So I switched lawyers and things happened really fast about that.

Rose

Okay, can you take us through that...process?

Frame

David...he's got a really unique way about him. He's very...very, very polite. And I think people just respect him enough not to try and jerk him around. So when he got involved. He's also what's his hold up? He would do this about it, that would get taken care of. And then the next one, and then the next one. And then he came down here and spoke, I forgot which group it was...a civic group in Arlington. We had a meeting. He spoke in front of them and talked to them. And it was...it didn't take long after that. The city had filed with the repeal court again. We had also...the repeal court had judged...which is three judges...

Rose

This is a **fixed circuit**?

Frame

Yes. In Louisiana. And we requested that they review the case with all fifteen judges, which they did. They had ruled in the city's favor, then they ruled in my favor. And it really didn't matter which way they ruled. One of us were going to petition the Supreme Court. So the city did. And the Supreme Court reviewed it, said lower court has it right, said, "We're not going to take it on."

It went back to them and pretty much closed everything at that point. We'd won. All we had to do was iron out the details of the city with what was going to make us happy and what they would be able to do.

Rose

So what happened then?

Frame

They presented us with a plan. It was a fifteen-month plan to address everything we had brought up. And a way for citizens, it's on their website. Anyone can just log on, type in their complaint, location and anyone who does that gets moved on the top of the list of what needs to be done. And I thought, "That's one of the best settlements I've seen."

I see other settlements that, thirty-year settlements, win. People are going to be dead when it's all settled. This was fifteen months. And anyone who has a problem wants to get it taken cared of right now.

Rose

What about after the fifteen months?

Frame

They did, during that time, they still sent reports to David. And David sent some to me. Peer review. And the city, they won a lot of time, money and effort into fixing things. There's a lot to do. A lot of different places in town. They'll work on it. Over those fifteen months, I did a lot of work.

Rose

What do you think was the most important of the fifteen months **as what they did**?

Frame

As far as what they did?

Rose

Yeah!

Frame

Mostly putting in curb ramps on the sidewalk. Because if you can't even go on the sidewalks, you can't go anywhere. And a lot of people in wheelchairs, that is our transportation...their wheelchair. I had a friend that lived in some apartment in South Arlington. His daughter went to school in Central Arlington. He would drive his wheelchair all the way across town just to go visit her for lunch. He spent have the time out in the street 'cause he couldn't go down the sidewalks. And too many times, you read in the papers, see on the news [that] somebody in a wheelchair was hit by the car and killed. They didn't mention that they had to be in the street because he couldn't ride down the sidewalk. So hopefully, Arlington is better about that now.

Engel

Did you ever go back to that Mexican restaurant to see if you could get over to it?

Frame

I haven't gone into that Mexican restaurant. I've seen the work that they did there. The curb and the sidewalk is no longer broken, the corner, the ramp and the phone poll repositioned. I think it's more accessible now.

Rose

Do you think Arlington has shifted at all to a sense of more proactive about how their setting ramps, how they're setting phone poles, etc.?

Frame

I think so. There's still a lot of old stuff that needs to be addressed, but there's new stuff they do a pretty good job on. Everything they put in, I'll take a look at it and say, "Doing better than most cities, that's for sure."

Rose

So it's been really systemic change in how they approached?

Frame

Yeah.

Rose

That's great! What about access to medical facilities? I know that somebody on the Mayor's Committee is pretty concerned about...we had an intern work on it. Is that still an issue that you encounter?

Frame

Most of my visits, I go during Dallas now. So I don't get around the area too much. Like I said, at that time I was. That's where there was a problem. I went up and checked up on the north side of the town **around the mill** and much problems around them too, but they had fixed them.

Rose

Has Dallas generally been accessible?

Frame

Generally.

Rose

And where do you see access issues now, whether it's physical or other kinds?

Frame

I'd say mostly older sections of town that they haven't got to or nobody's told them they need to go over and fix. Mostly retail. That's a big problem.

Rose

Okay. Like what do you see there?

Frame

A lot of parking issues. Ramps that either aren't right or don't exist. The good thing about Texas is they do have Registered Accessibility Specialists (RAS) and they check these businesses. But the older businesses, they don't get checked. Only new ones do. And newer ones, they're pretty accessible. Hardly have a problem.

Rose

And from what we've heard that the whole RAS program was pretty in abandonment in terms of Texas. We talked to **McLove**.

Frame

And I've had people around the country that go through on an internet contact visa. Is that just a Texas thing? Yeah, do you think they might have something like it? I don't know, but...

Rose

Yeah, I at one point, every shop we had at UTA, electric, carpentry, etc. They were all trained as RASes. So they were actively going into, keeping an eye out. And that's changed a bit now. But...

Frame

People who have that knowledge, they just see stuff and they know that needs to be fixed and they'll say something.

Rose

Yeah. Yeah, well so what article is this that said that a number of other people joined your case?

Frame

Yeah.

Rose

Yeah, how did that come about? And then, what kind of issues?

Frame

Yeah, the first guy that did, his name was **Scott Updike**. And he had saw my story in the newspaper and contacted the attorney...asked me if he could have my contact information. Tried to contact me. I called him, "Shorty, contact me. I want to be involved."

He had problems. This was the same guy who drove all the way across Arlington in his wheelchair. So he got involved and other people called. We didn't go and solicit anybody, they came to us.

Rose

Like cross coverage?

Frame

This is a problem. And we want to be a part of making it better.

Rose

How many people did you wind up participate with?

Frame

Oh, I'd have to look at the paper. But it was maybe eight. Eight or nine.

Rose

And were you present for all of the arguments?

Frame

No, I didn't get to go to any of those actually. I was looking forward to going to the Supreme Court. I ultimately decided that they need to do it. And I was planning on that one.

Rose

Yeah, that would have been very cool. What about some of the press coverage on your assignment you did? ADA enforcement is a new area where the victim winds up being the bad guy. What was the experience like going through these lawsuits?

Frame

Well, a lot of it was published in *The Star-Telegram*, which has a comments section. And there were a lot of not very pleasant comments about me. They said, "The ADA is old law."

And I literally...I had one business years ago. The building manager told me he was told not to worry about it.

That no one would probably say anything. I think a lot of businesses look at it that way. There's not like an electrical inspection or a plumbing inspector. It's going to come in and cite you and fine you. There's no ADA inspectors. So why bother? The thing a lot of them don't realize, especially with new construction, it's such a small, small percentage of the budget to make it right. To go back afterwards, cost a lot more.

But you read in the paper stories where these little Mom-and-Pop shops are going out of business because they can't afford the ADA modifications. It says right in the law: "If you cannot afford it, you don't have to do it."

They are not going to take your word for it. They will take a look at finances. But if you can't afford it, you don't have to do it. Technically- and financially-feasible. If it's not financially feasible, it was not technically-feasible, you don't have to do it.

Rose

That's a really nice explanation.

Frame

But that's not the way the papers write it up.

Rose

No it isn't. Did you...I knew you were part of an ADA, an internet ADA group? Do you remember the name of it?

Frame

No, it was a *Yahoo!* group. That's how long ago it was. But yeah. It was people from all over the country that were interested in, mostly advocating in their area. And I got the best piece of advice out in California when I'd first gotten started to do this. I wanted to save the world. He told me, "Fix your neighborhood, and then worry about it."

You take on the world, it's too big. It was too much to do. You get overwhelmed. So I said, "Okay, I'm going to work on Arlington."

And that's what I did. And I made a difference.

Rose

Yeah, definitely.

Frame

Could you give me a minute?

...

Rose

<topic>Partnering with other disability rights organizations</topic>

Okay, we're good.

Frame

Okay.

Rose

Well so did you wind up connecting with other disability rights groups as part of...? Sometimes the Coalition for Texans with Disabilities.

Frame

Well, I've actually been involved in helping run the...it's called the Consumer Directive Service program to Texas, 'cause that's the way I wanted to do things myself. I was with an agency at the time that kind of let me do that, even though it wasn't official.

Rose

And this was an attendant agency? Okay.

Frame

What year? You still have to go through a state agency. But that's basically...you do all your hiring, training, managing. There's no company that comes in and does that for you. All they do is...you send them a timesheet, they send a paycheck. So I was at an agency that kind of let me do that anyway. They were with a CDS program. Then the owner of that agency passed away and I had to find a new one.

Well I know CTD, the Coalition for Texans with Disabilities, did that program. So I called down there and I said I need a new agency to work with and I want to be on the CDS program. And the lady that answered the phone, I think she's a COO, Denise Ellison.

Rose

I've heard of her name, but I don't think I met her yet.

Frame

She usually doesn't usually take care of clients, but we hit it off with the phone and she got me all set up and we've kind of been friends and she's been taking care of me and anything I need to in that channel. And it's worked out real well. But it's not a program that works for them, but there's a lot of people that it's the best program to be on.

Rose

<topic>Higher wages for attendants</topic>

Why do you think it's better than employing your own attendants?

Frame

When I first started doing this, when I first came home, I went through a lot of attendants 'cause I wasn't advertising or interviewing. They would just send people. One girl showed up one day and I told her one of the things she has to do is my exercise. My range of motion stretching. She wouldn't touch me. She was afraid to touch me. She sat over there on a chair and just flat said, "No."

I had another girl they sent out. Her only experience was driving a truck. She had no idea. And I knew that I had to get people that were experienced. And not just, "I took care of my grandfather."

Like, do you know how to work with quads or at least people with paralysis?

Rose

And what kind of specific things do you think were really important there?

Frame

Well one of the reasons I need somebody around all the time is because we're high-level paralysis, I can actually breath in. Breathing out talking, it's just the pass of air flowing out my lungs. So I can't clear my throat. If I get sinus drainage or something in my throat, I can't cough. I can't cough, I can't breathe. So I need someone that understands that and knows how to take care of that. Some of them understands that you have to brush my teeth. I can't brush my teeth. Pretty much know that I need complete care.

So most people who had never been in that situation don't understand, they get flustered, for lack of a better word. They get overwhelmed.

Rose

So the attendant you have, how many attendants do you have now?

Frame

Just Shelly.

Rose

Okay, how long has she been with you?

Frame

Two and a half years?

Wood

Almost three.

Rose

Okay. And can you just give your name and spell...I know we have people we work with.

Wood

Shelly Wood.

Frame

She had a punishing experience in the medical field who work with people like myself. So I don't have to guide every motion and explain every, single thing. She knows what to do. Makes it easy on me, makes it easy on her.

Rose

So certainly today, there's a lot about the importance of an attendants for independent living, some wages.

Frame

That is a big point right there. And I have fought for seventeen years to raise the wages. The first attendant they sent out to work with me was getting \$5.35 an hour. And the really bad thing was, if you go to one of these agencies and to be hired as an attendant, they are going to tell you you're getting \$5.35 an hour. Do you want to work with this still, old lady that needs you to make her lunch and do her laundry? Or do you want to help with a quad that you're going to work hard all day? It's the same pay.

Wood

Yeah, it's bad. Because with a quad, you have...their whole life is in your hand.

Rose

One has a lot more physical labor, I would assume too.

Wood

And care and everything.

Frame

But getting someone from an agency that will work with a quad, when they can work with somebody else for the same money, for a lot less work. It's hard to find someone. So like I said, I do my own advertising, my own interviewing, hire my own people.

Rose

So who've you worked with in terms of advertising more wages? I know that there's a number of groups...

Frame

Most of the agencies I've argued for more. There's one agency I was with a long time ago. I've been arguing with them about paying our. 'Cause I know what the state pays, agency. So it's in my paperwork. Like, you're getting paid this much, why am I only getting this much of it? I went to this one agency and I told the girl up front that I was here to see the vice president of the agency that was back there. She was mad though. And I could hear them back there,

"You mean he's here?!"

So...But most of my arguments with the agencies was to pay more. That was one of the good things about the CDS program. They take on dollar off the top. That's it. The rest is yours.

Wood

Per hour.

Rose

So does it work out to raising more wages then?

Frame

It works out to about \$10 an hour.

Rose

Wow! That's huge. I think it's even Helping to Restore Ability. They do the program I think too. They've been fighting for higher wages too.

Frame

To the very first agency I was with, I came home from rehab.

Rose

So we've talked a little bit about assistive technology. Are there other ones that you think were really important during your period? Or have you modified things for your own use?

Frame

Well, when I came home...we built an addition to my house that was accessible. We needed to have a bigger bedroom, lifts, a roll-in shower. All kinds of stuff.

Rose

How was your house accessible? Was your house wheelchair-accessible before?

Frame

<topic>Technology for people with paralysis </topic>

More or less, except for the bathrooms. The doors to get into a bathroom wasn't wide enough for a wheelchair. So when I first came home from rehab, I actually stayed at my parents' house 'cause they were working on my house. And then I ended up back in the hospital for a few months. And when I got out that time, they were still working on the house. But I sat down, "Well, oh well."

And then I lived in my living room for a few months until they finished up. But there's so much assistive technology out there now. It's really growing. When I was in rehab, one of the first things we had to do was figure out how I could drive a wheelchair. I'm paralyzed from the neck down. I can't move anything. And so I had a good physical therapist. And she said, "Well let's try this one."

And it was a sip-and-puff. And because of my limited respiratory capacity, that was very difficult for me. And we tried a couple of others. That just didn't really work for me. So she was like, "Okay, there's one more."

It's way out there technology. It's called a tongue-touch keypad. It's a little remote control that moves to the movement of your mouth. And it has buttons on it. And you drive your chair with your tongue. And I said, "They brought me out one, maybe a temporary mouthpiece. And I just fell in love with it."

And I use that for years and years and years. And then that company ended up going out of business. So now it's like, "How do I drive a chair now?"

And I found a company out of Austin. Adaptive Switches Laboratory or something like that. They make a proportional head array system that's not the big buttons, it's got the sensors. It's just a flat headrest, but if I turn my head left, the chair goes left. Right, right. Move my head forward, the chair moves forward.

Rose

Oh, that's cool.

Frame

It's just been working out pretty good for me. Voice recognition software on my computer. Pretty much anything you can do on a computer with a mouth keyboard. I can do my voice, so that's wonderful. And the biggest problem was actually getting to use a phone. I had gotten a phone with a physical button. I could hit my chin on it and it would go down a list of pre-programmed memory slots. And I'd hit it again, and it would dial. And it wasn't great, but it worked. But next day, I had found out about Sesame Enabled. And when I did, I was talking to a developer there. The phone was prohibitively expensive that time. And I said, "Now that's great technology. I hope you keep developing it, but there's no way I could afford that."

A guy, they were doing social funding at the time, people could pre-order the phone. Well this guy preordered it. He wasn't disabled. He donated his phone to me.

Rose

That's amazing.

Frame

So it was a \$900 something phone. And he lives over in Israel, we're still friends. We talk. I've since donated that phone to someone who works on all that to see the lady down there. And they've actually donated another one. So, well they got it down towards now it's not a hard-programmed in the phone. It's actually an app that can download. So the price is way, way down now. So you can just set it...that was a funny thing. It was on a phone that couldn't work on a Verizon network. But they had a Verizon grant to develop software. I actually

had to be on a...I argued with Verizon for weeks. And I was like, "It just won't work on our network."

That was kind of funny.

Rose

<topic>Service dogs</topic>

That's pretty funny. [laughter] What about like changes in attitude since you have...almost twenty years living with a disability, like how people act, how ADA enforcements come...

Frame

I don't know. There's a lot of people, a lot of difference in society. Society is pretty much saying, "People, individuals, they're all very nice."

Ninety-nine out of one hundred. Of course, I am severely disabled. You just look at me and *Oh!* A lot of people with invisible disabilities, they take a lot of harassment from people. That's never been my problem. I had a service dog for a long time and that was in the eight years I had them. I only ran into a problem in one place. And it was a lady. She was foreign and she didn't understand. I explained it to her and it was okay. When I first walked through the doors, she was like, "You can't bring him in here."

Beyond that, a lot of people have access issues, but I never did. Baxter, he was special. Like I said, I can't clear my throat, so I need someone to help me cough. That was his job. If a person wasn't around, I was home alone, his job was to cough me if I needed it.

Rose

So basically jumping on your chest?

Frame

Um-hmm. If I was in my wheelchair, he would jump up and put his paws up under my diaphragm and push. If I was in bed, he would step over me and jump his way down on my chest and force the air out of my lungs, clear my throat. I have spent over \$20,000 on two different dogs being trained. Both have flown. When I had Baxter, he was my third one. I'd two flown before him. And so right now, we are just kind of in a holding pattern, trying again eventually. But it costs a lot of money.

Wood

We still have those dogs.

Rose

Oh! I see. You have all three dogs?

Wood

They can't be used as...

Frame

No. Baxter passed away. He had cancer.

Rose

The other two you have?

Frame

The other two, yeah. They still live with us. They're...I call them flunkies.

Rose

So what are you working on now? Because it seemed that you like to have a lot of projects that you're working on.

Frame

I'm working on a few things with Palmer Bailey there. Nothing big. Just they had some problems with a parking garage over downtown Fort Worth we're talking to...I said, back in 2010, I left my license lasp and retired. I still consul. I still help people. I'd have to see something pretty outrageous to get involved myself. I've done a lot so.

Rose

Yeah. You certainly have. Is there anything you feel like you would have acquitted or that we should've asked, but didn't?

Frame

You know, two of the biggest things that need to be worked on are attendant pay and the abuse of handicapped parking, really. That's when I pulled here in today. You wouldn't believe how many cars halfway in the access aisle. So I can't use the van accessible spot 'cause that car is parked a foot over that line. They may mean looking at others. The cars out there, no tag, no placard and parked in the handicapped. So it's a problem.

