



Oral History and Folklife Research, Inc.

AN INTERVIEW WITH PATTY SARCHI
INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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AUGUSTA, ME
SEPTEMBER 4, 2014

TRANSCRIBER: KEITH LUDDEN

KJL It's September 4, and we are in Falmouth, and we're talking with Patty Sarchi. Do you mind if I ask what year you were born?

PS I was born in 1947.

KJL 1947. That was just after World War II. Like me, you're something of a baby boomer

PS Pardon me?

KJL Like me, you're something of a baby boomer.

PS Yes, I was. My dad came home from the war in '46, no '45. They got married in '46 and I was born in '47

KJL So you grew up mostly in the '50's. You grew up mostly in the 1950's?

PS I'm sorry, I'm not hearing you that well today. My hearing aids have been adjusted.

KJL I sympathize.

PS A little slower. If you could speak a little slower.

KJL OK. When you were in school, what was that like? Did you go to a different school, or did you go to a regular public school?

PS I went to a Catholic school in a small town, where Catholic and French were the prominent population, and I left there when I was... [edit] They didn't have them in the small town up in the County, which is the popular name to call Aroostook County. And I taught myself to lipread in French. I could hear, but it was not as clear as everyone else. Then when I went into kindergarten, which at that time was called subprimary, we noticed that I wasn't hearing all that well. So that was really the first inclination that my family had that I wasn't hearing well. They noticed it as I was a toddler, but they thought I was just a very stubborn little girl, and not responding when they called for me, so nothing was ever made of it. During Christmas vacation of my subprimary year, I had my tonsils and adenoids removed and two weeks later, I had the mumps, and they thought that's what created my hearing loss, but it wasn't. It was later on in life they found out it was a genetic...

KJL So you grew up in the County?

PS Yes

KJL Where in the County?

PS Van Buren, Maine. A small community. Everybody knew everybody else, and there was a Catholic church, and a Catholic school. And the boys' high school was in a separate building from the girls, and that was across from the church.

KJL Yeah, that's about as far north as you can get

PS Almost. You've got another fifty miles to get to Fort Kent, and there you're at the end of the road.

KJL I've been there, yes. So tell me a little bit more about Van Buren.

PS Van Buren, I guess is a town that I will always call home, but it's nothing to brag about now. It's just so, so poor. There's no industries, there's really no work to be had, other than local, small town jobs. But ironically, a lot of people leave, and some of them do come back. And some of them have never left. I still remember kids that I went to school with, up 'til the fourth grade, and some of them still live there. They just never wanted to leave. And I'm willing to bet some of them have never even left the state of Maine. They might have gone over to Canada, but that's it. And it was a very Catholic community. The older folks went to church every morning and celebrated Mass, whenever there was one. And we were taught the manners of Catholic upbringing. And my grandparents on both sides, my mother and my father never spoke English. They were French speaking people, that's all they understood, and it was okay, because we all spoke it.

KJL Do you still speak French?

PS I don't speak it well, anymore, and I have to laugh at myself when I do, because I don't want anyone else laughing at me. Laugh with me, with my mistakes, but I'm shy about it. But I could speak it if I needed to get a point across.

KJL How long did you live in Van Buren?

PS I left there when I was ten years old.

KJL You said you were in grade school when your hearing was identified?

PS Yes, I was.

KJL What year was that?

PS That was in kindergarten.

KJL Kindergarten

PS Yes. After I had my tonsils and adenoids removed, which was after the Christmas vacation, I was assigned to a front row seat in front of the teacher's desk, so that I could hear better. And it's been that way ever since; the desk right in front of the teacher's desk.

KJL What was it like with the other children in the class?

PS I don't think they noticed at that young age, because it was not that drastic a hearing loss, and the fact that I could lipread compensated for a lot of it. I was pretty good at it, and many people didn't even know. It wasn't that noticeable until I moved to the city. Then people were exposed to more things, and more disabilities and more people, so they could identify someone who had a hearing loss, with a slight speech impediment, and I got by.

KJL So you said you learned to read lips, so you did not use a hearing aid, or an assistive device?

PS No, there were no assistive devices then, and hearing aids were available, but I didn't want to wear one, and fortunately my parents were smart enough to not buy me one and force me to wear it, because it would have--somehow I think it would have made me a different person. But I got by until I was a freshman in high school. Then the principal, who was a nun, cornered me one day, and said, "You know, you're missing out on a few things in the class, and with your peers. Why don't you get a hearing aid?" She said, "I know, it's not as common as eyeglasses or dentures, because we see it as being more common amongst older people, but it could brighten your life a lot." So I thought about it, and I went home that afternoon, and I told my folks, "I think I'm ready." So we went off to the audiologist, and got fitted to a hearing aid; had the molds made. Two weeks later we went together.

When I came home, my dad was sitting at the table, having afternoon coffee, and he stirred his spoon in the cup, and then hit the spoon on the edge of the cup, "ding, ding!" "What in the world was that?" Well it was our little trick after that. He always did that when I was around. Then my cat came around, and she was making a racket noise, "What is that?" "You never heard that, huh?" "Nope." "That's your cat meowing. I think she's hungry." So there's all these new sounds that came about. And I would go over to the park, and walk in the dry leaves in the fall. That was different. Listening to the birds in the spring. I hadn't heard them. You can't lipread birds. Sorry.

KJL Forgive me, that's a wonderful story, and I'm trying to be as silent as I can, for the purposes of the recording, but I really appreciate these stories.

PS Oh, well I don't mind telling them, I just don't want to overdo time.

KJL So when the nun pulled you aside and said, "You're missing stuff," how did you feel about that?

PS What are you going to do when a nun tells you something? You follow orders, and you sit there like a pretty young girl, and you keep your hands on your lap and you listen. And I knew that I was missing things. I knew that I wasn't involved with as many things as I might have liked to be, because of the hearing loss, but I was more of a wallflower back then. And believe me, over the years I've changed a lot.

KJL So you left Van Buren when you were about ten, and went where?

PS From there we went to Rome, NY, and my dad had a job there, building the runway on Griffith Air Force Base with a construction company that he was employed with. And we were there for about seven or eight months. Then he got transferred to Bangor, ME, to build the gym and the chapel on Dow Air Force Base. And after that he went to work for himself. He started his own business as a building contractor. I can take my children and my grandchildren today, and I can go back to the neighborhood and say, "This is what Papa did, and, "See that house over there? Well, Papa built that house." That has a lot of meaning to me.

KJL So you lived much of your life in Bangor?

PS From then on, from the age of about eleven. I was in Bangor until I got married. I was nineteen. I finished the elementary school there at the junior high, and I did one year at the Catholic high school, then we were the first class to graduate from the brand-new Bangor High School on Broadway.

KJL You've also lost a portion of your sight, as well. Tell me about that.

PS My sight did not come to play until I was graduated from high school, married, and had all three of my children. At the time, they were ages two, four and six years old. And I had gone to the eye doctors, the annual yearly checkup, and I was a very avid reader. So this one time I went, they found formation of cataract. So the ophthalmologist said, "If it gets worse within a year, come back." I said, "Okay, no problem." And we were living in Bronxville, NY at the time.

So I did go back within the year, and the doctor sent me to an eye doctor specialist in New York City, Columbia University, NYU. And it was on a Saturday. Doctor's offices are not open on Saturday. Medical buildings are virtually empty on Saturday. So I found the elevator, and I went up to his office. The doctor opened the door and invited me in, and we introduced each other. Then he said, "Let's go through the testing first, and then we'll talk afterward." "Okay," We did the testing and I remember it was just a lot of working in the dark. They dilate your eyes and look in behind them and so forth. So after that was over we went back in the office and we talked about it. He was a very gentle man, very kind, and he said, "There's no easy way to say this, but you will eventually go blind." My first question was, "Will I see my little girl in a wedding dress?" She was four years old at the time. And he said, "I don't know. Let's hope you do." So he asked if I had any questions, and I did the normal questions. I don't remember what they were, now. He gave me his business card with home phone and office phone and he said, "Don't

hesitate to call me if you have any questions or issues that you would like to talk about, just call me.” I said, “Thank you,” and I made my way back to the elevator and back out to the car and I went back home. It took me about two years to really kind of get used to the idea that life was going to work in a different way. So after the initial two years I read about it, I talked about it, I did research about it. It was diagnosed as retinitus pigmentosa, and there was a lot to learn.

One day I read the newspaper and there was a lovely story there about a young lady and her daughter, who had just been diagnosed with retinitus pigmentosa, and she was telling her story. And I used that for inspiration in my own life history after that. There is life after diagnosis of blindness. So I went ahead and adjusted with my kids, and getting them used to it. It’s hard to tell them that you don’t see well, because they can’t imagine that at a young age. And at the time I was doing quite well. I was still driving. So they didn’t pay too much attention to it. They knew I couldn’t hear well, and when I was alone at night, they were more or less in charge. I’ll stop here.

KJL Okay. Was there more, I’m sorry. So about how old were you when this happened?

PS I was twenty-seven.

KJL And you had young children.

PS Young children. They knew Mom didn’t hear well, and my oldest son, who matured at a young age took charge of letting me know when the babies were crying, or needed to be changed, or--he was a good little babysitter for his brothers and sisters--although I never left him alone with them, but he had a responsibility and he knew it. Not that it was forced on him, it was just second nature to him.

KJL And how old was he?

PS At the time he was six. But even at the age of two-and-a-half is when I had his sister. I know my husband went away for a few weeks and left my son and I alone with my daughter. And I figured, “What am I going to do? I won’t hear her if she’s crying in the night.” So I took the port-a-crib and I set it up at the foot of my bed, and I tied a string around her ankle, and the other end around my wrist, and that’s how we slept. Because when a baby cries or frets during the night, they move, and their little feet and legs are always going. So that would pull on the string, and that would wake me. But during the day, my son would take over with, “Mama, the baby’s crying. She’s awake,” or whatever. He’d even feed her her bottle once in a while.

KJL You worked mostly at home, as a homemaker, is that right? Or did you work outside the home?

PS I did not work outside the home. I found my place was as a wife, a mother, a homemaker, and they were responsibilities that I took very seriously, and to be fair to all and everyone, I chose to stay home. My family was more important to me than country club membership, which is what I probably would have had to work for.

KJL So was the disability at all part of that decision, or that was what you wanted to do?

PS No, that's what I wanted to do, because the disability didn't really occur until I had all three children, and if I'd wanted to go to work I probably would have gone when the first child was old enough to leave with a sitter, but...

KJL Now, you served on some task forces or committees involved with disabilities, is that right?

PS Yes. All of that started before the days of disability, I was very involved in the community with PTA, crossing the picket line, to make sure that our children got educated in spite of what teachers felt about their salary, and their conditions. I was a Welcome Wagon hostess, welcoming people into the community. Then I started support groups, or Coffee Mate was the first one I did. And it was these ladies who were new to the community; were probably probably all stay-at-home moms, and one-car family and really didn't have much of a way to get out and meet people. So I contacted all of them, and everybody got together with a carpool. We all met in a church basement every Tuesday morning from nine to eleven. It was really a wonderful time. It was a good time for all of us. We had over eighty people over a four year span, that came and went. That was my first big involvement.

And I was involved with the task force for children, Christmas for kids.

KJL So there was a mixture of groups that were involved in other issues and disability issues, is that right?

PS Yes, the disabilities came after my disability. I never really got involved in the Deaf/Hard of Hearing issues, because to me, I could hear. I could get along. I could get by. I was lipreading I was hearing. I was okay. But when the blindness came to play, that was a whole different scene. And that's where I became involved with developing support groups for the blind, and belonging to the American Council of the Blind, of Maine, and also being a leader with the national group with the sight and sound impaired committee. That enabled me to travel and see many parts of the country that I never would have seen if it hadn't been for the blindness and the advantages that it offered in its own way.

KJL Tell me about your work with that group

PS With that group? I was involved with ACB of Maine for quite a few years. I went to a lot of the national conventions for eighteen years, and it was very nice. It was interesting and it gave me an opportunity to see that there are successful blind people, and there are many different careers that they participate in, It's not a stereotype. When you come from a small community where the disabilities are not that well known; there aren't that many people who share that same disability. You don't really have that much positive stuff. It's more of the hiding syndrome, which was very common over the years. It still is in some rural areas. But with the ADA, we changed that, and it if hasn't changed yet, it will, because everything takes time.

KJL Tell me what you mean by the "hiding syndrome."

PS If we go back to the ages of, let's say, my grandparents. They'd be over a hundred, now, but a long time ago. People didn't really understand disability. So they didn't allow the disabled child to be publicized. They were not going to be shown to the world that they had disability. And oftentimes these children never knew the outside world. I've known of a couple of women who were blind, and lived in a small community, in the typical little white house with the white picket fence, and the gate, and that's all they'd ever seen all their lives. Well, their parents died, and where did these people go? They were more or less forced to go into institutions, because they didn't know anything about independent living. They were fed, they were dressed, they were bathed, they were cared for. They were medicated. They were taken care of. They didn't have any responsibilities of their own. So then came the time they are alone. And in those days, I don't think it was a common thing for others in the family to take over. Although there were some other siblings that might have taken in a disabled person if it was not severe.

KJL So are you speaking of your grandparents' generation?

PS Yes.

KJL ...or your parents' generation

PS No, my parents not so much so. They were starting to come out of it, although my mother had a difficult time with using the word "blind," or visually impaired. God bless her, she tried quite hard, and she'd fumble over it, she didn't know what to say. And if I was there, I would say, "It's okay, I'm legally blind." (at the time). Then as time went on, "Yes, I'm blind. I don't see anymore." That's a common thing for a lot of people. When you're newly diagnosed with the idea of going blind, you're, "visually impaired."

And you hang on to that title for as long as you can, and okay, so you grow up to be, "legally blind," which means you use a little more help. You're probably going to get more used to the white cane, or the guide dog, sighted guide, and different aids and appliances--appliances to assist you with your daily living. Then you get to the point where you don't see anything. You might see light perception. And I think at that point a lot of people say they're blind with light perception. It's too bad, you know, the vocabulary in itself is hard on many people. I know I've

met a lot of senior citizens, and some were my great aunts, and you could always see that I was okay, I was doing fine, walking with a cane, but still attired appropriately and able to get a long with society. And they would tell me their little story. "Now, this eye doesn't see too well any more, and the other one, well it's starting to go. But I'm not blind, or anything!" they're quick to say. It's the same issue with hearing. "No, I don't hear as well as I used to, but people talk funny now. They talk too fast. They don't talk loud enough. It's not me, I'm not deaf!" The ownership of the words is very difficult. It's getting easier as the generations grow and change. We teach our children more positive things about disability now, and they're more exposed to more disabilities, because we don't hide them in the attic anymore.

KJL So was it difficult to relate to other people in your family and other members of the community?

PS With my disability? Yes. I have to admit, yes. And even to this day there are members of my family that are proud of my accomplishments, but don't understand what I've done. "How can you take care of your house? How can you see the dust?" Sorry, you don't have to see the dust, you can feel it.

KJL So what do you tell them?

PS I tell them that I do more for myself than I allow others to do for me. The old saying, "You can do anything you want to do?" Yes, within reason. A great cliché that we use today is, "Independence. We must remain independent." And I agree with that to a certain extent. I don't want someone coming in and doing everything for me. That's true, I am independent. I cannot perform brain surgery and I cannot fly a plane. So in that sense, my definition of independence is not how much a person can do for themselves. Independence is the knowledge and ability to find the resources to do what you need to get done. A lot of people don't agree with it, but it's my motto and I'm going to stick to it.

KJL So what do you need to get done?

PS With the help of others?

KJL What is it that you need to find the resources within yourself to get done?

PS Well, if I need to go somewhere, I need to find the resources of transportation. How do I get there from here? Paying my bills. Okay, I can't read the bills, so how am I going to pay them? Well, I have a money minder that comes to me once a month and we read the bills and we pay them. He's very resourceful. He can also help me with other things, such as, you know you get things in the mail like a free life insurance policy. Nothing is free. but I especially like the ones where you get reduced car insurance. There are times I have went them their little letter back and made a note on it, "When you can insure people who are blind to drive, please let me

know.” But in a way, this is turning around, too, because there is so much equipment out there. It is unbelievable. The Apple iPhone has an--what do you call that?

KJL An app?

PS An app, you’re right, that’s it--that you can take a picture of a cake mix, and know that you’ve got a gingerbread cake mix in your hand; turn it over, take another picture, and that’s the directions on how to make a gingerbread cake. The iPhone will read you all the directions step by step. Now that’s a big jump. You can make your own cake mix. And you can read your own recipes. You can follow directions on other food products, or cosmetic products; laundry directions--anything. An the ability to use GPS is on the iPhone. Now how do I get from here to there? I don’t know, but neither does the person that I’m going to have take me there, so it’s my responsibility to find out how to get there without getting lost, so I can be prepared.

KJL In the late 1980’s and until about 1990, you would have been in your thirties, is that right?

PS Yes.

KJL So did you follow the disability rights movement?

PS I was there, and I knew what it meant, and with everyone else, I think we all did what we could to make it work. And I think that’s when many of us just stopped feeling disabled, stopped feeling different, and “Hey, we’re one of everybody. We’re all the same.” We all do things differently, because of the way we were raised, or because of our ethnic group, of because of the equipment we have, or because of who we are.

KJL I’m smiling, here.

PS You are?

KJL You said you were there. What did you mean by that?

PS Well, I was not a follower as far as getting into the rallies and public groups concerning the Americans With Disabilities Act. I was still home raising my kids, and I stood behind them as far as any kind of petitions they wanted signed, or any involvement that they needed me for, that I could do, I would do. And I just had high hopes that this was going to come about to be a very positive and productive thing for people with disability. Because we are people

KJL In the spring of 1990, when the Americans With Disabilities Act was being debated in Congress, did you follow that?

PS I followed it, but not in the way that many really gung-ho people did, because I was still the homemaker. I was living in a small town. At that time I was divorced and my children were pretty much ready to leave home. But I had gotten involved with the American Council of the Blind, the National Federation, some of the traveling issues to conventions, and some of the programs at the convention regarding the ADA. That was all part of the overall involvement, educating and participating at that time.

KJL After the ADA was enacted and signed, did you start seeing some changes?

PS I did. I did. Some of it was not so good, but most of it was. I think some of it went overboard, and there was violence and ridicule, and some negative aspects to it, like, "Who do you think you are, demanding these rights?" And we had to get through that. But we did. Because we had the positive attitude. We had the strength, the power and the knowledge to be able to get through that, and force education upon those who didn't have it.

KJL You said some of it wasn't so good. What did you mean by that?

PS Well, I'm trying to be specific without being overly specific.

KJL I didn't mean to put you on the spot, I'm sorry. I just wanted to make sure I understood what you meant.

PS I wish I could explain it, but...

KJL Were there some things in the ADA that you disagreed with?

PS No.

KJL Okay, that's what I was trying to understand.

PS Equal rights. I think before the ADA came, the women's groups; you know, women wanting equal pay for equal work, and businesses wanted to be open seven days a week, instead of six. And I was against that, because I felt the family life was going to pay the price. And at that time my husband was in retail. So that gave him another day of work that he could do, which was seven days away from the family. I had written to Senator Edmund Muskie back then. And he wrote back to me, telling me that he thought I had some good issues, but the people needed to work for the money, and people would always find a way to compensate for what they were losing. I said, "Okay, I can't win over a senator's voice." That was one part of a movement that I did not agree with at all, and to this day, I think I'm right. But the ADA, I don't recall anything that was really inappropriate, or not right.

KJL Did you find it easier to be in the community, to go out in the community? One of the big issues that I hear a lot about is transportation. Did you find that easier after the ADA was passed?

PS There was more of it available as far as the--paratransit is the word. The paratransit was available, and it did bring about a little more independence, and availability to go to different places and get different things done, without relying on someone else. Yes, that was a good part. And I don't know why, what happened, or what changed, but we've lost it. It's not what it used to be. And I can't decide if it's how it's operated, or that the population has multiplied to such a large amount that we just can't satisfy everyone. It's hard to draw the line there.

But transportation will always be an issue. I live just two miles outside of Portland, and in order to get transportation here, without going with paratransit, it can be expensive. Taxi service is available, but it can be expensive. And paratransit, since I have moved here, I have called them twice; they have stood me up twice, where I had to call the doctor's office and say, "I got stood up. I won't make it," which they understood, because they live with it day after day. But I don't know if it's ever going to be right, the way we would like right to be.

KJL Did the ADA mean a lot of changes in your life?

PS It has, in the sense of using the white cane. I must tell you of a funny incident. When I was living up in Norway, I used my cane to go downtown. I needed to get a wire cord for my tape recorder. So I went into the hardware store, where Radio Shack was, and this woman came up to me, "Hi, how are you? Haven't seen you in a while, and how's things going. Small talk (inaudible) "What could I do for you?" I said, "I'm looking for a wire for the tape recorder." "Okay." She grabbed hold of my cane and walked away with it, thinking that the u-shaped hook at the top of my cane was a recorder. And I had to laugh. I said, "Julie, you've really done it now. That's my cane, it's not the recorder." "Oh, my god! I took it away from you? Oh my god!" There are plenty of funny little stories like that. You remember them; you never forget them.

The freedom using the white cane and the freedom of being able to use the guide dog. Remember I lived in a small town, in western Maine, and I was the first person who--to use a guide dog. Being the outgoing person that I am, my biggest chore was to educate. I went downtown as often as I could. I could walk down. And I taught my dog where these different buildings were, and people started getting the hang of it. They would open doors for me. They would say, "Hi," to the dog, which they weren't supposed to, but they did. And the community finally got adjusted to the fact that I had a guide dog, and he was going where I was going.

We did have a problem in one restaurant, which unfortunately is now out of business. Not my fault. Years ago I had gone there with a few of my family members, and the manager had come up to us, and looked at me and said, "The dog's got to go. There's no dogs allowed here." "I'm sorry, but this is a working dog." "What's he doing?" "He's my guide dog. I'm blind." "Well, if you're blind, how can you read the menu?" And I said, "Do you know how far from my nose the menu is?" "You're just doing that." "No, ma'am, I'm not." There was a gentleman in the restaurant who worked for the sheriff's department. He knew me. He came up to me, and he asked what the problem was. And I said, "I don't think this lady believes that I'm legally blind, and wants me to put my dog outside." So apparently he spoke to her, but not sharp enough. So

when we went to check out, she got quite angry with me. She said, "I have a nephew that will never even utter the word, "Mommy," and people like you make me sick, trying to scam the whole world into believing your disability." I just walked away, I mean I was dumbfounded. And a friend of mine right behind me and explained it to her as best he could. But when I got home, I called the owner of the restaurant, and he tried to apologize, and I said, "You cannot apologize for somebody else's mistake, but you can correct it." And I never went back there after that. But things like that happen even after the ADA was enacted.

KJL So there was some resistance to the ADA.

PS Oh, yeah. There was some people that just--they didn't believe it. You know, they didn't believe in disabilities for one thing. And I'm sure that even to this day, you will find employers who manage to go through a loophole to avoid hiring a person with a particular disability. Unfortunately we will always have that. There's always a word in the vocabulary that can change things around, either in our favor, or (inaudible), but we will just have to keep fighting for our rights.

KJL What do you think still needs to be done?

PS Oh, dear! Transportation. Employment. I think there needs to be more work done on the accessibility of buildings and housing. There are no definite--sometimes there are no definite codes as to how things should be. For instance, porch rails. They have them at different levels; they have them at different lengths, and they still get away with it. And it shouldn't be that way. They should be standardized and they should be enforced. And just because you're a special landlord, doesn't give you the right to not have to follow that enforcement. So we still have some work to do there. I would like to see the ADA extend themselves a little bit more for support service providers, which we call SSP's

KJL You started to tell me about SSI's

PS SSP's

KJL Excuse me, SSP's. I'm sorry.

PS Support service providers are people who are trained to work with people who are dual sensory impaired. That is a polite term for Deaf/blind, which I am one of them. And SSP's can provide transportation. They assist us with shopping, reading labels, price tags; clothes shopping for the color, the style, the size, going out to lunch if we feel up to it, reading the menu, going to a church service with us, telling us what's going on; going to a meeting; describing the room, the way it's set up, how many people are there; who's sitting where. If I would like to go to a concert, it would be wonderful to have an SSP available to take me to the concert. Just about anything that anyone wants to do, I should be able to do with an SSP. I would like to see an SSP

being as necessary to the dual sensory impaired people as sign language interpreters are for the Deaf.

KJL I'm going to play devil's advocate here for a moment, okay? I can hear someone saying, "What? She can't hear. Why would she want to go to a concert?" How would you respond to that?

PS Well, I can hear some, with hearing aids, I can feel the vibration through the floor. I can enjoy the feeling of music playing. You can feel it, even in a room. I don't know how to explain it, because...

KJL I think you've done a wonderful job.

PS Thank you (laughs) Yes, I mean, she's blind. Why do you want to take her out sightseeing. Well, my answer to that one is--it's a nice one. Because if you want to take me sightseeing, you're going to describe a beautiful meadow with wildflowers running through it, and in a hill--without being a mountain. It's in a hill, surrounded by stone walls and facing the ocean. Now, when you've described that to me, you've seen it in a different light, because your way of seeing it is, "Oh." Your eyes saw it, you caught a glimpse of it, and, "Yeah, that was pretty." But now stop and explain it, and then see how you see it.

KJL So do you think your life would have been different without the ADA?

PS Yes. Yes, it would have been a lot more difficult to get on airplanes, on busses, in restaurants, in hotels. All of these would have been next to impossible without the ADA. Because, let's face it. The population of people today is growing older. And along with growing older comes macular degeneration, deterioration of the eyesight and age-related hearing loss, which can turn into getting hearing aids if they realize how bad their hearing is. So you're running into many more difficult disabled populations that still need the same treatment, benefits and accommodations, and everything that they've always had. And without the ADA, I don't think they'd use it. They wouldn't go anywhere. I don't think some of them might have lived as long as they have.

KJL You've been very generous with your time again. Is there anything you want to point out to me that I'm overlooking?

PS Hmm. Well, I would like to say that this is America. United States of America. We are American people. We believe in our rights. We believe in our government, and we need to feel that we can still be here without too many hardships, or too many flaws in our life. My wording is wrong, but that's okay. You know what I mean.

KJL Sure. And so do you look forward to more advances in disability rights?

PS Yes, I do. Yes I do, and I hope that it keeps growing and changing and getting better.

KJL Well, thank you. I appreciate your help.

PS You're welcome.

[End of interview.]

