Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Oral History Project

Timothy J. Nugent

FOUNDER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS DISABLED STUDENTS PROGRAM AND THE NATIONAL WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION, PIONEER IN ARCHITECTURAL ACCESS

Interviews conducted by

Fred Pelka

in 2004-2005

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Timothy Nugent, circa 1998

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Thanks are also due to other donors to this effort over the years: Dr. Henry Bruyn, June A. Cheit, Claire Louise Englander, Raymond Lifchez, Raelynne Rein, Judith Stronach, the Prytanean Society, and the Sol Waxman and Tina P. Waxman Family Foundation. Special thanks go to Professor Raymond Lifchez for his generous donation in 2006 in honor of Susan O’Hara.

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SERIES HISTORY by Ann Lage

Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Oral History Project

Historical Framework

The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed a revolutionary shift in the worldview and legal status of people with disabilities. In major cities across the United States, people with disabilities began in the 1960s and 1970s to assert their rights to autonomy and self-determination and to reject the prejudices and practices that kept them stigmatized, isolated, and often confined to institutions or inaccessible homes under the care of family members.

Within a few years of each other, groups of people—usually young, often with a university connection, and frequently wheelchair users with significant physical disabilities—formed organizations in Berkeley, New York, Boston, Denver, St. Louis, Houston and elsewhere to foster independent living in the community and to advocate for laws and policies to remove barriers to autonomy. Characterizing these groups, which formed relatively independently of each other, was the evolution of a new core set of beliefs that gave a distinctive character to this emerging disability rights and independent living movement. Their members came to insist on self-determination and control over their organizations. They resolved to make changes in their own lives and in society. And as they engaged in political actions, they began to recognize the shared experience of discrimination and oppression among groups with diverse disabilities.

Very quickly, informal regional and national networks of activists developed, often including people with a range of disabilities, who shared information about the nuts and bolts of funding, peer counseling, and service delivery. They joined together to advocate for essential personal assistance services and for the removal of architectural and transportation barriers. These networks were formalized in national organizations, such as the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (founded in 1975), and national gatherings, such as the 1977 White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals, which served in turn as catalysts for national and grassroots organizing on a cross-disability basis.

From the beginning, the movement was a part of the activist and countercultural climate of the times, evolving within the context of civil rights demonstrations, antiwar protests, and the emerging women's and gay rights movements. Early leaders such as Judith Heumann, Fred Fay, Ed Roberts, Lex Frieden, and a host of others conceptualized their issues as a political movement, a struggle for the civil rights of people with disabilities. A wide-ranging group of activists absorbed this civil rights consciousness and cross- disability awareness during a series of defining political actions, such as the nationwide sit-ins and demonstrations in 1977, organized to demand the issuance of regulations for section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and during the subsequent peer trainings on the rights of people with disabilities, which were carried out nationwide.

As the political movement grew, the new cadre of activists made connections with the emerging parents' movement and its efforts to free people with developmental disabilities from the massive and dehumanizing state institutions of the time. A series of landmark federal lawsuits, most notably *PARC v. Pennsylvania* (1972) and *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972), established for the first time a right to a public school education for children with disabilities. Alliances and coalitions also developed with a number of traditional, disability-specific organizations, which were themselves undergoing changes during this period.

New organizations devoted to pursuing legal and legislative reforms, such as the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (1979), ADAPT, a grassroots direct-action organization (1983), and a growing number of other local, state, and national disability organizations and alliances profoundly influenced national policy in education, transportation, employment, and social services. Their best known legislative victory was the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, which, although compromised by subsequent court decisions, offered broad civil rights protection for disabled Americans and has served as a beacon for the creation of disability rights legislation in fifty other countries.

Less concrete than the legislative accomplishments and legal cases, and still evolving, is the shift in attitudes and consciousness that was driven by, and has transformed the lives of, people with a wide variety of physical and mental disabilities, challenging the notion of disability as stigma and instead embracing disability as a normal facet of human diversity. Theoreticians and artists with disabilities play a prominent role in defining and communicating concepts of disability community and disability culture, and academicians are promoting disability as a category of cultural and historical analysis.

These achievements, as significant as they are, have not ended the discrimination or the prejudice. Indeed, the first years of the twenty-first century have seen several Supreme Court decisions which have limited the expected scope and effectiveness of disability rights law, and many disabled Americans remain economically and socially marginalized. While the need for change continues, the tremendous accomplishments of the disability rights and independent living movement cannot be denied. American society has been profoundly transformed, and any accurate account of the social and political landscape of the late twentieth century will acknowledge the contributions of disability rights and independent living activists.

Project Design, Interviewees

The Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Project at the Regional Oral History Office, the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, preserves, through oral history interviews, the firsthand accounts of the activists who have made significant contributions to the origins and achievements of this movement. The Bancroft Library also collects, preserves, and provides access to the papers of organizations and individuals who have been a part of the struggles for disability rights and independent living. All of the oral history texts, finding aids to the archival records, and selections from the archival papers and images are available on the Internet, as part of the Online Archive of California, California Digital Library.

The first phase of the project, completed in 2000, documented the movement during its formative years in Berkeley, California. Berkeley was the site where the concept of independent living was most clearly articulated and institutional models developed, originally by and for students on the Berkeley campus and soon after in the community, with the founding of the nation's first independent living center in 1972. These organizations and their dynamic leaders, together with the activist tradition in the Bay Area and a disability-friendly climate, made Berkeley an important center of the disability movement and a natural focus for Phase I of the project.

During Phase I, Regional Oral History Office interviewers recorded forty-six oral histories with Berkeley leaders, many of whom have also been figures on the national scene. The Bancroft Library collected personal papers of interviewees and others in the disability community and archival records of key disability organizations, such as the Center for Independent Living, the World Institute on Disability, the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and the Center for Accessible Technology.

Phase II of the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Project (2000-2004) expanded the oral history research and the collection of archival material to document the growth of the movement nationwide. The project again focused on those leaders whose activism began in the 1960s and 1970s. The forty-seven Phase II interviewees include founders and organizers of disability rights groups and early independent living centers in New York, Boston, Chicago, Texas, and California. Of these, many have also been national leaders in the movement and founders of national organizations. Many in this group, like the Berkeley interviewees, were among those who helped to conceptualize disability rights as a political movement and shaped the programs and philosophy of independent living. Others have been key figures in the development of disability rights law and policy, as organizers, strategists, and lobbyists behind the scenes.

A number of interviewees have held positions in state and federal government agencies and commissions, helping formulate government law and policy on transportation access, social security and health benefits, and personal assistance, education, and rehabilitation services. Several have worked to free disabled people from institutions, and others reflect on their own experiences living in institutions. Some interviewees were deeply involved with the parents' movement.

The international disability movement is represented by Yoshihiko Kawauchi, a leading proponent of universal design and disability rights in Japan; many American activists interviewed for the project also have connections to the international movement. Two interviewees are pioneering artists with disabilities, who discuss their careers as artists and the relationship of art and advocacy. Several have taught disability studies at colleges and universities, contributing to the concept of disability as a category of analysis analogous in many ways to class, race, gender, and sexual orientation.

The project Web site (http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/drilm/) includes the full-text of most of the completed oral histories. It offers the researcher four points of access to the collection: by geographic location, by organizational affiliation, by research themes addressed, and by name of interviewees. There is no claim to completeness in the collection; further interviews are planned pending additional funding for the project.

Interview Themes and Topics

An overarching research goal for phases I and II of the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Project was to explore and document how a broad group of people with disabilities, in key cities across the country, initiated and built this social movement, and how it evolved nationally, within the context of the social and political fabric of the times. Lines of inquiry include social/economic/political backgrounds of interviewees and family attitudes toward disability; experiences with medical and rehabilitation professionals and with educational systems; identity issues and personal life experiences; involvement in civil rights or other social movements of the era; and developing consciousness of disability as a civil rights issue.

Interviews record how people with disabilities built effective organizations, with information about leadership, organizational structure and style, organizational turning points, stumbling blocks, achievements, and failures. Challenges particular to the disability community are addressed; for example, leaders of independent living centers point out the difficulties of providing much-needed services to clients and answering to government funding agencies for their service mandate, while still maintaining the essential advocacy roots of the independent living movement.

Interviews explore the building of national alliances and coalitions, investigating networking among groups from different locales and among groups accustomed to aligning on the basis of a single disability. Indeed, the issue of inclusiveness within the movement—the nature and meaning, and sometimes tenuousness, of cross-disability alliances and the inclusion of newly recognized disabilities—is a complex and significant theme in many project interviews, and offers an area for future oral history research.

Interviews document the range of efforts—from protest demonstrations, to legislative lobbying, to litigation in state and federal courts—to influence disability law and policy, to embed disability rights into the canon of civil rights, and to alter and expand the very definition of disability. Several interviews also reflect on a recent philosophical shift of some movement thinkers, who draw on a human rights framework and acknowledge the disability community's need for social supports along with equality of opportunity and civil rights.

Also examined by many narrators are race, gender, and sexual identity issues: the role of women (large) and minorities (limited) in the movement; the development of programs for women and girls with disabilities; questions of sexuality and disability; and the disability movement's relationship over the years with the women's, gay and lesbian, and African American civil rights movements. The involvement of able-bodied advocates, including parents of children with disabilities, is examined by many interviewees, both disabled and able-bodied, with telling accounts of often awkward and sometimes painful struggle over their place in the movement. (For instance, one organization toyed with the idea of granting able- bodied members only three-fifths of a vote.)

Another important theme running through these interviews is the question of equal access. This includes the impact of technological advances—from motorized wheelchairs in the early days of the movement to adaptive computer technologies more recently, all of which have profoundly extended opportunities for people with disabilities. And it includes the campaigns, legislation, and lobbying—on campuses, in communities, and in Congress—for removal of architectural barriers to people with disabilities, for access to public transportation, and for access to personal assistance services, all essential requirements for independent living.

Many interviewees reflect on the process of developing a disability identity and a sense of belonging to a disability community. Several explore the concept of disability culture and its expression in the arts and in media, and theoretical explorations of disability by scholars and educators. Interviewees who have pioneered the fields of disability scholarship, arts, and ethics point out the contributions of disability studies to the broader society in fostering new and more complex ways of thinking about the body, about normality, about crucial ethical issues relating to abortion, euthanasia, and physician-assisted suicide; and in contributing a unique disability perspective to scholarship in history, literature, and cultural studies.

Project Staff and Advisors

Since its inception the project has been collaborative, with staff members and advisors drawn from the disability community, from academia, and from the Bancroft Library and its Regional Oral History Office. The national advisory board for Phase II includes disability rights leaders Fred Fay, from Boston, and Lex Frieden, from Houston; scholars Frederick Collignon and Sue Schweik from UC Berkeley, Paul Longmore, historian from San Francisco State University, and Karen Hirsch, disability scholar from St. Louis.

Ann Lage directed the project for the Regional Oral History Office, providing years of experience in oral history and leadership for the interviewing team. Interviewers for the project had a unique set of qualifications, combining historical perspective, training and experience in oral history methods, personal experience with disability, and, frequently, activism and participation in disability organizations. Oral history interviews were conducted by Sharon Bonney, former director of the Disabled Students' Program at UC Berkeley and former assistant director of the World Institute on Disability; Mary Lou Breslin, cofounder and former president of the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, policy consultant and lecturer on disability civil rights topics, and Henry Betts Award winner; Kathy Cowan, librarian for a public interest law firm; Esther Ehrlich, oral history interviewer and editor in the areas of disability arts and community history (who also took on myriad project management responsibilities); and Denise Sherer Jacobson, writer and educator on disability issues *(The Question of David, A Disabled Mother's Journey through Adoption, Family, and Life*, 1999). David Landes, former coordinator of student affairs for the Computer Technologies Program in Berkeley, took a less active role in Phase II when he was appointed to a full-time faculty position in economics. Susan O'Hara, former director of the Disabled Students' Program at UC Berkeley and the initiator of the original idea for this project, again served as consulting historian, occasional interviewer, and convenor of monthly project meetings.

Conducting interviews in Massachusetts and Washington DC was Fred Pelka, a writer specializing in disability rights politics and history, author of *The ABC-CLIO Companion to the Disability Rights Movement*, and a recipient of a 2004 Guggenheim Fellowship for his proposed book, "An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement." Harilyn Rousso, educator and consultant on issues of women and girls with disabilities, moved from project interviewee to interviewer, conducting one New York oral history and then organizing and moderating a videotaped group discussion with four New York advocates. The Regional Oral History Office production staff, coordinated by Megan Andres, transcribed interviews and carried out other production tasks.

Bancroft Library project personnel in the Technical Services unit collected, arranged, and catalogued personal papers and organizational records and prepared detailed finding aids. They included Jane Rosario, supervising archivist, and project archivists Susan Storch and Lori Hines, all under the supervision of David DeLorenzo, head of Bancroft Technical Services. The staff of the Berkeley Library's Digital Publishing Group, headed by Lynne Grigsby-Standfill, prepared the oral histories and other texts, photographs, and finding aids for digital archiving in the Online Archive of California. Brooke Dykman designed the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Web site. Theresa Salazar as curator of the Bancroft Collection, provided curatorial oversight for the project.

Oral History and the Oral History Process

Oral history provides unique and irreplaceable sources for historical study. It preserves the reflections and perspectives of those who have participated in historical events, documenting with firsthand accounts how events happened, how decisions were made, and the behind-the-scenes interplay that underlies the public face of an organization or social movement. Beyond documenting what happened and how, the words of participants reveal the personal and social contexts and the institutional and political constraints which profoundly shape events but may not be apparent in the written record. Most significantly for this project, oral histories offer an opportunity to elicit reflections on often elusive matters of identity, changes in perception and consciousness, and the personal experience of living with a disability. Finally, they provide a record of how people remember and understand their past, often a indication of personal values and cultural meanings.

The DRILM project team, primarily based in Berkeley, all contributed to the original design of the project and assisted in developing interview protocols. Bay Area interviewers were joined by Fred Pelka from Massachusetts for a two-day orientation session in December 2000 and by telephone during regular monthly meetings, held to plan and evaluate interviews and review progress. Interviewers assigned to document the movement in a particular location conducted research to choose potential interviewees and interview topics. Once narrators were selected and arrangements made, they prepared a preliminary outline before each interview session, based on interview protocols, background research in relevant papers, consultation with the interviewee's colleagues, and mutual planning with the interviewee. The length of each oral history varied according to the length and complexity of the narrator's involvement in the movement, but also was dictated by scheduling and availability limitations.

Tapes were transcribed verbatim and lightly edited for accuracy of transcription and clarity. During their review of the transcripts, interviewees were asked to clarify unclear passages and to give additional information when needed, but to preserve the transcript as much as possible as a faithful record of the interview session. The final stage added subject headings, a table of contents, and an index (for the print versions). Shorter transcripts were bound with related interviews into volumes; longer transcripts constitute individual memoirs. Interviewees were offered the opportunity to seal sensitive portions of their transcripts, or omit them from the Internet versions.

There are more than one hundred oral histories in the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement series. Nearly all of them are available via the Internet in the Online Archive of California (http:// www.oac.cdlib.org/texts/); they also can be accessed through the project Web site at http:// bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/drilm/. Print volumes can be read in the Bancroft Library and at the University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Special Collections. They are made available to other libraries and to organizations and individuals for cost of printing and binding. Many of the oral histories are supplemented by a videotaped interview session. Video and audiotapes are available at the Bancroft Library.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. The office is under the direction of Richard Cándida Smith and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. The catalogues of the Regional Oral History Office and many oral histories on line can be accessed at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/.

The Bancroft Library's Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Project, of which these oral histories are a part, was funded by field-initiated research grants in 1996 and 2000 from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research [NIDRR], Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education. Additional interviews on "Antecedents, Implementation, and Impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act" were completed for the project under a 2006 contract funded by DBTAC-Pacific ADA. Any of the views expressed in the oral history interviews or accompanying materials are not endorsed by the sponsoring agencies.

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Ann Lage, Project Director
Regional Oral History Office

Interview History—Timothy Nugent

The work of Timothy Nugent as educator, administrator, researcher, writer and advocate has had a profound impact on the lives of Americans with disabilities coming of age after World War II. As the founder and director of the world's first disabled students program, he provided an opportunity for a college education to some of the most prominent leaders of what would become the independent living movement of the 1970s. As the founder and long-time commissioner of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, Nugent confronted head-on the pervasive ableism of the general public, and in the process his athletes served as the impetus for innovations in wheelchair design. As the director of the American National Standards Institute Project A117, Nugent was a pioneer of architectural access. Instrumental to the founding of the National Paraplegia Foundation, Nugent also established the nation's first fraternity for students with disabilities, Delta Sigma Omicron (Greek for DSO or "Disabled Students Organization").

Timothy Nugent was born in 1923 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Disability was an integral part of his childhood. His younger sister was blind, and his father had both hearing and visual disabilities. Nugent as a child was himself diagnosed with a heart condition, and his parents were advised to limit his physical activities. Despite this, Nugent volunteered for service in the US Army during World War II.

At the war's conclusion Nugent took a position at the University of Illinois at Galesburg, where he was directed to create a program for veterans with disabilities. Built during the war as a military hospital, the Galesburg facility had been subsumed into the nation's burgeoning higher education system to accommodate the influx of new students covered by the GI Bill, as well as the backlog of those whose education had been interrupted by the war. With its ramped entrances and other access features, Galesburg seemed an ideal place to try a radical experiment: the integration of disabled students into a mainstream college campus, beginning with disabled veterans under the auspices of the Veterans Administration, but also including civilians with disabilities eager for a college education.

Nugent oversaw every aspect of the new program. Officially inaugurated in September 1948, this experiment had hardly begun when it was threatened with extinction. The governor of Illinois, in a cost-cutting measure, had decided to close the Galesburg campus, and Nugent was informed that his program would be terminated. In response, he and his students in April 1949 organized one of the earliest disability rights demonstrations. Twenty-eight of his students, along with Nugent and other supporters, drove from Galesburg to the state capitol in Springfield, demanding to meet with the governor. When he refused, they took their fight to the state legislature. Their efforts, reported in the media, gained the support of Disabled American Veterans and the American Legion, and the state eventually allowed the program to continue at the University of Illinois campus at Urbana-Champaign.

Virtually everything Nugent did at Urbana-Champaign those first years was an innovation. Faced with the need of his students to navigate a large campus, Nugent established a bus service for students with disabilities, overseeing the construction of the first lift-equipped buses in the nation, if not the world. Curb-ramps—virtually unheard of—were built first on campus and then

in the larger community, while Nugent and his staff pioneered new ways to meet the day-to-day needs of students with para and quadriplegia.

In the midst of all this, Nugent also became an early advocate of wheelchair athletics. In 1949 he founded the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, serving as its commissioner for the next quarter century. In this role Nugent organized and often personally went on tours with the teams, sending them out into communities where people with severe disabilities had never been seen, at least not in public. In an era before architectural access laws, before power wheelchairs, before independent living, Nugent's athletes were shattering stereotypes simply by showing up to play in a public venue. As well as all the usual social and individual benefits of organized sports, Nugent consciously used wheelchair basketball as a way to demonstrate that people with disabilities could be as competitive as anyone.

Encounters with inaccessible gyms, hotels, restaurants and streets, as well as his experience building ramps and providing access at the U of I campus, led Nugent into another virtually uncharted realm, that of architectural access. In 1959 Nugent became the first director of research and development at the American National Standards Institute Project A117, with the goal of promulgating standards for ramps, curb cuts, door widths, etc. The standards developed by the "ANSI" project became the basis for all subsequent architectural access legislation and regulation.

I interviewed Professor Nugent by telephone beginning in August 2004 and ending in October 2005: five interviews totaling approximately eight hours. The interviews were transcribed by staff at the Bancroft Library's Regional Oral History Office, and the transcripts were then reviewed by Professor Nugent and myself, and lightly edited for clarity. Professor Nugent reviewed the transcript for accuracy, making only minor changes and corrections.

The Nugent oral history was initiated as part of the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement project funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, a division of the US Department of Education. Funding to process the recorded interview came from DBTAC-Pacific ADA Center, as part of a project on the antecedents, implementation, and impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Interview transcripts are available for research in the Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. Audiotapes of the interview sessions are available for listening in the Bancroft Library. Transcripts of this oral history and others in the series are on line at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/drilm/.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Bancroft Library's materials on the history of California and the West. The office is under the direction of Richard Cándida Smith and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, The James D. Hart Director of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. The catalogues of the Regional Oral History Office and most of the collection of oral histories can be accessed at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO.

Fred Pelka, Interviewer, August 2008

Interview 1: 08-11-2004
Begin Audiofile 1 08-11-04.mp3

01-00:00:00
Pelka: This is an interview with Dr. Timothy Nugent, on August 11, 2004. This is interview number one, tape number one, side A. First of all, just some basic background information. You were born on January 10, 1923, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is that right?

01-00:00:31
Nugent: That's correct.

01-00:00:32
Pelka: Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about your family background. Where were your parents from?

01-00:00:37
Nugent: Well, my mother was born and raised in Germany but came over here, I guess in her late teens or in that neighborhood. She became very adept at English and she's held many jobs with banks and corporations and whatnot over the time. My father was born in Albany, New York, as best we can find. My brother-in-law is a specialist in genealogy and he can't find anything past my father in going back generations.

01-00:01:17
Pelka: Huh!

01-00:01:19
Nugent: My father was a very brilliant businessman but a very bitter person. I don't know what you'd say their socioeconomic status was because during the Depression, we were pretty poor. In fact I can remember going to the county relief line with a little red wagon to collect food.

01-00:01:46
Pelka: Okay. I just want to interrupt for two seconds. [pause] You were talking about your family socioeconomic status and remembering going to the relief line with a little red wagon. This is during the Great Depression, obviously.

01-00:02:10
Nugent: Yes and during that period of time I think I went to eight grade schools and two high schools.

01-00:02:22
Pelka: Do you have any particularly—you obviously have strong memories of your childhood. Is the Depression, the Depression, I gather is a major—

01-00:02:34
Nugent: Well, there were other things. I lived at home really only about six years of my life. My mother was quite ill for a while and at that time one of her aunts from Germany came over and raised me and I actually spoke German before I

spoke English [chuckles] and then for a period of about two years I lived with the family of Irving Riesen and I guess I lived with them for about two years.

01-00:03:07
Pelka: Yes, hold on just a moment please— I'm sorry I interrupted you. You were saying you lived with your aunt.

01-00:03:21
Nugent: I lived with my aunt, or I mean, my aunt lived with us and she raised me and I spoke German before I spoke English. And I also lived with a family in Madison, Wisconsin by the name of Riesen, Irving Riesen was the father's name, for about two years.

01-00:03:40
Pelka: Could you spell that for me? Irving Riesen.

01-00:03:44
Nugent: I beg your pardon.

01-00:03:45
Pelka: Could you spell Irving Riesen for me?

01-00:03:47
Nugent: Well, I-R-V-I-N-G is Irving, and Riesen, I believe is R-I-E-S-E-N.

01-00:03:54
Pelka: S-E-N, Okay.

01-00:03:55
Nugent: That goes back eighty-some years! [chuckling] When you talk about rural upbringing or urban, I have a little bit of both. I remember going to a one-room schoolhouse on two occasions and we lived in several parts of Milwaukee and several suburbs of Milwaukee and also Madison.

01-00:04:20
Pelka: Yes. Okay. Moving on—I want to ask you about your early experiences with disability. You had a sister who is blind, is that right?

01-00:04:37
Nugent: Well, let's start before that. I was born with a bad heart, back before they did very much, that's eighty-some years ago, that's—they didn't know much about the heart in those days and I was very restricted in the activities I was allowed to perform to the point of frustration, and I started just doing whatever I damn pleased and I started studying physiology and things of that nature.

01-00:05:04
Pelka: Yes. You said they didn't know very much about the heart in those days, but did someone tell you, here's your problem, you were born with a bad heart? How was this defined to you?

01-00:05:16
Nugent: Well, it wasn't defined to me, it was defined to my mother. [chuckles] When I was born I was hardly susceptible to that type of knowledge.

01-00:05:26
Pelka: Yeah.

01-00:05:26
Nugent: And my mother has written this up in her brief history and some of the difficulties I had at that time in my life. And, of course, my father was near blind and near deaf and was very bitter. He blamed the medical profession for that and as a result, the first five or six surgeries I had were not done by medical doctors. They were done by doctors of osteopathy, which at that time were not licensed to do surgery.

01-00:06:02
Pelka: Wow.

01-00:06:02
Nugent: And then my younger sister, my youngest sister who was very, very brilliant, very talented, she was a good musician and a good dancer, acrobatic dancer at the age of six, I believe, already, and had performed publicly and then all of a sudden they told her that she was losing her eyesight and that if she continued to play the piano or do gymnastic dancing or dancing that she'd go totally blind. And so she had to quit all those things, and that caused her to experience many adjustment and social problems for a number of years. As a result, I experienced, directly and indirectly, the impact of hidden disabilities. Patti was the most talented in the family and it was very disruptive to her and the family. She received no specialized training and rehabilitation. Nor did I, because it just didn't exist in any specific form in those days. She didn't have special education. She went to regular public schools.

Attitudes toward her and her disability—I don't think our attitudes changed much. We recognized she had a problem, but I took her to church with me every Sunday and we all played together during the week even though she was fifteen years younger than I was. In fact, I pretty much raised my brother and two sisters, who were all much younger than I was.

01-00:07:54
Pelka: Let me—let me back up a little bit in terms of your disability. How old were you when it was finally, or was it finally explained to you what the problem was and why there were all these restrictions on your activities.

01-00:08:12
Nugent: Well, I think it was just their concept of what would happen. I was told I shouldn't run, I shouldn't climb. My mother told me stories about, I'd be playing, if my heart seemed to be beating too fast, I'd lie on a cold concrete slab. This is all second-hand information, now, but this is how she described it. It was just something that I had and that was it, period. There was no great

fuss. There weren't many specialists in those days. In fact, half the specialists we know today didn't exist in those days.

01-00:08:53
Pelka: Yes. But you said at some point you just decided to hell with this, I'm going to do what I want to do.

01-00:09:01
Nugent: Well, I did. I pretty much started—I was built like a little bull. I was tiny, but I was very muscular because I did exercise on my own when I studied it. And eventually I outgrew it, evidently, because I'm almost eighty-two now and I'm still quite active even though I've had two spinal surgeries. And I love sports. I played every sport there was and I was reasonably good at it.

01-00:09:35
Pelka: Have you ever at any later point in your life asked a cardiologist or someone, "What was going on with my heart, back then?" Or—

01-00:09:46
Nugent: They identified it as murmurs and they said that one of my heart valves was not fully developed. It wouldn't close. That much I found out. Otherwise, than that I can't tell you I knew anything.

01-00:10:03
Pelka: Okay. Okay. It's interesting that the standard response to disability at that time seemed to be to begin to list things that you couldn't do. Both for you and your sister. As opposed to trying to figure out ways to work around the disabilities.

01-00:10:31
Nugent: Oh, yes, the approach in those days to my recollection was very, very different than it is today. In fact, [chuckles], it was still very different at the time I got into this field.

01-00:10:42
Pelka: Yes. Okay. Do you recall any discussion in your family about disability?

01-00:10:54
Nugent: [pause] No, nothing in particular that I can recall. You know, there would be times my mom would say, "Well, do you think you should do this?" Or, "I don't think you should do that." Or—other than that, not. It was never made to be a big issue, except I did have multiple surgeries and back in those days they used to put gauze on your face and either drop ether or chloroform on the gauze, which—I could smell it five blocks away, I think. And I was never able to be given enough because at that time they were afraid, because of my heart I remember them saying, so they never gave me a lot of anesthesia and more than once I woke up during surgery. It doesn't make any sense at all to me today, but that's the way it was described to me.

01-00:12:00
Pelka: Wow. How old were you at that time? This is before—

01-00:12:03
Nugent: Oh, it was between the ages of, I would guess, two and eleven.

01-00:12:09
Pelka: Okay. This is when you had these surgeries.

01-00:12:12
Nugent: Yes.

01-00:12:13
Pelka: Okay. Well, you said that your father blamed his disabilities on the medical profession.

01-00:12:19
Nugent: Not my disabilities.

01-00:12:21
Pelka: No, not yours, but his disabilities.

01-00:12:23
Nugent: His, yes.

01-00:12:24
Pelka: How so? What was the reasoning behind that?

01-00:12:29
Nugent: Well, if there was any reasoning behind it, I don't know it. I do know this, that he had a lot of very, very fixed concepts, and I believe his hearing loss and sight loss was the result of having diphtheria and measles, or scarlet fever back to back. And I believe from what we can find out, have been able to find out, that that's what was the cause, but he blamed it on the doctors, and that's the best answer I can give.

01-00:13:06
Pelka: But you said he was a brilliant businessman. Was he able to work despite his disabilities?

01-00:13:13
Nugent: Oh yes. In fact, I can tell you a couple of stories. I don't know if they're printable or not, but what happened during the Depression, either the federal government or the banks would make him the chief executive of a corporation. And he would determine if they would go bankrupt, then under what chapter, or if they would reorganize, or if they would sell out and whatnot. And when he got that job done they moved him to another place.

And that's one of the reasons I went to so many grade schools and high schools. When I returned from military service, I was hospitalized in an army hospital in Indiantown, Pennsylvania. And I went to visit one of my uncles

and aunts in Pittsburgh, and that uncle happened to be the general manager of the Pennsylvania Truck Lines, which at that time was, I guess, the largest in the United States. It was owned by Pennsylvania Railroad. About the third day he looked at me and he said, “Tim, you and I know each other well enough to talk straight, can’t we?” And I said, “Yeah.” And he said, “Well, when was the last time you’ve seen your dad?” I said, “I haven’t seen my dad for over eight years.” And he said, “Oh, you know, he visited us about two or three months ago.” He said, “On the third day I took your dad down to my office with me and actually he was there about three quarters of an hour, an hour and he started telling me I was wasting so much money here, and this was costing me so much money and he made me so blank, blank mad that the next day I called up my accountants and my consultants and had them come down to the office and he said they took three to four weeks to confirm everything your dad said was true.” [chuckles] And he looked at me and he said, “He’d be worth a hundred thousand dollars a year to me if I could stand the son of a bitch.

Now, that’s one case and it’s hard to explain, this description is better. I was consulting in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. There were three sectarian colleges, a Catholic, an Anglican, and a Protestant that were going to merge into Assumption University, which has since become the University of Windsor. And I was there as a consultant and I was meeting with various faculties of all three colleges and the executives, and the chairman of the board for the merger was the production manager of Hiram Walker in Canada. And that’s of course, their headquarters. He offered to hold a dinner at his house for the medical staff and myself and he kept looking at me and he said, “You and I have met each other before.” And I said, “No, we haven’t.” And he said, “Well, you know I used to be the manager at Peoria, Illinois.” I said, “Never been there.” Well, this went on most of the evening and about one in the morning he looked at me and he said, “Has anybody ever told you that you look like your father?” And I said, “Yes.” He said, “But his name wasn’t Tim, was it?” I said, “No, it was Jim, James Ambrose.” He said, “That’s the son of a bitch.” [laughter]

And then he told me that my dad, when my dad was a director of the Office of Price Administration appointed by President Roosevelt, as I understand it in Washington, DC, he was auditing Hiram Walker, and he told this manager that he could manufacture as much alcohol by using half the raw products he was using if he did it right. And, oh I can’t think of the general manager’s name, production manager’s name right now [Mr. Arrison], but anyway, he said that he had enough contacts in Washington to call and he said, “I called and I said, ‘Hey, I’d like to keep this guy up here for another week or two or maybe three and challenge him.’” And they approved it, so he called my dad in and said, “You’re staying up here for two or three weeks more to show me how we can do this.” And he said, “Damn it, if he didn’t prove to me that he could do it.” [chuckles] So that’s why I say he appeared to be a brilliant business man but that’s exactly where he stopped. So far as being close to his

kids or a good family man I can't say that at all. He never saw me play football, he never saw me run track or play basketball. He never attended my high school or college graduation or junior high school graduation. He didn't mean to be that way. My father lived past ninety and in his own way he tried to make amends to me and my siblings in the late years of his life.

01-00:18:28
Pelka: And is that why you spent so much time living with your aunt, as you said before?

01-00:18:38
Nugent: Well, no, my aunt from Germany was only with us for about, I'm going to guess, two years.

01-00:18:44
Pelka: Oh, okay.

01-00:18:45
Nugent: During a period when my mother was ill and I was a baby.

01-00:18:49
Pelka: Because at some—

01-00:18:50
Nugent: Mother's baby book says, "My Timmy speaks perfect German." And I was at least, I was two and a half years old at the time, I think.

01-00:18:59
Pelka: Because I just have this recollection of you saying—perhaps I heard this wrong, I misheard—that you only spent eight years, or something like that living—

01-00:19:15
Nugent: No, I was saying the total number of years that we were together as a family is six to eight years.

01-00:19:23
Pelka: And why was that?

01-00:19:27
Nugent: Well, partially because my dad was always being sent somewhere else. Partially because of his problems and—I wish I knew the answer to that because maybe I could have done something about it. [chuckling]

01-00:19:44
Pelka: Yes. Getting back to the issue of disability. Do you have any recollection of talking about disability as a subject—your sister's disability, your father's, your own disability, to any of your friends or classmates at school? Anyone like that?

01-00:20:04
Nugent: Well, I spoke to some doctors about it. And of course I worked very closely with my youngest sister because, as I say, they were—my brother was ten years younger than I was and my sisters were thirteen and fifteen years younger, if I remember correctly. And I literally raised them because Dad was never home. In fact, my older sis[ter]—the older of my two sisters says, "I don't even remember Dad." So it's a strange situation that when you describe it, I think, sounds worse than it is, and in other instances was much worse than it sounds.

01-00:20:52
Pelka: Yes. Just—staying with your sister for a bit, did she at any point, well, this was before the NFB [National Federation of the Blind], ACB [American Council of the Blind], anything like that—we're talking in the 1930s now—but just moving ahead, jumping ahead just a little bit. Did she ever become involved with any organized blindness organizations later on in her life?

01-00:21:18
Nugent: No. Actually—she wasn't declared legally blind until some years later. It was a progressive situation. She didn't go legally blind for some years later, I can't recall specifically her age at the time or the year. And of course, she was never permitted to drive or do things like that, until about eight or ten years ago they found a special lens for her to use and believe it or not, she got her driver's license! But she doesn't drive.

01-00:21:57
Pelka: Wow! That's great!

01-00:21:59
Nugent: I don't think anybody wanted her to drive, but—[chuckling].

01-00:22:03
Pelka: Yeah. But she gave up—but, during, as a child she gave up playing piano—

01-00:22:08
Nugent: And dancing.

01-00:22:10
Pelka: And dancing because they said that this would cause her to lose her eyesight. She lost her eyesight anyway. I would think that playing piano, at any rate, you could easily continue to play piano if you were blind. Did she ever—was she ever upset about that? Or angry about that?

01-00:22:27
Nugent: Oh, definitely. If fact, in a sense, and this is a broad generalization—she became somewhat of a problem. And she was the most beautiful—she had the most beautiful figure. Even when she came down here for the dedication of our rehab center. Everybody marveled at my youngest sister. She is—it's one of the reasons that I've understood that sometimes hidden disabilities can have

a tremendous impact on the life of an individual. I had a keen personal appreciation of that—not professional, but personal.

01-00:23:16
Pelka: Yes. Okay. Did she ever say anything to you about that? Or do you recall talking about that as kids or as young adults about what that—

01-00:23:32
Nugent: No, if we did, it was so much a part of the normal conversation that I can't recall anything specific. I know that every Sunday I took her to Sunday school and church and then I took her several other places over the years, but I did that with both my sisters. My—the older of my two younger sisters was born, I believe, two months premature, and so had several battles early in her life, but she's done beautifully since then, very beautifully. She's still doing beautifully.

01-00:24:07
Pelka: Going back to your father for a minute—did he, were there any, did he make any accommodations for his disabilities? Did he—did he, for instance, ever learn sign language or—

01-00:24:20
Nugent: No. He had a very powerful microphone on his chest leading to his hearing aids.

01-00:24:21
Pelka: —use large print, or—

01-00:24:23
Nugent: No. In fact, I don't even recall large print being available as a common accessible factor during his time in life. I know that not too many years ago, *Reader's Digest* started printing large-print issues and others did, but that's all rela[ted] to the history, you know. My dad, now, would be a hundred, I guess a hundred and ten, a hundred and fifteen—he was old, I don't know for sure.

01-00:24:58
Pelka: Yes. And, now—you also had originally said that, you know, this was during the Depression and your family had some tough economic times, and yet it sounds like your father was doing some pretty, I mean, if he was appointed by the president to be the—the head of a section of the Office of Price Administration, that's a pretty high-powered position. Were these at different times in your childhood? Or—maybe—

01-00:25:30
Nugent: Well, that—I mean, I'm not fully knowledgeable about all that. That was second-hand information that I was passing on to you. I know that he became the director, because I have, in my files here, I have a full-page copy, from the *Washington Post*, I believe it is, announcing his appointment and then saying that he has released 33 percent of the personnel for military duty.

01-00:25:58
Pelka: Yes.

01-00:25:59
Nugent: Because he thought they were all goof-offs.

01-00:26:01
Pelka: Oh, so this was during the war, then.

01-00:26:04
Nugent: Yes.

01-00:26:05
Pelka: Oh, okay.

01-00:26:05
Nugent: World War II.

01-00:26:06
Pelka: So this is—

01-00:26:06
Nugent: At the beginning of World War II.

01-00:26:08
Pelka: This was later on. Do you recall—I'm just wondering, looking back that distance, if you're able to recall the kind of impact that disability, for instance, your father's, your sister's, your own, the kind of impact that that had on your self image, your view of the world.

01-00:26:35
Nugent: Well, I know two things. I know that I was a skinny little runt at the beginning [chuckles]. I know that my dad referred to me as a weakling [chuckles]. And that just made me work harder and as I say, by the time I was eleven or twelve I was built pretty much like a bull and I had strong shoulders and chest. At one time I had a forty-four inch chest and a twenty-eight inch waist, so I worked hard at that. So it affected me in a positive way—it made me want to improve, it made me want to prove to him I *was* something. And I think in that sense it had an effect on me.

01-00:27:22
Pelka: Do you remember any other people with disabilities in your life, at that time, as a child. Did you have any classmates who were obviously disabled, or people in the neighborhood?

01-00:27:42
Nugent: Well, I remember meeting and seeing several in the course of my life. I can't in any way be specific, moving around as much as I did, but I do remember one thing that I never will forget. When my dad was gone for a while and mother was working, we had a houseboy to take care of me. His name was Levi Jackson. He was an ambulatory CP, cerebral palsy, and that was the best

job he could get at that time in history. And yet, I still consider him one of the most brilliant persons I knew, and [coughing] excuse me—I learned a great deal from him. At the time I didn't realize all that I was learning from him, but it came into being later in my life. And that was the only [disabled] person that I had a direct contact with, although I did have a cousin who was also cerebral palsied and was denied everything, school and everything else at that time in history. That goes back into the twenties and thirties, so I remember some of the negative things that were attributed to disability, or the negative attitudes that prevailed, concerning disability.

01-00:29:21
Pelka: Such as what, like what kinds of negative attitudes? If you could be a bit more specific.

01-00:29:28
Nugent: Well, you might say they tolerated them, but didn't want anything to do with them. They—somewhat, from my experience, avoided them, unless it was immediate family or, you know, there was some personal bond that compelled them to be together. But the general attitude was negative. It was still negative when I started the rehab program back in the forties. Universities didn't think they should be on campus because it would be distracting, demoralizing, an extra cost, an extra liability, and what would they be able to do with a college education. And that's the result of a survey I did, and the truth of the matter is, I would like to do as well as my so-called disabled graduates have done. Four of them have given a million dollars to our program [chuckling]. So I think it's a—you have to remember, Fred, that we didn't have the communications in those days we have now. I had a radio that was about one-foot deep and one-foot high and two-foot wide, and I was lucky if I could get two stations when I went to college. The news media did not cover things as they do today. The transmission of knowledge via radio, TV, and print, was very limited in comparison with the last forty or fifty years. In fact, I can remember going into a store and if the magazines filled one shelf, I think they thought they had a full line of publications.

01-00:31:31
Pelka: What was your family's religious background?

01-00:31:39
Nugent: We were Protestant. Now, I—this is another thing, I understand my father—my brother-in-law the genealogist has been able to confirm this—he was raised in a Catholic orphanage, and yet, my brother-in-law finds that his parents were still living, according to the census. So my father was obviously Catholic, as least, if not by commitment, but by placement [chuckling]. But my mother was German and basically Lutheran, but most of my childhood I went to the Evangelical Reformed Church, which later became United Church of Christ merging with the Congregational Church, which was Anglican. Today I'm a United Methodist church member.

01-00:32:39
Pelka: I need to stop you for just two seconds because the tape is coming to the end of the side here. [pause] Okay. This is an interview with Dr. Timothy Nugent on August 11, 2004. This is interview number one, tape number one, side B. We were talking about your parents and then your religious background. Did you see religion playing any sort of role in how your family dealt with issues of disability?

01-00:33:26
Nugent: When the church I was going to and was a member of for years in Milwaukee closed, they wrote a history of the church, and there's a chapter in there about me, quoting a verse of the Bible and how it translates to my work. I have often said, and quite recently in fact I have written something, and I said, if it hadn't been for my church and the youth group of my church and sports, I never would have made it through my teens.

01-00:34:09
Pelka: How so? Why is that the case?

01-00:34:14
Nugent: Of course this goes back to the Depression years—I was in high school, you know, back in the thirties, and the youth group there was the kind of people that were helpful, encouraging, loving. My pastor was tough but very loving. Many of the activities I participated in at that time in my life were through the youth group at the church. So I would just say it was a natural phenomena, and good fortune, that I was at that place at that time in history.

01-00:35:05
Pelka: Okay. What year did you graduate high school?

01-00:35:12
Nugent: The spring of '40.

01-00:35:14
Pelka: Okay. And then you—did you immediately go to college? Or did you, did you work for a while?

01-00:35:22
Nugent: Well, I did both. I worked at various things, very difficult jobs. I was with Interstate Drop Forge for two summers lifting two-hundred-pound forgings. I was with Delta Quality Tool. I was with a branch of Archer Daniels Midland, the William F. Goodrich branch, in Milwaukee. And I was the only fellow under 210 pounds to ever be allowed in the press rooms. A tank blew up when I was there and I had second- and third-degree burns on my face and head and other places. I was partially unconscious for two or three days, so I had a lot of experiences along the way. I also worked as a lifeguard when I was in college. I also worked as a bouncer when I was in college. I also worked as a drummer in a dance band when I was in college.

01-00:36:26
Pelka: Wow!

01-00:36:27
Nugent: And I also scrubbed floors and was a—I can't think of the word now, not waiter, but—busboy at a restaurant. If there's anything I didn't try, I don't know what it is! And my first paying job in college was twenty-five cents an hour and they kept the first seven-and-a-half cents to make sure I ate there [chuckling]. A very different world!

01-00:36:55
Pelka: Well, you know, what's astonishing is that, here you were beginning your life with everyone saying, you've got this weak heart, and you have to really limit your physical activities. Obviously—

01-00:37:08
Nugent: That was not [an issue] by the time I got to college.

01-00:37:09
Pelka: Yeah, obviously somebody's diagnosis or prognosis was not terrifically accurate there.

01-00:37:16
Nugent: I think it was accurate in the sense of what they knew at that time.

01-00:37:18
Pelka: Right.

01-00:37:19
Nugent: But it was not as limiting as some of them thought it would be because I was a reasonably good athlete. I held the high jump record in high school, and I think the guy that broke my high jump record won the gold medal in the '48 Olympics. I played football in high school. I played football in college. I played football in the military, and I coached all of them. So, you know, it wasn't any deterrent, as things turned out.

01-00:37:53
Pelka: Yes, but it's interesting to me that the sort of assumption, just looking at your experience and the experience of yourself and your sister, the assumption seemed to be to link disability and limitation. Or to link medical condition and limitation, and given your life work, that's an interesting perception there that you were fighting against during your childhood.

01-00:38:27
Nugent: Well, I think I was definitely fighting against it, but I don't think it was a cerebral plan, you know what I mean?

01-00:38:37
Pelka: Right, right.

01-00:38:38
Nugent: It was natural phenomena of the way I lived and thought and I don't take credit for it, but I think it has a tremendous effect on the way I thought and the way I lived and the things I did later. In fact, when I was in college, there was an orthopedic school located almost next door to my university and I could not understand why those people were not in regular school. And it was a question mark, but I didn't have any concept that it would ever involve me professionally.

01-00:39:19
Pelka: Yes. And when was this? What year was this?

01-00:39:23
Nugent: This was back in '40-'41-'42.

01-00:39:28
Pelka: When did you enter—you went to the University of Wisconsin?

01-00:39:33
Nugent: University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, which at that time was La Crosse State Teachers College, one of the better known schools in that part of the world.

01-00:39:45
Pelka: Okay. What year did you enter?

01-00:39:46
Nugent: In September of 1940.

01-00:39:50
Pelka: Okay. And were you planning on being a teacher? Is that why you went in, or—

01-00:39:56
Nugent: No, I was taking, I was majoring in physical education and health but I was taking what they called at that time the pre-med option. One of my classmates went directly into medical school. I didn't, because I had enlisted in the service.

01-00:40:14
Pelka: And when did you enlist in the service?

01-00:40:20
Nugent: The day, or shortly after, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

01-00:40:27
Pelka: Wow. So though you were—you enlisted in the service, but the army—explain that a little bit. You enlisted shortly after Pearl Harbor. Were you—

01-00:40:51
Nugent: That's when we initiated our effort to enlist. I don't know if I should take your time with this, but my roommate was intercollegiate swimming champion and

quite an athlete himself. In fact, I think that time in history he was better than I was and he said he wanted to be a marine, and he would not under any circumstances go to the army.

So he and I tried to enlist in the marines, and this was within twelve months of the time I had that explosion at Archer Daniels Midland, and the marines would not even consider me with a closed head injury in less than twelve months. That was their policy at that time, or that's what was given to me. So he and I went to the navy and the navy refused me. They said I wouldn't last five minutes on a ship because I had an injured right leg from playing ball at the time, which has not bothered me since then. We went to the air force and they wouldn't let me in because of my eyes, so my roommate, pardon the language, said, "The hell with you Tim, I'm going back to the marines."

So I then went to the army and the guy on the left side of my head couldn't see through my ears to the guy on the right side of my head and they accepted me. And I went into the enlisted reserve corps, which you may or may not know anything about, but it was a corps of enlisted people that voluntarily enlisted but were still in college. And so I did not get called to service immediately, but I believe I got called to service sooner than if I had been drafted. [chuckling]

01-00:42:44
Pelka: Was your decision to do pre-med in any way influenced by your own experience or the experiences of your family in terms of disability and medical issues?

01-00:42:59
Nugent: I never thought of it or expressed it in that fashion. I think a lot of it was that at that particular time in history—jobs were very, very limited. My first teaching offer, was, I think, was for 900 dollars a year teaching and coaching and cleaning up the gym afterwards. So that—whether or not I would have the resources to go on into medicine was a very questionable thing, so I wanted, as best I could reason it out, I wanted to be employable at the end of four years no matter what the future held. If that makes sense to you.

01-00:43:47
Pelka: Oh yes. Well, you served in the army during World War II, and what I have in my notes here is that you were on active duty in the U.S. Army Medical Corps. Is that right?

01-00:44:04
Nugent: Yes and no. Again, there's something about my life that just is screwed up from day one. I went in as an instructor in the medical corps. I did my basic training at Barkley, Camp Barkley in Texas. While we were on our final maneuvers, I had to have surgery out in the field. This disqualified me from officer training school and from any active duty for ninety days. They sent me back to my unit to be an instructor or cadre is what they called it in those days.

01-00:44:43
Pelka: Say that again—to be in a what now?

01-00:44:46
Nugent: An instructor or to be cadre—C-A-D-R-E [spells]. That's someone at the camp that, I guess, acts as an instructor. Anyway, I was restless and I kept demanding that I be given the opportunity to do something else, so they finally sent me to what was a STAR unit—don't ask me what STAR stands for, but I think it was specialized training something. But anyway, at that STAR unit they would send you out to colleges.

When I said that I wanted to go to med school they said, "We have no quota for med school in this service command." And so I raised a little Cain, and so the commander cooperating said, "Well, we're going to try and get you into Fitzsimons General Hospital." Well, that didn't work out and I guess I bugged him so much that he called me in one day and he said, "Well, we've got a place for you." And I said, "Oh great, where?" He says, "You're going to a branch of Texas A&M in engineering." So I went to Tarleton State University, a branch of Texas A&M, and I guess we went through a semester's course in very few days down there. It was an accelerated course, and then all of a sudden at that time in history, there were ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program] Programs all over the country at different universities. And then when they were planning the invasion, all those programs were immediately canceled and ninety percent of the personnel went into the infantry.

So even there, there was no plan or logic to the way my military career ran, and I can go one step further. I was still in pretty good shape in those days and I won all the events in the track meet for the division, therefore the company commander decided I would be his personal runner [chuckling]. And that's where I stayed until after the war. Then I was transferred to the 1st Division, from the 99th Division to the 1st Division, and I became the assistant A&R officer and I had captains and lieutenants and other officers working for me. I don't know how to describe it, but anyway, I was in charge of things. I was the assistant football coach, and the head basketball coach and track coordinator.

01-00:47:36
Pelka: A&R officer, what is that?

01-00:47:40
Nugent: Athletic and recreation.

01-00:47:47
Pelka: Okay.

01-00:47:50
Nugent: I was the assistant A&R officer.

01-00:47:51
Pelka: At any point in this process, I'm very interested to know when you began to become interested in the concept of rehabilitation and—was it during this time that you were in the service? This is now the 1940s, early 1940s, were you aware of rehabilitation as a field? Maybe talk a little bit about that.

01-00:48:30
Nugent: I guess I was aware of it but not with any intense involvement. While hospitalized myself in an army hospital, some accidents occurred and I did enter into helping and the treatment of some of those that were injured.

When I got out of college, jobs were still quite limited—this is still back in the mid-forties—and I had other teaching and coaching job offers, but [then there was] the opportunity to come to Galesburg, Illinois, where the university had assumed the property of the brand new Mayo Army General Hospital. It was a brand new hospital that was used briefly but not needed when the war ended, and it was built like most of the army hospitals in those days, one-story series of building connected by corridors, one-story high except for administration, but it was all masonry, so it was a nice facility. And so the American Legion and others thought, hey this would be a good place to try and get some of our disabled veterans in, and so I was called down in a quasi-consulting role and then I was interviewed and offered the directorship of the program that was being initiated at Galesburg, but in order to be appointed, I was appointed as instructor in health education.

01-00:50:24
Pelka: Okay. Let me back up a bit. Do you remember who in the American Legion was particularly involved in this effort?

01-00:50:35
Nugent: Well, there's one man that I remember very much—a Mr. Benston, Lester Benston, I think it's B-E-N-S-T-O-N [spells].

01-00:50:44
Pelka: Okay, and it's—

01-00:50:45
Nugent: He went with me on several occasions and he came down to Galesburg and backed me up on several things. He helped me get equipment for the wheelchair students. He helped me in many ways and at the time that they closed the Galesburg division, in '49, he also reentered to help me in my fight to get a transfer to the main campus.

01-00:51:16
Pelka: And his first name was Lester?

01-00:51:19
Nugent: I believe it was Lester Benston. B-E-N-S-T-O-N [spells]. I'm going to guess he held the rank which would be something like chief service officer for the state of Illinois, but that's not a proper title.

01-00:51:36
Pelka: Anyone else that you remember involved with the American Legion?

01-00:51:40
Nugent: Oh of course, several legionnaires got involved at different times, but I didn't have any real close bonds with them. Also, the DAV got involved. In fact, when they threatened to close Galesburg, we immediately tried to get into the University of Illinois and were denied, in Champaign, and we surveyed universities throughout the country, and none would allow us to bring the program to their campus. So we marched on the capital of Springfield and when we got there, we were greeted by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, all the various veterans groups got behind us at that time because, of course, we were representing, or I was representing, the disabled veterans. Although, from the very beginning—I want to explain—from the very beginning, we had non-veterans with disabilities at Galesburg.

01-00:52:51
Pelka: Yes. Well, let me back up a little bit because we're going to talk about all of the stuff that you're getting into now, but going back to your being offered the directorship of the program, how defined was the program that you were going to direct? Did someone have a plan all laid out on what you were going to do?

01-00:53:15
Nugent: Absolutely not.

01-00:53:16
Pelka: So it was more like, what we want is we want something for these disabled vets to be able to go to college, and you do it.

01-00:53:24
Nugent: A Dr. Homer Lawder was the director of health services at the time.

01-00:53:28
Pelka: Okay, could you—

01-00:53:30
Nugent: And I was on his staff.

01-00:53:31
Pelka: Could you spell that name for me?

01-00:53:33
Nugent: Homer. H-O-M-E-R [spells], Lawder, L-A-W-D-E-R [spells]. He was the director of health services at Galesburg and my immediate superior. He kind of gave me a free hand and was always supportive and encouraging. One time I do remember walking into his office and he was tapping his hand on his desk and he said, "Why in the hell did I ever hire two redheads at the same time!" Because the woman—my counterpart in the health education field, in the

health services, was also a redhead. [chuckling] But he was very helpful to me throughout and gave me a free hand, and that's where I got the idea that these guys should participate in sports and they should take a full load, not a—the VA wanted them to take only two hours a day. I insisted they take a full load and the VA and I fought about this for a long time.

01-00:54:39
Pelka: Okay. Now what year is this that—where you're beginning this program?

01-00:54:44
Nugent: 1948.

01-00:54:45
Pelka: 1948, Okay.

01-00:54:48
Nugent: That's when it became official. Fall of '48. I went down there during the '47-'48 school year to discuss these things with Dr. Lawder and others, but I joined the faculty officially in '48, September.

01-00:55:02
Pelka: Okay. At that time, were you aware at all of the work that Howard Rusk had been doing?

01-00:55:08
Nugent: No, no. In fact, Howard Rusk was just emerging in that period of time. He came up during the war, but he was not a physiatrist, he was a chest surgeon, I believe, but he took an interest in this problem, and then, of course, did a lot of great things. But he and I became friends over the years. In fact, he was the speaker when we dedicated our center on this campus, our new center. And he used to write about our program in the *New York Daily Times*, I think it is, quite regularly.

01-00:55:47
Pelka: Were you, before becoming the director of this program, did you look around at the field of rehabilitation and try to get a sense as to where things were at or did you just kind of plunge into it?

01-00:56:03
Nugent: A little bit of both, Fred, but I did visit VA hospitals. I visited orthopedic schools and developed a concept of what was going on and had my own ideas of what should be going on. It took me a long time to piece it all together.

01-00:56:27
Pelka: What was your impression of the sorts of programs that you saw at that time? For instance, at the VA hospitals.

01-00:56:38
Nugent: Well, now there're two aspects there. When it came to care, personal care, the surgery and whatnot, I can't offer any judgment or criticism on that. I can say

things that I noticed: that many of the veterans that were still in the veterans hospitals didn't have to be there. That came across very clear. There were times I could go to the veterans hospitals and I could go right to the bed where I knew the liquor was hidden underneath the mattress. But some of the doctors at the VA became good friends and good supporters. I know that the concept they had—for instance, I received prognoses from VA hospitals where it said this man should not sit more than two hours, lie more than two hours, or stand more than two hours. Well, what else was there—suspension in the air? And the VA criticized me in demanding that they go to school full-time. They had the concept that they couldn't tolerate that. In fact, I received one prognosis that stands out in my mind and it said, "Will live by the grace of God." And that kind of tells you the general concept. Understand at that time there were medical doctors that were also opposing the way these things were being interpreted, but that's the way it really was.

01-00:58:32
Pelka: So again, it was the same kind of general theme, which is that people are looking at disability and they're thinking of ways to limit the options of the folks who have the disabilities.

01-00:58:43
Nugent: At that time they were more concerned with what they couldn't do than what they could do. And their concept of tolerances, their concept—particularly with spinal cord injury—of what they could tolerate and endure was very limited, very limited. In fact, I've lectured to the Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and comparable professional groups on these subjects over the years and I've pointed out that our kids play wheelchair football, and wheelchair basketball, and they fall out and they don't have sores. That's because the cause of pressure sores is the lack of blood in the skin, the lack of circulation, not the impact initially, although the impact was the precipitator. And by activity, they maintain better circulation even in paralyzed areas. And that was one of my main themes in those days, and of course, as I say, we had wheelchair basketball, wheelchair football, wheelchair softball, even tennis and things like that, back in the forties and fifties.

01-00:59:54
Pelka: Yes. Who had started those activities?

01-01:00:00
Nugent: I guess I did it.

01-01:00:02
Pelka: Oh okay. So when you said, "We had them," what you meant was that you had instigated, you had started them, not that the programs had already existed.

01-01:00:12
Nugent: No. Let me explain this. Veterans, some of the veterans in the various VA hospitals were filled with energy, and all the VA hospitals had small

basketball courts or gyms, and a lot of the veterans went down there and shot baskets and whatnot and eventually put teams together, and some of the VA hospital teams played each other. There was a group in California that became known as the Flying Wheels from Van Nuys—now Long Beach VA hospital—that actually traveled across the country and played some of these hospital teams. So nobody invented wheelchair basketball—it evolved. But I appreciated the significance of it, and so I standardized the rules and I organized the first National Wheelchair Basketball Tournament and created the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, and then became its commissioner for the first twenty-five years. But I don't claim to have invented wheelchair basketball. [chuckling]

01-01:01:22
Pelka: Okay. Okay. Yeah, I know, because there was also a similar movement, as I understand it, going on in England at the time. There were—

01-01:01:32
Nugent: No. Not really.

01-01:01:34
Pelka: Not really?

01-01:01:35
Nugent: Dr. Ludwig Guttman, a neurosurgeon and director of the Stoke Mandeville Center had started developing activities like archery, and I think he had swimming by that time. He didn't have basketball. They finally did start something where they shot at a hoop that was on top of a pole in the middle of an area. Dr. Guttman and I became good friends. He spent time with me here in Champaign and I was his personal guest in Stoke Mandeville on two different occasions.

01-01:02:09
Pelka: Okay. Could you spell Guttman for me?

01-01:02:11
Nugent: Well, I can try. It's G-U-T-T-M-A-N.

01-01:02:15
Pelka: Okay. That's what I thought.

01-01:02:17
Nugent: The first name is Ludwig. L-U-D-W-I-G. He was a neurosurgeon that evacuated from Germany and for years they would not allow him to practice neurosurgery in England and as a result he decided to develop this program at Stoke Mandeville. He developed the whole of the system there and it was good.

01-01:02:41
Pelka: Yes. I want to back up just a second and maybe get a little philosophical here. I was wondering if you had any thoughts on the changes that World War II

brought into the field of disability, both in terms of perceptions of people with disabilities, numbers of people with disabilities—maybe you could just comment on that in a general way.

01-01:03:10
Nugent: Well, let me comment on it in two or three different ways. First of all, I believe there were as many paraplegics created among our civilian population during the years of WWII as there were veterans. However, nobody knew where they were. They would be discharged home, they would be discharged into a nursing home, or they would die. With the veteran, we had a common agency that knew where all these guys were and that was important, if you understand what I mean.

01-01:03:48
Pelka: Yes.

01-01:03:48
Nugent: Because we knew they were there, we knew how to find them, and so the veterans with paraplegia and other disabilities, multiple amputations, blindness, became a core source of personnel to develop programs around. So that's what happened. The other thing was that the veterans hospitals could not continue to accommodate all the incoming people perpetually, so many nursing homes developed that just accommodated people with disabilities like this, and at the same time, the civilian population was being schooled in orthopedic schools, hospital schools, or at home, which I felt was very inadequate. There was a time that the principals and faculties of orthopedic schools hated me for saying that these people should not be in those schools.

01-01:05:02
Pelka: How about in terms of attitudes toward disability? Do you think the war had any impact on, if you can generalize, the public's attitude toward people with disabilities?

01-01:05:20
Nugent: Well, I think so, but let me point out something else.

01-01:05:23
Pelka: Okay.

01-01:05:24
Nugent: When you were in service, you were a ward of the government, and they were at liberty to do things in the surgical area that they never would have been at liberty to do or probably would never have tried in civilian settings. And that's where some of the most outstanding spinal surgery had its beginnings, you know. And I think that was important. And it was another way that the war opened up opportunities that were developed further following the war.

01-01:06:09
Pelka: Okay. I need to interrupt you for just two seconds there.

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02-00:00:00
Pelka: Okay. This is an interview with Dr. Timothy Nugent on August 11, 2004. This is interview number one, this is tape number two, side A. You were talking about the fact that disabled veterans were essentially wards of the military and that the military was able to try surgical procedures and other things on these folks that possibly wouldn't have been attempted had they been civilians with the same kinds of injuries.

02-00:00:39
Nugent: I think that's very definitely true. In fact, I can remember one major who was a surgeon threatening a soldier in the hospital ward that I was in with a court martial if he didn't submit to the surgery. [chuckling] So—it was a different world, but [because] they were wards of the government and things were so critical, they—both the physicians and surgeons and the general populace—did things that they probably would not have done at this same time in history in civilian life.

02-00:01:19
Pelka: Yes. And there's also the development of antibiotics at this time, the widespread use of antibiotics. Did you—

02-00:01:29
Nugent: Well, about the only thing that was big in those days, it was sulfanylamide. Sulfur drugs were the thing and of course, later on, penicillin came into being not too far after that. But the abundance of miracle drugs we have now didn't exist. It's also—another factor is true, Fred, and that is this, that having a source for finding people with these various disabilities, paraplegia, triplegia, quadriplegia, amputations, blindness, whatnot, having a source for that was a big help. The other thing was that these were mature people and were willing to, willing and able to speak for themselves. Do you follow what I mean?

02-00:02:26
Pelka: Yes.

02-00:02:26
Nugent: And they could also relate experiences they had as an able-bodied person, depending on their age when they went into the service, with the experiences they were having at this time following their disability, which, the young people, the young civilians, did not have that opportunity, or that potential. Do you understand what I'm saying?

02-00:02:53
Pelka: Yeah, well, yeah. I'm—go ahead—you were going to say something else.

02-00:03:01
Nugent: No, that's it. [chuckling]

02-00:03:03
Pelka: Okay. Would you say there was—one comment that I've heard is that people who were disabled as adults or young adults, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, in the military had a sense of entitlement and self image that people who, for instance, might have been born with CP might not have felt at that time. [If] you were someone who was disabled in the service of [your] country and there was the feeling that [you] deserve good treatment, as opposed to many people born with disabilities at that time may have incorporated the self image of what you were talking about before where people were saying, "Well, you know, you're not able to do this, you shouldn't be doing this."

02-00:03:58
Nugent: On your latter point, I don't think there was any difference between the veteran and the non-veteran there, but in part of what you said—the veteran having been mature and having been disabled in the service of the country, did have the right to expect certain things, and of course, the government initiated programs on their behalf. There were—people respond differently. There were veterans that demanded everything and there were veterans that were grateful for what they were given and then they worked hard to further develop themselves, so among the total scope of veterans, there were many different attitudes and patterns of behavior, patterns of escapement that existed at that time in history.

02-00:04:55
Pelka: Patterns of what now? Of—

02-00:04:56
Nugent: Of escapement, drinking a lot.

02-00:04:59
Pelka: Oh, I see.

02-00:05:00
Nugent: So there was no common pattern of behavior, but they all recognized one thing. They had become disabled in the service of their country and that because of the Veterans Administration and the attitudes of the public after World War II, they did have the right to expect something. Some of them expected more than they should have. And others were very grateful for what they got.

02-00:05:28
Pelka: Yes. You said also the attitudes of the public—was there a difference, do you think between, I mean, we're talking generalities now, but was there a difference in the way the public, moving beyond even the Veterans Administration, the public would look at somebody who had been disabled as a soldier and somebody who had been disabled or was disabled due to a civilian accident or being born with a disability?

02-00:05:56
Nugent: I don't think there was a knowledgeable or a conscious difference there. I think it was just that prior to World War II you may see one CP in your entire lifetime, or one paraplegic in your entire lifetime and you may or may not even know what the cause of disability was. With the advent and the conclusion of the war, there were great numbers of them and the definition of their disabilities became public knowledge and the Veterans Administration in its various programs advanced this. Do you follow what I mean?

02-00:06:40
Pelka: Yeah.

02-00:06:41
Nugent: I don't think there was a willful difference in the way people thought. It's like so many other things. If you don't know about something, you don't have an attitude toward it. But when you do know about it, you will develop an attitude toward it and of course, this is what's true here. The veterans in their numbers and the fact we had an agency responsible for them created a knowledgeable attitude among the general public. Not always the best one or the correct one, depending where they were and who they were, but nevertheless, it was there.

02-00:07:26
Pelka: Okay. Getting back to Galesburg. Maybe you could describe your first, if you have a recollection of your first days there. What was it—you report for work—what did you find?

02-00:07:57
Nugent: I found, I'm going to guess at the number right now, about twenty-five individuals in wheelchairs that were veterans and maybe three or four that were not. I found that nothing had been planned as of that moment. So the first thing I did was develop a therapy room with various pieces of therapy apparatus and whatnot in order to support the program in those days.

I had no appropriation from the university or the state. I created a contract with the Veterans Administration on a cost per treatment rendered basis. In other words, I got so much for gait training, so much for weight training, so much for massage, so much for the various passive modalities and things of that nature, and that went into a revolving fund and that in turn paid for the program. Near the end of the first year at Galesburg, a group of people came from Washington, including medical doctors and CPAs, auditors, and, I think, even an attorney to audit our program because they didn't believe that we were doing what we said we were doing. They were challenging the charges I made [chuckling].

And one of those—oh, golly, just like that his name slipped me, the doctor—but anyway, after they were there for a while they became very convinced that we accomplishing what we said we were accomplishing. In fact, became very

enthusiastic, and when Galesburg was closed, the medical director at that time, there was a Dr. Cockerel and another doctor, Dr. Hirsch, became two of my strongest supporters in getting the program moved from Galesburg to Champaign.

02-00:10:01
Pelka: Okay. Could you—you said, a Dr. Cockerel.

02-00:10:05
Nugent: I believe his name was Cockerell, Dr. C-O-C-K-E-R-E-L, I think, Cockerel, or R-E-L [Cockrel?]. Boy, you're asking me to go back sixty years!

02-00:10:20
Pelka: Yeah, yeah! You're doing very well! I'm amazed you can pull these names out.

02-00:10:26
Nugent: I wish I could remember. I think it was Dr. Hirsch that was the doctor that came with the audit group, and as I say, he was very helpful. He really went all out to help me get the program transferred to Galesburg. And incidentally, we got here on a legal technicality. Our march in Springfield, Illinois at the capital and our march on campus drew attention to our needs and desires but didn't get the job done. But the students at Galesburg undergraduate division were promised two years of college education and they hadn't received it, so on that technicality we were allowed to come to this campus as an experimental program and I received no budget for the first eight years here.

02-00:11:22
Pelka: Now the students were there—were they mostly there on the GI Bill? Or how were they paying for their tuition?

02-00:11:28
Nugent: Well, some were on the GI Bill and of course the non-veterans were not on a GI Bill. Some of them were under the sponsorship of their various state divisions of vocational rehabilitation, and you must understand too, Fred, that all veterans did not receive the same benefits. If you were a service-connected veteran, you were under Public Law 16 and you received maximum benefits for school, for health care, you even received an allowance toward your first car and an allowance toward your first home. If you were a non-service-connected veteran, if my memory doesn't fail me, you fell under Public Law 346 and you did not receive the same benefits that the service-connected veterans received, but you did receive benefits that assisted you in school.

02-00:12:24
Pelka: Do you remember the names of any of the first students? Your first class?

02-00:12:32
Nugent: Oh I sure do! [chuckling]

02-00:12:34
Pelka: Maybe you could talk a little bit about who these people were and what they were like.

02-00:12:39
Nugent: Most of them were outstanding. Don Swift, who used to come in and help volunteer when I was working many hours late at night, Al Oelschlegel, Harris Hjelter, Red Drake, Harold Drake was his name. Bill Holloway, Jack Chase, Joe LoPresti, and a non-veteran—Bob Waller.

02-00:13:17
Pelka: If you don't mind, I'm going to ask you to back up and spell some of these things for me, if you can. Al, you said Don Swift, the second one was Al—

02-00:13:26
Nugent: Oelschlegel, O-E-L-S-C-H-L-E-G-E-L. I still hear from his wife. He died a few years back, I still hear from his wife.

02-00:13:36
Pelka: Okay, Harris.

02-00:13:37
Nugent: Hjelter, H-J-E-L-T-E-R.

02-00:13:42
Pelka: Okay. Bill Holloway, that's obvious, right?

02-00:13:49
Nugent: Yeah.

02-00:13:50
Pelka: Okay, Jack Chase is obvious. And then Bob—the last one.

02-00:13:55
Nugent: I think it's Waller, W-A-L-L-E-R, that I mentioned. And Joe Lopresti was L-O-capital P-R-E-S-I—E-S-T-I. Joe LoPresti, no that doesn't sound right—Joe LoPresti—that one throws me right now, I can't remember, but I think it's Joe LoPresti.

02-00:14:23
Pelka: Okay. Are any of these folks still around?

02-00:14:28
Nugent: Well, Jack Chase is, I just got an email from him about two days ago.

02-00:14:32
Pelka: Oh great! Okay. You know, I may want to, I would definitely be interested in tracking some of these folks down and interviewing them as well. So, I don't know if you'd be willing to, for instance, talk to Jack and explain what we're

doing here and ask if he'd be willing to be interviewed, or maybe you could give me his email address and I can do that directly.

02-00:14:56
Nugent: Well, let me see if I can pull his email address up here, it'll take me a minute to get the computer—

02-00:15:01
Pelka: Okay, well, we can, you can—we can do that later, or—

02-00:15:06
Nugent: Well, I'll let the computer work its way up while we're doing other things. [chuckling]

02-00:15:09
Pelka: Yeah. Okay. Maybe we could talk a little bit about these folks. Where were they—were they from all over the country?

02-00:15:17
Nugent: Oh, yes. Jack Chase was from Washington, Don Swift was from Michigan, Al Oelschlegel was from some place, I believe, in the East. Joe LoPresti, I think, was from Chicago, Harold Drake was from the Midwest somewhere. But they came from all over, yes.

02-00:15:46
Pelka: And from all different services. And some of them weren't veterans, you said.

02-00:15:51
Nugent: We had some that were non-veterans that first year.

02-00:15:55
Pelka: Okay. And do you remember the names of any of those folks?

02-00:15:59
Nugent: Well, there was Bob Waller, he was a non-veteran, Shirley Sayers, S-A-Y-E-R-S was a non-veteran. She was a female. The first year—I've got all that stuff in my files here, but—taking it from memory, those are the only two wheelchair people that were non-veterans that I can bring out of my memory at the time.

02-00:16:39
Pelka: Okay. And were all of these folks wheelchair users? Or were there other disabilities?

02-00:16:44
Nugent: Well, there were others. For instance, Bobby Anderson was ambulatory but had multiple disabilities. Bill Holloway was ambulatory. He was a high-level amputee. Harold Drake was also an amputee that did rely on a wheelchair most of the time, where Bill Holloway didn't. I can't think of any others right now.

02-00:17:23
Pelka: And was it a racially integrated group? Or was this an all-white group?

02-00:17:29
Nugent: In our first year we had, oh golly, we had a black person. He's not in the first year, in the second year, and we also had, of course, several on campus that were not disabled. But we also had a couple of blind in our program.

02-00:17:54
Pelka: Yes, Okay. Do you remember the name of the second-year black student?

02-00:18:07
Nugent: No, I don't right now. I can remember several of our black students, but I don't remember their year.

02-00:18:17
Pelka: Yes, okay.

02-00:18:20
Nugent: One of them, I know, is a judge today.

02-00:18:23
Pelka: Oh!

02-00:18:25
Nugent: And one is an author. One became an associate professor at the University of Missouri. He died about four years ago. So they all did well—did better than the old man did! [chuckling]

02-00:18:42
Pelka: I'd love to track some of these folks down, but in the meantime, maybe you could talk a little bit about some of the first, some of your experiences that first year. The campus at Galesburg was a former army hospital, so I'm assuming that access was better than certainly it would have been at your standard college or university campus. Is that right?

02-00:19:11
Nugent: The physical advantage it had is that they were all one-story units and they were easily ramped and that they were all connected by corridors. In other words, once you were in, you could go to almost any part of the facility without having to encounter steps or go outdoors. The only exception was the gymnasium.

02-00:19:42
Pelka: Yes. Which is an interesting exception. What was up with the gymnasium? You had to—

02-00:19:48
Nugent: Well, it was a separate building.

02-00:19:50
Pelka: Oh I see.

02-00:19:51
Nugent: It was accessible, but it wasn't connected by the corridors.

02-00:19:54
Pelka: Oh I see, I see.

02-00:19:57
Nugent: Got your pencil and paper handy?

02-00:19:58
Pelka: Yeah.

02-00:20:32
Nugent: All right. Jack Chase, and by the way, it's Reverend Jack Chase, he's a retired clergyman, and his email is [personal information redacted]. He wrote a book, *Job and Jack Talk Back*. If you know your biblical history, Job himself was disabled. And so Jack wrote this book making comparisons and challenges and whatnot and in it he discussed attitudes and whatnot.

02-00:21:02
Pelka: When was the book published, do you know?

02-00:21:06
Nugent: Oh, I think it became publicly available, and again, this is a guess, Fred, please—three years ago, three or four years ago.

02-00:21:17
Pelka: I'd be interested in seeing that. I'll look that up. Okay.

02-00:21:24
Nugent: Many of our graduates have written books.

02-00:21:28
Pelka: Yes. Do you have—while you're in your email, do you have email addresses for any of these other folks? Or—

02-00:21:34
Nugent: When you say other folks, do you mean from the first year?

02-00:21:38
Pelka: The first or second year, let's say.

02-00:21:39
Nugent: Well, let me see here. I've got a lot of my veterans on this list, but, let me scroll down and see if find any more besides Jack that go back to the first year.

02-00:22:01
Pelka: How many, how many of your veterans have you got listed there?

02-00:22:10
Nugent: [computer noises] Oh, that doggone virus window comes up again. [to the computer] Get off. [to Pelka] Oh, I would guess, among my former students I must have at least forty or fifty, including guys like Fred Fay. Of course, Cliff Crase, the publisher and editor of *Sports and Spokes* and *Paraplegia News* is one of our alumni. I've got his address here. His last issue, the July issue of *Sports and Spokes* had quite an article about our big banquet here. Did you know that the University of Illinois, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, awarded varsity letters to all my wheelchair and blind athletes going back to 1948?

02-00:23:12
Pelka: No, no!

02-00:23:15
Nugent: Well, if you can get yourself a hold of the July copy of *Sports and Spokes*, you'll find the story and their editorial plus a story about it in there.

02-00:23:24
Pelka: Okay.

02-00:23:25
Nugent: And I think that's miraculous, that the—we've been giving varsity letters to our wheelchair athletes since '77, but that the athletic division would go back and honor my wheelchair athletes going back to '48, is just amazing. Never—something we never dreamed of. Let me see. I'm going down the list yet. I'm finding some of my early ones, but not necessarily first-year ones.

02-00:23:55
Pelka: Well, actually or, any early one would be fine for my purposes. If we're talking mid-fifties, even that would be great.

02-00:24:06
Nugent: Well, here's Charles Dahncke, his email is [personal information redacted**].** Cliff Crase is, he's reasonably early. Chuck Chapman, who was also editor of our student publication and was editor of the AMA for many years is [personal information redacted]. The previous one was Charles Dahncke.

02-00:25:40
Pelka: I'm sorry, could you spell that again? Dahncke is—

02-00:25:44
Nugent: D-A-H

02-00:25:46
Pelka: Oh, D-A-H

02-00:25:49
Nugent: N-C-K-E.

02-00:25:50
Pelka: Okay. Like Donkey, Okay. That's German. Or Dutch.

02-00:25:57
Nugent: Let's see here.

02-00:26:05
Pelka: Any women from that era? Say pre-'55?

02-00:26:17
Nugent: Pre-'55?

02-00:26:17
Pelka: Yes.

02-00:26:18
Nugent: Well, let me see here. I've got a lot of the women students on this address list, but I don't think that actually—Shirley Sayers is dead. She was my first woman student (1948-49). Of course, you've got Fred Fay.

02-00:26:51
Pelka: Yeah, I've already—interviewed Fred. He's later on, though. Mary Lou Breslin—she was one of your students, wasn't she?

02-00:27:02
Nugent: Who?

02-00:27:03
Pelka: Mary Lou Breslin, was she one of yours?

02-00:27:04
Nugent: Yes, in school 1962-66, fourteen years after the beginning.

02-00:27:05
Pelka: Yeah, we've interviewed her.

02-00:27:10
Nugent: Jack Genskow unfortunately died just two years ago, he was one of my early quad polios.

02-00:27:29
Pelka: Okay. Well, we can, we can, we can come back to this, but I'm definitely interested in finding some of the early folks and doing interviews with them. I think that would be really helpful.

02-00:27:44
Nugent: And Robert Hawkes came in the late fifties, I think. It's Robert Hawkes, H-A-W-K-E-S, his email is [personal information redacted].

02-00:28:20
Pelka: Okay. And he's from the late fifties.

02-00:28:23
Nugent: I believe that's when he was here. An outstanding, outstanding person. He's eighty-three, now, I think, eighty-three, or eighty-four, so my boys are pretty healthy. [chuckling]

02-00:28:41
Pelka: Now, we're approaching—we're actually past 12:30, my time, 11:30, your time, so you said you had a noon appointment?

02-00:28:49
Nugent: Now, let me give you another one here, I just came across, and he's one of the ones that wrote a book. It's Tom Jones, J-O-N-E-S. He was here in the fifties and the sixties. His email is [personal information redacted]. There's another early one—Kaloupek, Robert Kaloupek, K-A-L-O-U-P-E-K, his address is, [personal information redacted]. Here's one of our outstanding alumni who, in fact, just called me yesterday. He goes back to the late fifties and early sixties. His name is Leon Keller, [personal information redacted].

02-00:30:50
Pelka: Okay. And when was Mr. Kaloupek a student?

02-00:30:56
Nugent: Back in the fifties, I think he was there in the '53-, '54. '55 era.

02-00:31:06
Pelka: Okay. I want to ask you—yeah, that's great, this is really good. This'll be very helpful. And how are you doing on time right now? Do you need time to prepare for your noon—

02-00:31:24
Nugent: No, no, don't worry about it.

02-00:31:25
Pelka: Okay, Okay. Getting back to Galesburg. This first class, the very first year--how were these folks selected? Did they—was there an application process? Who decided who got in, or did everyone get in who applied?

02-00:31:45
Nugent: Well, we were so anxious to get the program started and of course, admissions procedures were so much different then than they are now. There were no SATs and ACTs and—there were other tests, but not those. And enrollment wasn't as high and as difficult at that time. Many were pushed out of the veterans hospitals by doctors or therapists. Many took the initiative to come on their own. I went out and visited the veterans hospitals, and actually, in some instances had to convince them that they could and should come to school. There were some that were very hesitant. So that it was a different picture entirely. And of course, when Galesburg got a little publicity, then of course, some of the non-veterans from the Midwest were applying.

02-00:32:49
Pelka: Yes, but that would have been the second year, or—

02-00:32:52
Nugent: No. We had them in the first year.

02-00:32:54
Pelka: But when you said when Galesburg got a little publicity—that would have been after the first year of the program? Or was there publicity even before the program started up?

02-00:33:06
Nugent: Well, there was publicity when it was decided that we would try to do this.

02-00:33:11
Pelka: Yes, I see.

02-00:33:12
Nugent: There was publicity when the American Legion, of course, got behind us, maybe just in their own media. But the local papers also published that Galesburg was doing this. I can't tell you how widespread it was or how effective it was.

02-00:33:30
Pelka: Yes, Okay. Again, I need to interrupt you 'cause we're at the—[tape interruption]—interview with Dr. Timothy Nugent on August 11, 2004, this is interview number one, tape number two, side B. Okay. Were there any people who applied for the program that first year and were turned away?

02-00:33:55
Nugent: If there were, I can't remember it. And that doesn't mean there were or there weren't, it's just that I don't have any recollection of that particular thing.

02-00:34:09
Pelka: And you weren't involved in that process, though, were you? When you arrived the students were already there.

02-00:34:15
Nugent: No, no. I arrived before the students were there, but I'm sure that all the students that came were already through the processing when I arrived.

02-00:34:26
Pelka: Okay. I'm just looking at my list of questions here. Some of these questions, I think I'll come back to when we get away from talking about the first year. But I want to focus on the first year. What kind of—were there any major surprises that first year? Were there things that, for instance, developed into difficulties that you just didn't imagine when you began the program would be a problem.

02-00:35:15

Nugent: Oh, I'm sure there were. I remember one instance that was quite traumatic and stuck with me and that is we went out to a place in the north end of Galesburg, it was a famous bar and eating place, and I wheeled in with Harold Scharper and his wife. His wife was an attractive able-bodied girl, and I remember, a woman and a man, or a couple of couples sitting at the bar, and one of them turned around and said, "They don't allow those people in here now, too—do they?" And she said it loud enough that Harold's wife heard about it and it was one of the worst fights that I ever had to break up.

So there were those negative attitudes from time to time that first year. However, the local bowling alley was very cooperative in setting up a bowling program in the very first semester. The very first national wheelchair basketball tournament, every game was broadcast on the local radio station. And you wouldn't know it was a wheelchair game to hear the broadcast. So there were people that were very negative and antagonistic and there were people that were very supportive.

02-00:36:41

Pelka: How about the school administration. Were they—how did they view the program? Were they an obstacle? Were they a help?

02-00:36:51

Nugent: Oh, no, I'll tell you—the executive dean at that time was Chauncey, C-H-A-U-N-C-E-Y Louttit L-O-U-T-T-I-T [Chauncey McKinley Louttit] and he was one of the most wonderful men I've ever known. He was very supportive of everything I wanted to try. I'd have an idea and I'd go talk to him and he said, "Tim, if you think it's worth trying, we'll try it." And when they closed Galesburg, he also became associate provost on the main campus here in Champaign and was very supportive of me throughout my early years when I was fighting with the administration. In fact, one time I had a real good offer from another university. In fact I had more than one. And I went up to talk to him and told him that I was thinking of possibly leaving and he stood up and looked at me, he said, "Listen, you redhead, you convinced me of something years ago, and I accepted, and if you think I'm going to let you quit, you're wrong!" [chuckling] So he reinforced me in many different ways.

02-00:38:07

Pelka: What—were there other surprises besides the—you talked about this incident in the restaurant and presumably there are other incidents like that. Were there other surprises besides some people's attitudes?

02-00:38:23

Nugent: Oh, yeah, very definitely there were. I can't cite them all, but—there were people who, even when we came to Champaign, there were a lot of people who didn't think we belonged here. In fact, one of my own faculty colleagues said, "These people belong in trade schools or nursing homes."

02-00:38:42
Pelka: Wow.

02-00:38:45
Nugent: He was in the same college I was. So yes, there were a lot of negative attitudes. And they varied so much because we were involved in so many things. I know we had trouble with the airlines for a while, but then we were able to resolve that.

02-00:39:09
Pelka: What kind of trouble?

02-00:39:11
Nugent: Transporting our wheelchair people.

02-00:39:14
Pelka: Yes. They didn't want to do it, presumably.

02-00:39:18
Nugent: Right. Some airlines were worse than others, and many years later, we had a lot of hearings across the country on that very subject.

02-00:39:27
Pelka: Yes, Okay. Once a student was in—well, give me a sense as to the kind of day-to-day nuts and bolts of the program. Did the students all live on campus? Or did some live on campus and dorms and others lived off campus. How was housing arranged?

02-00:39:50
Nugent: Now you mean at Galesburg? Or in Champaign?

02-00:39:53
Pelka: At Galesburg.

02-00:39:54
Nugent: Well, at Galesburg we had adequate housing. Some of the wards were turned into dormitories because there were, I think, 126 buildings, wards, connected by corridors. Some were turned into classrooms, some were turned into labs, some were turned into dormitories. Then we also had a series of small apartments or homes. Each was an individual building where our married students lived and where many of our married faculty lived, including myself! [chuckling]

02-00:40:29
Pelka: Now, there were—this was all taking place at—this is a smaller program within a larger school, is that right? This was the University of Illinois campus.

02-00:40:44
Nugent: This is Galesburg I was talking about.

02-00:40:45
Pelka: Yeah.

02-00:40:46
Nugent: The first year, yeah.

02-00:40:47
Pelka: The first year, but were the only students there disabled students? Or were there other students.

02-00:40:52
Nugent: Oh no, no—there were able-bodied students. In fact, to clarify and give you probably a more true picture—when World War II ended, not only were there going to be a lot of veterans returning to college or choosing to go to college, but the high school graduates, who could not go to college because of the threat of being drafted, would also be converging on our university.

In order to accommodate them, the University of Illinois created an undergraduate division in Galesburg—that's a two-year curriculum, and they also created an undergraduate division at Navy Pier in Chicago. It was a naval base. The one in Chicago, Navy Pier Illini, evolved into the University of Illinois in Chicago. It was at Navy Pier for years and then evolved into a very fine campus in Chicago. And now Navy Pier is a very deluxe recreation/social setting. So the two schools were developed, not just for—or Galesburg was not just developed for disabled people at all. It was developed to accommodate the increasing enrollments that we anticipated at the same time Navy Pier came along.

02-00:42:25
Pelka: How many students total at Galesburg, do you think?

02-00:42:30
Nugent: Oh, golly, I'd be afraid to even guess at that, but I'm going to make a guess that there were about three thousand. That is not a very authoritative figure.

02-00:42:46
Pelka: But we're talking thousands of kids.

02-00:42:48
Nugent: No, I would say definitely more than a thousand and possibly three thousand.

02-00:42:54
Pelka: Okay. And about two-dozen disabled students mixed in with that—

02-00:43:05
Nugent: We had about twenty-three or twenty-seven disabled students.

02-00:43:09
Pelka: Okay. Now, were the disabled students all housed together? Or were they housed—

02-00:43:15
Nugent: No. They were housed intermixed with other students.

02-00:43:18
Pelka: Okay. And they'd also go to classes with the other students as well.

02-00:43:23
Nugent: Oh, yes.

02-00:43:24
Pelka: This is all totally integrated.

02-00:43:25
Nugent: That's right. That was the whole purpose of our program from the very, very beginning.

02-00:43:31
Pelka: Okay. Were there any sorts of personal care services offered to the students? What today we would call personal care assistants or personal assistants?

02-00:43:44
Nugent: Well, we handled that just pretty much as it was needed on a volunteer basis. I did have a nurse on my staff, on the health service staff, and we worked together. I off course had Dr. Lawder, and oh golly, I can't think of my other colleague now. I know her so well—but we handled that [on an] as the need arose basis. There were some students on campus who befriended our people and automatically were helpful to them at different times. Some very strong bonds of friendship were created.

02-00:44:26
Pelka: But did this, did this mean then that, some of the more severely disabled kids, you know, high-level quadriplegics, were they able to attend the program that first year?

02-00:44:40
Nugent: Oh yes. I had a quadriplegic, the first time he wrote to me, I thought I'd have to carry him around on my back, but he did quite well. And he did quite well on the main campus.

02-00:44:53
Pelka: How about staff and teachers? Were there instructors there? Professors who had disabilities that you were aware of? Maybe not connected with your program, but just as—

02-00:45:06
Nugent: On the Galesburg campus I do not recall anybody with any severity of disability. I know we had some people that had some slight problems and things like that, but so did I [chuckling]. But no, I don't recall any of our faculty and staff being disabled.

02-00:45:32
Pelka: And how about—were there any disabled students at Galesburg who weren't directly involved with your program, do you recall.

02-00:45:40
Nugent: No, they were all involved with the program to one degree or another.

02-00:45:45
Pelka: So this is pretty radical stuff then. You're talking about a group of disabled students in a population where there really aren't other people with disabilities represented, as far as you know.

02-00:45:58
Nugent: Yeah, well, and of course, that's where we—it was at Galesburg that we established the National Wheelchair Basketball Tournament. It was at Galesburg where we established or founded Delta Sigma Omicron Incorporated, a rehabilitation service fraternity which still exists and has chapters on other campuses now.

02-00:46:23
Pelka: Just going back to the sort of nuts and bolts of the program. I want to get a sense now. Okay, you've got students now, they're declaring different majors, presumably. Different kids are going into different, taking different classes, different fields. What level of involvement or communication was there between the students and the folks in your program? If someone who was a disabled veteran came to campus and just wanted to go to classes and not deal with your program at all, were there people like that? Or was everyone pretty much involved with the program?

02-00:47:11
Nugent: Well there were, of course, people among our disabled group that didn't want to do certain things that we were developing and promoting. But for the most part they were all involved in one aspect or another and in most instances very enthusiastically.

02-00:47:30
Pelka: What sorts of programs and things were you developing?

02-00:47:33
Nugent: Well, we had swimming, we had basketball, we had bowling, of course we had therapy. Bowling was one of the real big things and it was good because we used a bowling alley downtown which projected my disabled students out into the public and that had great effect. People would see them bowl and see them do other things, see them play basketball, and say, "Hey, these guys have the same enthusiasm, attitude, desires that we have."

In fact, I recently wrote a statement for publication by the college here and I said, "Of all the tools we had in our rehabilitation education program, research, counseling, therapy, medical services, whatnot, prosthetics, the most effective was our sports program." And it was effective in that, one, it allowed

us to project our people out into the public eye. Hearing me talk about a problem and saying, “Well, this is possible or that’s possible, or that should be done,” that just only goes so far. But when these people would see them playing football, basketball, baseball, bowling in normal alleys, they would come to understand that there were some common denominators between what they did and what the disabled were doing, and they began to recognize them more as individuals with the same interests, attitudes, aptitudes, and ability that they had. So that our sports program was probably the most effective vehicle we had. It had to be supported by the other services—medicine, therapy, counseling, et cetera, but it was the vehicle. Am I making myself clear?

02-00:49:39
Pelka: It must have been—if we’re talking in the late 1940s it must have been, to use a sixties expression—kind of mind-blowing for people to go to a bowling alley and see all these folks in wheelchairs bowling. I imagine you had all kinds of different reactions.

02-00:50:01
Nugent: Oh definitely did. In fact there were—well, I remember places where when we were traveling, the minute our bus pulled up, all the shades in the restaurant went down—closed. [chuckling] They didn’t want me to unload that bus of wheelchair people at that particular restaurant. There were all sorts of different attitudes and approaches and some people, because they were overtly expressive against what we were trying to do, had to defend their stand for years after that. You know, they couldn’t say, “Hey, I was wrong, this is good.” I’m sure you’ve met people like that.

02-00:50:54
Pelka: Oh yeah.

02-00:50:55
Nugent: They made a statement or took a stand and now they’re defending their stand. They’re not listening to the new rationale for changing.

02-00:51:04
Pelka: Right, right. Well, we’re running out of time here and before we do, what I wanted to do was schedule another interview session. So if we could do that. Do you have a sense as to what your—I’m going to turn the tape off at this point.

Interview 2: 08-13-2004
Begin Audiofile 3 08-13-04.mp3

03-00:00:01
Pelka: This is an interview with Timothy Nugent on August 13, 2004. This is interview number two. This is tape number three, side A. First of all, was there anything that we talked about the last time around that you wanted to elaborate on or anything that you were thinking of that you wish you'd said and hadn't? Because that happens sometimes to people.

03-00:00:33
Nugent: Well, I'm sure there is, but right now I'm trying to see if I can find any place where I made a note. Let me put the phone down a second.

03-00:00:38
Pelka: Okay. [pause]

03-00:00:56
Nugent: I've got a couple of marks here. I think we were down to where, if my memory doesn't fail me, when did you become aware of Dr. Rusk? Work.

03-00:01:08
Pelka: Actually, I don't know if we were. I'm looking at my notes. We kind of jumped around a bit, and that happens a lot. Lots of times people answer questions before you ask them and all. Okay. That's where we are. Actually I had one or two things I just wanted to clear up, if that's okay, before we go back to the format. I just wanted to be sure I understood—we're talking now, the first year at Galesburg and when you got there and you were asked to be director of this program. Now, the students who were going to participate in the program had already been selected when you were offered this position, is that right?

03-00:01:54
Nugent: Yes and no. They were in the process of selection at the time, because I was offered the job before the school year started.

03-00:02:02
Pelka: Okay. But did you have anything to do with that selection process?

03-00:02:07
Nugent: Not really.

03-00:02:08
Pelka: Okay. Do you—

03-00:02:10
Nugent: If they were qualified to come, they came.

03-00:02:12
Pelka: And do you recall, just for that first year, do you recall what the qualifications were? Besides—were there any academic qualifications?

03-00:02:24
Nugent: Oh yes. They had the same academic qualifications that all the others did. A couple of them were admitted by GED testing, which I was involved with.

03-00:02:35
Pelka: Was there any attempt—I've done interviews with folks who started the—this is many years later, started the Boston Center for Independent Living in the 1970s and other programs, and one of the things that they talk about was a sort of process of cherry picking, as they would call it, some of the students. They wanted to make sure that the program succeeded, and so what they tended to do was to pick the most high-powered overachieving types to make sure that that first crop would be a success because there were a lot of people who were looking at the program and kind of expecting it to fail. Was there anything like that involved that first year at Galesburg that you recall?

03-00:03:28
Nugent: No. Not the first year. When we got to the main campus that entered into some of our thinking, because the main campus did not want us here. Of course, I was directly involved in all of the admissions of every disabled student after we got to the main campus.

03-00:03:43
Pelka: We'll talk about that a little later, but I just wanted to ask that specifically about the first year. You talked a little bit about the layout of the campus, that this was designed to be a hospital, a military hospital. Were there any particular accommodations that had to be made for your students that you recall?

03-00:04:08
Nugent: Oh yeah. We made some accommodations. I can't remember each of them specifically, but we put a rail here and a rail there, and we did add a couple of ramps because of certain segments that for certain reasons as a hospital weren't ramped. And we made some modifications in some of the restrooms because we were using the whole building. In the beginning only certain wards or certain buildings were used for patients and the rest were used for clinics or for staff or for offices, so, yeah we made, we made changes. I can't be explicit as to what they were, but I guess we made a lot of changes.

03-00:04:54
Pelka: And were these funded by the school? Or were they funded by the program?

03-00:04:59
Nugent: Well, they were funded a little by the university and a little bit by some outside sources.

03-00:05:05
Pelka: Okay. Outside sources being the VA? Or—

03-00:05:10
Nugent: Well, the VA—not so much in the very beginning, but later. In the beginning the American Legion and others, they entered in.

03-00:05:19
Pelka: Okay. And how about in—now, I've never been to Galesburg, so I don't know what the layout is there. But the campus was there. Was there a town nearby? You talked about going to a restaurant.

03-00:05:33
Nugent: Galesburg was a city. It was a major railroad center, I believe, at one time. There was a college in Galesburg, a very famous small college—Knox College. K-N-O-X.

03-00:05:44
Pelka: Oh Okay. Were—obviously this is before the advent of curb cuts and things like that. Was there any attempt to make any changes?

03-00:05:54
Nugent: Oh yes. We made changes in town. We made changes elsewhere and of course we made changes in the bowling alleys that we played in and things like that.

03-00:06:04
Pelka: And was this the students who made the changes?

03-00:06:07
Nugent: No, it was myself finding one way or another to do it. Anybody that was available, I latched onto. [chuckling]

03-00:06:18
Pelka: Okay. Was there anything like a—you said when we spoke day before yesterday that the students were pretty much integrated into the campus. That they were—they weren't set apart in their own particular building or anything like that. But was there an attempt by the students to—was there a disabled students organization? Or a club?

03-00:06:46
Nugent: That's where Delta Sigma Omicron was founded, at Galesburg, and it was the first and only Greek letter organization on that campus, and when we realized the campus was closing, and that all the equipment we had for our disabled students would revert to state surplus, then we incorporated Delta Sigma Omicron and *we* assumed all of that equipment. Otherwise, when we would have gotten to Champaign, we wouldn't have had anything.

03-00:07:20
Pelka: Okay. Do you remember the names of the particular students who were involved in organizing that chapter?

03-00:07:31
Nugent: Well, I guess every one of the students that was there at the time. I don't have a list in front of me, but certainly Don Swift was and Al Oelschlegel and Harris Hjelter and Ray Krueger and Joe LoPresti and Shirley Sayers and Red (Harold) Drake and Bobby Anderson, and there were others. I can't think of them all that fast, but they were all involved in one way or another.

03-00:08:06
Pelka: Okay. And they were officers and—this was a chapter in a national fraternity? Or was this its own—

03-00:08:16
Nugent: Well, it became a chapter in a national fraternity. It was the fraternity, service fraternity to begin with, and then it became Alpha Chapter and there are two or three other chapters now in other universities.

03-00:08:28
Pelka: But I guess what I'm asking is, were you, this first year, affiliated with one of the stand—again I know very little about fraternities, so—

03-00:08:40
Nugent: It was—there was no other fraternity with those Greek call letters or anything like that. Delta Sigma Omicron, three Greek letters came from the fact it was the disabled students organizations-DSO.

03-00:08:56
Pelka: Ah, Okay! [chuckling]

03-00:08:59
Nugent: But we wanted to be more professional, more refined, so we became Delta Sigma Omicron and our publication became *Sigma Signs*. And our publications—they went all over the world.

03-00:09:17
Pelka: Okay. Speaking of sign, you talked about the variety of disabilities that were a part of, manifest in the students that were there that first year. Were there any deaf students as part of this project?

03-00:09:37
Nugent: Yes, there was one. I don't recall whether he's totally deaf or the degree of deafness, but there was one deaf student. We had one blind student. I'm trying to think—of course we had some cerebral palsy. I really can't remember anything that's more specific than that, Fred.

03-00:10:07
Pelka: Okay. You wouldn't recall whether the deaf student was a veteran or not a veteran.

03-00:10:16
Nugent: I'm pretty sure that he was a veteran, but again I cannot say that with any degree of certainty.

03-00:10:22
Pelka: Okay. I guess there are two things that I want to get into now, and it depends on the chronology. You had mentioned becoming aware of Howard Rusk's work, but I also want to talk about the attempt to close down the program and the protests and activities that came about because of that. So I don't know which came first—becoming aware of Rusk or this campaign.

03-00:10:57
Nugent: I didn't know anything about Dr. Rusk other than the fact he existed in New York, in the first year. After we got on this campus he started writing about our program and I started to get to know him, and I've lectured, of course, at New York University Medical Center after that, but at the beginning I didn't know anything about Dr. Rusk.

03-00:11:21
Pelka: Well, then talk about the—there was an attempt after the first year to, I don't know if you'd call it an attempt to close down the program, but the program was certainly in jeopardy, is what it sounds like. So maybe you could discuss that. What happened there?

03-00:11:38
Nugent: Well, when we received word that they were going to close the Galesburg campus, we started looking around for what we could do. We had the fear that our fledgling program was going to come to an end. And with the help of two other staff members there—Ron Grafolier and, oh, golly, just one moment, Coke Mills, we surveyed universities all over the country and they all denied us the opportunity to bring the program there, to bring all our students there or the program concepts we had, including the University of Illinois in Champaign. They refused us. And that's when we had to really start fighting.

03-00:12:29
Pelka: Now why were they closing Galesburg? Was this a budget thing? Or—

03-00:12:34
Nugent: Well, it first of all, it became a political football. The governor wanted to turn it into a geriatrics institute, a state-sponsored geriatrics institute. At the same time, I guess, they felt the enrollment at Galesburg was not adequate to justify its being sustained any longer. And that's a determination that I'm deducing, although I think it did come up in discussion. And as I say, it became a political football, and we then organized a march. I had twenty-plus paraplegic-driven cars, march on the capital in Springfield and we created quite a turmoil there and met with Fred Hoelor, the director of public welfare and met with other state officials, Senator Thompson was the ranking senator in the state of Illinois at the time and he met with us because he was from Galesburg and was very supportive of our efforts. We created quite a turmoil—the city police and the capital police got into a fight with each other.

03-00:13:56
Pelka: You mean a jurisdictional fight, not a literal fight.

03-00:14:00
Nugent: No, a literal fight. Yeah.

03-00:14:02
Pelka: A literal fight! How did that happen.

03-00:14:05
Nugent: Well, you know, when you describe these things verbally now they sound so different than the actuality, but when we, when our cavalcade got to the edge of Springfield, I called the head of the police because I didn't want to create a traffic problem with twenty-plus paraplegic-driven cars in a convoy, and they sent two motorcycle cops out to see us. Plus the IVC came out and that was quite a unique experience. And after the two officers that came out on motorcycles talked to me for a while they said, "Hey, could you wait a while? We want to make a couple of calls." And they called the police department and out came six or eight more motorcycles.

They conveyed us all the way through town. At each intersection they would block the intersection and the cops would salute each of my cars as they went by and then the guy at this intersection would go to the rear of the convoy and then the next guy would come up to the next intersection and you would have thought the president was coming through town. [chuckling] And when we got to the capital building, we pulled into the circle drive in front of the capital and they just had us park there where it said, "Governors, Lieutenant Governors, Secretary of State," et cetera, et cetera. And the state capital police came out and they went belly to belly with the city police and there was a little bit of pushing and shoving and at one time one of them drew a gun.

03-00:15:43
Pelka: Oh my gosh!

03-00:15:45
Nugent: And I thought, what the hell did I get myself into here! [chuckling] And after a bit of a skirmishing, and arguing, and incidentally, just a few blocks away from there, two of the Shelton Gang were killed that day, as I remember it, and they were the big gang in southern Illinois. They were a really famous gang. And that's a vague memory too.

But anyway, after a little skirmish, they asked us to meet in the armory across the street from the capital. And we went over there and we met there and discussed things, and I explained what I wanted to get done and they talked with the veterans, and one of the officers got up and he said, "As long as this redhead says go, we're going to go." And I thought—why am I getting such support from these police? And when one guy had a flat tire, they escorted his car to a filling station but they went around the block three times with their sirens on—and you know, the attention we were getting was just unbelievable.

Well, I found out later on that at that time, the state police in Illinois were under the spoil system. In other words, they were appointed by the governor, and of course, that meant that the governor would appoint his supporters and cronies and that each of these city police officers had been an officer in the state police force previously and had been released when the new governor took over. So they were supporting us in a very enthusiastic way, but I don't think that the origin of their support, in the beginning at least, was because they believed in what we were doing. But fortunately, in the end, they did. They started to hear what we were saying and what we were planning and hoping for, and I expect in the end they were very supportive of what we were doing, but that's not why we got all the attention.

03-00:17:55
Pelka: Let me back up a little bit. This is a parade, or whatever, a demonstration that went from Galesburg to Springfield.

03-00:18:06
Nugent: Right.

03-00:18:06
Pelka: Do you recall who came up with the idea of—

03-00:18:10
Nugent: I did, and a couple of the fellows, and I think Ronny Grafolier and some of those guys also helped. And it was interesting that as we went through a town, the local radio stations would announce our coming through town and in some instances come up to the cars and interview people.

03-00:18:31
Pelka: Now how long from the time that you made—this probably wasn't a spontaneous kind of thing, right? You must have planned this for a while—or did you?

03-00:18:43
Nugent: Well, when you say a while, it may have been a week. [chuckling] And again, I don't remember that time relationship, but it was something that we put together pretty fast.

03-00:18:54
Pelka: Okay. You talk about radio stations. Did you call the media beforehand? Were you—

03-00:19:01
Nugent: No, no. But the word got out and of course, our local radio station in Galesburg had become supportive of our program, and I'm sure that they let others know, but I can't tell you this for a fact.

03-00:19:15
Pelka: Okay. And what about the non-disabled students at the Galesburg campus—was there any effort on their part to keep the campus open?

03-00:19:25
Nugent: Oh, yes, in fact, they were very supportive of us because they felt that we were the one weapon that could keep the campus open.

03-00:19:33
Pelka: Aha!

03-00:19:33
Nugent: In other words, our group was going to be jeopardized by the closing of the campus. The able-bodied students would not be so jeopardized. Do you follow me?

03-00:19:44
Pelka: Right. They'd just transfer—

03-00:19:45
Nugent: The able-bodied students were behind us 110percent.

03-00:19:49
Pelka: Yes, Okay. So who did you meet with in Springfield?

03-00:19:53
Nugent: Oh, I met with several state officers, but primarily I met with the lieutenant governors and I met with Senator Thompson, who was from Galesburg and was the ranking senator in the state of Illinois. And I met with Fred Hoeler, who was director of public welfare. In fact, if you were to go to the *Chicago Tribune* in April of '49, you would, through their files, you'd find a picture that was probably twelve inches by twelve inches edged in black, and it had the caption "For Whom the Bells Toll." And it was a picture of me and the director of public welfare, Fred Hoeler.

03-00:20:40
Pelka: Okay. And when you say the ranking senator, you mean state senator or federal?

03-00:20:45
Nugent: No, state senator.

03-00:20:46
Pelka: State, Okay. Were the American Legion or Disabled American Vets involved in this effort?

03-00:20:59
Nugent: Yes and no. They got word of it, and of course they all met us when we got to the capital and they met us when we went from the capital to the governor's mansion and he avoided us there. While we were at the front entrance, he snuck out the back entrance and that's when we went back to the capital and

circled the drive. [chuckling] It's kind of a humorous thing to discuss, but it was dead serious at the time.

03-00:21:29
Pelka: Yes. Now when you went into all these various buildings, presumably these buildings weren't accessible at the time, or were they?

03-00:21:38
Nugent: Well, no. The capital had a lot of steps and not many of us got into the capital. The armory—we found a reasonably accessible entrance, yeah. But I don't remember any real problem. Maybe one step or something.

03-00:21:54
Pelka: Okay. Now was PVA, Paralyzed Veterans of America, were they active at that time and were they at all—

03-00:22:03
Nugent: No, no. They were just organized the same year, just about. In fact, we were one of the first groups to send money to them. The proceeds of the first national tournament went to the PVA and the National Paraplegia Foundation. And the proceeds from many national tournaments after that went to the PVA and NPF.

03-00:22:26
Pelka: Okay. We'll probably talk some more about that later, but sticking with the demonstration for a while, what happened next? You met with the lieutenant governor, you got some press, some publicity, you met with some other public officials. What happened after that?

03-00:22:46
Nugent: Well, I think that in turn put a little bit of pressure on the campus in Champaign, but we also had a demonstration in Champaign. We took a good number of our students to Champaign and I do remember one of the things we did—we took two-by-eight planks, I think they were, or two-by-ten planks from a paint scaffolding and we laid them up over some steps to show that these guys in wheelchairs could get into that building. The building was Lincoln Hall, which had about four steps leading into it at the time. And we did crazy things like that and of course, we wheeled around campus, some of the people would see us. But that did not come with a positive answer yet. The positive answer came long after that, when Dr. Hirsch, director of the Veterans Administration, medical director of the Veterans Administration for this area, this district, got in behind us, and the American Legion got in behind us. The DAV got in behind us and Dr. Hirsch himself came to campus to argue on our behalf, and other people became involved, and eventually we were allowed to come here, but as an experiment.

03-00:24:10
Pelka: Okay. Now all of this activity is happening basically in the spring of 1949.

03-00:24:16
Nugent: Spring and summer of ’49.

03-00:24:17
Pelka: Spring and summer of ’49, Okay. And—now, was there, I’m just trying to tease out some of the details here. Your purpose wasn’t necessarily to keep Galesburg open. Your purpose was to keep the program alive, is that right?

03-00:24:37
Nugent: Well, I think the two went together initially.

03-00:24:40
Pelka: Okay. Initially you figured the only way to keep the program alive was to keep Galesburg open.

03-00:24:47
Nugent: Right. When we found that was an impossibility, then, facilities be damned, what we wanted to do was keep the program going. We formed a perpetuations committee and we formed all sorts of things.

03-00:24:59
Pelka: Okay. Well then talk about—you talked about Dr. Hirsch getting involved. This is all happening now in the spring and the summer. How—did you approach these people to get them involved? Or had they heard about this and got involved on their own? How did that happen.

03-00:25:22
Nugent: I wish there were simple answers to the kinds of questions you’re asking, Fred, but there just aren’t.

03-00:25:27
Pelka: [chuckling] Well, then you can—

03-00:25:28
Nugent: Some of these things evolved, you know. They don’t come because of a single act and they don’t become a one-directional thing. They become a sort of a reciprocity of—

03-00:25:40
Pelka: Sort of serendipitous.

03-00:25:42
Nugent: Yes, and Dr. Hirsch of course, was one, and I hope I’ve got his name correct, I think it’s Hirsch. He was one of the doctors that came to campus with the auditing group to challenge what we were doing originally. He came to Galesburg, and I’m telling you they put me through a thousand wringers. I don’t think I ever sweated so much in my life. They were challenging me and throwing medical questions at me. Fortunately I had enough training to know the answers to most of them, but every once in a while I’d go to my little medical dictionary to make sure I was right! [chuckling]

03-00:26:20
Pelka: Well, now, what were their main concerns, backing up a bit? What were they—

03-00:26:23
Nugent: You see, I had a contract with the VA. And the income from that contract is what paid for the program.

03-00:26:29
Pelka: Sure.

03-00:26:29
Nugent: I got so much for gait training, so much for hydrotherapy, so much for diathermy, so much for this that and the other thing, and it went into a revolving fund and that's what paid my salary and that's what paid for the program. And this had to go through a three-month process each time. A month ahead of time, I would request authorization for the succeeding month. Then I would, at the end of the month, send billing for the previous month. And you know it was a very cumbersome routine that we had to go through, and it involved money from the VA and of course, I had to write reports, and I would write reports and say, this fellow is doing this now, and that now, and the people challenged it. [chuckling]

03-00:27:19
Pelka: Yes. Now they were, they were—this is a sort of a bureaucratic challenge. They were saying, "We don't necessarily believe you're doing all the things you say you're doing." Is that what the concern was?

03-00:27:32
Nugent: I guess that would be a good way of putting it. The attitudes were very different then, you know—they didn't think that paraplegics in particular, and particularly high-level paraplegics with high-level spinal cord injuries could go to school full-time, could go out in the world and just do all these things.

03-00:27:47
Pelka: So they figured you were making this stuff up, right? [chuckling]

03-00:27:50
Nugent: Well—

03-00:27:51
Pelka: For the money, I mean, to put it crudely.

03-00:27:53
Nugent: I can't speak for them, but they challenged everything I was doing, and I remember one time Harold Scharper, who was my very first student—he died at the end of the first year on this campus, unfortunately—but he [chuckling], actually let go of the handrails on the bar and walked four steps to the doctor and grabbed the doctor and said, "Don't you ever say he can't do this!" [chuckling]

03-00:28:19
Pelka: Wow.

03-00:28:20
Nugent: And so, it was rather dramatic in that sense and as a result of that, Dr. Hirsch became one of our strong supporters, as did other officers of the VA. In fact, the regional office referred to me as "Mr. Rehab" for a while and we had a big meeting. I'm—it's coming off the top of my head now. We had a big meeting near the end to discuss their questions, their findings, and their interpretations and I came up with the term, anthropometrically speaking. Hirsch looked at me, he says, "What do you mean, anthropometrically?" And I looked at Dr. Hirsch, I said, "Dr. Hirsch, you've been putting me through the wringer for the last three and a half days. If you don't know what anthropometrically means, you go look it up." And he burst out laughing and that controversy turned out to be our friendship. It's one of those unexplainable things.

03-00:29:27
Pelka: Now eventually the decision was made to allow the program to move from Galesburg to Champaign.

03-00:29:35
Nugent: Right.

03-00:29:37
Pelka: Who made that, who was in charge of making that decision? Was that the administrators at Champaign or the state—?

03-00:29:44
Nugent: Well, it was—you know, in Illinois, it's a very politically encumbered state, so that if it was done, a lot of people could have become involved, but it was the president's office that finally sent notice that we could come here. We had a college on campus that was called the Division of Special Services for War Veterans. And that existed before we got here. That was a college that, if you were a veteran, you were exempt from hygiene, from ROTC, from physical education. You were exempt from certain basic courses if you could proficiency them to expedite your getting to your degree. And you could get your degree in any college. You could be enrolled in DSSWV and get your degree from commerce, or LAS, or anywhere, so that many of our veterans did enroll in DSSWV. Well the director of DSSWV then became my first boss, Dr. Robert Bone, who later became president of Illinois State University and prior to that became associate provost of this campus, became a very strong supporter of our program, was a very dear friend until he died, and Dr. Lawder who had been director of health service in Galesburg, joined the health service staff here and eventually became director of the health service here. He was a strong supporter. Chauncey Louttit, who was the executive dean at Galesburg, became a strong supporter of mine and of my ideas, and he became the associate provost over on this campus and—so there were a few people, very few, but there were a few people who were supportive and believed in my ideas and gave me the—generated the power for me to go on.

03-00:31:52
Pelka: Okay. When you say this campus, now, you're talking about Champaign.

03-00:31:56
Nugent: Right.

03-00:31:57
Pelka: Okay. And it was Dr. Robert Bone? B-O-N-E?

03-00:32:02
Nugent: B-O-N-E.

03-00:32:03
Pelka: Okay, and Dr. Water, you said?

03-00:32:05
Nugent: Just a second, I have to get my bearing here. Chauncey Louttit was the executive dean in Galesburg and became associate provost here. Homer—oh, golly, I'm sorry. I'm just—I'm drawing a blank on his last name and he was very close to me.

03-00:32:36
Pelka: Well, it'll come back to—

03-00:32:38
Nugent: Homer, Homer, Water? No, that's not right. Oh gosh, that makes me mad!

03-00:32:47
Pelka: Well, I'm sure it'll come back to you.

03-00:32:49
Nugent: Lawder, L-A-W-D-E-R. Homer Lawder, L-A-W-D-E-R.

03-00:32:56
Pelka: Oh, Lawder, Okay.

03-00:32:57
Nugent: He was director of health services over there and my superior over there, my immediate superior, and he became a member of the health service here and eventually director of health service here on the main campus.

03-00:33:08
Pelka: Okay.

03-00:33:10
Nugent: And as I say, Dr. Bone was already here as director of DSSWV.

03-00:33:16
Pelka: I'm going to have to—I'm going to turn the tape off for two seconds here. [This is an] interview with Timothy Nugent on August 13, 2004. This is interview number 2, tape 3, side B. The DSSWV, was that a program that was instituted after World War II? Or had that been there—

03-00:33:49
Nugent: No, that was instituted after World War II to benefit the veterans of World War II.

03-00:33:57
Pelka: Okay. So you heard the decision that the program would be allowed to move from Galesburg to Champaign. What exactly did that entail? You said you had all this equipment that—

03-00:34:19
Nugent: Well, the equipment, fortunately, we transferred over to the possession of Delta Sigma Omicron, Incorporated, incorporated under the state laws of Illinois. There was a committee appointed to consider the transfer on this campus. I don't even think they ever met, because the chairman of the committee met with me just for an hour or so after we got here, took me into this tarpaper shack which had nothing in it and said, "Well, this is where your office and your clinic will be, and we understand that you have a contract to raise the money to support the program." And that was it. That was the end of our conversation!

03-00:35:01
Pelka: So then you packed up your equipment in vans, or whatever, transferred it over to the new campus. How did that change the program? Or did it?

03-00:35:17
Nugent: Oh, it definitely changed the program wherein accessibility was relatively easy in Galesburg. It was very difficult here initially. I used to transfer as many as three hundred class sections a semester from one building to another, because we ramped just a few buildings originally. After we got that done, then I realized that the programming was difficult, so we arranged a system of pre-registration for our disabled students, where they would register in advance, where the sections wouldn't be filled and they could make out a program that was reasonable for them to physically access. And after we were here for a while—because we were making things accessible for several years starting from '49 on—I was asked to be the director of research and development and then the secretary and eventually the national chairman of the American Standards Project. But then I also realized that getting about this big campus was a problem, and so we had to work on transportation and we began by—I had veterans that had automobiles and I had non-service connected veterans that didn't have automobiles and I had non-veterans that didn't have automobiles, so I would make out a program every night—John pick up Joe at such a point, drop him off at such a point. Joe pick up John at such a point, et cetera. And I would make that out, and every morning around 5:30 I would lay it on the beds of all the fellows that had—all the fellows, period, those that had cars and those that didn't. They would know how they would get about campus that way.

03-00:37:17
Pelka: Maybe you could describe the campus a little bit. How—this is a fairly large state university?

03-00:37:25
Nugent: Oh, it was a large campus.

03-00:37:26
Pelka: How many—did you have a sense of how many students overall at that time? Are we talking 10,000?

03-00:37:32
Nugent: Oh no, it was well over 10,000. In fact I remember at the time we were coming here they were concerned about going over 15,000. Because we were at 20,000 and way up above that in nothing flat.

03-00:37:45
Pelka: Wow, Okay. And now we're talking just the second year of the program now. You're moving from Galesburg to Champaign. How many disabled students at this point?

03-00:37:55
Nugent: Oh—we picked up some that started out that year and we brought about, and this is just a guess right now, about twenty with us from Galesburg. Not all of them came from Galesburg. Some gave up or some decided to go home. But we picked up some new students along the way. I can think of two of them quickly but that's all. And we had to get them around campus, but, this transportation system had its problems. For instance, one example, this was a lighter story, I found out why two of my guys were having real personal difficulty. The guy without the car was borrowing the car of the guy with the car to take the same girl out! On different nights. And that really created a problem.

03-00:39:03
Pelka: Oh I bet.

03-00:39:04
Nugent: One that you probably can't picture, because I have trouble thinking of it now, but it was a very big problem. And there were other problems. Eventually we decided we had to develop a transportation system and with the help of the father of one of my students, Hugh Calkins—the son was John Calkins—I hope I don't have that reversed—he knew the president of Greyhound, Mr. Orville Swan Caesar, who was the founder of Greyhound as well, and he arranged for me to meet with him and so I explained to Mr. Caesar what I wanted and why and he liked the idea. He got pretty--he says, "How many buses do you want?" Well, I was afraid to ask for too much so I asked for two. If I asked for ten I would have gotten them. I know that as a matter of fact because at that time he was converting his buses to buses that were higher and had two separate engines in the rear. And so his old silversides, which weren't really old, he was selling to foreign countries or would give to me.

03-00:40:17
Pelka: I just want to back up—Hugh Calkins, can you spell that?

03-00:40:22
Nugent: C-A-L-K-I-N-S. And I think Hugh was the father and John was the son. John was one of my students, disabled students.

03-00:40:32
Pelka: Okay. Now presumably this is a really large campus [geographically]. Was there a transportation system for non-disabled students? Did they have a shuttle bus?

03-00:40:39
Nugent: No. They had nothing.

03-00:40:42
Pelka: Nothing at all, okay.

03-00:40:43
Nugent: There was a small city transportation system but it was very small and it was quite inadequate at the time. Now what happened then, to show what the attitude was—Don Swift, one of my outstanding wheelchair people and the first wheelchair graduate, and I visited with the Greyhound maintenance people at their various garages, saw the buses that we were supposed to get and they were beautiful new silversides. So we wrote up our findings and the estimates, the cost of operation, everything, and after I wrote it up I took it to my dean and my dean said, "You can't give buses to the university." And the dean and I at that time were at odds. And I said, "I don't want to give buses to the university. I want the president to know that Greyhound wants to give buses to the university."

But it never got past the dean's desk, so then of course, Hugh Calkins called me, he said, "Tim, what's happening?" And I explained to him. So Mr. Calkins and Jim McMannis who was the father of another of my wheelchair students, a woman student and an attorney and secretary of Skil Corporation, the large tool manufacturing firm, came down to campus and met with me and they went over to talk to the dean and they came back to me and they said, "Tim, how can you persist in a setup like this? We never ever experienced someone so backward in their thinking." Now I'm quoting them.

And so we sat for hours and said, "What do we do?" Well, what we did was form a parents' organization. It had two members—Hugh Calkins and Jim McMannis—and they prepared a letterhead and they wrote directly—see I couldn't bypass the dean. Particularly in those days. The university structure was so different. I couldn't bypass the dean. But they could. So they wrote to the president of the university who was Lloyd Morey, M-O-R-E-Y, at the time, they had already fired President Stoddard, and Lloyd Morey sent me a letter of commendation within two days saying, "Tim, it's wonderful that you were able to get all that stuff."

So Hugh Calkins and Jim McMannis went back up to Orville Swan Caesar, and Orville Swan Caesar said, “Well, I don’t have those buses any more. I couldn’t afford to wait for two or three years and pay insurance on those buses while that damn fool Nugent makes up his mind. He’s either stupid or crazy.” And that’s his opinion of me then. And they said, “Hey, wait a minute, wait a minute. You’ve got this all wrong. And they explained what happened and that I was being held up by the administration. And so Orville Swan Caesar said, “Well, all of our buses are sold or out of the country.” And he said, “I’ll get you two buses if I have to go out of the country to get them.” And he did. He brought two buses up from Mexico.

Orville Swan Caesar said, “If you want these buses to be fabricated like you explained to me, with lifts in the front door, et cetera, you should see Mr. Carmont C-A-R-M-O-N-T Blitz B-L-I-T-Z, who probably was the nation’s number one modifier and fabricator of truck and bus equipment. And so I got this call at 1:00 from Mr. Blitz and he said, “Tim you’d better get up here right away.” It’s one in the morning he called me. He said, “You will be surprised what we got up here.” And when I got up there, there wasn’t a piece of glass in the buses. They were really what you would see in Mexico after they’d been used for a while.

And so Hugh Calkins, and Mr. Blitz, and Mr. McMannis and I met for an entire day at Gene and Georgetti’s Restaurant I think it was. It was one of the Al Capone hangouts as I understand, and we met there all day, and our final conclusion was this is not President Morey’s fault and it’s not the university’s fault. We can’t embarrass them. It’s not Mr. Caesar’s fault. We can’t embarrass him by negating this project, so Carmont Blitz said, “Tim,” he said, “I’ll make these buses operable no matter what it takes.” [spoken with emotion] And he did. And the charge—at that time—he only charged us $11,000, but he must have done about $500,000 worth of work on them. And we used those buses on the campus and we used those buses for trips to Kansas City and Memphis and all over for basketball and square dancing and whatnot and they were adequate but not too adequate.

03-00:46:20
Pelka: Now you’re talking about lifts.

03-00:46:26
Nugent: Yeah, we had lifts in the bus, yeah.

03-00:46:27
Pelka: Lifts at the front of the bus.

03-00:46:31
Nugent: Well, for the original buses the lift was a little further back than the very front of the bus.

03-00:46:34
Pelka: Okay. But had you—was there a model for this anywhere? Were there buses anywhere else in the country or the world that you knew of that—

03-00:46:43
Nugent: No, none whatsoever.

03-00:46:45
Pelka: How did you—

03-00:46:46
Nugent: We knew of some buses that had a ramp on them which you had to enter through the back of the bus and the ramp was about fifteen-foot long and you had to go out in the street to do it.

03-00:46:58
Pelka: Okay, and the ramp was designed for people in chairs to use the bus.

03-00:47:01
Nugent: Yes. That's right.

03-00:47:03
Pelka: So who came up with the idea of a lift?

03-00:47:08
Nugent: Mr. Blitz and I together did.

03-00:47:10
Pelka: Okay.

03-00:47:10
Nugent: He was the engineering knowledge. I was the idiot with the idea.

03-00:47:15
Pelka: Okay. I'm just curious as to how the original, the original brainstorm occurred. If he was thinking of other equipment that he'd seen, or—

03-00:47:27
Nugent: No, no, no. We—the truth of the matter is we originally went to some of the lift companies, oh, I can't think of 'em, the lifts that they had in the back of trucks, you know, for lifting heavy stuff up to the level of the truck floor, things like that, and I know the name of them but I can't think of it, and they refused to have anything to do with us because we were talking about human cargo, so none of the companies that were making lifts, hydraulic lifts, would have anything to do with us, so Mr. Blitz himself engineered the lift. It was all his ingenuity. [chuckling]

03-00:48:09
Pelka: Yeah, wow.

03-00:48:09
Nugent: And that was back in 1952.

03-00:48:13
Pelka: Okay. I want to back up just a little bit about—to ask you something about something you said earlier. You said these people came back after meeting with the administration, with administrators and said, “We’ve never run into somebody with such backwards thinking.” How did they mean that? Did they mean just the—was it a question of, our bureaucracy can’t do this because this isn’t—you’re asking us to do something that isn’t standard procedure?

03-00:48:43
Nugent: No, it was just—first of all, I can’t say it’s bureaucracy, although that’s an easy way to blame everything nowadays. But this dean at that time had a concept—he reprimanded me for raising money outside the university. It was just his concept of how a university should run.

03-00:49:04
Pelka: Okay, but did it have—I guess what I’m trying to get at is if it had anything to do with attitudes toward disability.

03-00:49:11
Nugent: Oh I’m sure that entered into it too because they didn’t want us here. In fact, that dean didn’t really want us on campus. Now, this is not Dr. Bone. This is the dean of health, physical education, recreation, on whose faculty I also was. My appointment was split in order to find enough money to give me a salary [chuckling], which wasn’t much. But anyway, I want to insert that later on as we proved our point, this same dean became a very dear friend [spoken with emotion]. But he just had a misconception of what things should be and so did the rest of this damn campus for the most part. So anyway, after those buses were in operation for about two or three years, another wheelchair student of mine, a very severe athetoid spastic, cerebral palsy, who had never gone to regular grade school or high school but who had been helped by the Bradley Foundation in Wisconsin—at that time it was named after Mr. Bradley’s wife but it’s been changed since then—anyway, because of his close association with him, his father went to them and asked if they could give us a grant for buses which the Bradley Foundation did. And so we got two brand new GMC 3102 regular transit buses and Mr. Blitz equipped them with lifts in the front door, with steps so that you could walk in and a wheelchair could wheel in, one after the other and it would only take five seconds to get in the bus.

03-00:51:03
Pelka: Yes. Now how was the busing service operated? Did it run like a regular route and students would have to—

03-00:51:11
Nugent: Oh yes. We ran four buses every hour on routes. The first half of every hour was going from places to places and the second half of every hour was coming from those places back to other places.

03-00:51:29
Pelka: Okay. So a student would have to show up at a bus stop—what was essentially a bus stop—and be there on time.

03-00:51:36
Nugent: Not a transit bus stop, we had bus stops too, designated for them to be at. The buses would occasionally veer off to help a severely disabled student and whatnot, but it was a system, and it ran sixteen hours a day at that time.

03-00:51:51
Pelka: Now who paid for that?

03-00:51:52
Nugent: That was paid for through some subsidies that I had from various sources. I can't even name all the sources.

03-00:52:05
Pelka: Okay. But it wasn't campus money, it was money—

03-00:52:09
Nugent: No, not campus money per se, no.

03-00:52:11
Pelka: Okay. And you hired drivers full time.

03-00:52:14
Nugent: Yes, and the first driver I hired was a member of the Teamsters Union and he could be earning big money, but he worked for me for ten years for a dollar an hour.

03-00:52:28
Pelka: Wow.

03-00:52:29
Nugent: And I said to him once, "Fergie, you could make more money, you know, in half a year, than you can make here in years." He said, "Tim, as long as you're here, as long as you want this to go, I'm with you." So he stayed with me until he retired and only five years before he retired did I get them to give him his benefits for service, retirement, and insurance. That was the attitude that prevailed in those days.

03-00:52:58
Pelka: Yeah, yeah.

03-00:52:59
Nugent: And other drivers—one was a marine captain that came out of service and was a student here. He drove for me. Another was a horse farmer who part-time drove for me. [laughs]

03-00:53:14
Pelka: Okay. So that takes care of transportation. What about housing? At Galesburg the buildings were all on a single level and people were housed with the regular students. Everything was kind of integrated from what you were saying. What about at Champaign?

03-00:53:38
Nugent: Well, of course in Champaign, my building was a tarpaper shack. It was an army World War II army surplus barracks, which had been moved onto campus with hundreds of others like it and they became dormitories for able-bodied students and also for my wheelchair students. We filled, let's see—one, two, three—four of those tarpaper shacks with wheelchair men and then one of the buildings and eventually two of the buildings became our rehab. center and we have an oil painting of it hanging in the new building which is now forty years old, and the new Lincoln Hall, Lincoln Avenue Residence Hall, was just being completed. It was the first major residence hall built on campus after the war and even there we had a unique problem. Shirley Sayers was a wheelchair student at Galesburg. She wanted to come and did come with us here. They didn't want to ramp or make Lincoln Hall accessible and they gave me an estimate that it would cost about ten thousand dollars to do it. And so we argued and argued and finally I went to Shirley Sayers' father and I said, "I would like to try a bluff if you'll go along with me. Would you make a check out for ten thousand dollars to the University of Illinois and mark it for the ramp on Lincoln Avenue Residence Hall?" And he did, and they were ashamed to accept the check. They put the ramp up, and it probably cost about 250 dollars.

03-00:55:36
Pelka: Now when you say they were reluctant, who is they?

03-00:55:39
Nugent: The dean of women and other administrators and the housing division.

03-00:55:44
Pelka: Now what was the reluctance there? They just didn't want somebody in a wheelchair in their residence hall?

03-00:55:50
Nugent: Well, you're coming from a period of time where this hadn't been in acceptance a long time.

03-00:55:54
Pelka: Right.

03-00:55:55
Nugent: You've got to remember that, back in the forties, very very few, if any, went to regular grade school if they were severely disabled or high school or anywhere. You've got to remember that the public thought they should be hidden in back rooms. Parents actually *told* me that. So you're asking me questions almost sixty years later about things sixty years ago, but you don't

have a concept of the attitude that prevailed at that time. They were also concerned about the appearance of this new building.

03-00:56:25
Pelka: Right.

03-00:56:27
Nugent: And I'm not saying that critically, I'm saying—

03-00:56:28
Pelka: No, no. That's why I'm asking the question. It's—I want to get at what that attitude was because I think people—one of the reasons we're recording this history is so that people understand or have a sense as to the extent of the changes that have been made. So essentially it was that people just simply didn't want folks in wheelchairs, specifically, or people with disabilities around. They were uncomfortable around them.

03-00:56:58
Nugent: Well, they thought they would be uncomfortable with them around. I presented a paper for the American College Health Association back in '52 in which they asked me to explain the attitudes of administrators and faculty, and basically I said that their attitudes were that these people would be a distraction on campus, they would be demoralizing on campus, they would be an extra cost, they would be an extra liability and what would they do with a college education. That's a sum up of this paper. Well, I'd like to do as well as they've done, because four of my wheelchair graduates have each given us a million dollars for our program, and I couldn't do that if I hocked everything I own including my wife.

03-00:57:47
Pelka: [laughs] Okay.

03-00:57:49
Nugent: But that prevailed and the initiative had to be a collective initiative. I called the students together and I said, "This is our battle, fellows. Are you with me?" And they were with me a hundred percent. I've published statements since then that many of the disabled students now would never, never, never endure what my original students endured.

03-00:58:18
Pelka: Now you were talking about the attitude of the administrators. What about the professors, the teachers?

03-00:58:28
Nugent: Oh, professors were part of the problem. It was—professors were some of the people that objected to them being in their classes. I could give you one or two examples. In the very first year or two I used to have to relocate classes. In one instance, I was relocating a class from a third floor of the English building to the first floor and the professor cussed me up and down and he said, "I don't think these people belong here anywhere and I've been here seven years

now and I finally got all my classes in one room," and he only taught nine hours a week. He had his classes one, two, and three o'clock in that same room on the third floor of the English building. And he was objecting to my moving his classes to the first floor of the same building. Can you believe that?

03-00:59:24
Pelka: Yeah.

03-00:59:24
Nugent: That was his attitude. Well, I can't tell you what I told him on the phone.

03-00:59:29
Pelka: Now how were these—when a professor would make an objection like that, how was this resolved? Would you have to go to the administration or a dean?

03-00:59:38
Nugent: No, I just told him, "You either do that, or I'll be up there and we're going to have some real problems." And pretty soon the word got around that, and it sounds funny for me to say it, this guy Nugent means it and he's pretty damn tough. [chuckles]

03-00:59:55
Pelka: Yes, but you obviously had some support from the higher ups. People weren't able to just blow you off.

03-01:00:03
Nugent: No, they weren't able to, but it was because of a few people like Dr. Lawder, like Dr. Chauncey Lauttit, and like Dr. Bone. And one of the best friends after we were here on campus was Mr. Joe Blaze, who was at that time chief of police and security officer. And he and I worked together on parking and on all sorts of things. I could tell you stories of how he had to fight with some of the deans. [chuckling]

03-01:00:36
Pelka: We're talking now early 1950s, right? I just want to—

03-01:00:41
Nugent: We're talking about '50 or '49-'50, '50-'51, '51-'52.

03-01:00:46
Pelka: Okay. How about the other students? What kinds of experiences did you have with non-disabled students?

03-01:00:59
Nugent: Well, we had a variety of experiences. There's no single behavior pattern, but I remember we put every disabled student in with an able-bodied student and I can remember some of the able-bodied students objecting, but more than that I can remember that some of the parents of the able-bodied students objected

and insisted that their son or daughter be removed or that the disabled person be removed. And later on, some of those people became the best of friends.

03-01:01:34
Pelka: Now who would they take their objection to? Would they come to you? Or would they go to the—

03-01:01:40
Nugent: They would go to the housing division or the residence hall director there and he would call me and tell me about it and sometimes I'd step in, sometimes I didn't. I said, "Well, if they want to leave, let 'em leave!" [chuckling] Because we had more students than we could handle—that is, able-bodied students.

03-01:02:11
Pelka: Okay. I'm just looking at my questions here, seeing what—because, like I say, sometimes what happens is people answer questions that you haven't asked yet, or they—now—again, at this point, students, there was no program for personal assistance services. Is that right? In terms of helping a student get out of bed or get dressed or—

03-01:02:39
Nugent: In some instances, and I had quadriplegics right from the beginning, I would show the roommate what to do, but I showed, more than anything else, I showed them what *not* to do. And I remember one time a student came here and he thought he needed help and rather than enter into it I called one of my other paraplegic students over and I told him what the situation was and what I wanted him to do and so he wheeled into the guy's bedroom and he said—now, pardon my language, but this is the way we talked back then, all veterans, and we were angered. He said, "Listen, you lazy son of a bitch. You get out of that bed by yourself and you get dressed by yourself or go home. We don't want you here." And that guy became totally independent in less than a week and graduated in three years and within six months after graduation was vice president of a firm. [chuckling]

03-01:03:41
Pelka: But that obviously wouldn't work, though, with somebody who was, say, a high-level quad.

03-01:03:48
Nugent: Well, I'm talking about high-level disabilities in quads. John Storer—I still have the letter he originally sent me. I thought I'd have to blow his nose for him, but John Storer became an administrator with the Cook County Park District, which is the county around Chicago.

03-01:04:06
Pelka: Yes. Storer is S-T-O-R—

03-01:04:08
Nugent: E-R.

03-01:04:09
Pelka: E-R. Okay.

03-01:04:11
Nugent: So you know—people like to think it's this, that, or the other thing, I received a letter just yesterday from one of my quadriplegic girls who could not get here for our May 18 celebration. If we have time later on I'll read it to you and give you an idea of what it's like. [At the May 18 celebration, the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics awarded varsity letters to all my wheelchair and blind athletes, going back to 1948-49. Entire families attended. It was a gala affair.—TN]

03-01:04:35
Pelka: Okay. Had—at this point, what was the mix of veterans versus non-veterans, and did that change over the course of time?

03-01:04:46
Nugent: Oh it definitely changed over the course of time. As word got out, more non-veterans were applying. I would think that in our first year on this campus that we probably had, and I'm making a guess at this—I think I'll be reasonably close but it's not a statistical study now—I think we had probably 40percent service-connected veterans, about 22percent non-service-connected veterans, and the rest were civilians, origin.

03-01:05:27
Pelka: Okay. And this was what period of time?

03-01:05:29
Nugent: This is starting in '50. '49 and '50, '51.

03-01:05:37
Pelka: Okay. I'm going to click off the tape here because we're coming to the end of the tape and I've got to change the tape so hang on two seconds here.

Begin Audiofile 4 08-13-04.mp3

04-00:00:01
Pelka: A lot of noise on these reels, I don't know why.

04-00:00:03
Nugent: I can hear it every once in a while.

04-00:00:04
Pelka: Yes. Okay. This is an interview with Timothy Nugent on August 13, 2004. This is interview number 2, this is tape 4, side A. Okay. We were talking about the mix of students—veterans versus non-veterans. I'm wondering if, looking back, if you noticed a difference in, let's say, attitude, between the veterans and the non-veterans who came to the program.

04-00:00:38
Nugent: Well, that's a question that I was asked when I gave lectures all over the country at colleges, whatnot, in the early years. And there are multiple answers to that. The first answer is this—that once we got the veterans back into the mainstream of life, their attitudes were not as most people thought they would be, that is, bitter. And one of the reasons was they could associate what they were doing now with what they had done prior to their military service. Do you follow me?

04-00:01:13
Pelka: Yeah.

04-00:01:14
Nugent: Now the non-service-connected people and the non-veterans that had never gone to grade school or high school had been home-bound instructed, orthopedic or hospital-school instructed, and many of them were given grade A when they should have been graded C. They had a very unrealistic concept of themselves in most instances, not all. And they had a tougher problem sometimes than the veteran, and that's just the opposite of what most people thought. They thought the veteran, because he was injured in service, would be bitter and there were that kind, but they were not the kind that came out of the hospitals and went to school.

04-00:01:59
Pelka: Yes. Earlier you talked about, I think it was, I forget if it was a man or a woman, but someone who had CP who came into the program and you said they'd had no, had not been to high school, had not had much of an education before that. So where were most of the non-veteran students coming from? Were they coming out of institutions? Or from homes?

04-00:02:29
Nugent: Some came out of nursing homes. Some came out of just having been in the back room of a home for a long time. Some were more recently disabled and didn't have to go through that unfortunate sequence of events. I admitted freshmen that were the age of forty-nine that had been disabled for years. I admitted one boy who had been in bed in Chicago, Illinois, one of the largest hospital centers in the world for twenty-one years! And he came down to campus and when he came down he had an attendant. And the first thing I did was say to the attendant, "You can leave and just visit the campus because he does not need you here." And that just frightened this guy to death. And the next thing I did—I used various mechanisms over the years. The next thing I did is I called one of my wheelchair boys that had a car. Who by the way was also a non-service-connected veteran. I said, "I want you to pick this guy up and take him to lunch."

Well, when lunchtime came, we went out of my office, went out to the curb of the street next to the office, and he said, "Well, what do I do now?" I said, "I'll tell you what. The guy that's sitting in that car driving is going to tell you

what to do now and I'm going back to the office." He learned what to do. He spent two weeks. He only came down here for the intent of getting functional training, which is something we had developed at that time. He wasn't intending to come to college. After he went home for two weeks, he called me up, and he said, "If I could learn that in two weeks, what could I learn if I came to college?" He was a very bright person. I said, "Jack, I can't promise you anything except one thing—you won't be the big bum that you are today." And so he came to college. And he graduated in less than four years and also became the vice president of a firm in Chicago. And was very independent, got married to a beautiful, tall, able-bodied girl. So things change if they're given the right opportunities and the right challenges, but the two have to go together. A person's potential will only develop to the degree to which it is challenged, Fred. And so one of my jobs was to challenge their potential in all areas of their life.

04-00:05:14
Pelka: I have a couple of just—kind of picky questions, housecleaning questions. You said, "non-service-connected veteran" a couple of times and I think I know what that means but maybe you should define what that means just so that it's on the record.

04-00:05:32
Nugent: Veteran A is a paraplegic. He became a paraplegic being shot while in service in Europe or Japan or wherever. Veteran B was discharged from the service as an able-bodied person and then became disabled—automobile accident, factory accident. I had all kinds of them. He is a non-service-connected disabled veteran. And the benefits for each were different. Group A had many more benefits than group B.

04-00:06:08
Pelka: Okay. Another question I wanted to ask you was about manual versus power wheelchairs. Were there any? Were there a lot of power wheelchairs at that time?

04-00:06:24
Nugent: No. In fact I pretty much disallowed them. Many people came with power wheelchairs that I knew could operate a standard wheelchair [if they were] properly trained. And we ended up with a morgue of probably twenty-five or thirty power chairs that we couldn't even give away. And—because many times the easy way for the therapist, whatnot, was to get them that way and get them out. I even knew of surgical procedures that were done because it made life easier while they were in the hospital, but [that] was not in the interest of their future living potential. I can give you one example of a boy who was arthrogrypotic, had a power wheelchair, had never gone to grade school or high school. A medical doctor in New York was sponsoring him. And he had to use his mouth, with a special device we developed, to write, to answer the telephone, and to even wipe his rear end. And he was getting along pretty well and he kind of pushed with one leg a little bit backwards with his

wheelchair, and one day the manager of the canteen, which happened to be right next door to our tarpaper shack, came running over to me and he said, "Tim, you've got to get over here and see this." And here was this arthrogrypotic boy in an electric wheelchair saying to a girl who was very severely disabled, "I've learned to operate without this wheelchair. I would like to give this wheelchair to you." He said, "Tim, when I heard that," he said, "I couldn't believe it." And so he made sure that I got over there to hear it. And there were so many little dramatic instances like that in our early years that exemplify the change in attitude, the change in the person's own concept of self, and self-reliance.

04-00:08:31
Pelka: Yes, but there are, would you acknowledge that there are some people who do, I mean, someone with multiple sclerosis, for example, or muscular dystrophy who's reached a certain point in their—

04-00:08:43
Nugent: Oh, yeah, there's—definitely true. In fact, some of my best wheelchair athletes of years gone by are now in power chairs. Of course, they're in their seventies and in fact a couple of them are in their eighties and with the progression of age and disability the power chair is the thing. And of course the power chair has improved tremendously over what we had back in the early fifties.

04-00:09:08
Pelka: Yeah. In the early fifties was E&J [Everest and Jennings] the big name then? Or was this before?

04-00:09:13
Nugent: E&J was *the* name in wheelchairs. Other wheelchair companies came into being that I got to know personally and even worked with their executives. But E&J was the chair. Unfortunately, E&J, about twenty years later did not keep up. They're still in business.

04-00:09:32
Pelka: Yeah. What about perceptual disabilities? Again I'm asking the same questions a number of times but now we're talking about a different, slightly different time period from Galesburg, talking about deaf students, blind students—what was the mix there?

04-00:09:51
Nugent: Oh we had a tremendous mix. We have a whole service for people who are blind and people who are deaf at the rehab center. And we graduated the first person in history who was totally nerve deaf to graduate from a regular university, according to the records that we were given, and she went on to become a PhD in pathology and then became a medical doctor, even though the medical schools originally refused her. It took her years to accomplish this, but she was a very persistent young lady, and after she got her PhD in pathology she was working in hospitals and eventually convinced them, and I

don't even know how, to let her pursue her MD degree. And she was totally nerve deaf from birth. We've always had services for the blind. I established the first study abroad program for people with disabilities way back, oh golly, '65 or somewhere in there. And we sent cerebral palsy students, blind students, paraplegics, people with multiple sclerosis and muscular dystrophy to study in Aix-en-Provence, France, for a whole school term.

04-00:11:17
Pelka: In where, France? I'm sorry.

04-00:11:18
Nugent: Aix-en-Provence.

04-00:11:21
Pelka: Oh, Okay.

04-00:11:20
Nugent: Aix-en-Provence. That was written up in the Rotarian magazine that year and in several other magazines as quite a unique thing.

04-00:11:36
Pelka: What year was this?

04-00:11:37
Nugent: Oh golly, it, I wish I could have access to my files more quickly but I can't. It was—I sent a group to South Africa in '62. That's the year I remember. This was after that.

04-00:11:56
Pelka: Okay.

04-00:11:57
Nugent: It was in the mid-sixties, I think.

04-00:12:01
Pelka: Yes. Going back to the deaf students—did any of them use American Sign Language? Or was it an oralist environment?

04-00:12:08
Nugent: Oh, some used sign language, yes.

04-00:12:13
Pelka: Okay. And did you have any contact at that point with folks at Gallaudet U[niversity]—I guess at that time it was Gallaudet College, but Gallaudet University?

04-00:12:22
Nugent: Yes. In fact we had people come to us from there and I, I think, two different occasions was invited to go to Gallaudet and it was *the* place for them to get higher level education at that time in history.

04-00:12:40
Pelka: Yeah. Was Rochester Institute—had that been established by then or was that before R.I.T. [Rochester Institute of Technology]? Do you know what I'm talking about? There's a technical school, or college—

04-00:12:57
Nugent: In Rochester, New York?

04-00:12:58
Pelka: Yeah, for deaf students. I forget when—

04-00:13:01
Nugent: I have no knowledge of the origin of that so far as years are concerned.

04-00:13:07
Pelka: Okay. Yeah, I'm blanking on that.

04-00:13:10
Nugent: Yeah, I wouldn't even want to comment on that, because I don't know.

04-00:13:15
Pelka: Okay. In turning to the blind students, had you at that point any contact with the National Federation of the Blind? Or—

04-00:13:23
Nugent: Well, the National Federation of the Blind was a relatively recent organization. The American Association of Workers for the Blind was the primary organization in the early years.

04-00:13:37
Pelka: Okay. The NFB was founded in 1940, I know, but it was still pretty—it didn't—

04-00:13:45
Nugent: It was pretty young. It took a while, yeah. And I had occasion to meet with them, and I think they're doing a much, much better job now than they did even in the fifties and sixties.

04-00:13:58
Pelka: What was your first experience meeting with them. Do you recall?

04-00:14:01
Nugent: Well, [chuckling] one of my experiences with them—they had a president for a while that was a—you know, he thought himself to be quite the guy, and he criticized us for saying that the blind needed certain things in facilities, such as a safety precaution in sound instead of light. He criticized us because we had established a sound device on the lights where construction was going on, so that the blind person would know there was a hazard ahead. And of course, once you get them out in the community like we were doing, and walking around a big campus where there's always something going on, it was logical that we—he criticized us for that. And he was a very selfishly motivated

person. I hate to say it that way. And I spoke at one of their national meetings, and he got real nasty at the meeting, and there were two priests and a clergyman that when I walked out they walked out with me and they said to me, “We apologize for the way he behaved. We’ve been supportive of this group until now, but we’re not supporting them any more because he’s doing them a disservice.”

04-00:15:21
Pelka: Was this a national spokesperson?

04-00:15:23
Nugent: Yeah. He was the national president.

04-00:15:24
Pelka: Oh it was—

04-00:15:26
Nugent: He was critical at the time.

04-00:15:27
Pelka: Was that Jernigan maybe? Kenneth Jernigan?

04-00:15:30
Nugent: I’m not going to mention names.

04-00:15:32
Pelka: Okay.

04-00:15:34
Nugent: Is Jernigan the president now?

04-00:15:37
Pelka: No, no. He’s long gone.

04-00:15:39
Nugent: Yeah. It probably was, but the one they have now seems to be a very level-headed guy. And I think they’re doing good work.

04-00:15:50
Pelka: Okay. Still talking in the period—we’re still focusing on the early 1950s up to say 1955 or so. Was there anything else around the country happening similar to the program that you were running that you know of?

04-00:16:12
Nugent: Well, it was later than ’55 I used to lecture regularly at SIU, and Les Blankenship, one of our paraplegic graduates, a non-service connected veteran, became assistant director and chief of rehabilitation services for the Illinois Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at that time. And he worked with Dr. Renzaglia at SIU and eventually SIU developed a program comparable to ours, not as big, but definitely a worthwhile program.

04-00:16:55
Pelka: Do you know what year that would have been?

04-00:16:57
Nugent: Oh, I'm going to have to say it was in the late fifties.

04-00:17:01
Pelka: Okay. And I hate to keep doing this to you, but I need to try to get the spellings on the names because when the tapes are transcribed for one thing, I may not be the one transcribing them, so—you said Les Blankenship?

04-00:17:15
Nugent: Yeah, Lester D. Blankenship, B-L-A-N-K-E-N-S-H-I-P. He later became, by the way, assistant to the commissioner of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in Washington D.C, I believe.

04-00:17:35
Pelka: Okay. And then Dr. Riscaglia.

04-00:17:39
Nugent: Renzaglia. It's Dr. Guy, G-U-Y, R-E-N-Z-A-G-L-I-A.

04-00:17:47
Pelka: Okay. Great.

04-00:17:49
Nugent: And he was not directly involved in the services. He was the head of the rehabilitation-counselor-training program under Public Law 565 at SIU. And I had gone down there for six or seven years as a lecturer and he and Les got together and developed a rehab program down at SIU. That is a service program, not a counseling program. [In the early to mid-sixties, several faculty and administrators from the University of Missouri spent about a week on campus viewing our efforts with the intent of replicating our efforts and in time they did.—TN]

04-00:18:32
Pelka: Okay. A couple of minutes ago you talked about somebody came and was there for functional training.

04-00:18:40
Nugent: Oh that was Jack Torrance, yes.

04-00:18:43
Pelka: Yeah, but wasn't there—and then decided to become a student. So it sounds like you had a program for disabled kids or disabled adults who would come in and learn stuff, you know, rehab—

04-00:18:56
Nugent: No, we didn't have a program per se, Fred, but because of what we were successful in accomplishing, people would come here and seek that. It wasn't an established program, but Jack was one of our prime examples, but we had

others who came during the summer or during hell week, as they called it, and for that reason only.

04-00:19:21
Pelka: Oh then—and you were able to accommodate them. I mean, people would just show up [chuckling] and there'd be folks who would take them around and—

04-00:19:29
Nugent: Well, they wouldn't just show up. They would either call us or write us first.

04-00:19:33
Pelka: Oh, I see, Okay. So it wasn't quite that informal, but still.

04-00:19:37
Nugent: No.

04-00:19:38
Pelka: Had you at that point any contact with Mary Switzer? Folks in Washington?

04-00:19:45
Nugent: Well, Mary Switzer at that time was director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in Washington, and I had contact with Mary Switzer from time to time. Not very strong because the, well, first of all, when some of the first grant laws came out like Public Law 565, we were declared ineligible because the interpretation of the law—this is just where bureaucracy enters in, and I don't hold Mary responsible for this, but she was the director—the interpretation of the law was to extend a service to some place where it did not exist.

04-00:20:26
Pelka: Aha.

04-00:20:29
Nugent: And to extend research to some place where it did not exist. Well, we *had* all those things already. We had transportation, we had sports, we had research, we had turned out masters and doctoral degrees, so we were ineligible! [chuckling] And that made me mad. And that's one of the ways I got acquainted with Mary Switzer, who was a wonderful person and who did one wonderful job. And I remember having dinner with her one time when things had leveled out and she looked at me, she said, "Tim, what next big thing are you going to try?" And I said, "I haven't gotten the first job done yet, Mary." [chuckling]

04-00:21:07
Pelka: Maybe you could talk a little bit about her. If you could just describe her a little bit, or do you have any particular memories that stand out in your mind about Mary Switzer?

04-00:21:20
Nugent: Well, she was a very stately person, I can say that. She presented herself very well, I thought. As I say, my association with her was not consistent or persistent—it was occasional. And that's about all I can say is that I know she did a good job. I know she was highly respected and she always presented herself very well.

04-00:21:51
Pelka: Okay. Talking about the philosophy of the program. I don't know if you've thought of it in these terms or not, or how you thought of it, but—was the program considered primarily educational? Rehabilitation? Mixture of both? When you thought about what this was that you were creating there, how did you think—in what terms did you think of it?

04-00:22:21
Nugent: I thought of it in all those terms. In fact, that's why our program is called rehabilitation education services, and that's why the center is called Rehabilitation Education Center because my feeling was that the tools we use in rehabilitation and in education beyond the medical are exactly the same, but in rehabilitation there's greater emphasis on the needs of the individual. Do you follow me?

04-00:22:52
Pelka: Yeah.

04-00:22:56
Nugent: So it took me a long time to get the university to accept that terminology. In fact, they fought it for years, but eventually we won our battle and that's why it's called that.

04-00:23:07
Pelka: Yes, Okay. How are you doing now in terms of time and energy?

04-00:23:12
Nugent: I'm Okay. Energy—I didn't have any when we started!

04-00:23:16
Pelka: [chuckling] Okay. I want to—again, I really want to focus in on some details here. Let's go back a bit. Let's say I'm a disabled, I'm a disabled student. It's 1951, 1952—I hear about your program, I apply to enter the university, I get accepted, I show up on campus. Walk me through that. What are the first things that would happen when a student with a disability would show up?

04-00:23:53
Nugent: Well, I'm going to have to take you back a little further first. After we started getting a lot of applications, some cowardly administrators put a limit on the number of students that we could have on campus.

04-00:24:07
Pelka: Oh! Okay.

04-00:24:08
Nugent: And at that time the limit was ninety. And that included all of the permanent disabilities. And there was a period of time that for every one I accepted, I had to refuse fifteen. And at that time I was getting letters from clergymen, medical doctors, school superintendents, congressmen, Al [Alan J.] Dixon, senator from Illinois—he was a state senator, then a U.S. senator—and others were just raking me over the coals because one of their constituents couldn't get in. And I was literally going through hell at that time. And so that it wasn't an either-or-thing. So what happened, the university established the policy that there would be an inquiry on the application blank—Do you have a disability?—and then the records would be referred to my office. So I entered into the approval of all the admissions at that time and that went on for a number of years until the new laws started coming into effect.

04-00:25:20
Pelka: Now when you say approval of all the admissions, you mean all the admissions of students with—

04-00:25:26
Nugent: Disabilities.

04-00:25:27
Pelka: Okay. And who else was involved in that process? Or was there, I mean, obviously you had to apply academically. So these students had to—

04-00:25:39
Nugent: Oh yeah, well, the Office of Admissions would determine the academic admissibility and—

04-00:25:43
Pelka: Right—and then—

04-00:25:44
Nugent: —they were referred to me.

04-00:25:45
Pelka: Okay. And then was there anybody else besides you who was making these decisions?

04-00:25:50
Nugent: No, but occasionally I would call one of our medical consultants to inquire about this or that or the other thing. Or I would maybe call the parents and ask them a question or two about the person. It wasn't a simple one-item deal, you know, we looked into everything and we also required a personal visit because I used to get some letters where the parents depicted this person as being unable to do anything. And when I got them down here, they could do just about everything. I had one parent actually bring a student down, and in my office, the student fought to come to the University of Illinois, and in my office I heard the mother say to the father, "I don't know why we're wasting this money. He's going to die before he gets through the first year anyway."

04-00:26:47
Pelka: Oh, my gosh.

04-00:26:47
Nugent: Now that's an actual quote and I've had other situations equally as bad, so we had them have a personal visit and then we would put them through some functional evaluations and some functional training, and then we even had a functional week that started a week or two before the semester started, where we could devote all of our energies. My whole staff, twenty-four hours a day, would work with them to become physically independent, to learn how to transfer from a chair to a toilet stool and back again. To learn how to handle bowel management. To learn how to dress and undress and all this kind of stuff. It was called functional training. They called it hell. In fact this young lady that just wrote to me refers to it. [chuckling] So and then of course, we had a week-long orientation, where we would take them about the campus and show them the entrances and the pathways from this place to that place and the bus stops and things like that and people with vision would lead the blind around campus to orient them to campus so that they could function independently once school started. And this was all done before classes so that it did not interfere with the time that they would have to spend with studies.

04-00:28:19
Pelka: Okay. Once classes began, was there follow up?

04-00:28:23
Nugent: Oh yes, definitely. In fact, our center has its own therapy clinic, a very well-equipped therapy clinic. It has its own counseling services, had its own prosthetic services, had its own wheelchair and prosthetic repair services, and services for the blind. Now, in recent years we have a high-level PhD who does nothing but work on technology, on computers with the blind and deaf and others. And of course we had recreation and athletics. In fact, that had its beginning here.

04-00:28:58
Pelka: When you say, "we," at this point, again, we're talking to the mid-fifties, how large a staff did you have?

04-00:29:08
Nugent: Well, [chuckling] in 1956 I hired my first full-time staff member. And my budget at that time, I think, was about $9,000 a year for everything.

04-00:29:19
Pelka: Wow. So how many, just out of—how many hours a week were you working at this time?

04-00:29:26
Nugent: Well, the first two years I slept in my office building, literally.

04-00:29:31
Pelka: Okay. And were you married at this time? And starting a—

04-00:29:37
Nugent: Yes, but that lasted about one year [chuckling].

04-00:29:39
Pelka: Okay. So this kind of impacted your family life, then, I would imagine.

04-00:29:43
Nugent: It did.

04-00:29:44
Pelka: So, okay. A couple more kind of technical, demographic questions here. You mentioned at one point that you had a student who came in as a freshman at age forty-four, forty-five, something like that. What was the general age breakdown? Was it mostly younger people with a few older people? Or—

04-00:30:10
Nugent: Well, in the beginning the admission age was much higher, because first of all, it was veterans. Some of the veterans maybe didn't go to college after they graduated from high school. They worked. During the Depression, many people worked before they even started college whether they were veterans or not. And so, of course, then after service they were much older. Harold Scharper, my first wheelchair student, was thirty-four years old. I was in my twenties. [chuckles] And periodically we'd get students who either didn't know about the opportunities that existed or were confined unrealistically and they would come in and they'd be thirty-three years old. Our program was in its fourteenth year when I had a student come to me at the ago of thirty-three who had never been in a grade school or high school. So you know, it varied. But eventually it leveled out and the majority was normal college age.

04-00:31:31
Pelka: Yeah. But like you say, at that time in the late forties with the GI bill and the Depression and the war, even in the non-disabled population, there were a lot of older people.

04-00:31:45
Nugent: Definitely.

04-00:31:45
Pelka: Going to college. What about the breakdown in terms of male/female. Was it fifty-fifty? Mostly men?

04-00:31:55
Nugent: You mean in our program?

04-00:31:56
Pelka: Yeah.

04-00:31:57
Nugent: Oh, definitely not—the males definitely dominated in the beginning. Shirley Sayers and oh golly, Joan—she became Joan Wise, Joan Wall and a bilateral leg amputee and Lula Jean Kussart and, oh, there were several others that

were non-veteran females that were our students, but they were definitely a minority.

04-00:32:32
Pelka: And was that—do you think, primarily because it was, at the beginning at any rate, it was primarily a veterans program? Or was it just the way things were, or both?

04-00:32:43
Nugent: No, it was a lot of things. It was first an attitudinal thing. In other words, well, yeah, that's all right for the fellows but it's not going to work for the girls. That was the expression I heard. Another thing was a very practical thing. You know a lot of the fellows and gals had to wear leg urinals and things like that back in those days, which were not as refined as they are today. And a fellow would wear long pants and that would conceal it. And a fellow could grab his pants with his good hand and throw his leg over the other leg, or throw his leg over a chair. A woman couldn't do that in those days. Slacks were not popular in those days for women. Do you know what I mean?

04-00:33:34
Pelka: Yeah.

04-00:33:35
Nugent: So part of it was social mores. People think there's one cause or another cause, but all these things contribute to how things were and how they developed, Fred. And part of it was social mores, part of it was attitudes. Part of it was doubts on the part of people.

04-00:34:01
Pelka: Yes. Let me pause again here. [pause to change tape] How about the racial breakdown? It was an integrated campus in Illinois, I'm assuming.

04-00:34:19
Nugent: Yes.

04-00:34:21
Pelka: Do you have a sense as to the proportion of people of color versus white people in the program at that time?

04-00:34:28
Nugent: No, I don't. But like most campuses in that day, the black population was definitely a minority population, although there was no willful effort on the part of the university not to have them here. In fact we hired deans of students that were black purposely to encourage black enrollment back in the very early years.

04-00:34:56
Pelka: Yes. Okay. You said something earlier that kind of piqued my curiosity. You talked about a student coming in who was thirty-four and here you were in your late twenties. I guess there are a couple of questions I want to ask about

that. Now traditionally, college is often a time when young people have—it's their first time away from home for many people. It's a chance to kind of go wild for a while, if you know what I mean, you know—dorm parties and stuff like that. What was that like for students with disabilities?

04-00:35:35
Nugent: It was the same. [chuckling]

04-00:35:37
Pelka: Okay.

04-00:35:38
Nugent: I can tell you two stories that might give you an example. First of all, the American Legion here in town would have a stag show at least once a year. And it was a very bold stag show. And they would come out and put posters on the bulletin boards in my office and in my therapy rooms and invite the veterans. Well, that was okay, but then pretty soon I had a lot of non-veterans, and I had—I couldn't say to one guy, particularly if they're almost the same age, that—or well, no, they'd be minors, most of the non- veterans, "You're man enough to go and you're not man enough to go." So I eventually had to tell the American Legion, "Do not post this stuff on my bulletin boards. If you know the veterans, you can send them a personal notice, but do not make it a group invitation." So that was one of the experiences we had. And those were some pretty wild parties.

Another experience I had, and it's much years later, a young fellow came to us and he was, I would guess, just turning seventeen at the time, very seriously disabled and because he hadn't been treated properly and had no rehabilitation, his body was very badly disfigured and he had an air about him that was not pleasant, you know what I mean? His appearance and whatnot, the way the clothes fit him, even if he tried to look good, he couldn't. And all of a sudden I found out that he was going out with the older fellows and really drinking it up. So I called him into the office one day and I said to him, I said, I'm going to use a fake name, "Mack—I understand you've been going out and doing a lot of drinking up on campus town or whatnot." He said, "Well, yeah." I said, "You are underage aren't you?" I think the law at that time was twenty-one. "Yeah." And I said, "Well, haven't they ever carded you?" He says, "Oh yeah." He says, "They have." I said, "And you're still allowed to drink?" And he said, "Well," he said, "Professor Nugent, my ID is in my back pocket and none of them wanted to go back there to find it." And that was his answer! [chuckles] His body was just disfigured and I think he had some odor about him as well and I don't say this disrespectfully. It was an unfortunate set of circumstances that he had never been taken care of properly. But he was a young person that I had to reprimand because they were afraid to card him.

And I had others that got in trouble. I even had a situation once where one of the fellows got drunk in a wheelchair and threw a bottle through the police station window and almost killed an officer sitting at a desk. So, they were

kids. Once they got on the campus they—many of the things they did, they probably would have done as able-bodied people and you know, to assume that they were that different is wrong. They were different because the environment forced them to be different, but once they got into a normal environment and had normal opportunities, they became normal people who just had to do things differently. And I feel the same way about sports. These guys are great athletes. The only thing is they have to play it differently.

04-00:39:33
Pelka: Yes. Was there a feeling of camaraderie among the students there? Did disabled students hang out together? Or—

04-00:39:44
Nugent: Well, they hung out together and they had their own fraternity and they had their own sports team, but that did not limit them from going out with able-bodied people and socializing and whatever else.

04-00:39:56
Pelka: Yes. And what's interesting about that is that I've—you know, I've interviewed a lot of people. And I've interviewed a lot of disabled people and there—for some people there is a tendency, and I've heard this many, many times—particularly people who grow up isolated from other disabled people. They don't want to be associated with other—they go through a phase where they don't want to be with other disabled people. They don't want to be one of them, if you know what I mean. So they—

04-00:40:27
Nugent: Yeah, I've experienced that many times.

04-00:40:30
Pelka: And so, they don't want to be a part of a disability organization because they don't want to be associated with those folks, and I was wondering if you ran into that in your experience back then.

04-00:40:41
Nugent: Oh yes, I did, more than once. In fact, I—you remind me of a very particular case of a young lady who was disabled, ambulatory with braces and crunches, and of course, the admission policy required that she come through my office for approval for admission, et cetera. And her mother objected vigorously, and it took me a long time to say, "Look, she's going to live over there in Lincoln Hall. She can associate with whomever she wants to associate. If she needs certain services, we're here to offer them, but there's no requirement." Well, finally the mother let her come to school. Guess what. This young lady married a fellow in a wheelchair and this young lady became the director of rehabilitation in the state of Illinois. [chuckles] Now how's that for a changeover!

Now I don't say this critically, but I'm just giving you a tangible example of the parents' attitude and how once they got here they realized it wasn't at *all*

like the parents made them think. And there's only one way to do that and that's through association. I've said it in my lectures many, many times—that when we are prejudiced against something, it's usually because our lack of association with that something and that understanding and familiarity and a lack of prejudice comes through association with the people, whether they're black or red or disabled or whatever. And that's one of my basic philosophical tenets.

And the idea on campus was they all had a chance to associate with whomever they wanted and many times their selection was just the opposite of what everybody would have predicted. Ninety percent of my wheelchair people married able-bodied men and women. But some are married to other disabled people, and I can't tell the difference in the successes of either one. I wish that I would have been as good parents as some of my wheelchair couples were.

04-00:43:11
Pelka: Yeah. Looking at—going back to the demographics again, just one final question on that, in terms of the class. If you're talking about veterans, I mean, it seems as though you'd have a wider range of backgrounds of people than perhaps the usual freshman student group, if you know what I mean. Veterans coming from all—

04-00:43:39
Nugent: They had more experiences in life before becoming disabled.

04-00:43:41
Pelka: Right. Was that the case? That's my kind of supposition, but I don't know if—

04-00:43:47
Nugent: That's what I was pointing out before. That they had many experiences before their disability that they could relate to with the experiences they were having since their disability. Where the non-veterans and those disabled early in life did not have that opportunity.

04-00:44:05
Pelka: Yeah. And in terms of—in terms of background, you had folks there that were working-class, lower class, lower-middle class—all different backgrounds. Is that the case? Or not.

04-00:44:18
Nugent: Oh very definitely. I had some come from the farm. One of the people I described a while back who was so successful dropped out of high school at the end of his sophomore year, enlisted in service, came out of service, and then was in an auto accident and became disabled. So he's a non-service-connected veteran without a high school diploma. I worked with him through special courses and through G.E.D. qualification, he got in the college and turned out to be a great success. In fact I described him to you earlier but I won't identify him.

04-00:45:02
Pelka: Okay. Were there disagreements some[times]? I imagine there would be disagreements and personality clashes between people in the program. How were those resolved?

04-00:45:18
Nugent: Well, there definitely were people who would disagree on certain issues whether related to the program or whether related to social life or academics or whatever. And most of the time it resolved itself the way it would resolve itself in any other situation. Other times it required the intervention of a third party. Quite often when it happened with our students I would have another one of our students—I would counsel them and they would then enter in to help and resolve the problem. Sometimes we'd refer them to one of our counselors. There was no one way, but we had all different ways of resolving these and there would be at times conflicts between an able-bodied and a disabled person. And we'd treat that the same way.

04-00:46:12
Pelka: Yes. And these would be conflicts over housing, roommate problems, stuff like that. Or—

04-00:46:21
Nugent: I'm sorry, I didn't understand.

04-00:46:23
Pelka: I mean, when we're talking about these kinds of conflicts, these are the general college kinds of conflicts. Roommates not liking each other, things like that, or were there other issues that you recall.

04-00:46:38
Nugent: Oh there were issues of a heterosexual nature from time to time. I think I identified one of them earlier when the two wheelchair guys were using the—one that had the car to take the same girl out, and there were issues like that. As I say, once they got on campus and had all these opportunities, their actions and their responses were like the general public.

04-00:47:05
Pelka: How much input did the disabled students themselves have in the development of the program. Was there a standard mechanism where you met periodically to say—

04-00:47:19
Nugent: Yes, we met regularly and of course my office door was always open, but most of the meetings were through Delta Sigma Omicron. That was their rehabilitation service fraternity. Their purpose was "to further advance the research, the education, and employment of people with disabilities", so they were very involved, and we started publishing *Sigma Signs* back in 1950.

04-00:47:49
Pelka: Okay. Do you remember specific instances of a student coming to you or to someone and saying, “I’ve got this idea. Let’s do it this way instead of that way.”

04-00:48:01
Nugent: Oh I had that many times, and I encouraged it. And many times they had good ideas. Many times they had foolish ideas, but at any cost I encouraged it, and one of my young staff people who was an able-bodied student of mine from his freshman year through his bachelor’s degree then went up to medical college to get his certification in OT and became a supervisor at a state hospital, came back to me as a grad student and eventually became an assistant professor on my staff—he always looked at me and he said, “Tim, you keep getting crazy ideas and I’ll find a way to make them work.” It was an attitudinal thing. We discussed all these things and a lot of times some of my own students would look at me and say, “You’re nuts!” [chuckling] And I would agree with them.

04-00:49:01
Pelka: Okay. You’ve talked a couple of times about counselors. Were these volunteer counselors?

04-00:49:06
Nugent: Oh no. They were professionally trained counselors.

04-00:49:08
Pelka: Okay.

04-00:49:09
Nugent: And eventually I had all those services on my own budget. For a while I was using volunteer counselors but they were professional counselors but who volunteered their time with us.

04-00:49:21
Pelka: Okay. And these were psychologists or—

04-00:49:24
Nugent: Or rehab counselors, or just general educational counselors—academic counselors. A lot of times they were assistant deans of the different colleges whose responsibility was to counsel students in that college.

04-00:49:44
Pelka: You’ve talked a couple of times now about interactions with parents of students. Were you—a specific question first, I guess: were you at all involved, or have any contact with organizations of parents, like UCP, you know, Muscular Dystrophy Association—anything like that?

04-00:50:09
Nugent: Oh yes. In various ways and in various degrees, in fact, back in 1956 I was director of adult programs for cerebral palsy in the state of Illinois under

UCPA and I worked with MDA and MS groups from time to time. I can't say that I had any particular role or influence on them except that I was director of the UCP adult program in the summers in Illinois.

04-00:50:44
Pelka: Okay. Now this was in 1956?

04-00:50:47
Nugent: Yeah, well '56, '57—I think '58. I think I did that for three years, I think.

04-00:50:53
Pelka: Okay. That's pretty early on for UCP, which was, the national UCP was organized in what, '49, '50?

04-00:51:01
Nugent: I don't really know.

04-00:51:02
Pelka: I think it was—

04-00:51:05
Nugent: It was a relatively new organization by—compared with Easter Seals and some of the others.

04-00:51:10
Pelka: Right, right. Who did you work with at UCP at that time? Do you remember?

04-00:51:14
Nugent: Oh I remember him quite well but I'm having trouble thinking of his name now, but he became the director of UCPA in New York, for the entire state of New York later. He was director here in Illinois at the time and of course I worked with all their committee people but I can't recite their names.

04-00:51:35
Pelka: And these were primarily parents, right? Or—

04-00:51:39
Nugent: [very faintly] Yes.

04-00:51:39
Pelka: Okay, because there was a—particularly at the beginning UCP was very much a, my impression seems to be, very much a more grass-roots parents organization.

04-00:51:50
Nugent: It definitely was. In fact, the parents did most of the decision-making and whatnot. In fact, this is an aside—the first year that I accepted the position of director of summer programs for the United Cerebral Palsy Association, I picked my own staff. I picked one athlete who was about 6'4" and I said whether you like it or not, you're going to lead the community singing,

because when these young people see you, a big healthy athlete doing it, they're not going to feel reluctant.

One of the professors in the college became a member of my staff. A couple of other professors did, and we put together a program, and the first time I met with the board of UCPA they had a program outlined and on that program they said, "Well, on Wednesdays we'll dress them up in their formals and shi GMC 3102 regular transit buses rts and ties and we'll have this party." And after they discussed that for a while I just looked at them and I said, "Folks—you hired the wrong director. There's no way that I'm going to direct a summer program, a camp program, where that kind of stuff is going to go on." And boy, we had a knockdown affair and they finally agreed with me.

Well, some of those kids learned things that they had never even thought of before. The only problem we had is at the end of the first week we had parents day and on the Monday following I had to start all over again. Because the parents still persisted in their concept of what the kids could and could not do. But one of the students, he had never been in grade school or high school before, he was thirty-three years old at the time, came to the University of Illinois and was a big success.

04-00:53:47
Pelka: How had he been educated? He must have passed the academic requirements to be admitted, so—

04-00:53:55
Nugent: Well, we had testing programs for that, and incidentally, I hate to say this, but his father was a professor of special education at another university. And yet he'd never been in school. And you'd be surprised—at one time I had offspring of twelve medical doctors and none of them had had normal schooling. And when I noticed this, I thought this was funny—I thought, I'm going to study this a little bit, so I spent some time studying it and what evolved was that all of them had social—well, I think the socio-psychological problems came into being first, and that's what made me start looking at it, and that's how I discovered they were all offspring of medical doctors or professors. And one of the things I found out—some of the parents wouldn't discuss it with me but a lot of them did, and in essence they said, "We were afraid that when we were treating people, counseling or treating people, the fact that we couldn't do anything for our son or daughter would reflect poorly upon us." Now that's fact. And one of these came from New York.

04-00:55:18
Pelka: Wow. Okay.

04-00:55:20
Nugent: So there was a lot of variety in the things we experienced.

04-00:55:24
Pelka: Yeah, yeah. I want to throw another name at you and ask if at this point you had had any contact with her, and that's "Gini" [Virginia Grace Wilson] Laurie.

04-00:55:35
Nugent: Oh, Gini Laurie, yes, we were good friends—from Springfield? And then she was at St. Louis.

04-00:55:44
Pelka: St. Louis.

04-00:55:44
Nugent: Yeah. Oh yes, Gini Laurie, and she started a program and published a magazine on polio. Gini was a very vibrant person. So was her husband, although he's much heavier, not quite as vibrant [chuckles], and yeah, we got together from time to time and she did some, I think—the publication, I know the name but I can't think of it.

04-00:56:14
Pelka: Well, it was—it's *Rehabilitation Gazette* now, and then it was *Toomeyville Gazette* before then.

04-00:56:23
Nugent: *Toomeyville Gazette* before that, yeah. In fact, one time my son and I were driving through St. Louis, just, we were out there together for the weekend and we were driving through this old residential area and I said, "Stop, Tracy, stop! I know that lady!" And it was Gini Laurie, and so Gini invited us into her house and we had a cocktail or two in there and visited. It was a shame that she passed away when she did.

04-00:56:48
Pelka: Yeah. When did you meet her? Do you remember?

04-00:56:52
Nugent: Oh it goes way back, years, Fred, I'd be afraid to guess. I would guess it was in the early fifties but I don't really know.

04-00:57:03
Pelka: Okay. And—but she was then definitely aware of your program.

04-00:57:09
Nugent: Oh yes.

04-00:57:12
Pelka: Okay. Well, the next thing I want to start talking to you about is the athletic component of this, which is a huge part, but I'm wondering whether we should start doing that now or whether we should break at this point, because I imagine that's going to take another hour or two.

04-00:57:34
Nugent: Oh I could talk about that for three weeks! [chuckling]

04-00:57:37
Pelka: Yeah. So I'm wondering whether this is—

04-00:57:39
Nugent: I could talk about accessibility for three weeks! I could talk about athletics for three weeks.

04-00:57:44
Pelka: Yeah. So—because what I've done is I've sort of come to the end of the segment on, at this point, the early days of Galesburg and Champaign and now I want to get into, start into the athletics part, so—

04-00:57:56
Nugent: Let me ask this—will I get copies of these tapes?

04-00:57:59
Pelka: Oh yeah—do you want the tapes or the transcripts?

04-00:58:01
Nugent: Oh either one.

04-00:58:02
Pelka: Okay. Well, we'll definitely send you copies of the transcripts.

04-00:58:05
Nugent: I'll tell you one reason I ask. I told the dean of the college—I had dinner with the dean of the college last night and she said, "Oh I hope we get copies of that." And I said, "Okay."

04-00:58:16
Pelka: Well generally the way it works is that these things are going to be transcribed, and then you will see the transcriptions, because what we're hoping is that you'll go through them and see if we've made any major mistakes in transcribing them.

04-00:58:30
Nugent: Oh and if you had I'm going to go to court and sue you! [chuckling]

04-00:58:33
Pelka: Yeah, well, so—so you'll definitely see something. It may take a while because these things take some time.

04-00:58:42
Nugent: Oh I appreciate that.

04-00:58:44
Pelka: Okay. Do you want to break right now and maybe we can—

04-00:58:49
Nugent: I think that would be good because my ear is getting a little sore.

04-00:58:51
Pelka: Yeah, yeah. Do you want to set up another time?

04-00:58:54
Nugent: Well, I don't have my master calendar here. Let me go in the other. I'm in my office, which is attached to the house. Let me go into the house and see if the master calendar shows a logical time.

04-00:59:12
Pelka: Okay. And I'm going to turn the tape off now.

Interview 3: 08-17-2004
Begin Audiofile 5 08-17-04.mp3

05-00:00:01
Pelka: Okay. This is an interview with Timothy Nugent on August 17, 2004. This is interview number 3, I believe, tape number 5, side A. Was there anything from the last session that stuck out in your mind that you wanted to add or correct or anything like that?

05-00:00:24
Nugent: No, because I don't have that good a memory.

05-00:00:26
Pelka: Okay. No problem. Okay. What happened on the 13th was we had finished up a lot of material and we were beginning to talk about the role of athletes and wheelchair sports in the context of the work that you were doing. So maybe you could begin by talking about the beginnings of wheelchair athletics. I gather we're going to go backwards now. We were talking about the mid-fifties, getting into the sixties. Now we're going to go back again to the forties. But if you could begin to talk about your first experiences with wheelchair athletics that would be great.

05-00:01:07
Nugent: Well, I can answer that inquiry several ways. Having grown up during the Depression, and having both played and coached during those Depression years at all levels, I had a sense of appreciation for the role that meaningful sport can play in the life of an individual, and I've often said if it hadn't been for sports and my church, I never would have made it past my teens. That's one perspective.

The other perspective is that hearing someone like myself talk about a problem or about its solution is somewhat weak as compared to having an exhibition of what I'm talking about. You can't talk about a people's psychological problems, you can't talk about their emotional problems, their bowel problems, their bladder problems, except in a clinical setting and in a clinical sense. And you cannot relate these things to the normalcy of living and achievement.

So I've often said that of all the services that we had at the University of Illinois, and we had them all, that sports was the most significant and effective service for getting all of the other things that we wanted to do done—accessibility to buildings, accessibility to transportation, accessibility to education, and the breaking down of barriers, attitudinal barriers. The reason being is that the sports allowed us to project these people out into the public eye where they would be seen, and there were enough common denominators in our sports and sports for the able-bodied people that the general public could relate to these and come to understand and appreciate that these people had the same emotions, the same desires, the same skills although they may

go about it in a different way as all other people had and it developed a sense of appreciation for them as genuinely good athletes.

There were many times that our athletes were responsible for people that had been in the hospital for years and had been doing nothing and had intended to do nothing, but were able to come and see our group play or other wheelchair groups play and change their own attitude toward themselves. And I remember one boy at Chanute Air Force Base who had been there for over a year, I believe, longer, in bed most of the time, and they brought him to one of our tournament games on a gurney, and our fellows went over and visited with him when they weren't playing and so did other team members, and about six months later this young man wheeled into my office and he looked at me and he said, "You don't remember me, do you." I said, "Well, you look a little familiar, but no, I don't remember you." He says, "I'm the guy that was on that gurney at the game at Chanute Air Force Base and now I'm independent and I'm coming to school." Nothing else worked for him except seeing what these people were able to do. It changed the attitude and the concepts of the general public much more than a speech or a lecture or even a slide show would do.

05-00:04:48
Pelka: Yes. Was this conscious on your part and on the part of the beginning participants? Were you, did you—did you think of it in these terms? Or was this a theory that you developed later on?

05-00:05:02
Nugent: No, no. We thought of this in these terms. That's one of the reasons it was one of the first things I developed and pushed hard at because it did other things. For instance, why exercise in therapy if there's nothing to do with that arm or that shoulder or that trunk? Having sports of all sorts gave reason to work hard in therapy. One of the good reasons to work hard in therapy, not the only reason. And so, yes, we had that philosophy, that concept, from the very beginning, and also in the beginning when we had no budget, we authored a contract wherein 55percent of the net proceeds of any game we played in any city went to a benevolent cause in that city. And 45percent came back to help support our program. Well, that gave people a reason for doing it, because if they only made a dollar, they got fifty-five cents out of it. They wouldn't lose anything. And as a result, after about two or three years, we had to turn down requests to play. We had so many more requests to play than we could handle that we just had to turn them down, and in many instances, in later years, able to turn those requests over to other teams who would honor the same contract that we had set up. So it was a means of being of service. It was a means of getting them in front of the public eye where they would see these people as individuals and recognize they have the same emotions, the same desires, the same skills, the same attitudes that everybody in the grandstand had.

05-00:06:56
Pelka: Yes. Now what time period are we talking about. This is the mid—

05-00:07:01
Nugent: We're talking about '48, '49, '50, '51 and on. We did that on for several years and on many of our occasions we did demonstrations of how to go up and down steps in a wheelchair, of wheelchair square dancing, or wheelchair archery, of some of the stunts our kids did in wheelchairs. And we also took our singing groups with us—men and women who could play the guitar and sing so that between halves of our games, we tried hard to exhibit other talents and skills and abilities that these people had that were very easily understandable to the general public. And talking about them wouldn't do it.

05-00:07:47
Pelka: Yes. What were the venues for these events? This would be generally at colleges? At rehab. hospitals?

05-00:07:54
Nugent: No, no, no. Just the opposite. [chuckling] They were at—there were some at colleges, yes. There were some at high schools, yes. But generally they were, even when they were at high schools and colleges, they were more often than not sponsored by the Polio Foundation, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the cerebral palsy associations, disability groups. In some instances it was special education departments of school systems that sponsored the games and as I say, they received the bulk of the proceeds.

05-00:08:37
Pelka: Yes. So, I'm sorry, I'm still a little confused then—then the venues for these were mostly where? Where would the games mostly take place?

05-00:08:50
Nugent: You mean city-wise?

05-00:08:52
Pelka: In terms of, yes seeing where, are we talking about general arenas? Gymnasiums? Private clubs?

05-00:09:01
Nugent: [laughing] Well, we played on everything, including basketball courts that were built on the auditorium stage, which a lot of high schools had back in those days and I was always afraid that one of the guys was going to go off the stage so I always had a special arrangement to catch them. We played in some of the biggest arenas in the country like the—oh, I can't think of the name of it now, the arena in St. Louis where the St. Louis Hawks played. We played in the arena where the Milwaukee Bucks played back in those days they weren't called the Bucks, in fact they were the Hawks back then, in those days, I think. And we, in one instance, we played on a basketball floor in an armory that was built on top of a swimming pool and an hour and a half, or two hours after or game was over, the floor collapsed into the swimming pool! [chuckling]

05-00:09:52
Pelka: Oh boy!

05-00:09:54
Nugent: So—and we played in high school gyms and grade school gyms—you name it. [short technical problem] We were there because of the fact that we had to take what was available. What's available now was not available in those days.

05-00:10:09
Pelka: Yes. And who made the arrangements for the games? Was that you mostly or other people, or—

05-00:10:15
Nugent: No, I was head of the program, and people would write and ask questions or call and ask questions, and then I'd send them a copy of our contract, our agreements and they would, they'd let us know what they want to do and when.

05-00:10:27
Pelka: Okay. And who were the players? Were they mostly students, veterans—

05-00:10:33
Nugent: Ours were all students. Ours were all students. Now we played against—we played against professional teams. We played against college all-star teams from an area. We played against high school all-star teams in places like Sterling, Illinois, and other places. We played against the leading politicians of a community. You know, the local sponsor would try to get a team that they thought would attract attention and sell tickets for them. So we never knew for sure what the makeup of the team would be, but many times they were former high school all-stars from that community or college all-stars from that community. Many times they were political leaders from that community, and as I say, we did play against some pro teams.

05-00:11:25
Pelka: Yes. So these are students then from the University of Illinois. How—would there be tours that you would go on? Or weekend games? How would this be structured, time-wise?

05-00:11:38
Nugent: Well, if the game was near enough—for instance, if the game was in Matoon, Illinois, which is about thirty miles from here—it could have been any time during the week. The same with Monticello and Mahomet. We played games on various days during the week at places like that. Danville was another. If it was a trip that required a distance in travel, it had to be at a time that wouldn't interfere with the students' studies and their homework. And of course, in addition to that, we had a tour between semesters, every year, starting in 1949 and we would, some of those tours we'd travel seven and eight states. I can remember tours where we would play in St. Louis, in Kansas City, in Sioux Falls, Iowa and then we would go back down to Memphis and then we'd go to

Chattanooga and then we'd come back up home. We took some very long trips between semesters, because at that time, the break between semesters was about two-and-a-half weeks.

05-00:12:53
Pelka: Yes. And was this—did you travel mostly on bus, train, in vans.

05-00:13:00
Nugent: [chuckling] We started out traveling just in the cars that we had, that is, the veterans that had cars would load the other fellows in wheelchairs into them. Then when we got a little money in the bank, we maybe rented a trailer that carried the wheelchairs. Then a little later on we were fortunate enough to be able to get university station wagons and we traveled in a convoy of sometimes seven and eight station wagons. Players and cheerleaders and square dancers and their wheelchairs and whatnot. And then we were fortunate enough a few years later to have our own buses, and we traveled by bus. The first two buses we used for travel were really old wrecks. They were referred to as the Blue Bulls, Nugent's Folly, or How Dumb Can You Get? Because they broke down all the time, but the kids took it in stride and their attitude was one you just can't imagine today.

05-00:14:02
Pelka: Yes. And some of these trips then, must have been overnight trips. You would go out on the road and stay places overnight, is that right?

05-00:14:13
Nugent: Oh particularly on our tour between semesters when we'd be gone for eight or ten days. Other times, like for instance, we were out in Sterling, Illinois one time, and I remember that we stayed in Sterling, Illinois for three days and three nights and played games there and in nearby cities.

05-00:14:29
Pelka: What was it like arranging accommodations? Did you stay at hotels? Motels? Private homes?

05-00:14:38
Nugent: Most of the time we stayed at motels or hotels, and the accommodations in those years were not what you'd call good, but we always managed one way or the other. Fortunately there were some of the smaller motels that didn't have steps. They had ground level or near-ground level entrances—maybe a small step into the room. Other times we were guests of people in the community and in some instances, the kids liked that better because they got to know the people and the people got to know them. But there was never a common attitude toward that. One person would like being a guest in this home, another person would like not to be a guest in a home because of their own personal problems or techniques or whatever. But we did use all those means to accommodate what we were trying to get done.

05-00:15:35
Pelka: Okay. You mentioned, a little earlier, veterans, sort of in passing. I was just wondering what the role, if there was a role for the organized veterans organizations at the beginnings of this, PVA for example, or DVA [means DAV]—were they involved as organizations?

05-00:15:57
Nugent: What was the last one you gave?

05-00:15:58
Pelka: Disabled Veterans—DAV, DAV.

05-00:16:01
Nugent: Disabled American Veterans? Well, there was and there wasn't. First of all, wheelchair basketball really had its beginning because of certain energetic veterans in the veterans hospitals going down to the court and playing and then some organized teams occasionally could get a chance to play each other. They never ever met together as a tournament or anything like that, so that was a part of it. The—you know, I've kind of lost the question right there.

05-00:16:35
Pelka: Just the role of organized veterans groups.

05-00:16:38
Nugent: Of the organizations—well, in several areas, veterans groups also became the sponsors. In other words, the American Legion would sponsor a game in some of these communities—the Disabled American Veterans in Springfield did this. They did other things for our program that they sponsored. Veterans of Foreign Wars, I think, on occasion or two sponsored games. PVA was just having its beginning in those years. In fact, for the first few years, the net proceeds from our national tournaments went to the PVA and the National Paraplegia Foundation because in those years they were both broke [chuckling] like we were, except we had a means of generating a little bit of income.

05-00:17:24
Pelka: Okay. There was an overlap though. You talked about these folks being veterans, so a lot of the folks that you were talking about being involved in wheelchair basketball were, in fact, disabled veterans, even though they might not have been involved in any of these veterans organizations.

05-00:17:41
Nugent: Well, of course, I'm sure they were involved with the veterans organizations, particularly the spinal cord injuries. I'm sure a good number of them were part of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the National Paraplegia Foundation, because they were the beginning of it, but not all of them, because there were some people that didn't believe in organizations. Some people didn't think it was worth their time. You know there are all these different attitudes that prevail yet today in some of these groups. But there's no question, Harold Scharper, who was my first wheelchair student, was very active in the

beginning of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the National Paraplegia Foundation and until the day he died he was very enthusiastic about our playing games and giving the benefits to those two organizations.

05-00:18:31
Pelka: Yes. So there wasn't anyone that you recall who said, "We shouldn't be mixing politics and sports. I don't want to go out there with any kind of agenda to educate people. I just want to play."

05-00:18:44
Nugent: Whether or not some of the people felt that way, I really can't say. Nobody ever made that expression to me. But I know that what motivated them to play was that they wanted to play. But they all understood, at least all of my fellows understood, that they were doing it for reasons other than just playing.

05-00:19:05
Pelka: Yes. Now you talked a little bit before about your being a coach growing up and an athlete growing up. I want to go back to that. How did you personally become involved in organizing wheelchair sports? Do you recall when this idea came to you or how this began?

05-00:19:25
Nugent: Well, it came to me when I was at the Galesburg campus University of Illinois. The first year that I directed the program. During the fall I started a bowling league and we bowled in city bowling alleys. We played a little bit of tennis, but basketball had appeal because it involved more people and because it was a team sport, and there are certain built-in characteristics of a team sport that you can't achieve in other individual activities, and then I realized that there were a few other teams in the country and I thought, well, it'd be kind of nice to have a tournament. So I invited every team I could find. I invited Kansas City, which was the original hometown team in the country. I invited St. Louis, which didn't come. I invited Hannibal, Missouri. I invited Evansville, Indiana, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Then I was short one team, and so I called the Veterans Administration hospital in Chicago, and Ed O'Reilly was the director of recreation there and I said, "Ed, can you put a team together for me so I'll have at least six teams for this first tournament?" And Ed said, "Yeah, I think I can do that." And he did. [chuckling] I could tell you story after story about that one experience alone, but I won't.

05-00:20:55
Pelka: Yes. Was there any resistance to this from anyone? When you were playing at different locations, high schools or community groups. Did anyone come up and say, "We think you're crazy. We don't want you people here. You're going to wreck our court. Somebody is going to get injured and we're going to get sued." All the different things that people say sometimes.

05-00:21:18

Nugent: Oh yeah. Some of the things you mentioned were true. A lot of them thought we would damage the court, and, in effect, we did, with the original old wheelchairs. And a lot of them were afraid of the liability, neither of which ever amounted to anything. In the very first year that we played, I would help others develop pneumatic wheels, and we put pneumatic wheels with gray tires on our basketball chairs, because they wouldn't mark the floor, and we started putting guards on the foot platforms so they wouldn't mark the floor, and eventually that became a standard. That eliminated some of the concern about our marking up the floor. Even the University of Illinois wouldn't let us on their regular gym floors. When we first came to the university in Champaign, we had to go out to the armory in Urbana or the armory in Champaign to practice. We were never allowed to practice on any of our university gym floors in the beginning.

05-00:22:16

Pelka: Yes. I want to back up just a second. You talked about pneumatic tires. At that time most wheelchairs didn't have pneumatic tires.

05-00:22:23

Nugent: No. They had what we referred to as carbonized hard rubber tires. They were black and they marked the floor if you just tried to stop without a big force or anything—they would mark the floor. And you'd get off the floor and there would be black marks all over the floor. And of course if you didn't have a protection on the foot platform, if someone fell forward or leaned forward, it would scratch the floor. But we got over that after just a few years and we were then permitted to use university facilities and still are. But that was a concern—the floors. Now when you talk about attitudes, I remember two distinct attitudes that prevailed. I remember people saying to me, "I'm sure these kids can play, but gosh, in wheelchairs they couldn't be any good, so I'm not going to spend any money to see them play." The other attitude was, "Well, there's just no way that they could be any good. Or even if they are good, I couldn't stand to see them play." In other words, they thought that seeing someone in a wheelchair out there would be depressing to them. And those are two common, or you might even say, three common responses we had in our earlier years, but we were able to overcome them with our exhibition games.

05-00:23:45

Pelka: Did anyone object to it, to put it crudely, did anyone say, "This is a freak show you're running here. This is like a circus, or something." This is demeaning to people." Or—

05-00:23:57

Nugent: Oh yeah. In fact I had people say, in fact some of them put it in writing in local newspapers or in our own paper here that these people should be left alone. They were happy when they were left alone by themselves at home.

People—that's not a specific quote, but in meaning, in connotation it is an actual quote, that more than one group of people made.

05-00:24:23
Pelka: Were there any people with disabilities or disability groups at that time that offered that kind of resistance?

05-00:24:31
Nugent: Yeah, there were some, but it was—I don't know how to describe it, it was just an attitude that some people hate change. I mean—this isn't just typical of the people with disabilities—people, all people—they originally oppose change until they come to understand it or until it proves its worth. So many of the phenomena that we experienced in our early years are common phenomena, except they would involve our people.

05-00:25:05
Pelka: Yes. Now pursuing this line a little bit—I remember talking to Paul Longmore. Do you know Paul Longmore? He's a [professor of American history at San Francisco State].

05-00:25:20
Nugent: I think I've met him but I can't say that I know him.

05-00:25:22
Pelka: He's a historian and he did a lot of work on this group called the League of the Physically Handicapped in the 1930s. And he said one of the huge issues that this group faced was simply getting people with disabilities—the group would do things like it would throw picket lines up at places that wouldn't hire disabled workers in the WPA—

05-00:25:45
Nugent: And what years were these?

05-00:25:46
Pelka: This is in the 1930s.

05-00:25:47
Nugent: Oh no, no. He's way off base there. I don't remember anything like that in the 1930s. In fact I don't remember anything like that until about the fifties or late fifties.

05-00:26:01
Pelka: This is—it was a New York City group. It was a fairly local group that he—

05-00:26:08
Nugent: Yeah but I think the years he has is wrong.

05-00:26:10
Pelka: Well, at any rate—

05-00:26:11
Nugent: I can't prove it, I can't argue the point with him, but—the number of disabled people, first of all, they weren't really together or organized in those days. So I doubt that very much,and we played two of our early tournaments in New York and it was a sensational thing in New York at the time.

05-00:26:31
Pelka: But the point I was going to make was that he talks about how one of the problems the group had in getting people, for instance, with disabilities, to be on picket lines or to do rallies or such, is that many people with disabilities felt self-conscious about being in public, about going out and drawing attention to themselves, and I was wondering if that was an attitude that you ran into in these early days of wheelchair sports.

05-00:27:00
Nugent: Oh definitely. In fact if you read any of my articles or anything, you'd see that I said that so far as those with disabilities were concerned, it helped to overcome self-consciousness and it helped to develop self-confidence on the part of the individual with a disability. When they went out on the floor and pretty soon—sometimes when we started a basketball game in a certain city we hadn't been in before it was as still as in church, just as quiet as in church, and then maybe about the middle of the second quarter, people started letting loose, and by the end of the game they were shouting and cheering and applauding the people. They had to wait to see what was going to happen. They were unsure of what they'd even come to see and the attitudes of people varied greatly from they can't be any good to they're not worth seeing. And the fellows themselves reflected some of that.

05-00:28:03
Pelka: Okay. I was reading something by, and I'm not sure I can pronounce the name, but it's Horst Strohkendl.

05-00:28:13
Nugent: Horst Strohkendl is a PhD in Germany. He's very active in the sports movement in Germany. He also was active in the international picture, and we're good friends.

05-00:28:22
Pelka: Oh great. Well, he writes about demonstration games that were played at Madison Square Garden, for instance, in 1948 at Cushing Hospital in Massachusetts. Were you aware of those things? What kind of contacts—was this a very—I guess what I'm getting at is, was this a very close-knit kind of organizing that you're talking about?

05-00:28:44
Nugent: No. That was at the initiative of the Cushing Memorial—VA hospital there. There's still a controversy and I don't intend to try to settle it, but there are people that claim that the first group of veterans to play wheelchair basketball were at Cushing veterans hospital. There's another group that claims that the

first group was at Van Nuys VA hospital, which turned out to be Long Beach VA hospital many years later. They're in California. And to this day they still argue about it. "Tip" [Armand] Thiboutot was with the Cushing [VA hospital in Framingham, Massachusetts], or is from that area, and he has evidence that he says proves that they were the first. The California group has evidence that they claim proves they were the first, and they've sent it all to me, but I don't know and I don't think that's that important. Because they each—they didn't even play by the same rules. You know what I mean? They made up their rules and played and each contributed to that area without a doubt they were terrific and adventurous people and they did a good job. And the tournament in New York at Madison Square Garden is where one of our truly outstanding players, he's now deceased for many years now, was first recognized, and right now I'm having a difficulty remembering his name, but he was without a doubt he's one of our early Hall of Fame inductees. [Jack Gerhardt.]

05-00:30:18
Pelka: Hold on just a moment we're running out of this side of the tape here so let me. [interruption] This is tape number five, side B. So it sounds as though what was happening in the mid 1940s was that this was—the wheelchair sports movement, if you want to call it that, was springing up in different parts of the country almost simultaneously. It seems in retrospect almost spontaneous, although that probably wasn't the case. Maybe you could talk a little bit about who the major people, who were the major people involved in starting this and your connection with them.

05-00:31:04
Nugent: Well, I can't think of the therapist at Cushing right now, but at Van Nuys it was Bob—oh forgive me for having an eighty-two-year-old memory, but just let me see if I can find one of my major references with all of these things listed. Oh, my goodness gracious, where am I here. Here, let me get something here. Rynearson. I knew it was Bob.

05-00:31:50
Pelka: Bob—could you spell that?

05-00:31:53
Nugent: Robert Rynearson, R-Y-N-E-A-R-S-O-N and it was at the, well, it was the California chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America that officially identified with that and then the other group was the Halloran and Cushing veterans hospitals. I'm trying to see if I can find the name associated with that, but I can't in what I have here. But both made, and of course leaders in the community, Kansas City was the first hometown team and I credit a lot of that to some of the veterans groups in the Kansas City area. Minneapolis—Minnesota was also one of the early hometown teams. They came much later. Then of course Hannibal, Missouri, was sponsored by the Disabled American Veterans if I remember correctly.

05-00:33:07
Pelka: Do you know when the Kansas City team was organized?

05-00:33:13
Nugent: In ’48, ’49. Let me see if I can find a specific date here.

05-00:33:37
Pelka: Again—this is all a matter of record, so there are places people can go to find these specifics. I was just curious.

05-00:33:45
Nugent: Yeah, I suppose so, but I’ll tell you a lot of the stuff that has been written has been erroneous just because somebody wanted to write something. In fact, one of our own alumni wrote a big article and had our program starting six years later than it did.

05-00:33:58
Pelka: Oh. Okay.

05-00:33:58
Nugent: Just because she had a chance to get something published. So unfortunately that does happen. [Kansas City Pioneers, Minneapolis Rolling Gophers, Chicago Cats, Evansville, Indiana Rockets, Hannibal, Missouri Rockets, and University of Illinois Gizz Kids were the first teams in the national tournament.—TN]

05-00:34:38
Pelka: Now obviously the primary goal of the activity was sports—we were talking about this a little bit earlier—but I imagine that one of the things that happened almost inevitably was that you’re getting this number of people with disabilities together in teams for whatever reason and folks are going to start talking about their experiences, their problems, their solutions. Was that the case? Did people begin to socialize outside of the context of the team and the gymnasium and the events in particular?

05-00:35:13
Nugent: Oh very definitely. Particularly here, because here they were in regular residence halls. Here they had able-bodied roommates. Here they attended all regular classes, so being a part of the Illinois Gizz Kids was like an able-bodied student being a part of the varsity basketball team. But that didn’t take them out of everything else that existed on campus. And of course a lot of the wheelchair fellows went out and encouraged other wheelchair fellows and also wheelchair women to play. So that there was a direct relationship between those that were playing and the numbers that played in later years being motivated to play, because they had a friend that was playing or because they were impressed by what they saw when they went to a game.

05-00:36:05
Pelka: Yes. Now I imagine in any sports, even team sports, you're going to have people who are stars, more or less. Who would you consider to be the first, let's say, wheelchair basketball stars?

05-00:36:18
Nugent: Oh my goodness. I would put Don Swift right up there. I would put Bob Miller right up there, because they were both outstanding fellows. Jack Chase who played on the first [Illinois] Gizz Kids team, was an all-American [many] years later, I think! He'd play until he was very—he's retired, he's a clergyman, retired clergyman, but very much inactive now, but I think ten years after he graduated I selected him to go to South Africa, and on the way back they went to England and he won the events he entered in the Stoke-Mandeville games. So I'd definitely put him up. Then there were—Kansas City had several outstanding players that first year besides Bob Miller, and again, you know you're asking me to go back a long way to remember!

05-00:37:15
Pelka: Oh yeah. Were people keeping track of statistics at that time? Points?

05-00:37:20
Nugent: Oh I insisted on that. I had records that went back to 1949. Of course I gave them to my successor when I retired as commissioner at the end of twenty-five years and unfortunately I don't think they were well taken care of after that, but yes. And I still probably have some of these records in my files.

05-00:37:40
Pelka: You mentioned earlier talking about getting women to play. How long was it—originally I imagine, or my understanding is that this was pretty much all male teams, but then women's teams began to be organized. When did that happen and what was your involvement with that?

05-00:38:01
Nugent: Well, first of all, before women's teams, per se, came into being, some of the women were good enough and the teams were kind enough to let them play with the men's teams.

05-00:38:14
Pelka: Oh.Okay.

05-00:38:15
Nugent: And so that there were some women. I remember there was a young lady from Detroit area that was exceptionally good and played with Detroit and the succeeding Detroit teams when they changed their name. Let me see here—the first game between two women's teams was here at Illinois and the first intercollegiate game by two women's teams—Southern Illinois and the University of Illinois was here in Illinois. Mentioning of some of the outstanding players Denver Branum and Bud Rumple are two others that come to mind.

05-00:39:06
Pelka: Oh—could you spell those names?

05-00:39:08
Nugent: Bud Rumple is R-U-M-P-L-E, Denver Branum is D-E-N-V-E-R B-R-A-N-U-M. There were a lot of great players over those years.

05-00:39:22
Pelka: You wouldn't remember, then, the name of the woman on the Detroit team that you were talking about.

05-00:39:28
Nugent: Well, I have it here right now, because she's in our Hall of Fame—just was inducted this past year. [sighs] Let's see when the women's group began here. (I can't find it that fast.) It was Darlene Quinlan.

05-00:40:01
Pelka: Well that's—she'd be on the, I've been going to the University of Illinois Website—the Department of Rehab, whatever it's called, I forget now.

05-00:40:09
Nugent: It probably—it would be there. I hope it would be there, yes.

05-00:40:13
Pelka: Okay. So I can—were these first teams racially integrated. Were there black players as well as white players?

05-00:40:21
Nugent: Yes. Not many of them but there were, in fact, some of the outstanding players in the mid years of the NWBA, starting in the late fifties or maybe early sixties, were outstanding black players. Again I'm having trouble picking the names up. One was Darryl "Tree" Walker, who started in Detroit and the other was from Indianapolis. And just not only outstanding players but fine gentlemen, really top-quality people. We had black fellows on our football and basketball teams very early in our history. And in fact, when we traveled to the South, Chuck, Elmer, and I would alternate living in the black hotel because in some cities in the South, the black player could not live in the same hotel that our white players lived in. He and I would alternate back and forth. In another city in the South back in those days—they may be able to live with us but they couldn't play with us on the same floor.

05-00:41:22
Pelka: I was going to ask how you dealt with that. Would you not play games there?

05-00:41:28
Nugent: No, we played games anyway, because our effort was to break that down not to give it credence by refusing to appear. As I say, Chuck would live in the hotel with the black player one night and I'd live in the hotel the next night. We'd alternate it.

05-00:41:42
Pelka: So you basically were breaking the—if there was a law calling for segregation, you were breaking that law?

05-00:41:48
Nugent: No, because we didn't have them living together. That was the law. We had them living separately, but then they would play together. And in another city they could live together but they couldn't play together. And I remember there was a real fine bunch of black athletes in the Memphis area and we were the only team to play them! We would have them come up here and play and we went down there to play in little places and I used to go down there and help coach them and in order to do that, we set up baskets in a parking lot in, I think it was the original—what's the famous—Holiday Inn, the original Holiday Inn parking lot, and we'd surround it with cars like the old covered wagon routine and we'd have practice in there, because the attitude against the blacks at that time was so bad. And I think our—this is another way that our sports contributed, just as all sports contributed to the integration of blacks and others. You know, sports were the leading group in integrating blacks and whatnot—that and the theater, but I think the sports probably had the greater impact.

05-00:43:04
Pelka: Yes. I wanted to move on now to organizing the National Spinal Cord Injury Foundation. I know you were very involved in that. Maybe you could talk a little bit about that. My understanding is that the Spinal Cord Injury Foundation began as something like an offshoot of the PVA.

05-00:43:26
Nugent: Well, when the Paralyzed Veterans of America were organized, they decided to have a research arm and they called it the National Paraplegia Foundation. Are you with me?

05-00:43:40
Pelka: Yes.

05-00:43:41
Nugent: And the National Paraplegia Foundation would meet at the tail end of the Paralyzed Veterans of America annual meetings and there may be ten to sixteen or eighteen at the most in attendance because they had spent themselves partying and whatnot back in those days during the PVA convention.

I was at these PVA conventions. I participated in, I think, most of them at that time and they petitioned me, the NPF members petitioned me, to become the president of the National Paraplegia Foundation. I said I wouldn't be the president of an organization like that unless they were able to stand up on their own feet. So I went before the executive committee of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and said, "Fellows, take a look at what's happening. You have this big convention but only nine people at the most show up for the NPF

meetings. You're not going to get anything done that way. I think that the National Paraplegia Foundation should separate itself from you, not deny that you were the ones that founded them, but separate so far as their activities are concerned."

Well, the very first—first of all, the executive committee was 100percent against it, because the PVA at that time and even today is a very possessive group. In fact, New York, eastern PVA, the most successful part of the PVA is no longer a part of the PVA. I won't tell you all about that, but it's just an example of the inside politics that go on. But anyway, even though they objected to it, we did it. And the very first independent convention we had, had over 600 participants. The very first convention, when the NPF was separated from the PVA, had 600 participants and they were doctors, they were nurses, they were therapists, they were everything.

05-00:45:46
Pelka: And when was this?

05-00:45:48
Nugent: I'm going to guess it was about 1954 or 1955—it would be in the history of the NPF**.** Jim Smitkamp wrote a history a while before he died. And it's in there. But it was years ago and after a number of years the PVA wanted us to separate, so that's when it became the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. See, the NPF evolved into the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. One of the reasons was in the conflict of raising funds for research and extending services to people that were recently paralyzed, and there was always a conflict—which came first, or what shall we do. And so the NPF evolved into the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. Fred Fay will be familiar with that. Fred Fay might be able to tell you the actual dates when I took over and when I was petitioned to take over. And then later on, many years later, I don't know how many years, the PVA organized its own research arm again. And of course right now there are several spinal cord research programs. There's a Miami project, there's the Reeves project, there's—golly, I can't think of all of them, but there are a lot of specific projects raising money for spinal cord research on behalf of spinal cord injured.

05-00:47:37
Pelka: Yes. Now you mentioned this conflict between folks who were emphasizing providing services and folks who were emphasizing doing research—raising money for research. That's a theme that comes down through all kinds of organizations and all kinds of contexts throughout the history of disability organizing, it seems to me. Did you ever come down on that decision—on that controversy one way or another?

05-00:48:10
Nugent: You mean did I come down [on] it—this is it or this is not it?

05-00:48:13
Pelka: Yeah.

05-00:48:14
Nugent: No. Because I appreciate that there is place for both of them. And I didn't see why it had to be a conflict, and I'm going to be very blunt: I think one of the reasons that PVA later started their own research arm was because the NPF became so successful and we went from a group of nineteen to hundreds and even over a thousand at our conventions and we went from one or two chapters to chapters all over the United States.

05-00:48:44
Pelka: Besides the—

05-00:48:47
Nugent: When I say "we", I should say "they".

05-00:48:49
Pelka: Yes. Besides the issue of research versus services, were there other controversies at the time that you can remember? Other issues around organizing this new entity?

05-00:49:03
Nugent: Well, I don't know whether the controversy—but there were always some personality conflicts even among professional people. One of the great neurosurgeons came up with a theory on the cause of paralysis and lectured on it and whatnot, and later on was very embarrassed when his theory or his research was disproved. And that's a part of growing. I don't say this as a criticism toward him, but it's just a part of when you have a difficult task of finding the answer and that's a part of human behavior. I don't think we'll ever eliminate the fact that there will be both ideological conflicts and personality conflicts and professional conflicts in life. When that happens we'll be in heaven.

05-00:50:00
Pelka: Did this new organization—organizing it and its growth, did it have any impact on the students' program at Champaign?

05-00:50:12
Nugent: I don't think it had any direct impact except that our students contributed to it. And it really wasn't organized—the NPF in its structure just became the National Spinal Cord Injury Association, the same board and everything and then they just reorganized their approach to what they were doing. Fred Fay was there during all this change, so he may have a deeper way of expressing, because he's got all the information on those doggoned Lazy Susans of his.

05-00:50:52
Pelka: And he's got all the papers too—he's got an amazing collection of papers.

05-00:50:56
Nugent: He does have, yes.

05-00:50:57
Pelka: So—I want to get back to the campus now since I brought that up. Again we're talking 1950s now. Just in terms of you personally—what was your political orientation at that time? For instance, were you following what was happening in the African American civil rights movement?

05-00:51:19
Nugent: Oh I was definitely following it, yes. And I—I always included our black students in the various events when we traveled whether it was allowable in that state or not. I never became a principal in the civil rights movement like a Jesse Jackson or something like that, but I was always supportive of the purpose and intent of what was going on.

05-00:51:49
Pelka: Yes. This is asking you to put yourself in your mind back then in the 1950s, but one of the things I'm interested in is the kind of influences that go back and forth between these movements. I'm wondering—thinking back to the 1950s now, or early 1960s even—if you ever saw any similarities between what was happening to people of color, to black people and what you saw happening to people with disabilities. Did you ever look at what was going on say with Brown v. Board of Education and say, "Yeah, that's what's happening in the disability community as well?"

05-00:52:30
Nugent: Well, it definitely was—it didn't manifest itself in the same way because the reasons for people being for or against were different, but I think the best way for me to explain my philosophy and my thoughts on that, and I've explained this going way back to the beginning is that people are always afraid of or disagree with something they are not familiar with. And the problem of blacks and whites in most situations was disassociation, not association. The same is true when people with severe disabilities weren't able to go to grade school or high school or college—there was a disassociation, and the same phenomena prevailed—that people either object to, are afraid of, or question things that they are not familiar with. And that was true both with the blacks—now you see on television screen[s] and at events a top-level white athlete and a black athlete hugging each other. You see the same in the awards for movies and things—that some of the top people in the world, including golf, which was always a white sport—the top golfer in the world is a black. So those are phenomena that are corrected not by words, not be people like me speaking about it, not even by a Jesse Jackson. The change comes about when they have the opportunity to associate with them in normal objective environs.

05-00:54:13
Pelka: Yes. In a different kind of—a different aspect of this, last time we spoke you talked about this, in essence, a demonstration that was organized when they were going to shut down the program when they were shutting down

Galesburg and it wasn't certain whether your program was going to continue after that year, you all essentially organized a demonstration to protest this. I'm wondering whether when you looked at the political activities of the black movement at that time if you felt an association there between what they were doing and what was happening with disabled people.

05-00:54:55
Nugent: I can't honestly say that I looked at it that way, no. We had a specific problem, we had a specific mission, and we did that to call attention to our mission and to change the governor's attitude but the big difference is that once we got a chance to prove ourselves on this campus, we never had another demonstration. And we were without a budget for eight years. We were without support of any sort from the university or state, really, for eight years. But we persisted and I explained this to my students. I said, "Hey, this is our problem fellows, and it's more important that we do this and do it well than anything else we can do. And so—there is a similarity, but I never looked at one or the other as a means of, or a similarity, let's put it that way. And actually demonstrations were not that common back in '49 yet.

05-00:55:54
Pelka: Well, we are moving into the fifties. I remember talking to Gunnar Dybwad—you met Gunnar Dybwad, right? You were—were you familiar with Gunnar?

05-00:56:03
Nugent: Yes. I'm having difficulty putting it all together, but yes, it rings a bell.

05-00:56:08
Pelka: Okay. Well, he was involved in the fifties with what was then called the Association for Retarded Children, now the ARC—they've renamed it a couple of times but—I remember talking with him and he said when Brown v. Board, when the Supreme Court made that decision about you can't discriminate against children, you can't deny them an equal education, separate is not equal, and you can't deny people an education because of the color of their skin. He says he, and this is because partly, I think, because he was trained as a lawyer and had that kind of a background, but he said, "Aha! Some day we're going to use that. Some day that's something that we're going to be able to use." And I'm wondering if there was a—it sounds like there wasn't really a similar feeling in your circumstances during that time period.

05-00:57:01
Nugent: No. And I think part of that is attributable to my childhood as well. I grew up with people of all races and nationalities around me. This is aside from what I want you to use, but I'll just give you one example.

In a big track meet in Milwaukee there was a black athlete—his name was George Walker, if I remember right—who was a better high jumper than I was, but they had very lousy uniforms and when he went over the bar, his

shirt hung down about a foot and was knocking the bar off. And I went up to the high jumping official and I explained that. I said, “Can’t we tape that up? Or can’t we let him take it off?” Well, the official at the high jump said, “Let him take it off.” So he took it off and another official, way up on the other end of the track came running down and disqualified him, because in those days you had to have a full uniform. Well, I think you still do. And I argued with the guy and so they disqualified me too! [laughter]

So I grew up with that sense of feeling towards all people. I don’t know how to describe it, but I never had that strong prejudice. I know there were times I was apprehensive, depending where I was under the circumstances back in the thirties and early forties, but some of the best soldiers I fought with were black during World War II.

05-00:58:37
Pelka: Okay. I just want to get you to recap or talk about if there were any other national disability organizations, and we’re talking now again the 1950s, even late 1940s, that you were aware of at that time? Were there other groups that you knew of that were doing any kinds of political work?

05-00:59:00
Nugent: Well, this term political—do you know the true meaning of politics?

05-00:59:04
Pelka: [chuckling] Probably not!

05-00:59:06
Nugent: Well, politics is one of the fields of philosophy. There’s aesthetics and there’s politics. There’s ethics, and politics is that phase of philosophy which is the structure of government and how you do things, but our use of politics is always distorted. You’re a Republican, you’re a Socialist, you’re a Democrat, you’re this, that, and the other thing. In that sense, no. I did not feel that, but there were a lot of other organizations, and actually the Easter Seals, one of the old ones—the Tuberculosis Association, one of the old associations, national associations existed. But they weren’t political in the way that other people think of politics. They each had a mission and they probably got involved, as I know Easter Seals did, with politics in order to fulfill their mission. But I may have lost your question.

But I don’t see politics as a big thing in here. I also remember being in a meeting in Washington where I said, “You know, you guys are saying we should do all this out in the general society, but I don’t see you doing it here in Washington.” And within six months every senator and every congressman had a disabled person working for them.

05-01:00:39
Pelka: When was this—do you recall?

05-01:00:42
Nugent: Oh, I would guess it was about ’72, ’73, somewhere in there. And again, I’m guessing those dates. You’re asking me questions I don’t have right at the tip of my tongue. It was very obvious that they were saying that the world should do this, the United States should do this, the states should do this, the cities should do this, but they weren’t doing it themselves in Washington.

05-01:01:15
Pelka: Okay. Hang on a second, I’ve got to end this tape here. [pause]

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06-00:00:00
Pelka: Timothy Nugent on August 17, 2004, this is interview number three, tape six, side A. One of the groups—we were talking about politics and the definition of politics and what political work was and one of the groups at that time that was working in the mid-fifties was something called, I think it was the National Federation of the Physically Handicapped. And they were doing things like pushing for Social Security Disability Income. Changes in the social security law to allow civilians who were disabled to get some kind of a pension through Social Security. Were you involved in any of that effort or were you familiar with those people?

06-00:00:47
Nugent: I was familiar with it—what dates did you give?

06-00:00:51
Pelka: Well, when was SSDI passed—that was what, ’56?

06-00:00:54
Nugent: The what?

06-00:00:55
Pelka: 1956 for SSDI, Social Security Disability Income.

06-00:00:59
Nugent: Yes, it’s around there. I can’t say that I was involved in any principal way. I received calls, I was asked to make statements on behalf of those things, but I don’t think I ever had a leadership role in that at all.

06-00:01:15
Pelka: Did you know any of the leaders? Did you meet any of them?

06-00:01:19
Nugent: Oh I’m sure I did, but again, I can’t tell you who they were.

06-00:01:22
Pelka: Okay. It’s a group I’m particularly interested in and it’s hard to track these folks down because most of them have passed on. And it seems to me like they did a lot of very interesting work and they’re not—everyone, there’s a

perception that the disability rights movement began in the 1970s and it seems to me there were a lot of people doing some very interesting work in the 1950s that—

06-00:01:52
Nugent: Well, let me offer my perspective on that.

06-00:01:56
Pelka: Okay.

06-00:01:56
Nugent: The disability movement that they say began in the seventies was when the disabled people themselves took some initiative. Prior to that, it was other people doing it. The American Workers for the Blind—those were able-bodied people who were concerned and were working on behalf of the blind. Easter Seals Society was able-bodied professional and lay people working on behalf. The disabled themselves did not take that kind of initiative until the seventies, really, and I mean in a notable way, and so that's why people claim that the disability movement began in the late seventies.

06-00:02:44
Pelka: Yes. While we're talking about this—this is jumping ahead quite a bit, but to continue the thread—why do you think it happened in the seventies? What made that time amenable to that kind of a movement as opposed to ten years earlier or ten years after?

06-00:03:04
Nugent: Well, things don't happen quickly. The effect of our program and programs that later allowed people to go to college and we were involved—I received an award way back in '60 or '50-something, from the Illinois Council on Exceptional Children for my help to elementary and secondary schools—but that just didn't happen over night, it was a gradual thing, and the sports program grew gradually. It didn't just mushroom. It grew much more rapidly than I thought it would, but when you say, "Why did it take that long," things have to happen to give these different groups a feeling of belongingness, a feeling of confidence, a feeling of recognition and then they start projecting themselves outward. We had to convince people to even come to school in the early years because of their self concepts. So when you say, "Why did it take so long?" it's a normal phenomena of—there's a long time between the germination of an idea and its realization. Does that make sense to you?

06-00:04:25
Pelka: Oh yeah, oh yeah. And among other things you have to develop leadership. You have to have people who have enough education—

06-00:04:31
Nugent: Right.

06-00:04:32
Pelka: —in whatever way, it doesn't necessarily have to be school, university education, but you have to have people who have the confidence and have the skills to be able to assume some kind of leadership, and that takes time.

06-00:04:44
Nugent: Right. That takes time, and to have the confidence and willingness to identify with these things takes time.

06-00:04:54
Pelka: Now there were what they'd call single constituency groups back in the forties and the fifties that were people with disabilities working on issues. I'm thinking specifically of the National Association of the Deaf and the National Federation of the Blind. I was wondering if you had any contact with either of those groups.

06-00:05:17
Nugent: Oh very definitely. I had contact with them. I even spoke at their national meetings years ago and I don't know how to say it but it was, I get a call for help, I get a call to speak to a group, things like that, and I would do it. So yes I was associated with those groups, but I don't claim any leadership role with those groups.

06-00:05:50
Pelka: Do you recall anything in particular about the people involved in those groups? Was there, for example, an NFB chapter at the University of Illinois?

06-00:06:03
Nugent: I believe there was, but right now I can't tell you when it existed and how well it persisted, but I know we used to have, oh, twelve or fifteen blind people meet on a weekly basis not too far from our rehab center for years. And I know that our audio-visual group started doing programs for their benefit and that goes back to the fifties some time. The—I had another thought lose me—go ahead.

06-00:06:40
Pelka: Well, this is again going back to the campus now—and you know, we may have covered some of these questions in previous interviews now, because sometimes as I say, people answer questions before I ask them [chuckling] and then I have to go back and go, "Oh, we've already done that." But I was interested in looking at the campus program again in the fifties and sixties and its relationship to the larger community at Champaign-Urbana. Backing up a little bit—because I've never been there, to tell you the truth. I've never been to Champaign-Urbana.

06-00:07:19
Nugent: Oh you just haven't lived! [chuckling]

06-00:07:20

Pelka: I just haven't lived. I don't know how I've escaped this experience, but it just has never happened. So I don't know—some towns, or college towns, what you've got is you've got a university or a college campus with a town attached to it and then there are other, for example, well I won't go into de[tails]—but then you have other universities, they're in the middle of larger cities and the cities exist quite apart from the colleges and they have a relationship but it's not quite so dependent. I'm wondering what Champaign-Urbana was like. Was it a fairly large city with this campus located in this—

06-00:07:57

Nugent: Well, I don't think you could say that Champaign was a very large city. At least, not at the time the university was brought here. See, this is not the original home of the university, but when it was made the home of the university, it was, and still is, the biggest business in Champaign-Urbana. But Champaign has grown tremendously in the fifty-six years that I've been here and we have several national industries, such as Solo Cup, University Bleachers, University Cap & Gown, which recently has changed its name and I don't know what the new name is, and various other—we have Kraft and [A.C.] Humko are here. Big plants. So we have a lot of national and regional businesses here. But even with them, the university is the largest business in Champaign-Urbana. And unfortunately you don't know when you're leaving one city and entering the other unless you've been told. But they don't merge, so that Champaign is smaller than it might be and Urbana is smaller than it might be if it were just one city.

06-00:09:07

Pelka: Okay. Well, that actually answers the question because I wanted to ask about—it's often called town-gown controversies. A lot of times when you've got a smaller town that is dependent upon or where the campus is the largest institution, business, however you'd want to call it, there can be tensions between the folks who live in the town and the students and the folks associated with the university. And what I was trying to get at was how your program was involved in that mix. It's a vague question but—

06-00:09:49

Nugent: Well, I can answer that question two ways. First of all, the city both on a political sense and on a general public sense got behind me and my efforts before the university did. Now there were some key people within the university that were, from the very beginning, were very supportive and helpful. But when you talk about the university as a total entity, the city got behind long before the university did. And the city started doing things on behalf of my people before the university did. So—in fact the first basketball awards banquet was created by the American Legion and the principal man there later became mayor of the city of Champaign. The engineer, the chief engineer for the city of Champaign—if there was a curb, an intersection, that all of a sudden became of significance to our people because of the traffic patterns, I'd call him up and in two days we'd have the ramps cut, the curbs

cut. So in many instances, the local people and governments got behind me before the university did.

06-00:11:04
Pelka: Now why was that, do you think?

06-00:11:06
Nugent: Well, two reasons. The university is a well-structured, definitively-structured entity. There's nothing, I say this in quotes, more stubborn than a PhD. [chuckling] You can tell Fred that. The concepts—you see, we were not creating an infringement on the city, but the university—we were considered an infringement. Do you understand what I'm trying to say there?

06-00:11:45
Pelka: I think so, yeah.

06-00:11:46
Nugent: And the fact that they didn't think we were important enough to even be considered for a budgetary appropriation, where the city, financially was making contributions to our program. A lot of that goes back to attitudes and, I think I may have explained already to you one professor who refused to move his class down two stories in the same building to accommodate my wheelchairs. And he said, "Hey, I've been here seven years and I've got all my classes where I want them, one, two, and three, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and I'm not going to move." Well, we made him move and he hated us!

[chuckling] But there's just that built-in nature. And we didn't have a really active foundation back in those days and I was criticized for all the money I raised for the program. I mean literally and critically criticized. It was a whole different world. As I said, my deans at that time, their concept was so different than what we think now that *they* opposed me.

But they also—there are two kinds of people, Fred. There are those people that oppose you because they actually think that maybe what you're doing is wrong—but once you are able to prove to them that what you were doing is right, they become your best friends and your strongest supporters. And that was true of many of the people that opposed me in the beginning. But then there's another group of people that oppose you for selfish reasons and they never change their attitude. You can prove you're right and they're going to still find something wrong. Do you understand what I'm saying?

06-00:13:36
Pelka: Sure, sure.

06-00:13:37
Nugent: And that's a normal part of the makeup of people again. And some of the people that were my worst opponents in the beginning became my strongest

supporters in the end. Others persisted in objecting even when we had proven ourselves a hundred-fold over.

06-00:13:56
Pelka: Who in the city government—let's begin with the city government, do you recall who in particular in the city government at that time was supportive of the program?

06-00:14:05
Nugent: Well, I know the mayors of Champaign-Urbana both became supportive, and John Kearns, who was the city engineer, he became very supportive. His wife was a teacher of the blind. I'm sure that had some effect on it.

06-00:14:21
Pelka: Yeah, could you spell his name for me? John Kearns.

06-00:14:24
Nugent: If I'm correct it's K-E-A-R-N-S**.** And there were a few of the medical doctors that would visit with me and say, "Well, why are you doing this, Tim?" And I'd tell them why and then they became supportive. At one time the district vocational-rehabilitation counselor became the mayor of Champaign—Emerson Dexter and he was very helpful. He was the one that sponsored the first basketball awards banquet for our wheelchair basketball team. He and the Legion. So it came from various facets and directions and the university, with its rigid concepts of how do you gain tenure and rank and all these things, and the—I was doing interdisciplinary things, and I was promoting it and calling it that. On campus they haven't thought of that until recent years, I mean with any real effort. There were always a few people that believed in it, were doing it, but each discipline was pretty much on its own.

06-00:15:42
Pelka: How about business leaders? Were there business people in the community that you found particularly helpful?

06-00:15:50
Nugent: Oh gosh, yes. In fact, Giles Sullivan, owner of Sullivan Chevrolet—if it hadn't been for him, we probably wouldn't have been able to send our Illinois athletes to the first Paralympics.

06-00:16:04
Pelka: What was the first name, Guy?

06-00:16:06
Nugent: Giles. G-I-L-E-S.

06-00:16:08
Pelka: Oh Okay. Giles Sullivan.

06-00:16:10
Nugent: Yeah. And—oh golly, oh there was another gentleman and I'm drawing a blank right now—Holmes, Holmes, Holmes—he owned a heating business here in town. Maybe if I look in the phone book I could find it. But he became a very strong supporter. Another gentleman who owned a janitorial service here—I even gave the, and this is pathetic really, I gave the eulogy at his funeral and I'm having trouble thinking of his name right now. Ray—but anyway—he was very supportive. In fact, when we were having a tournament or an exhibition or something here, all of a sudden he'd come up to me—he'd say, "Tim, here are the tickets I sold," and he'd hand me a big wad of money, and then he'd hand me another wad of money—"Here's the money that was contributed." And a good share of it was his. Oh, it hurts my feelings that I can't think of their names fast. You know you're talking to a man that's almost eighty-two! [chuckling] [Russ Darby.]

06-00:17:17
Pelka: Yeah, yeah. Well, you're doing okay! You've got a lot of detail here. A lot of detail to remember.

06-00:17:24
Nugent: But yeah—there were city people that—the president of Busey Bank was one that got behind us.

06-00:17:31
Pelka: Yes. President of what bank now?

06-00:17:33
Nugent: Busey—B-U-S-E-Y. And Ray Livasy—that name I can remember, L-I-V-A-S-Y, Bank of Illinois. At the time it was called the Treviss Mattis Bank. He bailed me out on more than one occasion. So it's a long story how each of these people entered into it—I don't know if you want to take time to—

06-00:18:08
Pelka: Well, give me an example of how—I was going to ask generally, how did folks find out about what you were doing and how did they get involved, so if you can give me an example or two that would be great.

06-00:18:21
Nugent: Well, there are a lot of ways. For instance, some of them may have been a member of the same service club I was, and we got to know each other. Some may have been a member of the same church I was and we got to know each other, and I would have a chance to talk to them and convey them. Giles Sullivan was the head of the Chevrolet dealership here and he got involved in various ways, but at the time that we needed money he gave us an automobile—to auction off. And the proceeds from the auction were for us to go to the first Paralympics.

Well, we needed the money faster than that, so I went to Ray Livasy, who was Bank of Illinois president, but it wasn't Bank of Illinois then, and I said,

"Ray—I need $8,000 dollars and I need it now! How can I manage this?" Well, this is a difficult thing to say, although I don't think anybody will take any legal action now—he loaned me $8,000 dollars on my signature. Now you can do that as a bank executive, unsecured loan, but it's only good for three months, according to the law at that time. So I had to have Chuck Elmer be my cosigner. Well, Chuck didn't even know what he was signing at the time. So what we did is every three months, with however much money I raised, I went down to the bank and paid the loan off, and he'd make out a new loan for the balance, and it took us a long time before we paid that off, but that was a wonderful thing he did. He didn't break any laws and yet he was skirting them. You know what I mean?

06-00:20:06
Pelka: Yeah. And the last name is spelled Livsay? L-I-V

06-00:20:10
Nugent: L-I-V-A-S-Y.

06-00:20:11
Pelka: Oh, A-S-Y, Okay.

06-00:20:13
Nugent: And he became president of a bank in Decatur, I believe, after that. But you know, there were various ways that people would help. The mayor of Champaign became one of my first wheelchair-trained officials. The first trained officials in wheelchair basketball and football. And Major—oh golly, I can't [remember] the name, but the National Guard, the commander of the National Guard in Urbana happened to be a near neighbor. He lived about four or five doors away from me. He allowed us to use their armory for practices and was very supportive of other things that we did. So these associations come about, not necessarily because of the program, but because of other things, but then they entered into helping the program. You understand what I'm saying?

06-00:21:09
Pelka: Sure. You mentioned meeting people at church groups. I was going to ask you after government, business, to talk about some of the folks in the church community or the religious community. I gather you had people in that community also as allies.

06-00:21:27
Nugent: Oh, definitely. Yeah, definitely. In varying degrees from varying churches, but for years we had a council of churches, and that's not the proper name, I forget what the proper name was, and they sponsored our buses to go around the cities of Champaign-Urbana to pick up disabled and aging people to get them to their churches. For years they did that. So that cemented a bond between us and that Christian organization. And of course I spoke to a lot of the Christian youth groups of various faiths all over the cities of Urbana and Champaign. And some of them got enthused enough to volunteer. [chuckling]

In fact one of our principal grad. assistants at the rehab center right now, and I didn't know it in the beginning, is from my present church, because she came up to me, she says, "I've known you in church all these years and I never knew you did this." [chuckling]

06-00:22:27
Pelka: Wow. Asking about the same groups but sort of the opposite question, I'm wondering if you recall particular resistance from anyone in the civic government at that time in—

06-00:22:42
Nugent: In the city government?

06-00:22:44
Pelka: Yeah. City governments, I guess, yeah.

06-00:22:47
Nugent: I know there was, but it was never a major issue. I know there were people that objected to our doing this, that, or the other thing, to make things better for the disabled, but it was never a strong, unified effort, you know what I mean? There was never a society against the disabled, let's put it that way. There were people who questioned more than objected and there were people who did object but no, I don't remember anything like that.

06-00:23:19
Pelka: Okay. Same questions in terms of civic—were there any businesses in particular that just said, "We don't want anything to do with this. Keep these folks away from us." Nothing like that.

06-00:23:31
Nugent: Well, in the restaurants, that was true for a while. But at the same time, the largest furniture store in Champaign-Urbana at that time I believe was Reliable Furniture. And Reliable had some very oversized billboards and one of their billboards, and I may not have it just right, was—now there are three good things in Illinois and they listed something, and then their store, and then they listed our program. [chuckling] And I forget the wording they used but—three great things, Reliable Furniture, and I don't remember how they identified us but they did.

06-00:24:18
Pelka: Okay. Were you able to, in terms of the restaurants for example, were you able to break that down over time? That kind of resistance?

06-00:24:27
Nugent: It didn't take long to break it down. First of all, service-connected veterans were able to go in and spend money, and nobody's going to turn that down. And it quite often wasn't the restaurant owners per se, but it was their concept of what their customers would think or feel.

In fact, one of the things we experienced time and time again in our early years is a veteran who was married to an able-bodied woman and they'd be in a restaurant. And the waiter or waitress would always ask the able-bodied wife as though the guy in the wheelchair couldn't answer. And he was the one paying the bill but—I remember some of the wives getting so mad that they blurted out loud, maybe even swore a little bit, saying, "Hey, ask him, talk to him, he's in charge here." But just—and it was reverse true if it was a disabled woman and an able-bodied man. They always looked to the able-bodied person to make the decision and to pay the bill. They couldn't understand that the guy with a disability, the girl with a disability was just as capable as the other. We did experience that on many occasions.

06-00:25:44
Pelka: You talked about doing curb cuts at places that were, say, strategic street corners. Were you able to get local, government, businesses, to do things like put ramps on buildings?

06-00:26:05
Nugent: Oh yes, yes. In fact, there were some places that they changed the shape of the sidewalk. I can't remember which place, it was downtown, but the building was so close to the curb that there was no way to put a ramp there. So what they did is they changed the sidewalk, about fifteen foot east of the door they started to elevate the sidewalk, made it flat with the door, and then west of the door they had a slight incline to the sidewalk. That's just one example I can think of quickly. But Champaign became very accessible in a relatively short time.

06-00:26:45
Pelka: What time period are we talking about now? When you talked about changing the contour of the sidewalk. Was that fairly early on? Or—

06-00:26:54
Nugent: I would say it was in the very early fifties, yeah.

06-00:26:56
Pelka: Okay. How did—this is getting ahead into the talk about ANSI and stuff like that but, it just—going back that far, when people are looking at putting in a curb cut, it would seem to me there weren't too many models for what a curb cut should look like or the incline, the width, or if you're talking about a ramp, how high to make the railings, how steep to make the incline. In those early days how were those kinds of decisions made?

06-00:27:36
Nugent: Well, we generally tested our people doing things. We had a ramp that became the master's degree for one of my therapists who was doing a master's degree for the University of Iowa but he was on my staff. That ramp could be a certain full length or it could be a half length with a leveling off platform and it could be adjusted in height and pitch by the inches. We have pictures of that. That was part of what was presented to the National Academy

of Science to get their support back in the fifties. And that became part of the American standards in the end. A lot of times I did research today to prove that what I did yesterday was right. I don't know if you understand that.

06-00:28:27
Pelka: I think I might, yeah.

06-00:28:29
Nugent: Well, we were in a situation where we had to get things done. And so I would decide that this was what we were going to do and then I'd sometimes ask somebody to do research to see if we did the right thing.

06-00:28:40
Pelka: Yeah. Were there any major catastrophes or mistakes in that regard? Do you recall instances where you would do something in terms of designing a ramp, let's say, or something and it was just obviously wrong and you had to go back and rethink what you were doing?

06-00:29:00
Nugent: I can't remember anything specific like that. I can remember that we were making modifications all the time, including on the lifts on our buses and things like that. And of course, our buses were called to Washington many times to demonstrate—because our bus system started in '52 and the federal law on buses is less than six years old, I think. So there were mistakes made and we had to rethink them. In many areas, I can't think of any specific one right now, but I know that some of the things we did to some of the real old buildings like Altgeld Hall—it was a circus! [chuckling]

06-00:29:44
Pelka: What was the name of the hall?

06-00:29:46
Nugent: Altgeld [spells] I think is the way you spell it.

06-00:29:50
Pelka: Hah! "Old-money hall."

06-00:29:53
Nugent: It's probably the oldest building on campus now. It's made out of great big cement stones, concrete stones. It's not red brick like all the other buildings.

06-00:30:06
Pelka: We're getting to the end of the tape here again, but I'm just thinking of an incident when—I was talking to Paul Corcoran and Fred Fay and some of the early organizers of the Boston Center for Independent Living and they talked about some of their early whoppers where they had to—there's one instance I remember they talked about one of their clients, they had their program, originally it was on the third or fourth floor of a building, and they had a wheelchair user who was visually disabled as well, and one day he took a wrong turn and just went down the stairs and was injured. And at the time

there was a real feeling that this could be the end of the program because there were all these people who had been telling them, “You can’t do this, this is dangerous, insurance liability, et cetera, et cetera,” and here they had this accident and there was a real—the sense I get talking to them long afterwards was that there was a real sense of panic for a while: “Oh my God, what are they going to do.” No—[tape cuts off here]

06-00:31:13
Nugent: We had an orientation for our students in the beginning and Fred [Fay] can tell you about that, to identify problems, tell them how to handle different situations, but it was a concern. It was one of the concerns the university had that we would be an extra liability and an extra cost. As I say, when people don’t know anything about something, they start out with a negative approach. If you were to try and start something in your area right now, something different, initially you would probably have opposition. I’m not thinking of any good example, but unless it was something everybody already wanted.

06-00:31:57
Pelka: I’m just going to do some questions. I’m going to jump around a little bit here. On one of our previous sessions we talked a little bit about Gini Laurie and what became *Rehab Gazette*. At one time it was *Toomeyville Gazette*. It had a bunch of different names. I’m wondering if there are any other publications that you can recall that seemed significant at the time to the work you were doing.

06-00:32:27
Nugent: Let me think a minute. Of course *Paraplegia News* was one of the early ones and of course Easter Seal had publications and most of the other associations on behalf of specific disabilities like cerebral palsy and so on, had publications but they were a very different approach and they were not created by the people with the disabilities themselves.

06-00:32:56
Pelka: Was there anything like that at the time? A publication created by people with disabilities—

06-00:33:03
Nugent: Oh yes, one of the early ones was by Ray, oh—from Bloomington.

06-00:33:08
Pelka: Oh! You’re talking about *Accent*?

06-00:33:13
Nugent: *Accent on Living*.

06-00:33:14
Pelka: Yeah. Oh I forget his name.

06-00:33:15
Nugent: I know it too well and I know his wife Grace very well—for some reason, oh I hate myself! But he, originally that was called *Accent on Polio*.

06-00:33:28
Pelka: Cheever.

06-00:33:29
Nugent: Ray Cheever, that's right. Ray Cheever [spells], and originally that was called *Accent on Polio*, and I used to tell him, I said, "Hey, do you want to have it be the accent on polio or do you want it to have a positive connotation?" And they eventually changed it to *Accent on Living*. And it was a very well done magazine. It only came I think four times a year. Ray died about two years ago, maybe three now, and when he died, his wife just gave up on it, just sold it out.

06-00:34:03
Pelka: Do you know where she is? What part of the cou[ntry]?

06-00:34:07
Nugent: She's in Arizona somewhere. Let me just stop and think, because we still have some correspondence with her and some contact with her.

06-00:34:17
Pelka: Yes. She'd be somebody I think I'd like to talk to.

06-00:34:22
Nugent: Oh—my wife may have her address and the next time we talk I'll see if I have it, because I know we've corresponded with her.

06-00:34:30
Pelka: Okay. Or I might be able to track her down. I might have some leads on that.

06-00:34:35
Nugent: Her first name is Grace and they moved out to Arizona years before he died, in fact, they went to Arizona for months at a time before he died and he'd carry his business with him and handled it all out there.

06-00:34:47
Pelka: Speaking of polio, one of the things I wanted to ask you is if you saw, again looking at the 1950s, if you saw a difference—and you spoke a little bit about this in a previous interview—but a difference in the role that was played by, say, spinal cord injured students, folks, and post-polio students. Would there—did people tend to associate by disability? Or was that an issue at all? And if so, were there differences in the way that post-polio folks related to the program and spinal-cord-injured folks did.

06-00:35:27
Nugent: Well, when you say to the program, do you mean our program?

06-00:35:30
Pelka: Yeah.

06-00:35:31
Nugent: No, no. But there were differences in other areas. The—first of all, one of the major differences between a spinal paraplegic and a polio, is that the polio loses control of motor neurons but not sensory neurons. Do you follow me?

06-00:35:55
Pelka: Yes.

06-00:35:55
Nugent: A paraplegic with a transverse lesion, functional or physical, whatever, loses both. Therefore, if a polio were to be in an area and say there's one of these exposed old-fashioned registers there and his knee falls against it, he'd feel it and he'd pull it away with his hand right away. A traumatic paraplegic wouldn't know it if he weren't looking at it or until he saw it burning and smelled it. Do you follow me?

06-00:36:28
Pelka: Yeah, oh yeah.

06-00:36:29
Nugent: Now that's a distinct difference in concerns for the two groups that professionals had to have. And a polio, if he developed a sore would feel it. A paraplegic wouldn't know it until someone pointed it out to him or he saw it. And that's why we taught them to always take a mirror and check their rear ends in the early years, to see if they had developed a sore.

The—let me tell you a story, on the side—but it carries quite a message. I was on the state hospital commission to investigate the hospitalization of paraplegia starting back in the '55 area, I think it was. We had five senators, five representatives, and five lay people or professionals on the commission. And we had one guy that, oh he knew about this and he knew about that and he was a real problem on the commission. He liked to hear himself talk.

So we held one commission meeting on campus, and I was still in the old tarpaper shack rehab center, and he said he understood all about decubiti and things like that, so I asked one of my traumatic paraplegics who had multiple scars on his back and rear end and even an opening from decubiti, from pressure sores, I asked him if he would be willing to let himself be displayed in a proper professional way so that these people could see the difference. Well, when they walked into the clinical room where I had him, this loudmouth fainted immediately, and never turned up at a meeting after that.

Now that's just a good example how some people assume things and like to be heard and demand things, but don't know what they're talking about. And this guy—in all the meetings previous to that in Springfield—he would pound the

table, “Well, I know what you’re talking about and I know this, I know that.” And he didn’t know anything.

06-00:38:35
Pelka: Now was he a medical professional? Or—

06-00:38:37
Nugent: I don’t remember what he was now but he was a pain in the ass. [laughter] And I knew this and I thought—Well, there’s one way to get to him, and that’s have him face the issue. And everybody else on the commission was able to weather it and ask questions of the person and of me and others, my medical staff and whatnot, but this guy just—and I think it took an hour and a half to revive him.

06-00:39:00
Pelka: Oh my!

06-00:39:02
Nugent: We had to call an ambulance. But that’s just an example of attitudes and that some people will sound off an awful lot about things they know very little about.

06-00:39:12
Pelka: Yeah. Now going back to this difference between, let’s say, post-polio and spinal-cord-injured folks in attitude. Would that kind of difference be felt, make itself manifest, say, in sports? I mean would there be a difference in the way that a spinal-cord-injured guy and a post-polio guy would play basketball because of—?

06-00:39:37
Nugent: No, no.

06-00:39:39
Pelka: Nothing like that.

06-00:39:39
Nugent: No. The difference would be that the post-polio player, if he was bumped or knocked would feel it. And sometimes that becomes an advantage to the paraplegic. You know—a ball hits him hard in the leg—he doesn’t feel it. The disadvantage is, he’d better check it at the end of the game to make sure it didn’t develop a sore.

06-00:39:59
Pelka: Yeah, see my feeling here, I would think I’d be a little less aggressive a player if I could feel the injuries, but maybe not.

06-00:40:07
Nugent: Well, if that were true, I didn’t know that, I didn’t notice that because I’ll tell you—some of our polios, like Ron Stein who was an all-American and one of

the best athletes in the world at the time, was a post-polio, and Marv Lapicola and Don Seifferth—they were the most aggressive people I ever saw.

06-00:40:25
Pelka: What was the second name you mentioned? Ron Stein and then there was—

06-00:40:28
Nugent: Ron Stein—he was even publicized in the Associated Press one time as perhaps the greatest athlete in the world maybe in a wheelchair. And Marv Lapicola—

06-00:40:39
Pelka: Marv.

06-00:40:40
Nugent: Who was president—Lapicola is L-a-p-i-c-o-l-a. He was president of the NWBA for twenty-some years. Don Seifferth was a post-polio and when Don and Marv were in school together, they played on opposite football teams and they used to ram at each other like crazy. So I called them together one time and I said, "Look fellows, you cannot run through the line like you were in a regular football game, because that wheelchair is there and that's steel and you're just not going to do it. So I don't want to see you guys going head on into each other." Well, they said they agreed, but on the first kick-off, I don't know which one of them received it, but he's running down the field and the other one's after him and they hit each other so hard that they each sheared a wheel off of the other's chair.

06-00:40:59
Pelka: Wow.

06-00:41:29
Nugent: And we had a net hanging up in the armory where we played our football that they lowered when they were practicing in field or pitching in the armory and both of the wheels ended up in that net. That's how hard they hit each other—and they were both polios. So you can't say that they held back!

06-00:41:29
Pelka: Okay. And that last name it's Don—

06-00:41:50
Nugent: Seifferth [spells]

06-00:41:57
Pelka: Okay.

06-00:41:58
Nugent: Some of my great athletes I can remember.

06-00:42:01
Pelka: Yeah. Okay. Well, the next thing we're going to get into is ANSI and all of that, but—I'm wondering if this would be a good—I haven't actually done a

whole lot of the questions on that yet, so I'm wondering if we can pause here and pick this up again next week, or I don't know when the next convenient time is for you.

06-00:42:27
Nugent: Well, let me go in the other room. I know I have several things scheduled, but let me go in the other room and double check.

06-00:42:34
Pelka: Okay. And I'm going to turn the tape off here.

06-00:42:35
Nugent: Okay.

Interview 4: 10-18-2005
Begin Audiofile 7 10-18-05.mp3

07-00:00:00
Pelka: This is an interview with Dr. Timothy Nugent. This is October 18, 2005. This is tape number seven, side A. How are you doing?

07-00:00:13
Nugent: I'm having troubles, but that's okay.

07-00:00:16
Pelka: Oh, all right. Is this not a good time? We could reschedule.

07-00:00:20
Nugent: No, no. I've only got two hours this morning, though, because I've got a noon appointment.

07-00:00:24
Pelka: Okay. Well, we'll get you—we won't, we'll get you out of here in time. One loose end from last time, which was last summer, I believe we spoke, I mean the summer before last—you, we had talked about Ray Cheever and *Accent on Living*, and you had said that Mrs. Cheever was still living at the time and was somewhere in Arizona. And you were going to try to track down her address and I'm sure you haven't been able to do that in—

07-00:00:55
Nugent: Yeah, we have it somewhere in the file. My wife has it, I know. But it's not within my reach right now.

07-00:01:02
Pelka: Okay. You wouldn't know—I could look it up if you—it would help though, if you knew the city in Arizona.

07-00:01:07
Nugent: Well, I'll tell you, the way those cities go up in that area—you go down the road and you're in one city and across the street you're in another city. Because they're all little communities there. What happens is a guy starts a development and half a mile away another guy starts a development and eventually they meet. But you still have two different names! [chuckling]

07-00:01:26
Pelka: Okay. All right. We can—

07-00:01:29
Nugent: I can probably call you just to give you that.

07-00:01:31
Pelka: Okay. Great. Now I reviewed some of the tapes from last time and my notes and I believe we were at the point where ANSI Project A-117 was beginning. This would be in 1959. We'd covered pretty much everything up until 1959-1960. Does that sound familiar to you?

07-00:01:52
Nugent: Well, if we're in 1960, we're already into the ANSI standards development.

07-00:01:59
Pelka: Okay. Why don't we begin there, then. Maybe you could give me a little background as to how ANSI began and how you became involved in that.

07-00:02:11
Nugent: Well, a Dr. Scott from Veterans Administration was sent around the country to survey accessibility on behalf of veterans. And he visited our campus and told me that our cities, Urbana-Champaign and our campus was the most accessible he'd seen anywhere in the United States. And then he went back to Washington and I don't know the sequence of events there exactly but eventually he talked to the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped.

They decided in 1959 to make this a major point of discussion and they invited people like myself and people from Easter Seal. They invited representatives from the American National Standards [Institute] and those of us that were quote of note at that time [chuckling] made presentations. And American Standards had to be sponsored. The American National Standards Institute does not sponsor its own standards. It has to be a group of interested people who see a need that sponsor it and then many of us convinced the American National Standards Institute that it is *worthy* of a standard.

07-00:03:32
Pelka: Okay. Now just to back up a little bit. The National Standards Institute—this is a private non-profit organization? Or, what exactly is it. How would you define it?

07-00:03:44
Nugent: The sponsoring agency?

07-00:03:45
Pelka: Well, no—the American National Standards Institute itself. This is an industry—

07-00:03:50
Nugent: Well, it was made up of highly technical people and they had several committees and not all of them are employed by American National Standards, but they're on the committee for elevators, the committee for this type of structure or that type of food, whatever, you know what I mean?

07-00:04:07
Pelka: Yes.

07-00:04:07
Nugent: I would prefer that you get the specific answer to that from American National Standards Institute in New York. But—and of course, it's changed over the years, because it was called the American Standards Association at the time

that we developed our standards. And then nothing was changed except the name. It became the American National Institute Standards Institute. Then during that meeting in Washington in conjunction with the president's committee meeting, we were able to put forth enough evidence that they accepted it as worthy of being developed into an American national standard.

07-00:05:01
Pelka: Okay. They being the president's committee? Or—

07-00:05:05
Nugent: Oh no—the American—

07-00:05:06
Pelka: American Nationals, okay.

07-00:05:07
Nugent: Yeah. At that time the ASA, now the ANSI, decided that the evidence we put forth justified creating a standard to solve that problem. And there are standards on foam, and there are standards of this, that, the other thing, elevators, A17 is elevators, and on and on.

So at that time, I was originally asked to direct the project, but then later on, they asked me to become director of research and development and secretary of the steering and national committees and Leon Chatelain [III], a world-famous architect, a very striking person, was named the chairman. And the reasoning for that—thought that since we're dealing with that type of problem it would be good that the chairman be a well-renowned architect and he certainly was. So he became chairman of the A117 project at that time, at that time ASA A117.1. Now it's ANSI 117.1.

I acted as director of research and we did a lot of research here. I only received a grant of $19,000 from Easter Seal, so actually the university basically paid for most of the development of the standard, because after I got through printing letterhead and envelopes and postage and travel, there wasn't much left of that $19,000, but fortunately I had been working on this for years prior to their having adopted this and we had research on ramps and we had research on energy expenditure over the years. We had research on the forces required to wheel—we had all sorts of things.

I used to assign my master's and doctoral students to specific areas of concern and interest. In fact, to the extreme that Dr. Tom O'Rourke, who later became head of community health here—his doctoral dissertation—no, I think it was his master's dissertation—was on the bowel management of traumatic paraplegics and quadriplegics.

So we went into great detail and we put all these different researches together to help us with American Standards in addition to doing additional research which if you will request—well, I'll tell you what, I'll try and make a

photocopy and send it to you of the paper that I presented in 1959 or early 1960, I can't remember which now. That's a long time ago for an old man, Fred! [chuckling] I'm eighty-three now and I'm lucky I can remember your name! [laughter]

07-00:08:01
Pelka: I have days like that as well!

07-00:08:04
Nugent: But anyway, I'll send you a copy of the original paper that I presented to the Academy of Sciences and then from there you'll see some of the scope of the research we've done up 'til that time and of course we continued doing research.

07-00:08:21
Pelka: Okay. Let me—

07-00:08:22
Nugent: And then in 1961, and this always bothered me—Easter Seal was so anxious to announce the new standard at their 1961 convention that it wasn't my research that determined when we were done but the fact that that's when their convention was. [chuckling] Because they, and rightfully so, they relied on contributions and they wanted to get this out into the public and they did a good job. But we only had that little over a year to do the whole job. And fortunately I had so much of this research already done or in progress.

Then of course, after that, I send my written report out, in the format of a standard and it goes to every member of the sectional committee. Now the sectional committee has as its membership, any individual or group who would be affected by these standards should they come into place, any industry or program that would be affected by the standards, and any component like home builders association and the American Construction Institute, I think it is, that all these people be represented on the sectional committee. In other words, the blind were represented, the paraplegics were represented, polio was represented, the deaf were represented, the elevator industry was represented, the homebuilders were represented, and on and on and on.

So that we had—you know, we covered the waterfront, so to speak, and after I finished the research—and there was a lot of communication between myself and the members of the committee back and forth in this process. But when it was done, a copy had to be sent to every member of the sectional committee and we had to get an affirmative vote from all of them.

07-00:10:36
Pelka: Let me back up a little bit, Okay? How were the particular representatives, let's say from industry groups, chosen? And did you have any difficulty in soliciting that kind of input from the different industry groups and from the different disability communities?

07-00:10:52
Nugent: [chuckling] Well, eventually all the disability communities entered in, although there were one or two, and I'm not going to name them, that were reluctant for one reason or another.

It's interesting that the American Medical Association did not want to be represented, but after it came into being they insisted on being represented. The Builders Institute, for a long time, was very skeptical. I can't remember exactly when they entered into it, and the—Home Builders Association—and many architects were opposed. The reason that they were opposed was that they thought the standard might change the requirements for buildings that would cause them extra expense or problems. And our job was to assure them that that would not happen.

And that's how I spent a lot of my time. I met with the American Institute of Architects, I met with the Home Builders Association, I met with the Construction Standards Institute—not for a minute or two, but for hours on occasion. And eventually all realized that hey, this is not going to create extra square footage of any significant amount that would raise the price of a building or a facility. And this was the major problem. And some of them were reluctant to join because of that. Some of them then joined because they wanted to defend themselves, if you know what I mean.

07-00:12:27
Pelka: They *didn't* join because they wanted to defend themselves?

07-00:12:30
Nugent: No—they didn't join for a while, and then they decided they had better join to defend themselves.

07-00:12:36
Pelka: Okay. I see.

07-00:12:37
Nugent: To be there when these decisions were made. Do you follow me?

07-00:12:40
Pelka: Right, right.

07-00:12:41
Nugent: And it's difficult for me to sequence this accurately. That goes back forty-some years! [chuckling] Fifty-some years. Anyway—but that was the pattern. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? But eventually we got to be quite amicable and eventually we all agreed and the standard was unanimously approved and it was released in October of 1961 at the Easter Seal national convention in Denver, Colorado. If you look to the original standard, you'll see that that's the date on it. And there was an article in, I think, Easter Seal magazine about that time, and if you read my paper to the National Academy and then read the speech that Leon Chatelain made at the presentation of the

standards, you'll find that 99percent of it is from my paper to the National Academy of Sciences.

07-00:13:44
Pelka: Okay. And this is—the publication was, "Making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to and Usable by the Physically Disabled." I think that was the title.

07-00:13:53
Nugent: Yeah, I think that's the terminology that was used then, yes.

07-00:13:55
Pelka: Okay.

07-00:13:55
Nugent: Even those things have changed over the years, you know. But anyway—

07-00:14:01
Pelka: Were you at the Easter Seal convention in Denver?

07-00:14:05
Nugent: Oh, yes, yes, I was very much there.

07-00:14:07
Pelka: Okay. And this was—the paper was presented at a—

07-00:14:10
Nugent: At the convention.

07-00:14:12
Pelka: At the convention.

07-00:14:13
Nugent: The announcement of the American Standards being approved, yeah, and it was handed out.

07-00:14:19
Pelka: Okay. Was this at like a plenary session? Or do you specifically remember what—

07-00:14:25
Nugent: Oh it was the major general session of the convention that year.

07-00:14:29
Pelka: Okay. Do you—

07-00:14:30
Nugent: That was the Easter Seals big project and the president's committee was also a co-sponsor.

07-00:14:34
Pelka: Okay. What was the reaction at the conference? Do you recall?

07-00:14:38
Nugent: Well, I recall that it was well accepted. The applause was exceptionally good and I don't remember any dissenters at that particular time and I wouldn't expect any, because they were all part of the Easter Seal group that was going for this.

07-00:14:58
Pelka: Okay. Was there any—

07-00:15:00
Nugent: If there were any, I don't know of them.

07-00:15:02
Pelka: Okay. Building up to this announcement and working on these standards—were there major—you just talked about spending a lot of your time dealing with the architects and builders association and trying to convince them that this wouldn't be the end of the world. Were there issues within the various disability communities on specifics involving the standards?

07-00:15:26
Nugent: Oh yes. There were certain people that wanted something because that's the way *they* liked it, you know what I mean? I'll give you just one example and I wouldn't like this to be in the paper, in the printed publication.

I was presenting a major program at the University of Wisconsin, the School of Engineering and Architecture. And there were two people there. One was a young lady from the state of Washington, and one was actually one of the members of our committee, and they both insisted that they could not function in the stall specifications that we had. So I made the announcement, I said, "Well, during the break, we'll be happy to go down to the restroom, and if I can't show you how to manage this in less than fifteen seconds, I'll come up here and eat my words." And that's a quote, almost.

So we went down there and as many people as possible tried to get in that "john" and the rest were out in the hallway, and that girl learned to do it in about fifteen seconds, and she looked up at me and she said, "I wish there were more people like you, with a practical mind." I'm not saying that to boast, but that's the content of what she said. Well, the other guy also learned to do it in fifteen seconds or less, but his response was, "But I still want it the way I want it." [chuckling]

07-00:17:21
Pelka: Yeah.

07-00:17:21
Nugent: And not all of this is with malice or anything—understand that. It was just that this was starting from scratch, a brand new idea. On campus, we had been doing it for ten, twelve years already.

07-00:17:36
Pelka: How did you physically coordinate all this? Let's say an issue comes up where representatives of the blindness group have a certain impression and the impression needs to be addressed. Were there monthly meetings where people would physically show up? Or was this telephone conferencing, or—

07-00:17:54
Nugent: No, we had had meetings almost monthly, but we also had a lot of telephone conference calls. And basically if an objection was raised, I would insist that it be in writing. And then what I would do is I would make copies of it and I would also write out my interpretation and my answer and I would send it to all the members of the committee for them to agree with me or agree with them or to mend the two together. Do you follow me?

07-00:18:24
Pelka: Yes.

07-00:18:24
Nugent: And it worked out well. It was surprising that when we issued the final product it was a unanimous—not a single negative vote.

07-00:18:34
Pelka: Where would those papers be now? Does ANSI have archives? Or would you—[have] all that documentation?

07-00:18:41
Nugent: I would think they would have but I don't know, because after all they're dealing with standards on film, and standards on cement, and standards on elevators, and God knows what! Whether or not they maintain any archive or whether they might leave that to the responsibility of the sponsoring committees, I don't know the answer to that.

07-00:19:05
Pelka: Okay. Did you maintain archives on that material?

07-00:19:07
Nugent: Well, I maintained quite a bit, yes. But I did maintain all the correspondence and whatnot because right now I can't walk into my office. The papers are everywhere.

07-00:19:17
Pelka: Oh I wanted to talk to you about that at some point, but—

07-00:19:20
Nugent: I'm thinking of hiring an able-bodied person, because I cannot climb up onto a ladder. I cannot reach to the top shelves, because I also had a stent put in my heart recently and between that and my spinal surgeries and my leg from World War II—I walk, and I go everywhere I want to go, but I go very damn slow.

07-00:19:42
Pelka: Well—this is an aside, then. I don't know if I've spoken with you about this before, but do you have plans for all of your papers? Are you thinking of donating them?

07-00:19:50
Nugent: Yeah. They'll go into the university archives.

07-00:19:53
Pelka: Okay. University of Illinois.

07-00:19:54
Nugent: And I've kept a lot of them because of the fact that I still get references—in fact, I got a call, two calls from England and one day I got five calls from Hawaii from a professor there and from a designer there. I still get calls and inquiries from China, which is just now getting into this thing in a big way. I get calls from all over—Australia, and I've had to keep these things handy for references—do you follow me?

07-00:20:27
Pelka: Sure.

07-00:20:27
Nugent: Because I refuse to guess at something. Now as I say, the standards were then approved, and then Easter Seal hired Dr. Tom Stein, who was a wonderful guy, and his main job was to promulgate the standard. In other words, get different Easter Seal chapters to put on pressure in their communities and in their states to make the standard into rule of law.

07-00:20:57
Pelka: Yes. Because at that time there was no enforcement mechanism for these standards.

07-00:21:01
Nugent: No, there is no enforcement mechanism to a standard just because it becomes a standard.

07-00:21:07
Pelka: Right.

07-00:21:07
Nugent: There has to be action after that. And if there's an exception to that, I'm not aware of it. So we did that and I believe South Carolina was the first state to pass a state law and then of course, over a period of time, other states did it. Some states wasted a lot of time and money.

For instance, I was asked to go up to Michigan to speak to the legislature. And I spoke to legislatures in several states including North Carolina. And when I got up to Michigan, they had the standard, but they said they had to refer it to committee and write their own standard. I said, "Well, here. There it is—with

a lot of research, a lot of work done. Why do you have to do it?" "Because our law requires that we do it." And there were other examples like that. That—my explanation may not be one hundred percent adequate, but basically, they refused to just put their stamp of approval on it, and when their standard came out, it was basically a copy of the ANSI A117.1 standard. [chuckling]

07-00:22:19
Pelka: Right. What was the—were there—do you recall the reaction of the various disability constituencies at that time? You had consensus within your committee itself, but when the standards were promulgated do you recall input from the disability community?

07-00:22:43
Nugent: Well, not necessarily the disability community, but there were people that finally found a way to do something and maybe they had some help or maybe they didn't. And they just didn't want to change. So they wanted what they were doing, like the example I gave you earlier of the boy and the girl, what they were doing written into the standard. Of course the standards committee disapproved of it. So there were a number of individuals that challenged things and basically, they wanted it the way they'd been doing it, you know? But when you create something that's applicable to all buildings and facilities used by the public, you don't do it for an individual. For instance, it would be nice if we could say that everybody should own a Chrysler 300, or a Cadillac, but we wouldn't do that. We would say, "Everybody has the right to own a car." Do you understand what I'm trying to say?

07-00:23:46
Pelka: Yeah. So do you recall specific objections? Was it to the degree that the incline in the ramp is too steep, or—the doorways aren't wide enough, or—what exactly were the objections that you recall.

07-00:24:04
Nugent: Well, there were objections, for instance, on the ramp. In fact, an architect in a wheelchair from down in, I think, Georgia, was up here for an institute I was conducting, and there was a ramp there and he said, "I can't make it." And so I said, "Let's see if you can try." Well he tried and he made it. He just had never made the effort before. And of course, if he makes it once, he gets better at it each succeeding time. And he looked at me and he said, "You know, you sure as hell know how to embarrass somebody."

07-00:24:39
Pelka: [chuckling] Now how was it decided—maybe I'm getting a little too technical, but let's talk specifically about ramp, you know, the ratio between elevation and angle. How was that decided? You'd had a lot of experience—

07-00:24:57
Nugent: Oh with research—in fact, you'll see pictures of the research ramp in that publication. We had a ramp that was thirty-four foot long and it was adjustable to length and pitch. We could have it be fifteen-foot long with a

four-foot leveling platform and then another fifteen, or we could have it be thirty-four foot long and we could adjust it by inches. And we ran hundreds and hundreds of paraplegics and quadriplegics, men and women, young and old, up and down that ramp. And we found they could do much better than one in twelve [a ratio of incline of twelve inches of ramp for every inch of vertical climb] , but the difference was that our people had all been trained. In other words, they took a regular therapy program here as a part of our program.

So after—and it was published by the National Safety Council, back in 1958, I believe. But we made the ramp much shallower to accommodate the fact that some people had never been challenged. Well, put it this way—before 1940, less than 3percent of the people ever entered into a regular school. They were all hidden.

But we were—our program was sixteen years old, as an example, and when there's a public health problem and the county health nurse was going from building to building—they found people sixteen years old with disabilities that the school district did not even know about, because the parents were ashamed to let them go out of the house. And not more than three years ago, I received a letter from the parent of one of those boys who I really got tough on at the time and his answer was this, "So and so has just died and I just want to tell you were right all along and I wished that I would have listened." Because his son just never did anything and then just died—and I've had several like that and they're in the files here somewhere.

But—there was never any objection from any specific disability group. The one thing that was—the PVA, because of one man, largely, insisted that the toilet seat be twenty-inches high, which I didn't agree with, but everybody else approved it and so it went through. Since then it's been reduced. The problem is two-fold. You have the problem of aggress—that is, approach—[and] you have the problem of transfer, and the problem of transfer to, is a little different than the problem of transfer from. Then of course you have the problem of egress, which is to leave. So that's been modified over the years.

07-00:27:40
Pelka: Have there been any—are there major modifications over the years that you can think of?

07-00:27:44
Nugent: Well, once it became popular or accepted—and that took a number of years—they've made the toilet stalls wider. See, I was faced with the issue that I had to prove that they could do it within reasonably confined spaces—and I did. But now they're much more liberal. They'll have a five-by-five toilet stall and they'll have bars on the back and bars on the side. The bar in the back, ninety-nine times out of hundred doesn't do any good because there's a reservoir bowl there. It only does good in certain types of toilet designs, you know what

I mean? But—yeah, there have been changes, none of any real consequence, but there have been changes.

07-00:28:27
Pelka: But your job back then, really, was just getting the entire concept—getting your foot in the door, so to speak.

07-00:28:35
Nugent: Oh yeah. It was changing the negative attitude of architects and builders and contractors. Oh I remember one time I called a meeting of the American—was it Plumbing Association—or something like that. And all the manufacturers—Plumbing Manufacturing Association, that's what it was. And we met at O'Hare Airport and I started out by saying to them, "You show me all the research that you've done to determine the proper inside diameter or outside diameter of a pipe and the proper distance from the wall." And there's took about five minutes. So I showed about a half an hour of my film and slides and I said, "Now, which do you think merits consideration?" And they all agreed that the dimensions we had specified from research, were right.

And the University of Michigan, some years later, did a research just on handrails and they concurred with everything we had done. And they weren't doing it for disabled people, they were just doing it period. And in fact, I've got letters from several of the plumbing companies saying, "Since we adopted your standard, it's the biggest part of our business." [chuckling]

07-00:29:54
Pelka: Were there any—did anyone react simply by saying, "Why are we doing this? Who cares whether these buildings are accessible?"

07-00:30:03
Nugent: Well, yes. I got responses like this even here in town after we had maybe a hundred wheelchairs in town. I'd go to a certain building and a fellow would say, "Well, I've never seen a wheelchair in this store." Or in this bar, or in this restaurant. I said, "Of course you haven't. They can't get into it!"

And eventually, the cities adopted codes long before anybody else had done anything and made it a requirement. I can tell you another little aside. I was talking to the American Psychological Association at the Cleveland Hotel in Cleveland and I showed my slides, I showed the pictures of our buses—incidentally, our bus where you can walk in the front door and a wheelchair can wheel in the same front door in less than five seconds, goes back to 1952. Nationally, it's only five years old. And I've got films of all that and pictures of all that.

Anyway, I was lecturing and showed my slides and films and whatnot, and I was the main speaker that day, and after it was all over, there was a question-and-answer period, and one smart aleck got up and he said, "Yeah, Professor Nugent, you say all these things, but you've got special ramps, you've got

special buses, you've got special this, you've got special that," and he thought I was going to argue with him. So I said, "Well, just a minute. How did you get in this building?" He said, "I walked in." I said, "Well, how did you get from the sidewalk to the door." He said, "I climbed up the steps." I said, "Oh, wouldn't you have looked like a jackass crawling up the face of that wall if someone hadn't thought of those steps first?"

And then the audience switched sides and, boy, they just roared. But people think that way. They don't realize that they're getting in on steps, but somebody had to design and build those steps. And then I said, "There's nothing special about what we're doing except that we're considering the *whole* population and not just a segment of it." That was our basic argument.

07-00:32:18
Pelka: Yes. You just mentioned steps and I was curious, did you run into any objections on aesthetic grounds? Architects seem to be very fond of steps.

07-00:32:33
Nugent: They have been and they are, but I had pictures of the Marin County Building [Marin Civic Center], which has a ramp that winds and circles and has gardens in it that goes up, I don't know, four or five stories and they also have steps in the building. They also had ramps and an elevator! [chuckling] So steps and ramps can be aesthetic. I had some pictures of a store where there's a ramp that goes around all four walls to get to the second story, and they've used the side of the ramp, and the walls going up the ramp for displays. It's absolutely beautiful!

07-00:33:12
Pelka: Yeah. But were there people at that time who simply wouldn't see that? Who just—

07-00:33:16
Nugent: Oh sure there were people—there were people that—well, people resist change, first of all. That's a phenomenon that will go on forever and ever. But there were groups that resisted it, but the truth of the matter is our assembly hall, which seats 17,000 people is all accessible to wheelchairs. Our stadium is—all the new stadiums have been built to be accessible across the country.

I've seen some beautiful work done across the country. I can't give you specifics of all of them. I think Milwaukee's park is one, but anyway—people resist change, or people want to cling to what they're used to—you know what I mean? And that creates controversy of a sort. The honest people, once it's explained to them or demonstrated to them, switch quickly. The dishonest one, for selfish reasons or some other reason—they take a little longer. And that's just normal behavior. You'll find that in any project that exists in the country.

07-00:34:26
Pelka: Yes. Okay. I want to go back to something you said a little earlier. You talked about South Carolina adopting the standards and implementing some kind of enforcement mechanism. Were you involved with that at all? With that effort?

07-00:34:47
Nugent: I was privileged to be present when it happened and I don't know, I received certain commendations or something from them—I'm looking on my wall to see if I can find one—but anyway, yes I was, but in other—and what they did and South Carolina relatively was a small population state then, by comparison to some of the others, going back that far. They created a state law. Now in many parts of the United States, you can't create a state law. It's done by counties or it's done by cities and whatnot. So, the unique thing about South Carolina was that it was a statewide law, period, which was terrific.

07-00:35:35
Pelka: So was there a citizens group that proposed the legislation? Or did you go to legislators in South Carolina? Did the governor take the initiative? Do you recall how that happened?

07-00:35:46
Nugent: Well, Easter Seal really took the initiative and I was invited to make a presentation to the legislature. I think once I also appeared before the North Carolina legislature—in fact, I can see my honorary tar heel plaque up here [chuckling]. But on several occasions I did appear before legislative groups in different states, but it wasn't uniform—it involved forty-eight states—there are now fifty.

07-00:36:14
Pelka: Okay. Was there discussion at that time, and we're talking now the early 1960s, of trying to pass some sort of national enforcement legislation?

07-00:36:29
Nugent: No, no. There wasn't at that time. However, the ADA, which is national law, really grew out of the American National Standards and some of the things that happened between the creation of the American National Standards and other programs. And the ADA, is, in fact, the national law, but that's what, only ten years old? Or eight years old?

07-00:36:56
Pelka: Well—more like fifteen years old, I think at this point—[it was passed in] 1990.

07-00:37:01
Nugent: I don't think it's that old, but it's pretty close in there, yeah.

07-00:37:03
Pelka: Yeah, although—I guess it was passed in 1990 and various aspects of it became—

07-00:37:09
Nugent: But it wasn't approved [regulations weren't written, and access deadlines didn't fall due] until some time after that. I have the dates somewhere but I can't find it that quick. I would say it's somewhere between ten and fifteen years old and we're talking about sixty years ago.

07-00:37:23
Pelka: Yeah, yeah. I'm wondering at that time—I just want to throw a couple of names out at you. We're talking again, early, now getting into mid-sixties, let's say. Did you have any contact with Hugh Gallagher?

07-00:37:39
Nugent: Oh yes. Yes.

07-00:37:41
Pelka: Tell me about that.

07-00:37:43
Nugent: Well, I can't recite all of the ways that we may have contacted each other, but I know we were together at certain meetings and things like that. He was very active in the Washington scene and, by the way, he's quite a golfer! [chuckling] Anyway—we had dealings and he was present at the time that I received the [Henry B.] Betts Award and things like that.

07-00:38:17
Pelka: Yes. Now he was involved with passing the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, is that right?

07-00:38:24
Nugent: I believe he was involved. I don't know if he was the principal or not, but I'm sure how he was involved, yes. I can't answer that question. I know that Leon Chatelaine was very much involved and others were—Fred Fay was very much involved in that and Fred Fay may be a better source of information regarding Hugh's involvement in that at that time than I am.

07-00:38:49
Pelka: Okay. What was your involvement with passage of the Barriers Act? Or did you have involvement—I'm assuming you did.

07-00:38:56
Nugent: Oh yes, I had legislators calling me, I had various people calling me. I went to Washington on more than one occasion for meetings. I can't tell you all the different experiences I had, but some of them were rather unique.

There was a period of time there when each department in Washington was going to develop its own standard. And I had to go to Washington for a presentation of some sort, I can't remember specifically what it was, but I went there a day or two early, because I thought maybe I can get some other things done while I'm there. And as I walked into the HUD building, one of my colleagues there recognized me and said, "Hi, Tim." And we visited for a

while. He said, “By the way, we’re having a reception tonight,” and told me where, “why don’t you join us?”

So I joined them. And as I walked in the room, he saw me—he was facing the door and he waved at me, and there were a group of six or eight people around him. They were discussing things and so I approached him and as I approached him I went with my finger over my mouth saying don’t say anything. Well, this one guy was giving all the arguments to why they shouldn’t have a universal standard or a common standard in the United States. And he was making all sorts of arguments and so when it was the right time I waved for my buddy to introduce me and he introduced me, he said, “By the way,” he says, “this is Professor Nugent and he’s going to be the referee tomorrow at the meeting.” And so I looked at this guy and I said, “Why don’t you want universal standards so it would help everybody?” He said, “Well, I was just hired by such and such department to write their standard and if they do that, I’m out of a job!”

07-00:40:44
Pelka: [laughs] Well, that’s honest!

07-00:40:46
Nugent: Yeah, and I finally said to him—I won’t tell you what I said to him, but he never showed up at the meeting the next day, because there were people that were thinking that way.

We had another big meeting and it was in conjunction with the president’s committee meeting and the executive director of the American Standards Commission, I think it was called at the time, objected to a uniform standard. And so I was at the speaker’s table and I stopped and I said, “Okay—you give me what your objections are.” And he thought and thought and he said, “Well, it’s only really about 4 or 5 percent.” I said, “You know the procedures for standards is if you have an objection you’re privileged to write it and if it’s justified we’ll incorporate it into the standard. Now why haven’t you done that?” And the crowd just went nuts, you know.

And he got really sheepish and the reason was he wouldn’t have a job. And believe it or not they removed him from that job two weeks after that. So you know, there were attitudes like this, Fred, throughout, and people that deal in such things, you have to understand, and can’t get too excited over it. They have to deal with it, sometimes diplomatically and sometimes harshly.

07-00:42:09
Pelka: Yeah. At that time, and we’re talking now early mid-sixties still, was there any discussion about access being a civil rights issue? Do you recall anyone framing it—

07-00:42:24
Nugent: Oh yes, it came up from time to time.

07-00:42:25
Pelka: Okay. Do you recall who would be framing it in that way?

07-00:42:29
Nugent: Well, Illinois—oh back in the fifties when, I believe, Kerner was the governor, included it in their *constitution*, the right of the disabled to have—and don't quote me on these words now—have access and whatnot, so that became a pretty forceful thing.

07-00:42:53
Pelka: This is in the 1950s in Illinois and—disability rights were incorporated into the state constitution?

07-00:43:00
Nugent: No, they didn't call it disability rights, in those words, but it had that connotation. Again, it's too long ago for me to quote the thing and I won't attempt to do it, but it was a part of the constitution of the state of Illinois!

07-00:43:12
Pelka: And was this—they were talking about physical access, primarily?

07-00:43:18
Nugent: Well, Illinois passed a Public Law 4816, I think it was, back in those days too. Tom Hood and I were the principal authors of the law, but it was a legislative committee on hospitalization of paraplegics that put it together and sponsored it and it became a requirement. So Illinois did that too, and I don't know when that actually took place but it's about forty years ago or more.

07-00:43:51
Pelka: Yes. What were your thoughts on that? Were you looking at disability—at access, let's say, physical access—when you were thinking about it back then, were you thinking in terms of —this is a right that people have, as opposed to just being a good thing that society—

07-00:44:06
Nugent: No I definitely felt it was a right. First of all, I was disabled early in life. I grew up to be pretty strong and healthy, athletic, and whatnot, but I had a lot of experiences in my life. For instance, back in the thirties, we had a houseboy. He took care of me when I was real small in the late twenties. He'd wipe my rear end and do everything and I learned a lot from him. He was a very bright person—but that was the best job he could get, was houseboy to take care of me. And it dawned on me—this guy's intelligent, he could do a lot of things.

And I didn't say that at that age, but later on in life I looked back and I realized that. And there was an orthopedic school right next to the campus where I went to college, and I often asked myself—why were they in that school? Why weren't they in a regular school?

And I have awards from the Illinois Council on Exceptional Children for the help I gave to the elementary and secondary school systems here. I didn't think of it as law at the time, I just thought of it as hey, we've got to plan for these people. And there were a lot of little things that contributed to my thinking, but I can't—I'm not a Glenn Cunningham story! [chuckling]

07-00:45:31
Pelka: I'm sorry?

07-00:45:32
Nugent: Glenn Cunningham story.

07-00:45:34
Pelka: Explain that—I'm not sure I follow.

07-00:45:36
Nugent: It's before your time. Glenn Cunningham was severely burned and ended up the world champion miler. He was burned and whatnot and ended up the world champion miler. And there are other stories like that. I don't pretend to be one of those, but nevertheless, these things had a profound influence on the way I thought and the things I did. [tape interruption]

07-00:46:01
Pelka: Okay, I think we're back on. This is tape seven, side B, oral history interview with Professor Timothy Nugent on October 18, 2005. I'm sorry, you were talking about Cunningham and—the influences on your thinking about disability rights at that time.

07-00:46:23
Nugent: Yeah—what I was trying to say—that all the experiences, my own experience—see I was born with a bad heart, and they didn't know as much about a heart eighty-three years ago and the doctors scared my mother—"Don't let him run, don't let him climb," all this kind of stuff—well, I finally in my own way said, "Go to hell!" And started doing everything I wanted to do, and I ended up playing college football and military ball and running track and doing everything. I saw other situations like that. I had a cousin with CP, who should have been allowed to do everything. She was capable, but they kept her in the home. I saw a lot of things that when I had the—this program I hoped would be my doctoral dissertation, but once I started it I found out how much there was to do and how hard it was to get done that it consumed my life. And the university was against it. They didn't even give me an appropriation for nine years—for nine years I had to raise the money for the program and for my salary. And Fred [Fay] has a little awareness of that, but—I mean, that's what the attitudes were! We surveyed all the universities of the country of consequence and they all refused the idea of this program at that time. Now they all have something—it's law.

So these things take time to evolve. And I got so involved in the program that I never finished the doctorate degree that I planned. I got two others but not

the one I planned. And actually we started the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, we started the first metropolitan-type bus system, we started the wheelchair football and baseball, and all those sorts of things, just because I thought these kids could do it and because I liked doing it! [chuckling]

07-00:48:28
Pelka: I'm wondering if the fact that so many of the people in your program at Illinois were veterans also had something to do with the sense of this as a right, as opposed to charity.

07-00:48:41
Nugent: No. See—you people—when I say you people, I don't mean this maliciously, now—the younger ones think in terms of rights and law and things like this, but the guys back there then did not, did not. They were willing to fight for what they thought was right, but they weren't—and eventually it evolved into, "Let's make this into law."

But you're wrong when you say that I had mostly veterans, because I had as many civilian people with disabilities as I had veterans in the first two to four or five years of the program. Now the big difference is this—during World War II, I believe there were as many spinal-cord-injured from the civilian population as there were in the war, but the one difference was, when civilians were discharged from the hospital—there was no record kept of them. Some went home because the parents had enough money to take care of them. Some went to nursing homes, some went to orthopedic schools or orthopedic hospitals. But with the veterans, there was an agency responsible for all of them, so we could find them—you follow me? And we knew they existed and we knew the numbers that existed, so the veterans and the Veterans Administration played a critical role in this development, but not because there were more veterans. Do you understand the difference?

07-00:50:09
Pelka: Sure, sure. They were a—I don't know if constituency is the right word, but they were a group that was seen as a group and that was followed as a group as opposed to lots and lots of individuals.

07-00:50:22
Nugent: Well, every veteran was registered with the Veterans Administration, whether he was disabled or not disabled, and so—and of course, we have veterans hospitals scattered throughout the country. In fact, our program began in the Mayo Army General Hospital in Galesburg, which was completed just before the end of the war and wasn't needed, and it was an excellent place to experiment with the program, but when we were transferred to the main campus of the University of Illinois, they didn't want us, see? So the Veterans Administration and veterans were a key factor in our getting the job done, but it wasn't because there were more veterans or it wasn't because of the veterans' initiative necessarily, although some of the veterans' leaders at that time were excellent leaders.

07-00:51:10
Pelka: Yes, and of course PVA came out of the veterans' experience.

07-00:51:15
Nugent: Yes. PVA was founded in Chicago in 1948. The first five tournaments, the National Wheelchair Basketball tournaments that we held, we contributed the proceeds to them because they were broke in those days, but now they're a very wealthy outfit and do a lot of sponsoring and whatnot and they grew up, you might say, simultaneously with this whole realm of programs.

07-00:51:43
Pelka: Yes. I want to ask you—I want to get back though—you didn't then see any difference in attitude, let's say, and I'm generalizing here, because obviously this is—I'm making a general statement. But in terms of difference in attitude between, let's say, disabled veterans and disabled civilians, you weren't thinking in those terms, or you didn't see that at that time.

07-00:52:06
Nugent: Well, I wasn't thinking in those terms, but there were differences.

07-00:52:09
Pelka: Okay. What were they?

07-00:52:11
Nugent: Well, for instance, Harold Scharper was my first paraplegic veteran. Harold Scharper came to the university thirty-four years of age and married. He was able-bodied until combat. Now he had grown up as an able-bodied person, so he could relate to some of the experiences he was having with his disability to experiences he had as an able-bodied person. Maybe they were more difficult, maybe he had to do things differently, but he could relate to that, where the person who's disabled at birth or very early in life and he's coddled by his parents or by others doesn't recognize these things as being normal. And the effort that's put forth to achieve them. Do you follow me?

07-00:53:01
Pelka: Yeah.

07-00:53:02
Nugent: So there wasn't a difference in their being necessarily, but there was a difference in the fact that they had experienced normal life, normal challenges, normal successes and failures prior to the disability. That was an asset if the people around them treated it right.

07-00:53:25
Pelka: Right, right. Well, for one thing they took it for—maybe taking it for granted isn't the right way to put it, but they had assumed at some point that they were going to go out, get married, get a job, be in the community and physically things might have been different now, but they had that foundation, is what you're talking about whereas somebody who, let's say, had CP maybe even grew up in an institution, didn't have that.

07-00:53:52
Nugent: Well, whether it was CP or spina bifida or another type of spinal cord injury, it's true of all of them. Let me give you another example—although I founded the National Wheelchair Basketball Association [NWBA]—wheelchair basketball started in the veterans hospitals. Without any organization by the administration of that hospital or anything, the veterans were restless, they wanted to do something, they got out on the floor and they started shooting baskets, and realized, hey, well we can still do this. Well, they knew it from beforehand!

07-00:54:28
Pelka: Right, right.

07-00:54:29
Nugent: And maybe some of them had been great basketball players—I can't name anyone right now, but they went back out there and they liked it. But you wouldn't get somebody that had never done anything like that to try it back in those days, so there's that natural phenomena of familiarity with what life is really like and what life has been imposed upon the individual.

07-00:54:56
Pelka: Yes. And also the fact that, if you're talking about disabled veterans, by and large—again, generalizing, but by and large these guys would have had a fairly normal—mainstream, let's say, education. You have somebody who's disabled from birth might not have been able to, depending on the disability, might have been excluded from getting an education.

07-00:55:22
Nugent: Well, excluded by policy and excluded by the fact that schools weren't accessible and public attitudes and apathy. However, we had veterans, for instance, one of our outstanding veterans who became assistant to the commissioner of vocational rehabilitation in Washington, dropped out of high school during his sophomore year and enlisted. And was discharged and within a year after his discharge was in an automobile accident and became a high-level paraplegic. So here he was—he didn't have a high school diploma, he was disabled.

We had to go through certain circuitous routes to make him eligible for university, and when I got him involved in basketball, when it came time that I wanted to put him in a game, he refused to go in the game—he was that tense, that afraid of the public's opinion. So I faked it with the team, I said, "Don, you foul out, John you get injured, and you do this, and you do that," so we end up with four men on the floor. And then I went to Les and I said, "Les, we're going to get our pants torn off of us if we don't get a fifth man out there." And he went out there and he played beautifully.

About four games later, I'm sitting on the sideline and I look out on the floor and Les has got his chest on his thighs and his hands on the floor and he

comes over to the bench using his hands on the floor to motivate himself. And I thought, oh my God, what have I done! And he reached for a ball under the bench, and, with arms extended, he sat up. Now if he had been paralyzed as bad as they said he was when he came out of the VA hospital, that would have been impossible. So through the sports program, we reduced levels of paralysis, we reactivated muscles that had become—not paralyzed, but completely idle.

07-00:57:20
Pelka: You know—what you're saying reminds me of—I guess it's something I was reading recently. You know Paul Longmore, right? Or you know who he is.

07-00:57:31
Nugent: No, I can't say I do.

07-00:57:33
Pelka: Okay. He's a historian at the San Francisco State University and years ago he did research on the League of the Physically Handicapped. Now these were folks in the 1930s, by and large polio survivors, who organized sit-in demonstrations and picket lines. These are civilians—they were protesting the fact that the WPA would not hire people with disabilities to be part of the WPA programs. Anyway—he did interviews with these people—this is years later, these folks were all in their eighties and nineties at this point. But one of the major obstacles they faced, organizing as a disability group, was the fact that a lot of these people didn't want to be seen in public. They did not want to draw attention to themselves.

07-00:58:23
Nugent: That's right—

07-00:58:24
Pelka: And be—to be on a picket line in the 1930s, someone in a wheelchair on a picket line, or somebody who didn't walk normally or however you'd want to call it, was very, very difficult. So I guess just that the attitudinal barriers you're mentioning that strikes me—the self confidence, I guess.

07-00:58:44
Nugent: It was very prevalent, and people would come up and ask silly questions of them. I remember one time I was with a bunch of veterans at the Hines Veterans Hospital outside of Chicago and they were all celebrating in a bar and people would come up and say to them—I remember one time one of the veterans got so mad he just hauled off and slugged the guy.

07-00:59:08
Pelka: Wow! Do you recall what it was the person had said?

07-00:59:11
Nugent: I can't recall, but there'd be things—some guy maybe was in service for six months and he'd come up and he'd say, "Well, you know, I'm a veteran too." And talk and talk and then say things that just rubbed the guy the wrong way,

because it was obvious he didn't understand what these guys had gone through. And there were a lot of situations like that over the years. I think it was called the Setback Bar, but I can't remember that for sure, either.

07-00:59:38
Pelka: [chuckling] The Setback Bar?

07-00:59:40
Nugent: Yeah, I think that's what it was called, but don't quote me on that.

07-00:59:43
Pelka: Okay. Just as an aside here, while we're talking about wheelchair basketball, I wonder—have you seen [the recently released documentary] *Murder Ball*?

07-00:59:50
Nugent: Yes. Well, I've seen it in actuality. It's been a part of our national veterans wheelchair games for about six years now, six or seven years.

07-00:59:59
Pelka: And what did you think? You've seen the film?

07-01:00:03
Nugent: Well, I didn't see the film. I haven't seen the film because it hasn't been around here yet, but as I say, I've seen the game from the very beginning when it first started. And they play a rough, tough game.

07-01:00:17
Pelka: Yeah, well, there was a scene in the film that I thought of you, actually, as I was watching it. And they were asking—it's a press conference, and you know, now they call it wheelchair rugby, I guess.

07-01:00:28
Nugent: That's what it's called: quad rugby.

07-01:00:29
Pelka: Yeah. Quad rugby. And a reporter asks, "Didn't this used to be called murder ball? Why did you change the name?" And the person responding said, "Well, we found it difficult to get corporate sponsorship for something called murder ball."

07-01:00:44
Nugent: Yeah—well, actually, I don't know which came first, murder ball or quad rugby, but from the very beginning it's been quad rugby in the national veterans games and that's the first place it was played on a broad competitive basis.

07-01:00:58
Pelka: Yes. Okay. Getting back to—how are you doing on time, by the way?

07-01:01:06
Nugent: I don't have my watch on. I'm trying to do some work outside, but can you tell what your time is?

07-01:01:12
Pelka: Yeah, it's 12:08 here, so it's about 11:08 your time. So you have to be somewhere at—

07-01:01:17
Nugent: Well, we're doing pretty good.

07-01:01:19
Pelka: Okay. So you have to be somewhere at noon, though, your time.

07-01:01:20
Nugent: I have to get done a little early because I have to clean up before I go. I was outside working up until ten.

07-01:01:26
Pelka: Okay. Let me just ask you one other question then, then I'll let you go—or series of questions. You talked about South Carolina. I was wondering if Ron Mace was involved in this effort? And if you were in contact with Ron Mace at that point.

07-01:01:46
Nugent: Oh, Ron Mace and I were in contact continually for a long time and Ron Mace is the architect in a wheelchair that I described earlier who said he couldn't wheel up a ramp.

07-01:01:56
Pelka: Ah! Okay.

07-01:01:59
Nugent: And he was so convinced of that that he never tried and he did it here and he did it throughout the week we had the conference here and he was both mad at me and glad at me! [chuckling] So yeah, I know Ron Mace very well. He's been in ill health lately. I don't know if he's still alive.

07-01:02:20
Pelka: I believe he's passed away.

07-01:02:22
Nugent: I thought he had. I thought I got word on that because he was very ill the last time I spoke to him.

07-01:02:28
Pelka: Yeah. Do you remember meeting him for the first time?

07-01:02:31
Nugent: Oh golly—I think it was when I was down in that area lecturing or at some national meeting that he attended and then of course I held a national seminar

up here and he came up here representing South Carolina—no, South Carolina or North Carolina?

07-01:02:50
Pelka: I think it may have been North Carolina.

07-01:02:53
Nugent: North Carolina. Yeah, I thought it was. And that's when we got to know each other real well and he served on a couple of subcommittees with me and he served in a consultants role with me with one of the large plumbing companies. Oh golly, they're out of Milwaukee and they gave me a $20,000 grant one time and now I can't think of their name. That's what happens when you get this age. Oh—

07-01:03:23
Pelka: Do you recall what year it was that you first met Mr. Mace?

07-01:03:28
Nugent: Oh I'd be afraid to guess on that, Fred, really. If people will talk to me about a student, or about something and I'll say, oh yeah, that was about ten years ago. And they look at me, "Oh no, Tim, that was thirty-five years ago!" The next time I'm talking to somebody and I'll say, "Well, gee, that goes back a long ways." And they'll say, "No, Tim, that was only eight years ago." I guess it's just part of getting old! [chuckling] Everybody says I don't look eighty-three, but I'll tell you, I'm feeling it!

07-01:04:00
Pelka: Okay. Well, you know, why don't we break here? This is a good place, I think, to break.

07-01:04:06
Nugent: You said you had several—

07-01:04:08
Pelka: Well, no, I just wanted to ask about Ron Mace, and then the next thing I want to get into is the impact of ANSI on the overall disability rights and independent living movement, and that seems like a pretty major topic that's going to—

07-01:04:22
Nugent: Well, what happened was, the ANSI standards was the first program development that focused on the needs of those with disabilities. Therefore, it became a stepping stone or a slingshot for other things being called to the public's attention. And even when—oh darn, just a second, that I can see, I can see it here on the paper. Oh no, I was wrong, I can't see it here on the paper. Anyway—oh he was famous in Washington in a wheelchair. He wore a Texas cowboy hat.

07-01:05:11
Pelka: Oh, Justin Dart.

07-01:05:13
Nugent: Justin Dart and I became quite good friends, and when he made a presentation to me at our graduation ceremonies here. He made the statement that the standards and the programs that we had developed here at Illinois were the basis for the federal legislation. And of course, I appeared before congressional committees. And he [Dart] presented it to me, and he says that this wealthy guy on TV—[to himself] oh Nugent, you ought to be ashamed of yourself—he had a program [on TV called] *The Apprentice*--

07-01:05:53
Pelka: Called what now?

07-01:05:55
Nugent: Called *The Apprentice*.

07-01:05:56
Pelka: *The Apprentice*—oh, yeah, what's his name, I know who you mean. [Donald Trump]

07-01:06:01
Nugent: [Dart] said, "He's famous [only] for being famous. [But] years after Tim's dead, these standards will still exist and people will be getting around," which was quite a compliment coming from him—he's in a wheelchair and being as high up as he—you know, he owned Tupperware and several other things. And he hired one of our outstanding basketball players to represent Tupperware in Japan. So there are little things like that that kind of perk me up every once in a while and keep me going. [chuckling]

07-01:06:37
Pelka: Okay. Well, why don't I let you go now—and do you want to set up another time?

07-01:06:44
Nugent: Well, I'm going to have to wait on a couple of tentative requests I have, for their confirmation before I can give you a specific time, but I'll give you a call and let you know maybe—let me look here—it looks like next week is free. I know this Friday we have out annual DSO awards banquet and Saturday I'm booked solid. Thursday of this week I'm booked solid, but—

07-01:07:17
Pelka: Well, why don't you give me a call when you know a little more what—

07-01:07:22
Nugent: Right now let me—I'm in my office, which is outside the house. Let me go in the house and look at the master calendar and maybe I can give you a reasonably good tentative idea, because I hate the fact that I've had to put you off, but it hasn't been willful.

07-01:07:38
Pelka: Okay. No, I understand.

07-01:07:39
Nugent: Two spinal surgeries and heart [problem]. Those kind of things kind of take a—

07-01:07:44
Pelka: I was thrilled when you called. I was just absolutely thrilled when you called.

07-01:07:49
Nugent: Well, I told Fred [Fay] that I've been wanting to do this for a long time, but I just haven't been able to. Of course, we also did go to Germany for a period of time. [Discussion about setting a date for next interview deleted]

Interview 5: 10-25-2005
Begin Audiofile 8 10-25-05.mp3

08-00:00:00
Pelka: Okay, this is oral history interview with Professor Tim Nugent on October 25, 2005. I forget what interview this is but it's tape eight, side A. We left off last time talking about ANSI and one question I wanted to ask, or a couple of questions I wanted to ask to tie that up are as follows. I was wondering first if you saw an immediate impact or a relatively immediate impact of the ANSI standards on the overall disability rights movement.

08-00:00:41
Nugent: I don't think anybody could call it an immediate impact. It was immediate within the small circle that was directly involved, but after that it was like dropping a pebble in a pool and the ripples go out, because it took a number of years and months for other states to adapt them and there certainly was an awareness but so far as complete impact, it wasn't spontaneous or fast. There was a lot of convincing to be done yet.

08-00:01:25
Pelka: Do you remember a particular moment back then, cruising around the country where you saw something, a ramp or a lift-equipped bus or something like that and thought, oh hey, this is something we did?

08-00:01:39
Nugent: Oh I'm sure I saw a few of those around, but I also saw some beautiful examples of accessibility that were done by the architect as a design feature. [chuckling] One example is the Marin County Building—I think this is called the Marin County Building [Marin Center; Marin County Civic Center] out in California. I think Frank Lloyd Wright designed it and I knew him briefly because we were both from Wisconsin originally and—it was beautiful, because in addition to the steps and the elevator, they had ramps going up through gardens, winding around, going up to the third or second level. I don't remember the level. And there were some places that I visited that—it was a direct result of our efforts, but I can't say that was too plentiful. Not immediately. [chuckling]

08-00:02:38
Pelka: Now I'm just curious—did Frank Lloyd Wright—was he aware of access as an issue? Or did he just happen to design a building—

08-00:02:45
Nugent: Oh no. Frank Lloyd Wright is really a generation or a generation and a half ahead of me. He's one of the most famous architects in the world.

08-00:02:53
Pelka: Oh sure—that's why I'm asking—if he—

08-00:02:56
Nugent: No, most of his houses, I would say, [were] inaccessible, because he always had such unique characteristics, like the Waterfall House [Falling Water in Bear Run, Pennsylvania] in—it's in the East somewhere and the house on the rock [Taliesin?] in Wisconsin and several others like that that, people travel miles and miles to visit, but of course those aren't accessible, but they're unique.

08-00:03:24
Pelka: Yes. So the fact that this building was relatively accessible was more or less an accident, you think.

08-00:03:29
Nugent: Well, I—you might call it an accident when you just think of accessibility per se, but it was a characteristic of design, functional design, where he was concerned. If you know what I mean. I hate these minute categorizations that we are of a habit of using these days.

08-00:03:53
Pelka: Yeah. Well, I'm just curious because when you mention Frank Lloyd Wright, he of course is one of the premier American architects and it would be interesting—I wonder if he ever wrote on the subject or if he was ever interviewed on it.

08-00:04:06
Nugent: No, not to my knowledge, and I've read quite a bit of his stuff over the years. I don't think as a particular item it ever entered his mind. And I'm not qualified to make a judgment of what was in his mind but from what I know of his works and the number of works that I visited, which has been many over the years, I don't think it ever entered his mind from the standpoint of the large population of disabled that are being denied because of accessibility or lack of it. I just don't think that.

08-00:04:44
Pelka: Okay. Let me move onto another topic. I don't know whether this would have come up during the ANSI deliberations or not, or if this was a later development, but historically in the movement there's been a lot of discussion about the issue of Para transit versus mainline accessible transportation—mass transit. I think this is resolved to some extent, but certainly, beginning I know in the 1980s there was a lot of discussion about whether it was better to use Para transit or better to design mainline accessible transportation. Was that a discussion that you all had back when you were developing the ANSI standards?

08-00:05:26
Nugent: Well, I made a point of telling them that we had to have transportation as a part of our concern, but the committee wasn't prepared at that time to include it and I think, logically so. They were more concerned about the accessibility of buildings and facilities used by the public. Of course, I think that

transportation is a facility! [chuckling] But I couldn't convince the committee of that originally.

However, our bus system, where you could walk in the front door and, Fred, could wheel in the front door in five seconds, and it was a regular transit bus and we had what you would call a transit system on campus for our people, and that was far more economical than a special transportation system. And you know you have to replace your public transportation vehicles periodically. They don't last forever. So the point is that when you replace them, do it right. Make it accessible to everyone and functional to everyone.

I have a great distaste for the fact that when the cities finally started to do this, out of cowardice they insisted that every chair had to be tied down and every person strapped in, because in our fifty-six years we have never had a tie-down or a strap-in for our wheelchair people and we handle hundreds and hundreds a day and we've never had an injury.

So—different authorities once they do get involved, they add their little bit and it's not based on experience or knowledge. It's just sometimes based on fear or the cost of insurance or things like that, Fred. And I don't think there's a damn thing that I can do about that. [chuckling] Or you or anybody else.

08-00:07:21

Pelka: Yeah. Was this an argument that you ran into even in terms of the ANSI standards, architectural standards? Did people say—well, if you put ramps on these buildings, you know, disabled people will come in and what if there's an accident, or an emergency or whatever.

08-00:07:33

Nugent: There was some concern for that, but it wasn't a very prominent concern. That didn't come up as much as that it would increase the cost of a building. It would increase the space consumption in a building that would reflect in cost. Those were the biggest arguments we faced, and as I say, people are always afraid of what they don't know. And the architects were very concerned about this, very belligerent originally about this because they thought it *would* increase the size or space consumption in a building and the cost of a building.

But the truth of the matter is I've never known a building that couldn't be made accessible without ramping. We've done that on campus here several times, just by re-grading [the landscape around the building]. And then running a sidewalk right up to the threshold. In one instance we ran a graded ramp down to, or graded sidewalk down to, through a basement window area way and made that the entrance and within two weeks, 90percent of the able-bodied students that entered and left that building, used that entrance. It was much more conveniently located than the regular entrances, which had all sorts of steps—curved steps and all sorts of things. [chuckling]

It's hard verbally to give you a complete picture of this, but actually, the orientation of a building, even on hilly land—you know,people used to say, "Well, you're lucky because the land's pretty flat in central Illinois." But the water table was only three-foot deep in those days, so it was a problem. But wherever you build a building on a hill, if you orient the building properly, you can have a ground level entrance. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?

08-00:09:30
Pelka: I know exactly what you're saying, because I had experience, or my partner had experience, years ago with making a church accessible, and this was a very [building]—old by American standards. It was 150 years old or something like that and it was actually a historical landmark kind of thing, and so there were all kinds of problems about making it accessible. The argument was that you're going to destroy—putting a ramp there is not historically accurate and you're going to destroy the impact of the building on the street and all of this. And they did exactly what you're talking about. They graded the grounds—they just simply brought in some fill and re-landscaped and were able to provide a level entrance without steps, without a ramp, without any of that.

08-00:10:18
Nugent: Yeah, and that's true—sometimes you don't even have to bring in dirt. You just have to orient things properly.

08-00:10:24
Pelka: Yeah. Of course it's a lot easier to do that designing the building outright when you're first designing it than to go back and retrofit.

08-00:10:32
Nugent: Oh yes. Any time you can include this in the original design and construction, you're making a big savings over any type of retrofit.

08-00:10:40
Pelka: Yes. This brings me to my next question. I was wondering if at that point anyone was talking about what's now called universal design. I don't know exactly when that term—

08-00:10:57
Nugent: That term began during the processing of American standards, of the ANSI standards. In other words, some people thought that by bringing that up at the time it would broaden the application and viability of the American national standard and it wouldn't. The thing about universal design is that the concept is accepted universally. It isn't a factor of architectural design per se, it's the fact that it is universal in its application and acceptance. Do you follow me?

08-00:11:40
Pelka: No, not quite. Maybe you could restate that or take me through that again.

08-00:11:44
Nugent: Universal design meant that it would be applicable anywhere and to anything that required design for access and usability. It didn't specify specifics like the pitch of a ramp or—

08-00:12:04
Pelka: I see what you mean.

08-00:12:06
Nugent: —it relied on other things for those detailed factors, but it was that it should be a universal concept. In other words, applicable anywhere and everywhere. And it did come up during our American National Standards committee meetings and discussions in the implementation of the standard. It came up quite often and sometimes I've even asked someone—tell me, what is the difference. And they couldn't. [chuckling]

08-00:12:37
Pelka: Who—do you remember—who in particular was in that discussion?

08-00:12:45
Nugent: Well Ron Mace was one of them. And—oh I can't think of this other fellow's name. He later became very much discredited and was even released from his position with Paralyzed Veterans of America on this project and another place, but I can't think of his name right now. So there were others that brought it up and quite often when you're in a large committee situation, people will brings things up because they like to hear themselves talk. I don't know if I told you the story about my Cleveland experience, but I think I did.

08-00:13:24
Pelka: Run it by me again. I'm not sure I remember.

08-00:13:27
Nugent: Well, I was lecturing in Cleveland and after I got through with my slides and films, there were questions and answers, and one young man got up, he was a PhD in something and said, "Yes, Professor Nugent, you have this and you have that and you can do this, you can do that, but you've got special ramps, you've got special buses," and he went on and on. And I could just feel the whole audience and there were several hundreds in the audience because it was a national APA meeting and I could hear them all swaying to his way of thinking. I did not argue with him. I merely asked him some questions. I said, "Wait a minute. How did you get here?"

08-00:14:05
Pelka: Okay. I do remember this, yeah.

08-00:14:06
Nugent: And he finally said, "Well, I walked up the steps." I said, "You'd have looked like a jackass if you hadn't had somebody build those steps before you got there." I said, so there's nothing special about it. It's a matter of considering all people and not just our concept of average people. And that's what a lot of

it is. It's a matter of conceptualization not just prescriptions or statistics or figures. You know what I mean?

08-00:14:36
Pelka: Right. Well, it's the idea of understanding all architecture as a form of accessibility. Like you say—everybody's got to get into the room somehow. A door—nobody can get into the room if there isn't a door in the wall. So a door is an access feature. It's just a question of how broad the access extends.

08-00:15:02
Nugent: You know for a number of years I kept asking architects, particularly home-building architects, "Why is a bathroom door always such a small door? And it took me years before any one of them came up with what I thought was a logical answer, and the reason was, it's the only room in which you don't move furniture in and out of after it's done.

08-00:15:26
Pelka: Hah! Okay. I never heard that before, but that does make some sense, I guess.

08-00:15:33
Nugent: Well, that's the only logical answer I got after all the years of my trying to find it and the truth of the matter is I've been in bathrooms where there's room for a three-foot door, or a three-foot-two-inch door, but they still had the two-foot or two-and-a-half foot door in there. So some things develop by habit and they're handed down and accepted as the right thing to do without any question or challenge. And that was the answer I got after I had tried to find the answer for years.

08-00:16:03
Pelka: It reminds me of—when you talk about habit—it reminds me of doorknobs versus latches. When I've been to Europe, all of the doors, or most of the doors have latches as opposed to handles, you know what I mean that you can—

08-00:16:19
Nugent: The lever type.

08-00:16:18
Pelka: Yeah—as opposed to doorknobs and it's just the way it's—I don't think anyone thought this is more accessible to people with disabilities. That's just the way it developed. It's the tradition there.

08-00:16:32
Nugent: Well, I was also told when I argued for that—was that you can't use it on the outside door because you can't lock it. Well, they've got lever handles now that you can lock just like you would lock any other door.

08-00:16:46
Pelka: Sure, yes.

08-00:16:48
Nugent: But it just took time for it to get around.

08-00:16:51
Pelka: That brings me to the idea of visitability. You're familiar with that term, right?

08-00:16:56
Nugent: Oh, yes.

08-00:16:56
Pelka: Yeah, Okay. When do you first remember that term being used?

08-00:17:02
Nugent: Oh I remember it being used when I was in college. That's a long time ago! That goes back sixty-some years! [chuckling] But of course, over the years, its connotation changed and it broadens Do you follow me?

08-00:17:24
Pelka: Yeah. But maybe you could explain that a little more?

08-00:17:26
Nugent: Well, for instance, right next to my college campus was an orthopedic school. And you couldn't go to class on my campus without noticing that orthopedic school. So there definitely was a visibility factor there, but it wasn't interpreted in a meaningful way as to why—that was my question—why weren't these kids in regular school. And that stuck with me until I got to Illinois and developed the program—that and many other things contributed to my doing it. So visibility is somewhat of an intangible thing. I can walk down the street and notice nothing and you can walk down the street and notice twenty things.

08-00:18:14
Pelka: Oh Okay—I think maybe I misspoke. I was thinking of the term visitability, as in the idea that you're designing homes, for instance, to be accessible not only because people may live there who need the access, but for people to visit back and forth.

08-00:18:35
Nugent: Oh, visitation, not visibility.

08-00:18:39
Pelka: Yeah, visitability. And I was wondering when you first heard that term.

08-00:18:44
Nugent: Oh well, it was a concern of ours from day one on this campus, because my home was wholly accessible, because I had a lot of visitation from people and alumni in wheelchairs and friends and students, and all the wheelchair people on campus were concerned about having their friends come in, and people who were friends of theirs when they built a house wanted to make it so that their friends in wheelchairs or braces or crutches could come in. And the truth

of the matter is that we never, ever had a home that was designed for one of our wheelchair graduates or students that didn't sell immediately when it was put on the market, because people would go in there and say, "Oh this is so convenient, " you know. So the conceptualization prior to that was in error, and I could probably name a hundred homes in Champaign-Urbana that aren't lived in by people in wheelchairs but are still accessible and usable.

08-00:19:51
Pelka: That's interesting, because one of the arguments you hear frequently against visitability, against making homes accessible, is there's the fear that it'll lower their market value. And you're saying that isn't the case at all from your experience.

08-00:20:08
Nugent: No, it isn't the case at all. If anything, it increases its market value because it is so much more functional. The only situation in which it might decrease a value is when an individual, a particular buyer, comes in and is afraid of the fact that this person that lived here previously had something wrong with them! You'd be surprised the number of people in the early years that thought paraplegia was contagious.

08-00:20:39
Pelka: Huh.

08-00:20:40
Nugent: We had several toilet stalls in Lincoln Hall, which was one of the largest academic buildings on campus, and I think it still is, and later, all of a sudden, about ten years later, I went over there on another check and I found that some of them [toilet stalls?] had been removed, and the reason the university administration architect gave me for having them removed is because people complained they couldn't use them—able-bodied people on faculty. They were afraid to use them. There was no sign there that said for a wheelchair person only, nothing like that, it was just their own interpretation or concept.

And I've seen a lot of that. I've seen people afraid to shake hands with a person with a disability. I've seen people who are just shy where somebody is uniquely different. We had the same problem with the blacks and others years ago. Psychologically it's the same problem, and let me just give you one of my philosophical bases, and that is this—that prejudice comes from the lack of association with an individual or a problem, not from association with it. In other words, the prejudice to blacks is because we stayed away from them, we never tried to understand them.

Now you see on television, and everything, you see a white person hugging a black person and meaning it! Well, it took a lot of psychological change, attitudinal change, not just legal change to bring that about.

08-00:22:29
Pelka: Yeah. I want to move on to a different topic, but is there anything else you want to say about ANSI and the development of the ANSI standards before we move on?

08-00:22:42
Nugent: Not that I can think of.

08-00:22:44
Pelka: Okay. I'm going to jump ahead quite a bit and talk about section 504 of what would become the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. What was your involvement with the development of 504, if any?

08-00:23:01
Nugent: I had an ancillary role in it. I would get inquiries from responsible people in Washington about this or that and I would participate in a few meetings, but mine was an ancillary role on that although I contributed to it in one way or another. And it was basically based on what we had done previously.

08-00:23:28
Pelka: Okay. Do you recall first hearing about 504 as a concept? The idea of prohibiting entities that receive federal funding from discriminating against otherwise qualified handicapped individuals, I think the language went. Do you remember first hearing about that?

08-00:23:54
Nugent: Oh yes, and it's a lot like so many other things. You know, if you know what the concept of our government, education is the right of the state, not the federal government. But how did the federal government begin to take over? By issuing grants and subsidies and things and saying, "If you don't do this the way we want you to do it, you're not eligible for that grant or subsidy." And that's where the change came in, because today it still says in our constitution and by-laws that education is the right of the state. But you and I both know that education is very strongly in the hands of the federal government today and that's how.

08-00:24:44
Pelka: Were you involved at all in any of the 504 trainings that came out after 1973 or—

08-00:24:53
Nugent: Oh I lectured to several groups scattered around the country about it and about its application or phases of it that were appropriate for my background. But I won't claim that I had a direct responsibility for it.

08-00:25:10
Pelka: Okay. Let's skip ahead then, another decade or more. Let's talk about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Did you—well, let me back up—when did you first hear about his concept, that there were a group of people with

disabilities trying to get a federal law, an ADA passed. Do you recall first hearing about that?

08-00:25:32
Nugent: Oh I heard about it years before it happened, partially because of people like Fred Fay who were involved in it and others of our graduates who were involved in it directly and indirectly and largely because I got questions from people about it. They'd call me and ask me what is this or what do you think of this or something like that. So yes, I heard about it before it became an actual law and it really—well, to quote Justin Dart when he made a special presentation to me he said that my work was the basis for the Americans with Disabilities Act—whether that's right or not, but I'm quoting him now, I'm not quoting myself.

08-00:26:21
Pelka: Yes. Do you recall any opposition to the ADA from within the disability community that you were aware of? Or did you have reservations about it?

08-00:26:32
Nugent: Well, I'll be very frank with you. I have reservations about all these carte blanche pieces of legislation. [chuckling] I put it this way in many of my lectures—we've gotten to the point now where we legislate where we should educate and I think that's true so often, but fortunately I guess you might say the stubbornness of people in general is that it's much quicker to legislate than it is to educate.

I don't know if that answers your question or not, but the—I have a very, in fact I just wrote a rather strong but polite letter to the NCAA about this Chief Illiniwik business and things like that. And in—this is aside—in the response I got from the NCAA, a very polite response, they mention, and I have it here in front of me that [reading] "although the NCAA objects to colleges and universities using racial/ethnic/national origin references," and I feel like writing them back and saying to them, "I am a dyed-in-the-wool Irishman and I take issue with Notre Dame University referring to themselves as the Fighting Irish and using gremlins and other comical characters to represent themselves, because it makes the Irish look as though they're belligerent and silly."

What I'm trying to point out is, when we have these authoritative groups or legislation it always broadens out in such a way that it really loses its significance. And one of the things they say is national in reference. Well, if the Fighting Irish aren't a national reference, I don't know what is, but they're not under question. [chuckling] Somebody made an issue a few years ago about an Indian and in fifteen years of outpouring, it's still a very small minority group, and I mean minority in the sense of numbers, not minority in the sense of blacks, or Indians, or Asians, or stuff like that.

Unfortunately, as I say, we're inclined to legislate in areas where we should be educating. And if we started doing this years ago, half this legislation wouldn't be necessary. Now that's me talking [chuckling].

08-00:29:13
Pelka: Oh yeah.

08-00:29:15
Nugent: I'm not talking for anybody else.

08-00:29:18
Pelka: Overall, though, were you involved in drafting any of the specific language in the ADA? Did people come to you and ask about particular titles, on, for instance, accessible transportation, anything like that?

08-00:29:34
Nugent: Oh yes, I had a lot of calls, particularly on transportation because it seemed to be one of the real bugaboos at that time. In fact, I appeared before Senator Church's congressional committee on aging and the disabled at a time when all of the major bus manufacturers were requesting a $50 million minimum grant to consider the problem and look into it. And I was there, and I was on the agenda for the second day, but about 11:00 the first morning, Senator Percy who was on the committee said, "Mr. Chairman, may I interrupt and ask a question?" And Senator Church said, "Yes." So he looked at me and he said, "Professor Nugent, I know you're on the agenda for tomorrow, but do you have your materials with you today?" And I said, "Yes, sir. I do." And then Senator Percy said to the chairman, "I would like to change the agenda and have Professor Nugent present his portion this afternoon."

So immediately after the luncheon recess, I presented it and after it was all over, Senator Church looked at me and he said, "Well, you must have had a real federal grant for that." And I said, "No, sir." He said, "Well, did you have a state grant?" I said, "No, sir." He says, "You mean the university paid for those?" I said, "No, sir. It was all done with private initiative and private money." Then he looked at these executives, and he said, and I'm encapsulating this now, he said, "And you fellows have to have a million dollars with all your industrial resources to do what this young man has done without any money from any outside source?"

08-00:31:15
Pelka: Fifty million dollars is a lot of studying!

08-00:31:18
Nugent: Yeah. And so it was dismissed. Well, that night they invited me out to dinner. All these different executives, and some I knew personally because I'd worked with them over the years, and when I got to the dinner, there were two priests there and I said, "Oh my God, was it that bad you needed their help?" And the priest said, "Oh no, we're on your side. We want to know more because we represent the geriatric group." And the next day when I got back

to Champaign, Carmont Blitz, who's done all the engineering on our lifts for year, called me up and said, quote, "What in the hell did you do in Washington yesterday?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, Ed Stokel at GMC and so-and-so of AMC, and so-and-so of such a bus company, Flxible, have all called me and asked if I couldn't shut you up."

08-00:32:07
Pelka: [chuckling] Now who is this who called you and said this?

08-00:32:10
Nugent: Mr. Carmont Blitz. He has the largest truck and bus modification firm in the United States. He works on half a bus from California, half a bus from New York. The back half of the one from New York may be still intact, the front end was smashed and just the opposite with the one in California, they send the two halves to him, he'd put it together, and in one of the travel magazines which I could find with time it said, "A bus rebuilt by Mr. Blitz is better than the original warranty." And he did all the engineering on my buses going back to the early fifties—'50, '51,'52, and so immediately they knew that so they called him and asked him if he couldn't shut me up.

08-00:32:57
Pelka: And how do you spell the last name? Blitz?

08-00:32:59
Nugent: B-l-i-t-z.

08-00:33:02
Pelka: Okay as in—

08-00:33:02
Nugent: His firm is now not operating because he's older than I am, which makes him about '88 or '89, and retired, but he's still quite active.

08-00:33:14
Pelka: And the first name was Connor.

08-00:33:16
Nugent: No. Carmont [spells]—

08-00:33:20
Pelka: Oh okay, Carmont.

08-00:33:22
Nugent: And he did all the engineering, which was very innovative back in those days because the one major lift company, Anthony Lift Company, would not make a lift for our bus because it would be handling human cargo. Their lifts were for the tail end of a truck to lift furniture and equipment on and they were afraid of the possibility of using a lift like that for human cargo.

08-00:33:47
Pelka: They were afraid of accidents or something?

08-00:33:49
Nugent: Well, liability, yeah.

08-00:33:50
Pelka: Liability, yeah. Okay. I'm going to shift again and get a little more general—very much more general, actually. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about the differences you see between the status of people with disabilities in the 1940s when you first began working and what you see today. What would be—if you had to list maybe the three most significant differences, what would those be?

08-00:34:19
Nugent: Well, first the fact that we do have accessibility and usability and subsequently we have transportation in most cities. Those are big differences. I think the public awareness and public understanding of those with disability is much changed.

In fact, one father, oh about twenty years into our program, maybe longer, wrote a letter to the university and he said, "It is," this is not a direct quote now because I don't have it within reach here, but, in connotation he said this, "It is great what the university has done for those with disabilities and I commend the university. However, I think they have done much more for the rest of the population in the world in bringing about an appreciation and understanding of their capabilities."

So that was a big change, and that father was quick to identify that you have done more for me as a father than you have for my son who's one of your students. [chuckling] Because it brought about an understanding of what their capabilities are, and the capabilities are unlimited.

The past president of the American Academy of Neurology is one of our wheelchair graduates. We have ten wheelchair grads who are medical doctors and outstanding physicians. We have engineers, architects—we have had a U.S. senator, we've had state legislators, we've had them in everywhere. And this brings about an understanding and appreciation and a respect for people with disabilities that didn't exist back in the forties. And it doesn't happen overnight, it happens because of the fact that these people went out and did something and did something good.

08-00:36:15
Pelka: I'm just thinking back again to your comment about removing accessible bathroom stalls because people were afraid that paraplegia was contagious. You don't run into that sort of thing as much now, right?

08-00:36:26
Nugent: Oh no, don't run into it at all. There are still a few people that are squeamish about using a toilet stall that has the handrails and the wide door and whatnot. I don't know why but it's something within their thinking that probably they don't understand either.

08-00:36:49
Pelka: Actually I hear the opposite from lots of people. I hear from disabled friends griping about how able-bodied people are always using the accessible facilities—"We can't get in."

08-00:36:59
Nugent: That's true. Yeah, well, that's true. In other words I didn't say this other thing I said was universal. There are still some people who have that reluctance for one reason or another, but basically you're right. If there's a handicapped stall somewhere, I think most people would be inclined to use it because you're a lot more comfortable than in those narrow ones that if you reach out with your elbow, you're hitting the wall.

08-00:37:26
Pelka: Are there any, as you look back on the broad sweep of this, the fifty years, what would you say are your major disappointments?

08-00:37:38
Nugent: What are my major disappointments—I suppose that it took so long to get done because to me it was such a practical and simple thing. I think the second thing that disturbs me is the variance in legislation within the states, because they all had to do it their own way. Sometimes state pride, well, let me put it this way: I had a doctor from Germany spend about two or three weeks with me. And when he went back to Germany he began to incorporate the things he saw here. And about five or six years later he came back to the United States but he was somewhere else in the East or Southeast and he called me, he said, "You know, when I went back to Germany within six months we had what I saw in Champaign. I come back here to the United States six years later and I don't see anything down here," wherever he was, I don't want to say because I can't remember. And I said, "You have to remember—we have fifty states in the United States and they all have their own rights so far as legislation and mandates are concerned." It bothers me that there's a certain ego or selfishness among some of the states that they won't just accept something that's been well studied and approved by various professional representations as well as disability representations. They won't just accept it and incorporate it, they have to go through a procedure to write it their own way.

08-00:39:11
Pelka: Yeah, well, it's not a good idea unless it's my idea is—

08-00:39:15
Nugent: Right. Well, you see it's because of that type of conflict that this term "universal" came up so strong. In other words, it's got to be applied universally.

08-00:39:25
Pelka: Yes. When was this experience with the German physician you were talking about, the German doctor.

08-00:39:30
Nugent: Oh gosh—I've been retired twenty years, and it was years before I retired. I would guess late sixties, early seventies—somewhere in there. But that's just a guess because you're asking an old man to remember an awful lot of things.

08-00:39:52
Pelka: Yeah, oh yeah—well, I was going to ask you if you could remember his name, but I guess—

08-00:39:56
Nugent: Yes, I remember his name. His name is Doctor Horst Strohkendl.

08-00:39:59
Pelka: Okay. Do you have a sense as to, let's just say the last five years or so. Do you think the movement is continuing to make progress? Or have things stalled? How would you characterize that?

08-00:40:38
Nugent: Oh, I think it's making progress because it's applied to every new building that goes up and there's an awful lot of new building going on. I think Champaign itself has got three times the residences that it had when I first came here. And all those and the apartment buildings and the hotels and whatnot that have been built have accommodated those with disabilities, particularly the wheelchair.

So I think there's progress. Sometimes it's what a particular person is looking for that distinguishes progress in their own mind. Example—and I may be repeating myself here—but at a national lecture I was giving at the University of Wisconsin, two people said they wanted wider, much wider toilet stalls and whatnot, and I said, "If I can't—during the break, we'll go downstairs in the restroom. and if I can't teach you to get on and off of the stool that's presently in the standard in fifteen seconds, I'll come up and eat my words." Well, I taught both of them. One girl was from Washington, the other was at that time with the Paralyzed Veterans of America. And they both learned how to do it in a short time. The girl said, "Oh my goodness, I wish there were more people like you to make this practical." And the boy said, "Yeah, but I still want it my way."

08-00:42:05
Pelka: [laughs] Yeah.

08-00:42:05
Nugent: So that's an attitude. That's not a matter of universal design or a matter of proper facilitation. That's an attitude and there's no way you're going to get away from the fact that people have different attitudes.

08-00:42:19
Pelka: Do you think the concept of disability rights has changed over the course of your career?

08-00:42:27
Nugent: [chuckling] Oh definitely.

08-00:42:31
Pelka: How so?

08-00:42:31
Nugent: A thousand percent.

08-00:42:31
Pelka: Okay. Could you talk a little bit about that.

08-00:42:34
Nugent: When I began the program at the University of Illinois, we surveyed universities all over the country and none would accept the concept of the program. And even the main campus did not accept it. We started at the Galesburg campus, and the main campus refused to let us come here at the beginning. We got here after a demonstration on the capital and after a demonstration on campus and because of a couple of legal technicalities.

But we were an experiment and I received no appropriation from the state or the university for the program, including my salary, for the first eight or nine years. That was the attitude. A lot of the faculty and administrators at that time were hoping I'd fail. In fact, I wrote a paper, published a paper for the American County Health Association back in '52 I believe it was, in which I described the attitudes of most administrators and ranking faculty and that was that these people would be an extra cost, an extra liability, a distraction, and what would they do with a college education anyway.

And I published that for the American College Health Association, oh, way back in 1952, I believe. I don't know if it was a publication—I should say it was a paper presentation and they usually publish those, but I don't know if they did or not.

08-00:43:57
Pelka: Do you think the civil rights analogy as applied to disability rights movement is a correct analogy? A useful analogy? The idea that people with disabilities are a minority group like other minority groups, and that's how we approach the issue of disability?

08-00:44:17
Nugent: Well, unfortunately, that came into it in a big way. And they really are a separate identifiable group—[thought] I'm questioning now whether they're still a minority, with the aging population that we have today. I, for instance, am qualified for a wheelchair-parking sticker because of my spinal surgeries, my spinal stenosis, and my heart. I just had a stent put in the large artery of my heart. I'm qualified, but I don't consider myself part of a minority. Nevertheless, if people were adding up the numbers of people that have these

needs in one way or another, we could pretty well now be a majority! [chuckling]

08-00:45:05
Pelka: Yes. I guess I'm asking about the concept of—if you're talking about disability as a civil rights issue, then you can also talk about things like federal legislation, lawsuits, my rights as opposed to—this is a medical problem or a social work problem or whatever.

08-00:45:28
Nugent: Well, this is true. And this is the nature of our political structure: since we're legislating instead of educating, you've got to find a way to get into the political arena. And by identifying yourself as a minority group and by identifying that you are being denied civil rights accomplishes this, and rightfully so. To me it's a shame that you had to go that far to get it done, but it's still true.

For instance, what I'm saying is there was no legislation when we just started doing our program. There was no legislation when we created our bus system. There was no legislation when I created the NWBA, National Wheelchair Basketball Association—it was still done. Now, what I'm saying is that could have been done many, many places [at 08-00:46:24 pause no voice recording while tape is flipped]—to do the same thing. And it implies a weakness in our national character, I believe.

08-00:46:46
Pelka: Okay. I'm pretty much at the end of my interview questions. I have—I'm wondering if there's anything that we haven't talked about that I haven't asked you that you think I should.

08-00:46:59
Nugent: Well, we haven't talked about where I should send my bill. [chuckling]

08-00:47:02
Pelka: [chuckling] Yeah! Right. I'll give you an address for that—send it to the National Archives.

08-00:47:41
Nugent: To me it's gratifying—at the same time, to me it's distressing. [Referring to all the invitations he receives to be interviewed]

08-00:47:47
Pelka: Yeah! Well, besides the stress and the impact on your time, is it distressing in other ways?

08-00:47:55
Nugent: No, no. I can't say it's distressing in other ways. It's time consuming and it's asking me to remember things that happened so many years ago that I question myself sometimes.

08-00:48:11
Pelka: Well, that's one reason to put all of this in a book, so that people don't have to call you directly! They can just go to the book.

08-00:48:18
Nugent: Well, about ten of our alumni have written books already. And one of them was editor of the AMA and he says, "Tim, I'm going to come down there and we're going to write your book if it kills me." [chuckling] And we haven't gotten together yet because of our schedules.

So I don't know—first of all, this may be hard to understand. I couldn't write the book honestly without being somewhat critical of certain people. I can just give you one example and this is not for you to include in the other. **[**During his review of the transcript, Mr. Nugent indicated that what follows could be included—ed.]When Dr. Henry became president of the University of Illinois, he had been at New York University with Dr. Rusk before that and the very first week he was here, the president of the board of trustees who I knew personally called me up and he said, "Tim, David Henry would like to meet you and he would like to see your program." And I said, "Wonderful. Any time, at his convenience." And I said, "By the way, there's a wheelchair football game this morning in the armory and you might ask him if he'd like to see that." He came back, he said, "Dave would love to see that."

So I went over there to the football game with my shirt and tie and suit, which I have never done before or after, and kept looking for President Henry. All of a sudden this voice behind me says, "Tim—come meet David Henry." So I went over and I shook hands with President Henry, who was a remarkable person, and he got very enthusiastic about the game. He wasn't superficial. He was really into it, and he turned around and he looked at me and he said, "Tim, there's no reason we can't raise millions of dollars for your program."

And I looked at him and I said, "Dr. Henry, it's been less than two weeks ago I was called in front of a central committee including the provost and others and I was reprimanded for the money I've raised so far. In fact, I was told that I was embarrassing the university." Thank God for the associate provost, who had been my executive dean before I came to the main campus of the U of I, who hit his hand on the table and said, "You're wrong, for the good of the soul of the giver, the gift must be encouraged. So, Tim's just helping the souls of all those people who have contributed to his program."

And I've used that ever since. And President Henry looked at me and he said, "Tim, the next time you want to go knock on doors, I'll go knock on them with you." Now that was a difference in the attitude of this university at that time compared to a private university like New York. We didn't really have a foundation like we have now. Now we've got a very large staff in the foundation. And we go out and try to raise $5 million to $50 million at a time.

08-00:51:32
Pelka: I'm curious—they said that you were an embarrassment to the university. How so?

08-00:51:39
Nugent: Well, this dean was pretty old fashioned and he thought by going around and asking people to contribute to my program that I was embarrassing the university. He had the concept that the university was self-contained. In later years he became one of my best friends, but in the first ten or more years he was absolutely against everything I was doing.

08-00:52:05
Pelka: So it wasn't the disability aspect so much? Just the fact that you were going around asking for money, he thought, was not dignified.

08-00:52:12
Nugent: That's right. That's it, plus the fact that when I raised the money I used it the way I wanted to. If I wanted to buy wheelchairs for a kid, I did! [chuckling] So that goes back to the attitude factor that I talked about for—as I say, once he understood the situation and once we were very successful, he became my best friend. I mean, in fact, after he retired, he'd bring big wheels down to the rehab center, and one of the things he always said that I'll never forget—he said, "It isn't just that he did it, it's the way he did it." [voice breaking with emotion] And he meant it. But it took him about twenty-five years to understand it! [chuckling] So, it's a unique experience. It's a million-dollar experience, like my military experience was, but I wouldn't give you a penny to go through it again! [chuckling]

08-00:53:07
Pelka: [laughing] Right! Okay. Well, I want to thank you so much for taking all the time to talk with me.

08-00:53:14
Nugent: Are we really done?

08-00:53:16
Pelka: Pretty much, yeah, unless you can think of something that we need to cover, and if you think of something a day from now or a week from now or a month from now, feel free to call. I'm going to have to go through the tapes and transcribe a lot of it and there may be questions that occur to me as I'm listening to the tapes, which often happens. I'll say, well, why didn't—

08-00:53:37
Nugent: And some superficial stuff on the tapes too.

08-00:53:39
Pelka: Yeah, well, so all of this stuff has to get edited down, so there'll be that process.

08-00:53:46
Nugent: Some of the examples I gave, though, I don't think are superficial, because I think they give meaning to the statement I made prior to that example. But you have to be the judge of that.

08-00:53:57
Pelka: Okay.

08-00:53:58
Nugent: I trust you!

08-00:53:59
Pelka: Oh, well, thank you!

08-00:54:00
Nugent: Fred [Fay] said you're trustworthy.

08-00:54:01
Pelka: Oh—you were able to get hold of Fred Fay, right? Because—

08-00:54:04
Nugent: I did have a chance to speak with him.

08-00:54:05
Pelka: Yeah, I actually spoke with him yesterday.

08-00:54:02
Nugent: Did you?

08-00:54:07
Pelka: Yeah, yeah. About a whole different thing.

08-00:54:10
Nugent: He seems to be in good spirits yet.

08-00:54:12
Pelka: Yeah. Oh yeah.

08-00:54:14
Nugent: It's amazing you know, he's been in bed what—seventeen years now?

08-00:54:18
Pelka: Yeah. Something like that, yeah. Have you been out there to Concord to visit him in his layout?

08-00:54:21
Nugent: Oh yes. I've been there at least twice and maybe three times, I can't remember for sure. But the first time I went out there, Fred, knowing that he was ill, I went through the process with him. I went through when he had to gradually recline the back of his chair and then gradually recline it more so he wouldn't black out.

And I went with him to Craig Rehabilitation Hospital because the doctor out there was the only one that had worked with syringomyelia or spinal cord cysts for any length of time. And so I went out there with him and the medical doctor called me in and talked to me—he said, "You know, " he said, "I've done a lot of work with this, but this is the first one I've seen when he's still alive." And he said, "Our means of diagnosis are not fine enough." This goes back prior to the MRI, etc., and he says, "Our means of diagnosis are not fine enough to risk going in and doing surgery, because it is so high in the spine."

So eventually Fred had to be in a reclined position all the time. And so the first time I went to visit him, I thought, well, I'll go out about 8:30 or 9 and I'll stay there for a half an hour so I don't bother him. Well, I was still there at 9:30 p.m.! [chuckling] And I went there at 8:30 a.m. and he had this bed that he moved through the doors. He went out and we played scrabble with Trish, and he helped make part of the supper, and he showed me his triple Lazy Susans on each side of the bed and what was there, and he pulled out that glass top shelf of the case behind him. And he had an Apple computer with the screen down, and an IBM, and he was communicating all over the world. And while I was there he must have received twenty calls from federal offices or legislators seeking answers to questions. So he's doing more lying down these last seventeen years than a lot of the people with two good legs and arms have ever done!

08-00:56:33
Pelka: Yeah. Well, it's amazing how the technology has advanced as well. And I think Fred is responsible for a lot of that. But just the Internet and the ability to do things like videoconferencing that fifty years ago were science fiction.

08-00:56:53
Nugent: And to me it still is, in part, because I haven't caught up with it. I use a computer—I'm on my fourth or fifth computer, but mine's in the shop right now because it wouldn't behave the way I wanted it to! [chuckling] But one of the things he did contribute to was the voice-controlled computer mechanism. No, he's a remarkable guy and he spent a lot of time in my office. He'd come in with a recorder and ask me all sorts of questions and it was always an interesting experience.

08-00:57:27
Pelka: Yes.

08-00:57:28
Nugent: So—no, he's—someone should write his history, really.

08-00:57:33
Pelka: Oh yeah. Well, I did an interview with him as well. We did about ten hours in total.

08-00:57:38
Nugent: Oh did you?

08-00:57:39
Pelka: Yeah, yeah.

08-00:57:40
Nugent: Oh good.

08-00:57:40
Pelka: And it's been transcribed and it's—and he is thinking of writing a book. I don't know if he'll ever get to it, but I know he's talked about that from time to time.

08-00:57:50
Nugent: Well, you know, after all these years of being on his back, that he's still looking forward—to me, you would never ever have seen anything like that sixty years ago or even thirty years ago or twenty-five years ago.

08-00:58:04
Pelka: Yeah.

08-00:58:05
Nugent: Well—you probably talk to him more often than I do, so whenever you do, give him my regards.

08-00:58:11
Pelka: Okay, great. And thank you again and I will be in touch. There's probably going to be more questions. But for now, it looks like we've pretty much finished up.

08-01:00:07
Nugent: Okay. Fred, well, lots of luck to you!

08-01:00:09
Pelka: Same to you, and thank you so much again.

[End of interview]

FRED PELKA Interviewer/Editor

Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Oral History Series

Fred Pelka is a freelance writer specializing in disability rights politics and history. He is a 2004 recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship to support research and writing of an Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement. He is the author of *The ABC-CLIO Companion to the Disability Rights Movement* (1997) and *The Civil War Letters of Colonel Charles F. Johnson, Invalid Corps* (2004). He has a bachelor's degree in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo and has done graduate work at Boston University (in journalism) and Emerson College (in fine arts).

Mr. Pelka is also the author of numerous articles on disability issues and was a frequent contributor to *Mainstream: Magazine of the Able-Disabled* and a contributing editor at *On the Issues*, a women's political quarterly based in New York City, from 1989 to 1995. In 1995, he researched and authored a major study on the problems of blind computer users for the National Council on Disability.

His disability rights activism began in 1983 at the Boston Center for Independent Living, where he served on the editorial board of Rollcall, the BCIL newsletter, from 1983 to 1994, and was elected to two terms on BCIL's board of trustees. He was also a long-time member of the Massachusetts Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (now defunct) and has been a researcher/writer for Justice for All, a disability rights listserve organized by Justin Dart, Fred Fay, and Becky Ogle, since 1997.

Mr. Pelka has conducted literally hundreds of interviews for use in his articles and book. He has taken the lead for the Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Project.on interviews in Massachusetts and Washington DC