

Tim Boyte

UT Arlington Alumnus, class of 1995

*Interview conducted by
Sebastian Fuentes
In 2016 in Arlington, Texas*

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

Biography

Timothy "Tim" Boyte is an undergraduate alumnus of UT Arlington, class of 1995. He identifies as a disabled person with an invisible disability: a heart condition caused by a side effect of a medication given to his mother during her pregnancy. Boyte came to UT Arlington in 1984 as an out-of-state student partly because the disabled student services and accessibility initiatives established by Jim Hayes made attending college more feasible.

Boyte graduated in 1995 with a B.A. in History after spending his first few years majoring in Architecture. During his decade-long tenure at the University, Boyte witnessed many of the accessibility improvements made to the campus's physical plant as well as students' social life from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s. He also observed the dangers posed by Cooper Street and the impact made by the 1990 project that lowered the street and led to the construction of pedestrian bridges across it.

During the mid-1990s and early 2000s, Boyte took graduate courses at UT Arlington in History and Urban Planning but did not complete degrees. He now resides in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. He currently works as a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) supervisor for the City of Arlington's Water Utilities Department.

Topics discussed

- Why Boyte chose to attend UT Arlington
- Origins of Boyte's disability; funding from the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for college
- The Corral area near UT Arlington's campus in the 1980s
- Shift from majoring in Architecture to History
- UT Arlington's student community in the 1980s
- Experiences as History major at UT Arlington
- Interactions with Jim Hayes and his programs for students with disabilities
- Identity as a person with an invisible disability
- Further details on Hayes's programs for UT Arlington students with disabilities
- Dangers posed by Cooper Street, student activism, and sinking Cooper Street

- Student community on campus & involvement with Anime UTA and Alpha Ro Chi fraternity
 - Interactions with other disabled students on campus
 - Integration of disabled students and evolving campus accessibility
 - Living off-campus and experience of UT Arlington as a commuter school
-

Fuentes

This is Sebastian Fuentes interviewing Mr. Tim Boyte for the UT Arlington Texas Disability Oral History Project. Today's date is March 16, 2016 and I am at my office suite in Davis Hall on the UTA campus. I am here today to talk with Mr. Boyte about his experiences of having attended UT Arlington, relationship to the late Mr. Jim Hayes, and the Cooper Street bridge construction.

Thank you for participating in today's oral history project Mr. Boyte. I guess to begin with let's talk about you growing up. Were you a native of the Arlington area or had you come to Arlington just before your undergraduate experience?

Boyte

Neither actually.

<topic>Why Boyte chose to attend UT Arlington</topic>

I was an Air Force brat so I grow up kind of all over the country and a few other countries, but my family's home is Louisiana/Mississippi. We started out the Carolinas in the 1640s and kind of migrated across. We do have some Texas ancestors here including some I had come to visit before I had known about the University.

So when I began looking for universities, I checked UTA out. I had scholarships and grants, and they had some additional programs including the disabled students' services program. That was a key to me actually coming here and looking at the university more seriously. I made a trip out here and visited with everybody. That is how I got started to looking at it and applying here.

Fuentes

Cool. So why did you pick UTA out of all the schools you could have gone to?

Boyte

Well, I had scholarships and grants and they also had some programs through Texas Rehabilitation Services. I forget what their current name is, but that is what they were back then. Maybe they were called the Texas Rehabilitation Commission [now Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services]. They changed names a couple of times. But, one of the key factors was the cost. Like I said, I had scholarships and grants, and I had been invited to go to Vanderbilt and Boston University which are great schools, but they were also much, much, much more expensive. Since I was putting myself through school by working, in addition to the scholarships and grants...well, I need[ed] to see what I could actually afford to do. So, that was a key choice along with them having some of the programs I was interested in. One of my uncles had graduated from architecture school here many, many years before. And he had recommended it.

Fuentes

Thank you for that. You had mentioned the Texas Rehabilitation Services, could you elaborate more as to why you were pursuing funding from that organization?

Boyte

<topic>Origins of Boyte's disability; Texas Rehabilitation Services [Texas Rehabilitation Commission] funding for college</topic>

My mom, when she was carrying me, which this is back in the '60s, she was given some medication by doctors of the time who weren't aware of some of the side effects. I was born disabled with a major heart defect, and I had come out here to Children's Medical Center and Scottish Rite and had a couple of open heart surgeries. And then the final one I had [at] Ochsner Medical Center. The surgery was actually conducted by Alton Ochsner Jr. and his father, senior, were the ones that were working, in addition to Terry King. And Dr. Terry King is the one that is the pioneer[ed] neonatal units at the hospital—neonatal intensive care units.

So when I came out here, one of the first things everybody did was like, "Go talk to Texas Rehabilitation Commission and Services and see if they have any funding available." And so, like, "You're out-of-state, but there may be something they can do coming into Texas to school here." I checked with them and they had...it wasn't much, but every little bit helped back then. And like I said, I was working, actually working full-time, so my campus life was more limited in some ways than a lot of students coming in even as a freshmen because I was working 35, 40 and then later on even more hours.

Fuentes

And where were you working at the time?

Boyte

<topic>The Corral area near UT Arlington's campus in the 1980s</topic>

Pretty much any job that I could find in or around here that included hardware stores, gas stations, little bookstore that used to be down the street that was called Clatters. Not Clatters, what was their name? I forget the name of them now. They had a different name for it. I can't remember now. It was one of the...it was an off-campus university bookstore. And I thought it was named Clatter, but that may have been the family's name. They were a competitor to the bookstore that used to be down here by the Bits and Bites Café, which was in the Corral area, which you might not know what those are anymore.

Fuentes

Could you explain a little more about the Corral area?

Boyte

Well what you have is your micro tech center down here now. That used to be the old UTA bookstore and beside it was the Corral burger stop, and it had like the Bits and Bites Café and the Student Union building—not the Hereford University Center, but the Student Union Building. Those were all located right there. So that was kind of a central area for all the students to congregate. You know it was the bookstore, the Liberal Arts building, it was the activities building in the back where they used to have the weekend movie showings on the back wall, so everybody would take their lawn chairs and towels out and go watch a movie on Friday evenings or Saturday evenings whenever they put them on.

Fuentes

So you mention working full-time while you were going to school. So did you go to school full-time or did you go to school part-time?

Boyte

I went to school full-time.

Fuentes

You went to school full-time. And what degree were you pursuing?

Boyte

<topic>Shift from majoring in Architecture to History</topic>
I started in Architecture and after three years I had gone back home, over the summer break—I think three and half years—to go back home and visit family. While I was there I was involved in a car accident. It took about two and half years of additional recovery to just get back on it, and about the time I was done with that, because of head injuries and one thing after another, I just wasn't interested in that degree any more.

So I changed my degree plan, which is why my bachelor's degree covers from this point to this point and then this point to this point (motions hands to display time difference), and then I switched over and had a minor...was working a bachelor's in History with a minor in English and was taking additional certifications in French and something like that.

Fuentes

So why did you switch to History?

Boyte

Well I had always loved History. That was just what I was interested in, especially after the accident. Like I said, a lot of the interest I had before I still retained and a lot of the knowledge, but just the interest in doing Architecture and Engineering studies...I just didn't have the interest in anymore.

Fuentes

So as a full-time student, and talking about how the campus has changed from when you were here, could you go into a little bit about your undergraduate experience just in general? For instance, getting involved with students or your typical experience in or out of the classroom?

Boyte

<topic>UT Arlington's student community in the 1980s</topic>
Well, the school even back then was a commuter school, so the people that were on campus didn't have quite the same number of people you would have at like LSU, which I had spent some time growing up around. I've got family down there. So I was used to kind of what

happened at LSU and visiting family at other states. That kind of university atmosphere—it didn't really kind of exist in the same way here.

They had the Dry Gulch Saloon, the bowling alley down in the basement of the University Center before they expanded it and expanded it again. Well that was closed and that was kind [of] a loss to the campus life...before they rebuilt and reopened the bowling alley, but the pub was gone. I had never drank anyway, but it was a social center. And since you were kind of limited in what you had for social activities around the campus, it tended not to be a lot going on on-campus at those points in time.

Well I was part of a fraternity also, so that is where a lot of people ended up going. Greek Row used to be fairly large here, now it's down. Just driving around, it's down to maybe a handful of houses, but back then there was probably thirty houses congregated around there: fraternity and sorority houses. And I was part of Alpha Rho Chi, which didn't really help my grade point average along with being a full-time student and working full-time and trying to do that, but hey, it was part of the experience.

Fuentes

Well, and that leads me to my second point, is what was the classroom experience like?

Boyte

Very hectic.

The Architecture classes...you had your regular classes during the week, and I tended to go Monday, Wednesday and Friday some years depending on what jury classes were available, and those would have a long afternoon class. The Tuesday, Thursday classes were a little more relaxed. Monday, Wednesday, Friday ones were the really hectic classes and what everybody would do especially after a four or five hour class, was they would go to Mr. Gatti's Pizza over on Abram Street which is long since gone—that is where the Subway is now. Mr. Gatti's became the Subway. But they had a big screen TV, and everyone would go get the pizza and sit around and chat and visit and kind of destress after the jury, especially if it had been a jury where the instructor was over there looking at your models and classes and basically destroying them, which is basically what those instructors like to do. It wasn't just good enough to put a big red "X" across it if they didn't like [it], but some of them would actually stomp your project, which is like, "That's not cool."

And it was...it had a lot of pressure going on for the students at that time. I am sure it hasn't really changed, but you did what you do to relax and get away. The Architecture fraternity house, which was Alpha Rho Chi, they would go and have parties. That was okay, but I was never a big party person, so I would be the one sitting off in the back just visiting with people talking. And then, when they lost the Dry Gulch Saloon, we would go and visit and sit in some of the empty student union buildings or couch areas on the second floor and you would just visit and talk, read and sleep a lot. Sometimes more so than you should have, but that was part of it.

Fuentes

<topic>Experiences as History major at UT Arlington</topic>

And, so you have talked about sort of your experience in the Architecture program, how different was it when you went to the History Department?

Boyte

It was completely different. By the time I had gotten back, most of the people that I was in school with weren't here anymore. They had either left to go into other things or they were working on their internships. The ones that I kept in contact [with] for a while, most of them didn't really get a career in that field because it is so tight and expensive to get into that field that they ended up being craftsmen or changing fields completely.

When I went into the History Department it was completely different. You know Liberal Arts people versus Engineering, Architecture people—world of difference. Neither one is bad, but History people tended to be more willing to discuss topics that the other guys just do not have a clue about. You start talking about "Why did the Roman people do this? Why did they build structures like this? Why did the English do this?" Most of the Engineering people were like, "I don't know what you are talking about."

Fuentes

Speaking of the History Department, while you were a student was there a professor that you gravitated towards that you had a lasting impact or that you remember?

Boyte

Dr. Kyle was a really good one, and Dr. Cawthon. Dr. Cawthon was from Louisiana or at least her family were. And, Dr. Kyle was an interesting fellow. One of his favorite quotes was, "Yeah, then there's Alexander the not so great, but hey, his father did all the little ground work." But they were both really, really good History professors. I don't know if they either became fully tenured, but they were probably some of the best teachers I had while I was here.

And there was a couple in the Math department that were really, really good, but I don't think they were tenured either—tended to be more of a practice, where the tenured professors weren't really in the classes. They were letting TAs do the teaching and it was your un-tenured professors that you were actually getting a lot of substance from.

Fuentes

Well, thinking of the faculty and the staff, I understand that you were friends with the late Mr. Jim Hayes. And so, I was wondering if you could talk about that relationship and sort of how that evolved?

Boyte

<topic>Interactions with Jim Hayes and his programs for students with disabilities</topic>
Well, the first time I came to campus after I'd applied, before I had even been accepted, they wanted me to come and visit with everybody because I had scholarships. And, I went and visited with the dean of the Architecture department for about an hour and then, they said, "Hey, have you met Mr. Hayes?" I said, "No, I hadn't met Mr. Hayes." "Well, let me send you back over to Davis Hall and have them see if he is available." And his offices at that time were in the old basement of University Center. And there was a whole little section down in the central, east side if I remember it correct. And, his offices were down there and so I went and met him.

He was the director of the Disabled Student Services, which I had heard a little bit about before then coming to the school, which was one of my reasons for coming here because there was at least something that would make it facilitate getting the classes you needed, making the campus more accessible...at least having someone who would understand where you

coming from. And, I had never used my disability as crutch and never did growing up, never did now...I do not either. But yeah, I met him and he was a very good man.

He had a lot in his life having to deal with not growing up disabled until his accident, and that kind of transferred over. He didn't have a lot of patience for people who tried to use it as a crutch. He was always pushing all of his students to be more involved, to get out and do more stuff on the campus, and do more activities outside. Now me being a full-time student and working full-time and having some other things going on, I wasn't as involved as he would have liked. So he was always pushing, "Hey, you need to do more of this. You need to do more that." And you know, I did what I could, but really when I got done with my classes on campus, I was like, "I am going to my apartment and rest." I didn't want to stay around too much more. You know, the weekend parties or something like...[I] tended to have to get up a 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning on Saturday to work so that kind of limited my Friday night activities, even though it wasn't all that uncommon for me to be up til 2 in the morning, go home, sleep for two or three hours and get up and basically be standing there at 6 in the morning going, "I'm here. What else do you want?"

Fuentes

Well, you talked about he you know would push people, including yourself, to get more involved and so I'm curious to know did you meet with him regularly or how frequently did you meet with him?

Boyte

I saw him pretty much every week, not every day, but several times a week because you would go check your mail over at the University Center, and you would go downstairs and see who was around the lounge area, and he would pop his head out and see how things are going. "How are your classes going?" "What have you got coming up?" "Anything we can do to help?" You know, just stuff like that.

<topic>Identity as a person with an invisible disability</topic>

Of course, he was really, really busy. He was always pushing around campus trying to get more accessibility for the students. Putting in more ramps. Making sure the elevators were working correctly. Trying to get more of the programs themselves geared to having classes where we could get to them.

I don't have a mobility issue like a lot of the students. I'm kind of...I'm a disabled person, but I don't look like a disabled person. And so, I kind of blend across both worlds I guess. It's not obvious, it's not physically apparent. It's when you get below the surface that you feel it's...okay...there's a lot of activities I can't do. There are big parts of my life that are restrictive. When I say I have to rest, that means I have to rest. It doesn't mean it happens often, but at my current work, I shut my office door and lean back and rest for a little while. It's a heart-related issue and I usually try to limit it.

You know, I push myself. Sometimes a lot more than I should, but then I pay for it so.... As I've gotten older and older and older, it's okay, I'm kind of willing to [say], "Okay, I'm not going to do that anymore." Like if I go to help somebody do something, like I kind of like [say], "No, that's too heavy I'm not going to...sorry," [or] "Willing to help you all the way, but I'm not going to help you with that."

Fuentes

<topic>Further details on Hayes's programs for UT Arlington students with disabilities</topic>

Well, you talked about some of the programs that Mr. Hayes was sort of trying to implement and get students involved in. So, having said what you said about how you went from one

group to another, in terms of how you...in terms of your disability, what programs in any did you participate in that Jim Hayes had tried to make available?

Boyte

Well, some of it was social programs like having car washes, and things like that. Fundraisers, we did those. Then they would do rallies like, how would you say this, not show that you were disabled, but show that even though you're disabled you could still function and get around. So we would have walks around campus, visits with people, go to other organizations outside of the school—visit with them.

One of the big things he did that was really helpful, and you wouldn't think about it, was back in the old days before computer registration, you come up to Davis Hall here, look at your classes, then you go meet with your counselor in your department. You would say, "I want to take these classes," [and] they would review it and sign off on your form. And, you would bring the form over and you would turn it in. And you know, it was all paper. Then you go...what would you call it, you would actually go for your final registration...the final registration was in the Student Activities building back here. (Gestures to location.) Rain, heat, whatever, you have all the students just lined up in long, long lines. Just sweltering or freezing because you would have to process them one person at a time, one person at a time. And you get to the front of the line and you may have been there for two or three hours and they'd say, "Oh, that class is filled. You need to go and start over." And so you would go back.

Well, saw that that was really stressful on a lot of us with disabilities. On normal days that's fine, but if you're stuck in a line and you can't move, you can get overheated or you can get cold or whatever. So he came up with a different system, and what they would do is you would turn the forms into him. And he would go, and they would have all your classes pulled in advance, and you could make sure. So I guess you were getting first pick of whatever classes you wanted. So that was a great program. And yeah, we took advantage of it. So we made sure that we got the classes we wanted with the instructor we wanted. I think pretty much all of us did that. And we didn't really think too badly about doing it at the time. Especially when you're going...going into line, you would have your form out, "I'm going to get my classes now." To the dagger-throwing eyes of everybody watching you.

Fuentes

I want to change the conversation just a little bit because you talked about Jim Hayes really pushing for accessibility on campus. It's been said that UT Arlington has been ahead, by 15 or 20 years of the ADA in terms of creating and expanding accessibility on campus. So, I was curious how you perceived the campus in terms of accessibility, whether it was physical accessibility or otherwise. You mention the fact that registration was different that that was change that was occurring. What other instances did you see across campus that made it more accessible?

Boyte

Well, if you just walk around the campus, most of these buildings, especially on this south and eastern part of the campus, they have ramps, which was not common for buildings of that time. You would have staircases. You might have a little add-on ramp, but a lot of these buildings had retrofitted and they had ramps. The Liberal Arts building here in the middle (gesturing to what is currently the Fine Arts building), Davis Hall, the library, they all had ramps added to them.

And, they had functioning elevators. If you go down, probably even to this day, in the bottom of University Hall and look at the fire hoses and fire extinguishers and stuff like that, because

the fire department is not allowed to come in and do any inspecting because it is a State university and they don't want to—the City to actually let them do stuff, back in the day. [If] we look...the last time those fire extinguishers and hoses had been checked was like twenty years before. So all that stuff was out of date, completely useless. The elevators, but the elevators were functioning. The elevators were functioning, they were roomy, you could actually get some place you needed to if you were in a wheelchair or on crutches or something.

Fuentes

<topic>Dangers posed by Cooper Street, student activism, and sinking Cooper Street</topic>
Excellent. Well, we've talked about changes to the campus and it is my understanding that you were here during the Cooper Street bridge project. So, I was wondering if you could talk about what it was like to be on campus as they were building the bridges over Cooper Street.

Boyte

Well, I was here before the bridges got put in. I was here before they lowered the street and crossing Cooper, you took your life in your hands. It was literally like playing the game Frogger. Have you ever played that game?

Fuentes

Yes.

Boyte

Because the traffic...there was limited sidewalks, and buildings pretty much let right off onto the street. There were three or four crossings, which the students most of the time ignored. So that was part of the problem. So, when you would have a class change, students were in a hurry. They would have to get from one side of the campus to the other. Cooper Street was a problem. Because you would have hundreds and hundreds of kids milling back and forth across the street, and the traffic did not want to stop. Because, they knew they might be there for ten or fifteen minutes.

So, eventually some students got hit and some got killed, including some of the disabled students [Freewheelers athlete and graduate student Andy Beck was killed in spring 1989]. I nearly got hit myself one time. I was actually going across in the cross guard, and a guy in an El Camino dodged into and I had to jump back. So it was, it was a not something you really wanted to cross.

What most of the kids ended up doing if you could, you would go down to a block north or a block south and cross at the light, which didn't really give you that much more safety. But, at least you had a light. But, those crosswalks they had, there were no lights or anything. You would start walking and people stop, and everybody just goes across. I don't remember. There may have been a light later, but initially, I don't remember there being any lights there telling people to stop.

Fuentes

So, you were saying that really what we have now, where the three bridges are, those used to be crosswalks?

Boyte

Yeah, the street was at the level of the buildings. Like where you get down here south of Davis Hall and the street before, the street was the same level all the way through the campus. It was a sidewalk that was it. You had a four or six inch curb dropdown and then, it was just crosswalks. Especially after the political hoo haa that started when the kid in the wheelchair got killed, that's when they started looking at it, and that's when the street got lowered, and they put the bridges across [Beck was killed just before construction began, but the plans had already been approved at that time]. I was here before that happened. It was different.

Fuentes

There was one student organization called "Students Mad about Cooper Street" that were here on campus, really protesting for the Cooper Street bridges and stuff. Are you familiar with that organization?

Boyte

I knew about them, and I supported their goals, but I am not a political person so I wasn't involved in any of it. I was on the periphery; I stood back away from it. I was very reticent about getting involved in any kind of demonstrations like that. I still am today.

Fuentes

Thinking back about the Cooper Street project, the actual bridges being build, you said you were here before it, could you explain what your experience was when you were here as they were building the bridges?

Boyte

They put temporary construction crossings. It was a mess is what it was. Because they would take one section of the street and narrow the traffic down so the traffic was cordoned off even tighter than what it was before. And, they put some elevated crossings to help get back across, back and forth across it, and they would dig, I can't remember if it was the south or the north, no, east or the west side of the street. I think they started with the west side first. So anyways, they had one section that was still at ground level, and they started digging down on the other section. And, they were doing it one section at a time. And of course you have the street as it is now, well then it was like four lanes, undivided, traffic going back and forth. It was just as much traffic then as now, and they may be been even more traffic. Because Arlington, in that time period, was really growing and booming. I think when I first came to Arlington the population was around 130,000 people. And now, it's like 400,000.

Fuentes

Could you sort of explain your experience once the project was over?

Boyte

Once everything was completed, it was great. You had bridges you could easily access to get back and forth across the street. They had elevators for the wheelchair [people], and people who had more mobility issues. The central bridge was kind of a weird one. It's more of a

showpiece and it's not really conducive to being used. If you try to walk on it, it's not handicap-accessible really. You have the ones at the north and south with the elevators and those are fine. The one in the middle is...it looks nice, but it's not even really easy to travel on foot. The staircases are kind of steep. It's not handicap-accessible, and it kind of goes nowhere and leads to nowhere because goes along the sidewalk of what used to be the Chemistry building to the front of the Liberal Arts [now Fine Arts] building. And it's like they're not really going back and forth at those points: Chemistry to Liberal Arts [now Fine Arts], and Liberal Arts [now Fine Arts] to the Chemistry building. It's not so really...so most of the traffic was on the north and south bridges. And I looked, coming across one of them today, and they are starting to show their age. So, I was like, "Yeah, I remember when these were brand new. These are starting to get kind of worn."

Fuentes

So nothing really has changed in terms of how the bridges look in terms of when they were first implemented?

Boyte

No, it doesn't look like they have done anything except maybe some painting. But as far as the design and structure, they pretty much look exactly the same. They may have changed the light fixtures on the center one, but I don't think they have even done that.

Fuentes

You mentioned something early I would like to go back to just briefly, and it's how you heard about UT Arlington before you came, and before you met people. And I was curious, how did you hear about UT Arlington before you came here?

Boyte

We've got a branch of the family that actually were some of the filibusters that came over to Texas before the Civil War, up in Paris, Texas. Well there were some that live here and we came to visit them a couple of summers, like 1980, 1982, one of my uncles were in seminary over in Fort Worth. He said, "Hey, UTA is a growing campus and I know you're going to be limited on budget, when you get out of school." My parents had gotten divorced by then, and I was pretty much supporting myself, which at the age of seventeen, I had lived on my own, which is like, "Okay, seventeen I'm gone. Bye parents."

And, I came out here, but he was.... My uncle Al, he said, "Go take a look at UTA. We'll take you over there." Because, I was visiting.... I didn't have a car to come over here. So they brought me over, we looked around the campus and walked over it.

In fact just walking around the campus, because we obviously weren't students at the time, the police came and said, "Hey, what are you doing over here?" "We are just checking the campus out seeing if I want to go to it." They said, "Okay, that's fine." That was when all the UTA police weren't really state police; they were security guard-type of people. So it was...that changed after that. It was different. That's how I came to UTA and consider[ed] it.

Fuentes

Going back to the bridge project, I mentioned a student organization. I was kind of curious just about organizations on campus just in general. There was another group called the

"Freewheelers" [the wheelchair basketball program founded by Jim Hayes in 1976, renamed the Movin' Mavs in 1990]. Are you familiar with that organization and if so to what extent?

Boyte

I don't know about that one. I may have heard the name, but it sounds like it was one of the wheelchair groups and the disabled groups that were here. We had some common ground. We're disabled obviously, but if you were disabled in a wheelchair versus disabled and didn't look you were disabled, there was almost cliquy in the way they worked with each other. It had nothing to do with the wheelchair basketball program or anything like that, even though they tended to be some of the same people, but their group hung out among themselves, and our group hung out among ourselves. We would visit each other and there were some people who would cross back and forth between them. But, it was very distinctive. Jim fought that and fought that, but it was hard to break. I think that's just human nature.

Fuentes

<topic>Student community on campus & involvement with Anime UTA and Alpha Ro Chi fraternity</topic>

Can we talk about the group that you ran with when you were in school? Like, how did you meet? Like, did you meet through Jim and through his office?

Boyte

Well, we met in the office and just hanging around downstairs. And you tended to gravitate toward people who had your own interests. And sometimes they were disabled and sometimes they weren't. There were several of us that read the same kind of SciFi and fantasy stuff when we had the time to read the fun stuff. And there were people that you know would go to the bowling alley, and there were some of the rooms available and we would play board games or whatever. We would get together and do that. Later that was a group that became Anime UTA back in the heyday of animation. We would go and watch anime. And we would use the theater over at the north side of the Liberal Arts [now Fine Arts] building and people would bring their VCRs and just plug them into the projectors and watch anime. That tended to be Friday nights or Saturday nights, if there wasn't something going on the west side of campus.

That was where a lot of us met. Just similar interests, whether it was anime, whether it was books, whether it was "What are you doing this weekend?" so it wasn't really organized but you gravitated toward the people you were friends with. And, I was part of the fraternity, but then again their main focus tended to be partying and drinking and classwork. Classwork was fine, but the other two parts were like, "I'm already having enough trouble with school, I don't need that too."

Fuentes

So, speaking of the fraternity you were a part of, the Alpha Rho Chi, is that correct? Why did you get involved with [that] fraternity?

Boyte

Well, I was an Architecture student, and I was taking Architecture and Engineering courses, and they were the professional architecture fraternity. So as soon as I applied for campus and came in there, they grabbed me, and all of a sudden I was part of the fraternity. I didn't

really apply, it was kind of like, "Oh here, we're going to bring you in." They inducted me and I went through all the ceremonies they had at the time.

Like I said, back then, I don't know how it is now, but back then the Greek life was very, very strong. There were over thirty houses on campus and right around campus. I drove through there and I could only see like a handful of the fraternity and sorority houses still there now. It's been bulldozed, but originally Greek Row there were fraternity and sorority houses east and west on both sides of the street and then north and south on the one that runs up by Swift Center, which used to be Swift Elementary. Then there were several on the north side of the campus that were standalone houses and they were there too.

Fuentes

So the fraternity was when you were here as an Architecture student. How was your involvement different when you came back and switched to History?

Boyte

I didn't get involved in fraternities, so my grades shot up dramatically. That was a good thing. I had more time to actually study, but then again, I was working more so I had less time to do fun activities. So I was more focused on getting the degree, getting finished, moving on to a graduate program. Once I was in the graduate program, I became part of Pi Alpha Alpha. And, we kept busy doing projects and research. I spent a lot of time up in Special Collections in the Library and working with Dr. Buisseret, who was doing a history of the southwest cartographic history project. And so, a lot of my time was spent working with him and in Special Collections, and working, and going to class.

Fuentes

I want to touch back on the group of students you met with as part of the disability services office and you made the comment that Jim Hayes really tried to unify all the students together. I was curious what he did to try to unify students?

Boyte

<topic>Interactions with other disabled students on campus</topic>

Basically, one-on-one relationships with all of the students. Because he would see us spreading apart. Since his goal was to get a campus that was more accessible and more friendly too to disabled students, and make people aware that people with disabilities are not handicapped. You know it's a different thing completely. Because people look at "handicapped" as you cannot function and do stuff, versus "disabled," which is like, "Okay, I have some disabilities and I am limited to what I can do, but I can still have a career and I can still get around, and I can still have a normal life."

So he tried to get everybody to work together. That was...that was very difficult because people with disabilities tend to range from, "I've got a chip on my shoulder," to "I don't need anything from anybody," to "Give me all the help you get." And those are pretty wide separations. Most of us kind of fell in the middle where it's like, "Okay, if you can help me with this that's fine. If not, I can take care of it myself."

People with a chip on their shoulders, they were the ones that really gave everybody a bad image. Because they would be out there and you would see them causing a problem. And there is nothing you can do about it, again that's just the way people are. It was so bad, one of the students, his name was Danny, and he had cerebral palsy and he was on crutches. Well,

he had a box hung under his car one day and a girl was walking by and the box was actually causing him to have issues backing in and out of the car because he had hand controls and it was interfering with the wheel. Well, she got beside the car and said, "Let me get that out from you." And, she was crawling underneath the car to do it. And, he got out and he pitched a fit. He was a real ass about things. We were just like, "Why were you doing that?" "Well, I don't need anybody's help." It's just like, "Okay, you're on your crutches. How the hell are you going to get that box out from under your car? If you are getting down on the ground, you are not getting back up." She was just trying to help.

That was one extreme example. Then you go to the other ones where they want help with everything. You know it's like, it's not just good enough to open the door and hold the door, but can you carry my books, can you do this. And you're like, "Oh, please come on. You can do that yourself."

Fuentes

How often did you run into experiences like that with other students on campus?

Boyte

It wasn't very often, but when they were it was enough that people would notice and you're like okay that just makes us all look bad. That's not the image you want to portray. You want to portray yourself as a viable member of society that you can actually function and do stuff. Okay, you may need a little more help to get certain things done or you may need the building a little more accessible or "Okay, help put me into classes so I don't have to stand in this heat for three or four hours." You would take help if it wasn't too...to some other people, but when you're actually causing other people problems just to benefit yourself that's not a good image to portray for anybody.

Fuentes

So, I have a question, I mean, to the best of your knowledge what was Jim's response when these issues were brought to his attention or were they ever brought to his attention?

Boyte

I don't know if anything was brought to his attention. He was all over the campus. If he saw something doing that then I am quite sure, without saying he definitely did, I am quite sure he had a talk to them about it. "It's like, yeah don't do that. If you need help, fine. But you're making an ass of yourself, don't do that."

Fuentes

In regards to your experience with him, had you been in contact with him all throughout your undergraduate experience and what kind of relationship did you have with Jim?

Boyte

I knew him throughout the entire undergraduate experience and even in graduate school. As I became more and more involved with classes and work outside of it, I became less and less involved with doing stuff. Of course, by the time you get to graduate school you're just like, "I have time to sleep three or four hours a night maybe if I'm lucky. And, when I'm not on campus, I don't want to be on campus." Because at that time, especially in graduate school, I was working 8-5, Monday through Friday, weekend projects as well. And, I would come to

graduate classes at night about 6 or 6:30, and then you're in class for three or three and half hours, depending on somebody wanted to pontificate about something that had absolutely nothing to do with the class and the instructor let them ramble. So, it became less and less frequent for me to see him. More typically, just a few times a semester in the later years.

Fuentes

Thinking about community just in general I was wondering if there was anything else you wanted to add about UTA's disability community. Any experiences that maybe we had not discussed that you can remember?

Boyte

<topic>Integration of disabled students and evolving campus accessibility</topic>
I don't know how they are now obviously having been gone from campus for twenty years, but by the time I finished going to school, I think the disabled students were pretty integrated into the campus. I haven't seen differentiation between the students, and even when I was going earlier, there was a little bit I think mainly because of the high number of disabled students that had come here because of the programs they had found out about. So, it was probably more typical to see a lot more students in wheelchairs, a lot more obviously disabled students walking across campus than you would see at other campuses. Of course, I had said the campus had been modified extensively by then to accommodate the students. Now, I have no idea. This was the first time I've been back on campus in probably ten or fifteen years.

Fuentes

Thinking about the Cooper Street project and some of the things Jim fought for to make the campus more accessible, since the Cooper Street project and while you were a student, had you notice any other changes to the campus? Like is there anything that stands out as being something that made the campus more accessible?

Boyte

Well, they extended the University Center so a lot of the stuff that was in the basement ended up being moved to the first floor. So, that made it more accessible. If you go on to the east side of the university center, instead of staircases, you are going to see ramps because that was all built into the new campus. When they redid the east side of the campus as well, that used to be Bauder College, and the old 7-Eleven, and Lang Van Restaurant. That all is gone and became new building and new parking lots and made the campus look a lot better too. It expanded the size of it. And they expanded the university activities building [Maverick Activities Building] over here too. I haven't been into it since then, but even before it was expanded it had a lot of ramps and elevators to facilitate students getting around. Of course, it was one of our favorite places to go to because it was always nice and cool.

Fuentes

You've attended UT Arlington both as an undergrad and graduate student, and I was curious thinking about changes to the university, in terms of registering for classes. I am assuming you...did you register for classes toward the end of your graduate career?

Boyte

Yes.

Fuentes

And how did that change the process of registering for classes because before you mention Jim Hayes had this new system in place to help students with disabilities to register for classes? Did that change much?

Boyte

Yeah, you could register for classes from home. I didn't get my first computer until, probably around, 1999. I had used computers obviously in computer labs, which you usually were using computers not for school related projects I would say. You were doing other stuff with them. I didn't have a computer at home until 1999. So what you would do, you would either go either upstairs to use one of the public-use computers or go to one of the computer labs which they had one at Carlisle...I think they had one in Hammond. They definitely had two or three in the library and they had like PC lab and the Mac lab depending on what you wanted to do. You could go online, enter your student services account, pull it up and you could pick your classes. And, if you were there early enough you could get the choice of your instructor, your classes, your time.

I don't know if it's different now, but tended to be kind of a problem with a few of the hard-to-get classes where you might have to wait a semester to get it. So then you're basically just taking fillers classes to keep on campus, keep your student status, especially if you had loans. Loans at that point were becoming more typical. We had scholarships and Pell grants and stuff through Texas Rehabilitation Commission, and I can't remember a few of the other ones. The American Legion had some scholarships available, but then it started migrating more and more toward student loans. "Get your guaranty student loan consolidation," which boy, I had three of those and I got those things paid off as quickly as I could as I saw where that was going. And, it's a huge problem now. There's fewer scholarships, there's fewer grants, but there are lots of student loans. And lots, and lots of debt for students coming out of school.

Fuentes

Talking about incorporating computers as part of the class registration process, obviously that changed how students might have interacted with disability services' office with Jim and registering for classes. What other changes did you notice maybe over time that the disability services' office, through Jim, had also changed? Did anything change?

Boyte

Yeah, it was no longer a social gathering spot as it was before. Once the university center was expanded and there was more elbow room for people to get around and do stuff, then the offices downstairs became more and more abandoned. I was down there less and less, when I would go down there in the later years, there might be one or two students which tended to be more of the basketball players and stuff. In the offices, maybe one or two others doing research. There wasn't the same numbers in the past. In the early years, it was a small area too. Maybe the size of three of these offices you have here. There could be 25, 30 people down there, sitting and talking, and moving. They might be there only for 30 minutes or might be there for two hours. But yeah, by the last time I went down there, I think there were only two people down there. Not counting Jim.

Fuentes

You made the comment that you hadn't been back to the university since you left graduate school. I'm curious to know, did you keep in touch with our network of friends that you made here?

Boyte

I did for about maybe three or four years. But, we lost contact with everybody. I could not tell you where a single one of them is that went here. There was one person, and he passed away recently. I did keep in touch with him because we did...we had a twenty-five year friendship. I wasn't discounting him. It's just he passed away recently that it's kind of a sore spot. But otherwise, no. I think about them and I've looked for them a few times. We have this wonderful Facebook and stuff—I can't find any of them.

Fuentes

And, so you really haven't been back to the campus?

Boyte

No.

Fuentes

Not at all. So, I'm curious to know since you at least made the comment that you drove around that Greek Row has shrunk in terms of houses, I'm curious to know did you take some time to drive other parts of the university and if so, what your thoughts were?

Boyte

Actually, I parked on the north side and walked. So, I actually walked through a big portion of the campus. So, I see you got the new Engineering building that's been expanded. You've got the new Chemistry building. University Hall looks about the same. The Library looks the same. Liberal Arts [now Fine Arts] building looks the same. The Architecture building was the new Architecture building and not the old Architecture building. The old Architecture building was part of the Liberal Arts [now Fine Arts] building and Swift Center before they built the new one. Hereford, the University Center, looks like it hasn't really changed since I left. It's starting to show a little bit of wear. I did see a lot more kiosks around campus that did used to be here that people could sit under. It looks like you have a shuttle bus that didn't exist in the past. The on-campus, off-campus administrative buildings, they look like they're the same. Like the student Baptist Union, those pretty much look the same as they were before. A lot of the old ratty apartments that used to be around, those are all gone. I did walk through the Corral area and its like, "Okay, yeah this is a micro-engineering center now for something, something."

So yeah, I took a walk around and lot of it is the same and a lot of it is quite different. See they are still expanding like that huge convention complex they got on the east side and I drove up and I saw they got, I think it's some kind of student housing. It looks like four-story apartment looking buildings. I'm like, "Wow, that's impressive." It's over on the far southeast side closer to Park Row and what used to be all houses, if you go across the bridge on Border Street over here, is that Border, no Border, is over here. No Mitchell. If you go across the bridge where the creek is the parking lot now goes on for several blocks and they used to all be houses. So those...a lot has changed. A lot hasn't changed. I don't know how the schools as

far as a commuter school any more, but back then it really suffered from being a commuter school. They had gotten rid of the football team by the time I started.

Fuentes

<topic>Living off-campus and experience of UT Arlington as a commuter school</topic>
So, it sounds like you were a commuter student. So how far away from the campus did you typically live?

Boyte

I lived down at Park Row and Cooper Street. There are several apartments that are down there. Like I said, there were three or four blocks of houses and I would just walk up to campus. I had a car, but it was an old junker car I would if I had to. One I didn't want to pay for a parking permit, which was pretty pricy even back then, and two, I just didn't like to drive. I preferred to walk. I enjoyed walking, and I had a bicycle too. I was riding it across campus one day, and my foot got hung in the gear. I was looking down to get unhung and ran smack into one of those light poles out there. So I ride into the pole, and I'm sitting down there going, "That hurt." So, I tended to just walk around. It was only four or five blocks.

Fuentes

Was there a reason why you chose to live off-campus versus on-campus?

Boyte

I was working full-time. I had some family things going on and it was easier to just live off-campus. I needed to work to live off-campus more so than living on-campus, and there wasn't as many opportunities to live on-campus and get paid for those unless you were basically in an athletic program. So I didn't really do it. I just went ahead and lived off campus. Back then, "Oh wow, this is expensive." It cost like \$350 a month.

Fuentes

Did most of your friends live off campus as far as you can recall?

Boyte

Most of them. Yeah. Some of them lived in the apartments. What used to be the Catalina apartments north on Abram Street that they bulldozed that...they're gone from what I could tell when I drove by there. And it's all new multi-story study housing now. But yeah, they all lived in various rat-hole apartments around the campus.

Fuentes

Well, and I ask that question because I'm curious to know if Mr. Hayes, to try to create unity among his students, if he encouraged students to live on campus.

Boyte

Not that I am aware of. I really never heard anything about that from any of them. A lot of the disabled students either lived with their families. There were obviously a few that lived on campus in the dorms, but I don't know how many. It just never really came up. Most of the people I knew lived off-campus, close by, or they commuted in from a distance.

Fuentes

Well, at this time, I do not have any further questions. Is there anything that you would like to add just about your experiences at UT Arlington, maybe with Mr. Jim Hayes, or the construction of the Cooper Street bridges, or any other aspect that I've gone over?

Boyte

Jim Hayes was a great man. He was way ahead of his time for getting stuff done. I don't know how he was in his last few years, because I wasn't on the campus. I assume he kept on with the fight that he had been pursuing the entire time. I'm glad Cooper Street got lowered because that was a horrendous mess. It was dangerous. I don't know how many students were actually injured crossing that road. I think it was good step for the university. It's kind of odd for a university to be built on both sides of a major street like that. And it keeps expanding. It's expanding north, south, east and west too. You have that dividing line right through the middle of this campus, which is kind of odd. So, I'm glad they got those bridges to get across there.

It was a commuter school, I think it still is a commuter school. I don't know if that's ever going to change. It's growing. It's got a lot more money put into the campus than it did back then. I assume the price of going has increased dramatically, but I haven't looked. I kind of finished my degrees, and I'm done, and I don't want to look back. Time to move on and do other stuff. I didn't get to have a typical "You go to university, college life," because I was working not that that's a bad thing, but it was different.

Fuentes

Well, alright. That concludes this interview. Thank you so much for taking the time out to meet with me and I'm going to go ahead and turn off the recorder.

Boyte

Alright.