



Oral History and Folklife Research, Inc.

AN INTERVIEW WITH KATHY MCINNIS-MISENOR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

KEITH LUDDEN

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TRANSCRIBER: KEITH LUDDEN

KJL [About 7:56 into the recording, after some preliminary explanation about the organization and the project.]

I'm going to start with a little bit of housekeeping here. Do you mind if I ask you what year you were born?

KM I was born December 24, 1958, Christmas Eve day, at about a quarter of ten in the morning.

KJL You said that was at Machias?

KM No, Saco, Maine, right here. I moved back home. I've lived many other places, but I moved back home. Born in Saco

KJL And we were talking a little bit ago about some of your Irish ancestors. Yes, well it's interesting that my activism, or political stuff, my mother always said was in the blood because my great grandfather, Francis Patrick Murphy was the last of thirteen children of Irish immigrant parents that had been involved in a variety of things. He himself worked as city jailer and then he worked as the city tax assessor and treasurer and had a lot of political positions and was involved in a lot of elections. He was very much aware of the Ku Klux Klan, and there's an extraordinary story about him which both our family and this other family that's involved in it. We'd love to get together because we're now friends, of course.

But the story goes that my great grandfather who was--saw his parents discriminated against and tried to teach his mother. His father died about a month before he was born, so his mother raised him by herself, and then married someone else, but he, like I said was one of thirteen. But he was very aware that the hard work as a blacksmith that his father did contributed to his life. So he was very much about wanting to be educated and wanting to do something. So he got involved in politics, and began doing stuff, so he was rather controversial. He was a very short man, Irish, but very much would use the term, "I'm an American," and was clearly that.

So the story goes he got in trouble with the local Klan in Saco, which was quite big, by doing several things. The first one was since his mother was distraught over the death of her husband and pregnant, her milk dried up. So she had to engage a wet nurse. Well, the only wet nurse that was available at the time was an African-American cleaning woman that lived close by. So she hired her as a wet nurse. She then became a family friend, within whatever situation at the time would have been, I'm sure, save for them. But he didn't seem to care because by the time he was city jailer and needed a cook, and somebody to clean, he hired her. I am still --part of my family--trying to find out who she is, by doing other sort of things that I can find out. If it said, "cook at city hall," then I'm going to know this is the woman. So that was the first cross burned out on his lawn (Laughs).

KJL Excuse me, I'm sorry. Are you speaking figuratively?

KM No, no, literally a cross burned on his lawn with sheet hooded guys and all that. So the story comes that he came out, and he said to the gentleman who was on the horse, who was like, six feet something, and Grandpa Frank was very short. He said, "If you're man enough to talk to me, get down off your bleepin' horse. If you're not, have your idiots douse this, and you'd better not burn Mary's lawn," which was my great grandmother. And so they started arguing,

got down, they argued, and he said, "Look you know her, blah blah blah, hired her, needed a cook. This is, whatever, Go away."

So he knew then that you had to stand up to them, because it was only going to escalate. So he proceeded when walking down the street to the jail, to see a lot of the kids that his children knew, sitting under the lamplight with beat up old books from the school, reading to their Italian, Armenian, Greek, whatever parents. And he stopped and the kids translated, saying, "We asked the teacher if they were going to burn them. We brought them home for Mom and Dad, they're trying to learn." So he said, "They're burning the books?" and he said, "Yes." And he as jailer went and said "I could use those books. you're not using them for fuel, are you?" "Well, we do sometimes, but they're just sitting there dusty and we're getting rid of them, because new history has happened, your know, that sort of thing." So he gathered them all up, and on his nightly rounds as a jailer to check, he hand delivered them to places. So suddenly, all of the immigrants--French, Italian, whatever--were reading, able to fill out applications and applying for jobs, so [thumps table] the Klan came after them again [Laughs]. So again, he said the same thing, It isn't going to happen, you know, it's just not going to happen.

So I think that the reason he was that way was that during the early scares after 1850 to the beginning of the Civil War when there was a lot of "No Irish need apply," whatever--the Murphy family which had settled here in Saco--they got married in 1849 in Portland and settled down here--they end up showing up in the 1861 census in Canada. They left and went back to Canada to land there and then came back again by the time the Civil War had ended and by the time the resurgence of the Klan had ended. So we've always wondered what was there that happened, and the local historian and I have been surmising. Was there an exodus, or did they leave because they needed work? What was the reason that so many of these Irish people that were here on the census in 1850 suddenly are not in Saco in 1860--and show back up in 1870?

So he was sort of the catalyst of doing stuff, and he was quite a character. He would know when his children voted or did not vote. Let's just say that. And when there became the right to vote, he made darn sure that his daughters--his daughters in 1920--his daughters registered to vote. That was a really big thing for him. Many of his older sisters had been involved in the suffrage movement. They had been involved in that, so he was very much pro women's rights and stuff, within the context of his time, I'm sure, because my mother's told me a lot about what her grandmother said and not all of it was--there was a bit of misogyny here and there.

He was very interested, and we would always laugh. Several of my great aunts and uncles were very involved in the Democratic Party; particularly my uncle Carl, who was on the Democratic committee here for a very long time. We grew up in a house that included my parents, my siblings--we lost one brother as a child. So all of us, my grandmother and several great aunts and uncles. So we had a wonderful atmosphere to grow up in and have that sort of talk about this and arguments with my great uncle Carl where he said he had met Wild Bill Hickock and Buffalo Bill Cody when he was a little kid, and we're like, "Yeah, no way!" And he spent weeks with the librarian, Mrs. Cary who is John Cary, a former state rep's Mom, and she finally found an old circus poster book, with the thing that said "Fairfield Park," which is of course now where the school is. And there it had all of them. And he brought it home and he called us all up. He walked us up, and he sat down and said, "See? Just like I told you." And when you think about it, you're thinking, "My gosh!"

And now when my daughter and I do genealogy we put it into the context, because when I started doing genealogy, at eight-nine-ten with my mother, and looking at all that, my grandmother loved history. My grandmother would help me created a historic time frame so that I would know what was happening when, so that I could understand the potato famine; so I could understand when the Civil War was happening; so I knew Uncle Carl was in World War I, and my dad was in World War II. So all of that sort of stuff really helped and stir red it.

When I was young--twenty or twenty-one or so--I worked on my sister [Connie] who had come back

from DC, she was Executive Secretary to Senator Hathaway, and of course, the Chief of Staff was Angus King, he was a family friend. And she had worked with him, and she had come back and she ran for school board and I worked on her campaign. The Saco went into default, and people started resigning because the mayor was just refusing to take bonds out to continue public facilities, schools, everything. So at that point they were asking folks and I ran for office, and defeated my Democratic opponent and then defeated my Republican opponent. And then an uproar came because the city hall was not accessible.

So this is in 1980 at the height of Reaganism, and that was really, you know, one of the first sort of things that really made me aware of the power of an individual to do tremendous stuff, because I had no qualms doing it. I knew there were going to either move the meetings or make it accessible. I knew what the Rehab Act, 504 said. There was no way. But i had every lawyer in the world, and everybody saying, "No, No, No." Except the Handicapped Rights Project, which was a small organization out of USM. And the secretary there was named Lena Muldoon, later, Lena [], who was a disability rights activist and leader in the Jewish community, and she said, "This is gonna be good, kid." She said, "We'll help you."

KJL You say you ran for office.

KM Yes, 1980.

KJL Did disability play any role in that campaign?

KM Oh, absolutely. The articles are horrific. There were several councilors that were just outrageous, calling me mentally unstable, mentally retarded, "She shouldn't have run if she knew she couldn't get into the building;" "It's not a place for them." I won't mention their names; it's in all the articles, because both of them, when it was all over, and things had changed and they had gotten older and wiser they apologized, all of those councilors.

But I did win. They did have to renovate a downstairs room to be accessible, and then make a plan to make the entire city hall accessible, which it is right now with an elevator So I served a few terms. I filled out the short term, and then I served another term and then got more involved in disability rights. And that when Lena--Gloria Davis who was an instructor in disability studies and a disabled Vietnam veteran, and Tom Andrews who was one of the members of it--we all decided to really take the small disability [group?] because it was there and expand it into a disability rights group that would do what we did, which is the national transit fight where we ended up fighting. We first found a way to be very clear in working with [staff?] around legislation that we wanted the Maine Human Rights Act amended to include language that included people with disabilities; around public accommodation, around equality.

And then we sort of let it me there and tested a while. Then when we were ready to do education around accessible transit, and we had public forums, an all of that; and when they said they did not want to be accessible, because they had para transit, door to door transit, we said, "If you don't do it, we're going to sue." And we did and I think it was September 14, 1980--What was it? '83, 84? Oh, gosh, I'll have to think--That Judge Alexander, Donald Alexander declared that separate was not equal for people with disabilities; that para transit was unconstitutional; and for the first time in the nation, that people with disabilities had a right to public accommodation; and that one bus per fleet, as they did in Berkeley, and as they did in Florida, and as they did in other states, was also unconstitutional. So Maine became the first state in the nation to declare transportation--

KJL [interrupts because of some noise at the microphone] Let me explain, that transmits up the--

KM The unique thing about the Americans With Disabilities Act consortium, for people with disabilities was that when we were doing bus stuff or we were investigating Baxter School for the Deaf sexual abuse, or the Pineland sexual abuse case, or suing the courthouse for being inaccessible, and then running the referendum to get the money to make them accessible at the same time--that was a fun one--when we were doing all that stuff, trying to sort of say, "This is civil rights, not services. And Steve Trembly, God rest his soul, my buddy that died couple of years ago, who was the founder of Alpha One--Steven and I would argue about this all the time--that--he was a "van in every garage" kind of guy, you know, like "a chicken in every pot." A van in every garage--that accessible transportation was nothing. But I kept arguing from a poverty perspective that we needed both; not everybody could afford a car. There's still rampant employment discrimination, people can't buy a car, unless there's a way to buy a car; and that how Kim Wallace, and Steve and I a few others came up with the idea of the MPower, or the "Kim Wallace Adaptive Equipment Loan Program." Kim Wallace Adaptive Equipment Loan Program, not the MPower crap they call it now. Because it deserved--to declare access to public transportation a civil right for people with disabilities. So that was really remarkable. So we had people calling from everywhere, "How did you guys do it?" And it was just pure grassroots strategy. It's something to look at and realize when people talk about the 25 years since the ADA. The ADA took an incredible long time to get there, and there were many incarnations--to have his name, it was his idea, get over it. Again, marketing and PR and people trying to make themselves more important than the work.

So we would fight about that, so Steve was opposed to accessible transportation, as was the majority of independent living centers around the country. Disability Rights Education Defense Fund, they were like, "Oh, no, no, yeah. This is a big thing to take on, let's do it piecemeal" or whatever. But at the time we were winning all and doing it, and we're going--I went down to DC and met with Elizabeth Dole, because when they refused to roll out the regulations as Judge Alexander said they were forced to do, we said, "We're suing you." So we sued the U.S. Department of Transportation, and I flew down to meet with Elizabeth Dole. That was really fun [Laughs]. The first thing I said to her was "Thank you for taking the meeting with me, and my father, who is a World War II vet has great respect for your husband." And her whole face changed. She didn't know what to say. And I said I really hope that his influence can help is resolve this. In other words, "He's disabled, I'm disabled, get with the program." And she was [very nice?] and I think she was well aware that it was soon going to be bigger than she anticipated, and we were developing a transportation coalition and we were seeking money around organized transit accessibility stuff. And Wade Blank, who was out of Colorado, who was a nondisabled guy, but--well, he became disabled later and then sadly he

drowned. But he was the one--because we were doing a million things--that orchestrated this big grant to do rabble rousing protests around the country, because transportation was his one and only thing on his plate.

KJL Now, was this ADAPT?

KM ADAPT. And they were first Americans Disabled for Public Transportation--Before that they were--he would take one project on at a time as an organizer, so the name would be "Americans Disabled for--whatever. I mean, he would change it. Right now it's for attendant services, or something, but--so anyway, started doing things like that around protesting, picketing, whatever, in my office, which was a mess, here in Portland. South Portland was refusing. We felt we've gotta do something really [stunning?]. So we had tried to educate people around accessible transportation way before any lawsuits were filed. So we did a series of public forums and invited everybody, including Senator Mitchell, town officials and basically said "You need to come and hear why this is cost effective, why whatever. We brought experts in, the whole bit. People from South Portland came, people from the Metro in Portland came, people from the Biddeford-Saco area, because here in Biddeford, Saco, my mother and myself, and some others were the first to have a 504 accessible bus in Maine was in Saco, and I'd take it back and forth for certain things.

KJL This was what?

KM A 504 granted accessible bus (inaudible). Not a para transit, a real, accessible, lift equipped bus that would go Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard, Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard. So one of the things that we did was we tried to educate them. Portland was getting antsy, but wanted to compromise. The Attorney General, who then shall be nameless, because I'm trying to be nice [wanted to?] compromise, like half the busses, and we're like, "No, no, no, no, no, no. We're not going to do it." And there's even oral history that was done about the legal aspects of the case, and they still, like as of--what was it?--five years ago, saying well, it was a good compromise. It wasn't. We won. And it's a hundred percent of the busses accessible, and there's no way we're going to say, whatever. We compromised (inaudible) and as you phase out old ones, fine, but new ones have to be accessible. And we were clear on that. So South Portland and Portland were dragging their feet. Portland decided--so we had to sue them too--but they quickly began doing negotiations, and we had to kick the AG out of the negotiations because we were not going to compromise, we knew we had won.

KJL What year was this?

KM Oh, God! Before 1986.

KJL In the '80's.

KM Yeah, an so this is in the early '80's, 'cause the decision, I think--the final decision came down in '86.

KJL This is the 504 decision.

KM No, no. 504. This is the Maine Association of Handicapped Persons versus South Portland and Portland Metro Transit. We sued both of the cities for inaccessibility and won. So prior to the win we were educating. After the win, and they were dragging their feet, and trying to get it, and then you had the AG's office saying, "Well, let's [compromise]; make one route where those people usually go--like to the mall, or to the doctor's--accessible." So, needless to say, we were just like, "No, this is what..." And we would repeat what was said in the negotiations, and they'd say they have to be quiet, and I'm like, "Why? They're saying, South Portland. So they're saying whatever they want to say, we'll say whatever we want to say."

So the AG pretty much walked out. They say there was no way of handling any of us. Neither South Portland, or any of us cared at the moment. So South Portland finally agreed they were going to have the busses, because the judge ordered them to. We decided that if they chose to order them inaccessible, which they did, we would do massive protests. And of course they were going to come on line in January [Laughs]. So what we did... Sarah, can you get the big sign, are you tall enough to get the sign above my desk? I know there's all the yard sale stuff in there. You're not? I'll try to show him later, you'll forgive me for all the yard sale [stuff] in the office. So we decided this will be interesting. These are brand new inaccessible busses. They are advertising everywhere for ads on the busses, so we bought ads on the busses, which is a big picture of a bus, with a symbol, a disability symbol and a wheelchair with a big red "x" through it, you know, the big red cross thing, the circle and the line, and it said--oh, yeah, bring it out--It said, "If you cannot walk--If you can't walk, you can't ride."

KJL I want to take a picture of that later.

KM So we put that on the front and back of every single one of their busses, and we came in with cold, hard cash to pay for it. And of course the clerk was nervous, the bus drivers were nervous, everybody, but they couldn't refuse it. and their lawyers called our lawyers, and this, that, whatever and finally they said, "Okay, you can have it, but they were disgusting. and then, they thought, "Well, that's it, but it wasn't. The day the busses rolled, those that had crutches, or whatever took their sweet time walking up onto the bus, and saying, "Oh, I was going to go to the mall today, but since my friend Kathy can't get on the bus, I don't think I am," and then taking their sweet time to get off.

And then we handed out leaflets to everybody getting on and off the bus, "If you can't walk, you can't ride." This is what the issue is We are like Rosa Parks; we are like, "Enough! There is technology, there are lifts. You've seen them on other stuff, why can't they put them on a public bus?" Using the logical sort of arguments for people, and then also sort of getting our supporters to write letters to the editor, and then the more it got--the people we connected with, "I saw this young woman in the streets covered with snow, in her wheelchair, trying to get on a bus--broke my heart, you know, I'm an old African-American woman that's involved in the NAACP; darn it! I understand where she's coming from."

And it was amazing, and so the floodgates opened. South Portland looked absolutely horrific, and by the time we of course sued Elizabeth Dole, and all of that, and then ADAPT had been doing their demonstrations. We combined every disability group around transit in the nation, that was doing work trying to get their place more accessible and we filed an appeal in the first circuit court. That's like the court before you go to the Supreme Court. And we won! And they caved [Laughs]. Department of Justice, the Department of Transit, they caved; big time caved, and so they were forced to issue the regulations that mandated all new busses be accessible.

So then Portland was ordered by Judge Alexander and further by Judge Carter, who also did the local state ruling on the bus thing, to retrofit the busses. South Portland had to retrofit their busses they had just bought with lifts, and Portland had to buy brand new busses. And I was reminded, actually by my good friend Sarah (Suyama) the other day, that the first time I rode on an accessible bus was July 6 of that--I'd have to look it up--July 6 of--I don't know, it's in this book--July 6 of I think, '84, maybe, I don't know, or '86, let me look it up. If it's '86, that would be really funny, but I might just be saying that, but I'll look it up. It makes me sound stupid that I don't remember, but I've lived a long time, now.

So we were very excited about that. And I was not aware--I mean, we had made sure--I mean, we had press following everybody, different disabilities that were getting on--visually impaired people that had not been allowed on because of their guide dogs. We had Deaf people getting on board and signing, "What's the fee?" you know, and then pointing, "Is it a dollar?" [They] wanted the drivers to know this is what it's going to be like. And then watching other disability activists like Judy Roberts, who's now gone; Darrel (Berkel) who's now gone; my friend Cindy Leach and David [Kim] who I talked to today, which you should talk to--and Joe Greeley, who's gone now as well. And everybody, because they were South Portland residents, and we wanted them to shine, so they were the ones, but of course the media, being what the media is, was, "When is Kathy going out, and is she going out with Tom?" Because they thought we were an item at the time, you know. Tom and I [were like] brother and sister, we were buddies.

But it was funny, so I had to go out, so I said to my friend Sarah, because I was going to go home and record the news, you know, on VHS, you know, and see everything, and so we arranged we would go out shopping. So we did that, and she's sitting on the bus, but it wasn't literally 'til I got to the store, and I was shopping that I realized, "My God, I can do this all the time now, at a half hour, you know--not even call, not a notice--because the para transit was seventy-two hours in advance, only to medical appointments--and I was overwhelmed, totally overwhelmed, and I thought "Geez, this is it. This is big, and I made two calls that night when I got home. One was to my mother, who said, "I saw you on the news, honey, oh you looked so cute! Congratulations, you did wonderful! How did it feel?" I said, "I cried like a baby in the middle of the darn store, Ma." And she said, "I bet you did," you know, and we talked. And the other was to Gerald Talbot, who was active in the NAACP, the first African-American legislator in Maine, and had been a member of our board, and I said, "So this is what it's like." He said, "When you get a taste of freedom, there's no going back, is there, kid?" And I said, "No, what are we going to do next?" He goes, "I don't know, let's talk about it," you know. It was amazing. It was an amazing feeling.

And one of the other stories that I shared with Susan Gold that just did this book on the history of the ADA, which you should probably get, give yourself some perspective, is that--a personal sort of story--is that during the time of segregation, this bus driver was my regular para transit driver that would take me to--quote--volunteering at the Association of Handicapped Persons. Because it was a church, we could say we were volunteering at the church. But they all knew we had our office in the basement of [Williston West] Church, right? That's where we were, you know, it had a lift, and [was] accessible, and we were there. And his name was Peter Misenor.

And then when we did the South Portland training about how they were required by the court to do an attitude adjustment, and do training around education. So they put it out to bid.

Alpha One got the bid, because they didn't want to give it to us, and then Alpha One failed miserably. Parents and people with disabilities said, "No, no, they're telling them things they shouldn't be telling them. And so we met privately with Steve Trembly, and said, "This is not good, you've got all your able-bodied staff doing it, and it's crap. So we want you to think about it, and I'd like you to gracefully pull out." And he agreed, because when he looked at what our stuff is, versus what his staff is doing, he said, "Okay."

KJL Explain what you mean by "attitude adjustment."

KM Attitude adjustment--that the drivers were not wanting to operate the lift, or lying and saying the lift was stuck, using inappropriate language, like "cripple," or "sick," or "diseased," or any of those things--patronizing behavior, "Honey, sweetheart," you know, all of that. So we did this really creative interactive training session where we played different characters.

So I played Lily Tomlin, you know, "ringy dingy dingy," like I was an operator for the bus system, right? And I had one of the bus drivers, who was one of our fiercest opponents--his name was Roger [Roscoe]--fiercest opponent, and most outspoken when they needed a driver to say how wrong this was--and I had him come up. And he was a character, wonderful man, wonderful character. And we played all the scenarios. So every time he said something--and I was supposed to be the girl with the little kid on the bus, or what. And I answered him the way an empowered person would answer. He realized, "My God! You can't take the para transit to work?" He began asking questions, which is what we wanted the drivers-- "No the para transit doesn't take me to work, it only takes me to medical appointments." "Well can't they take you to work?" "No, no, you have to call 72 hours in advance to get to a medical appointment, you can have only one medical appointment a month.

Saying all of that--well years later I'm in school, going back to school to get my undergrad, and I meet a young man who I then begin dating, and I have to meet his parents. They're divorced. His father is Peter Misenor the RTP bus driver, and his step father is Roger Roscoe. So my father-in-law is Peter Misenor, and now that he's passed, Roger (inaudible) was my other step father. And when it was announced in the paper and all of that good stuff, the bus driver said, "We knew you couldn't get away from us, you had to marry our children, you know, you're a cradle robber," 'cause []'s eleven years younger than me,

[interruption from Sarah]

So the history of the movement in this book that Sue Gold did, which is a great book you should get, not just because I'm in it, but because it's done not for the sake of glory, but for schools. It was done as part of the national education project for new legislation, and Sue worked with me and others--Yoshiko Dart, and Pat Wright and whoever--to write it. And it really gives a good sort of high school level overview of the Americans With Disabilities Act. This one, my mother was going to give to the high school when she died three years ago. But I could certainly send you a link to be able to get it on Amazon. I'm sure it's dirt cheap.

KJL It looks like it's self published.

KM No, it's published--

KJL Oh, Okay, yeah.

KM I could send you the link, but it has the “A Warrior’s Story,” which is me. And there’s two cool pictures, one on page 14--yeah and I don’t have my glasses on. Here is my mom and I on the lawn of the White House, at the signing of the ADA. I tried to find the original picture, which I loaned to Sue for this book. I can’t find it, so I hope she hasn’t lost it. “Cause this is my Facebook profile, that I think my sister sent to me.

KJL I’d like to have a copy

KM Yeah, so, maybe we’ll take a picture (inaudible). And then the other one, which Yoshiko probably has a better one, because I keep telling that--We grew up, of course we’re Irish. We worked on Senator Ted Kennedy’s campaign, even from Maine, and things like that--is that we knew him--but I wanted him, that picture with my Mom, me and him, you know. And Tom [Andrews], who was running for Congress at the time, and who had nothing at all to do with the ADA, he didn’t want to be involved in controversy then, because he was running for Congress. You could see--I love this picture--Ted is there with a group of folks that wanted their picture taken. Yoshiko said, “OK, I’ll take the picture.” And you can see Tom in the background and you can see half of me. You can see Tom right there. And you see how he’s starting to get up? This person behind is me. [Laughs]. nThere’s a better one on the PBS documentary, you can see more, and I’m sure Yoshiko has them. I never thought to.

KJL That was at the signing?

KM Yes, that was at the signing. And I have another one in there. I think there’s another pamphlet that Justin [Dart] signed. I’ll go in and get that. And this one which, we’re talking history--and oral history and written history, because written history is disappearing, too. There’s a wonderful book by Mary Johnson, Bartlett Shaw, who were involved in the *Disability Rag*, which was a wonderful radical publication. We had our own called *Moving*, or before that it wasn’t our name, called *Coping*, where we exposed a lot of the Baxter School stuff, but it’s called, *To Ride the Public Busses, the Fight To Build a Movement*; meaning a modern disability rights movement, not an independent living movement. Because the independent living movement, which had done the work, by Judy Heumann, who (inaudible)], did the regulations in ’73, so when I was in high school, and my mother was fighting for me to get access to high school and all that--we can talk about that later, maybe--but they were refusing to promulgate the 504 regulations. They had already watered them down numerous times and--but anyway, there were sit-ins at Berkeley and a variety of other places.

KJL Now this is the fight with Joseph Califano, right?

KM Yes, way back when. So finally they were released, or whatever, and then out of that, some of it was to really work to get centers for independent living, which did do some great stuff, I mean, brought a lot of services, community stuff began to have it--but again, many of them were controlled by non-disabled people, even though they were supposed to have disabled people in control, over the years, it’s not (inaudible). You have a not so prominent percentage of staff being people with disability and a lot has changed. But they have really began to look at that and look at why that is. One is they want to find qualified staff and not many people with disabilities are going into the field or have the access to the education, funding, training, et cetera, you know we’re really still far behind when it comes to employment rights.

But they were very much focused “If we [go] too much for the ‘right’ to everything, we will lose the services.” So when we were off--that is the rabble rousers, the radicals--off winning, you know, freeing people from institutions and sexual abuse and fighting our right to national transportation, and Maine was the first state to declare access to transportation a civil right, and boy, the calls we got the day of that decision! From every state in the union, from foreign countries, and operators trying to translate, and it was wonderful and crazy all at the same time--is that we really began to realize that the problem with the way things had been done before--because we were very involved, we worked with Senator Lowell Weicker, from Connecticut, a Republican, and his staff. We had worked with the Disability Rights Education Fund, the Children’s Defense Fund, and many others on different issues that we cared about. But there was always this thing about, “We’ll do the legislation, and you guys do what you do, and when we need your network, we’ll let you know.” But the end result was legislation was always compromise, and never happened. So thanks to several people, Pat Wright, Disability Rights Education Defense Fund, who is a vision impaired woman who is their Executive Director, Ralph Neas, a republican that got converted to being a Democrat, who was with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and Tim Cook, who was with the Disability Action Center, who we turned over our bus litigation stuff--Harold, our lawyer became an assistant, but Tim had enough money to do our circuit court thing for the bus case.

And Tim was a peach. He and I worked a lot on the amendments to the transportation section of the Americans With Disabilities Act. And he’s gone now. He was a peach. I liked him a lot. So what we said is, it isn’t good enough for us to spread the word, you need to be involved in what you’re saying, because you guys always end up with something with--like the 504 amendments--with post a stick by the elevator so people can push the number button, only to have the first guy that needs to scratch his back take the stick down and take it with him. No! It costs fifty bucks to move the electrical panel down, that’s not an undue burden. So we began really pushing to have them view nationally our rights as people with disabilities. The way the Birch Bayh had said, the way the Lowell Weicker--who had disabled members of his family--we were talking about modeling it on the civil rights act of ’64.

KJL And when was this?

KM This was in the early ’80’s coming in. [a little noise checking the recording] And I can send you a time frame and there are some that are out there, and those two books are very good about giving the time frame of that. What I would call the new version of the Americans With Disabilities Act was really drafted in the beginnings of--in the subcommittee--Subcommittee on Handicapped Persons and Services, or whatever the heck it was called at that time in the Senate--which was Lowell Weicker’s seat, but he lost to Joe Lieberman, who at the time was a Democrat, but as far as I’m concerned, might as well have been a Republican. And he just didn’t seem to get stuff, although of course, Kennedy got him on board, but it was one of those things like, “Great!, We’ve lost Lowell Weicker,” who was, like, awesome.

So Robert Silverman, who was one of the the lead attorneys on there, he began drafting language, and then began sharing it with different folks, like Pat Wright at DREDF and Ralph Neas at Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Time Cook. And then from there, getting feedback, and sending it out to the leadership of disability rights groups and independent living centers. And what they were finding was there was already coming out of agencies, professional disability groups, you know, like for a particular disease, or whatever--with a couple of exceptions, like the Epilepsy Foundation and the Cerebral Palsy Foundation, I

might add--and the blind and--some blind and Deaf groups, I'll clarify that--and all radicals were saying, "No. No compromise. Who suggested every third bus? Who suggested this or that? No, no, no, no, no."

And they began to realize that so many people had been trained to accept loss, to accept compromise, that we said, "Uh uh, I don't think so." So the consortium of people with disabilities was built that included hundreds of organizations around the country. That was the direct result of when--when they were going to roll back 504--President Reagan was going to roll back 504, and there's a wonderful picture in there of Joe Greeley. And they could get everything. C. Boyden Gray, who was Georg [H.] W. Bush, the Vice President--they wanted to get rid of everything. And at one point one of the staffers said something like, "I don't know why they want to integrate disable children in schools, anyway, who wants cracked china in their lunchroom?"

So things like that. So that is the point that The Association of Handicapped Persons, we organized a massive caravan--New England, east coast caravan, where we gathered, Oh, god, I think alone we had eighty-six-thousand-one-hundred-and-twenty. By the time we got to Connecticut, I stopped counting, because it didn't really matter, the number, it was going to be what we did with them. And as we went, we would pick up our buddies in Boston, we would pickup our buddies in Philadelphia, we'd pick up our buddies in Jersey, and we would pick them up in Baltimore, and everywhere we would have a protest, picket, whatever, at whatever federal building or whatever we needed to do--all the way down until, you know, the President knew we were coming, and then they did agree to a meeting, and so we got in the meeting and we did that, and we delivered the hundreds of thousands of postcards and we were like here.

So we were all here, and all the people that came with us, we demanded be in the room. If they had traveled that far, they were going to be in the room, where some of the agencies and stuff said, "Well, let's have a--" We're like, "No. We did that, you guys want to sit at the table, fine." And of course there were some people [we wanted--who weren't?] at the table, like DREDF, and Ralph, and whatever, and we began the negotiations about that. And we won. They stopped tearing out 504. I have some really nasty t-shirts if you want to see them about Reagan, but I'll be kind now, since he's gone as well. The Irish in me, you can't speak to ill of the dead.

So the 504 win, that is, getting them to roll back, which DREDF had put letters out, "They're rolling back, write letters, write this or that," and we're like, "Let's develop a campaign," and we got everybody else to start developing, and we did postcards. People can collect them. They can have friends [and] relatives sign them. And let's just send them, mail them, cart them, do whatever--well it clogged up the system at the White House, you know, because they were sent to the Vice President. And it was massive. Can you imagine if it was done today with the security. It would be like national news, not just local news, and a few scatterings on the nightly CBS news. So during that, once we won that, and then we got back together and got thinking about the drafting of the ADA and everything, we said, Well, why don't we do what we did for 504? Set up a consortium. You guys are sending us out stuff to edit and look at. Let's set it up and show them how many groups in the country care about this. And then let's use those groups, make them get off their duffs, go out there and educate their legislators, got out there and educate their Congressmen and Senators and really get them to understand," because we knew we had to get to the state legislators, too, because they would be worried about what it was going to cost to the local businesses in the state, or what. Because the Chamber of

Commerce had opposed it; Maine businesses, and big, fancy, multi-billion stores and whatever had opposed it. Money. Foodworkers of America had opposed it because they didn't want gay people, or people with AIDS handling food. There was all of that going on.

So as the drafting came down, Tim mostly did the transportation stuff. I worked with Tim, and I also worked with Ralph Neas and Pat Wright on public accommodation. And we would take stuff and pull it together. And then as we edit out, when we knew the majority of people said, "No compromise for the busses being 50/50, or one out of every ten." that was gone. We started with a hundred percent and we were going to keep it. And really getting clear what our vision was. And even stuff as simple as words, the preamble around "services and supports for..." No. We wanted to say it's [hereby] declared a civil right. We wanted the words of "a civil right."

So when it was clear that we had a draft of the bill, and [it] was going to start going through committees, that's when we started organizing people, and having people that were going to be coming in or could come in, or could come in for an epilepsy conference, or a cerebral palsy conference, or Alliance of Mentally Ill, or and Independent Living Conference, whatever it may be; if they were coming in to do whatever their little business is, "Let's make part of it going to the capitol, and visiting and lobbying and talking to your reps and senators." And it began to be very effective, so then we just hit the streets and Justin Dart, who had said at first, was not quite sure what all this was, was very supportive, obviously was fortunate, extremely fortunate, given who his family was--the have every thing he needed always taken care of for his disability, so when he became involve at the Texas level and stuff, he was unaware that so many people went without decent health care, without decent medical equipment, without to ride a public bus, without the right to go to a school, to be refused in a restaurant. He had never heard it, and it was a real eye opener for him. And then he turned when he went to Japan and saw either a patronizing attitudes or very positive, respectful attitudes of courtesy around disability, and that's where he met Yoshiko, his wife, is that he came back and said, "Yeah, I want to do something about this.

So the disability community, knowing, "Hey, you know he's a Republican, and we could use a Republican, and--got him involved, he was involved in the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities, and getting them involved and invested. We arranged to have him, and it was his idea to go to every state, but when you read a lot of people's stuff, it says, "Justin paid his own way to go to every state." Yeah, but we did all the groundwork, you know what I mean? So yeah, he paid for his own accommodations, and he paid for whatever, but when he came here the first time, the independent living center was a tiny group, and we were like, "We warned you." So when he came back, we had a massive group for him to talk to, but we were clear this is an Association of Handicapped Persons event that he was coming to.

But really getting people to unite, once people understood, and so fund those things. Justin compiled a report, and the report, to be honest, was a tool to show them the facts they wanted to know, like, what is happening, how many people are being discriminated against? True or not true. What's going on? And that I think changed the perspective in many ways of the administration, although they kept balking because by then of course, Reagan was gone, George [H. W.] Bush was in there, and he was wavering on things around monetary stuff.

KJL You're talking about George H. W. Bush.

KM Yeah, George--the first George Bush, yeah. So what we began doing is really targeting congresspeople at different levels. So Cindy Leach, who you're probably going to talk to, and David (Canne?) and a few others began doing a tremendous amount of outreach. I was the state of Maine disability--disability ADA coordinator. Steven Trembly was the liaison for the independent living centers, which there was only him in Maine, but we would use his network as well to get out our pamphlets, and other stuff, because he, you know, had that avenue, and disabled person that wanted his service--that was physically disabled person. We connected with The Iris Network, Laura (Maletter?), now back to Laura Vittorioso, and her former husband David (Maletter?)--he's blind, she has polio, worked at The Iris Network for vision impaired people. They did a lot of work in the blind community, and then my friend who is gone now, and another one from Connecticut, Sherri (inaudible) and Ellen (Hort) were like the New England coordinators. They were from Connecticut. So the three of us that are coordinating northern New England, east coast-y sort of stuff. And then when it came to going down there, we had to coordinate all the east coast people and make sure they were going where they were going, and lobbying and whatever. Hence the badge, the lobby badge. Look at how young I looked then. Amazing. Different hair color, too. Gosh, huh?

KJL I've often heard the statement that the disability community is the only community which anyone can join. How did you join?

KM Well, I had at the age of five, onset juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, and I walked till about eight or nine. I always had, like ace bandages, or metatarsal bars on my shoes, or ace bandages on my feet, but I slowly went to crutches, and then braces, and then a walker, and then a wheelchair, by the time I was like, eleven, twelve, somewhere around there. But yeah, there's a whole spectrum of disability within the community, and what we kept saying, particularly with (inaudible) and other bills like 504 had been watered down and how other things had been watered down, or blind folks saying, "I don't like the way this is going, so we're submitting a bill that's saying ...da da da da...rights for blind people, because they knew they would get it through, you know the history of the powerful lobby for Deaf and blind folks, it was just historic.

So one of the first things that we did as a disability rights group in 1981 was to hold what everybody said could never happen, which was a conference on civil rights with disabilities; and 2) it be cross-disability, that we have veterans with disabilities, people with physical disabilities, people with communicable disabilities, like AIDS, or whatever, people that had deafness, blindness, et cetera, et cetera. And I remember Steve Tremblay saying "Never gonna do it, McInnis, never gonna do it, never gonna get..." And we coordinated the para transit around the state, and we coordinated all of the nursing homes. I said, "If you got veterans or whatever, can you bring people, or if you're not gonna bring people, can we have your van, we'll pay for the gas, we'll sign a rider, we have a temporary rider with our insurance company, blah, blah blah."

So we ended up pulling together over five hundred people with disabilities to the Augusta Civic Center (and?) Portland. We had to modify the bathrooms in there, because they weren't accessible. We knocked down stall walls, put up curtains. The staff there was like, "Oh, my god, that's so easy, we could do this for real afterwards." I said, "Yes you could, and you're supposed to, under 504." So we had this conference and it was broken up not by disability, but by subject.

KJL And this conference was in...?

KM ...1981 in Augusta, at the Augusta Civic Center. So the headlines hit, that this was the nation's first cross-disability civil rights conference. Because remember the Berkeley independent living movement was mostly people in chairs, or occasionally a blind person or a Deaf person. But generally speaking, everything else had been physically disabled people, paralyzed vets on this side, or blind and Deaf in their own thing, but really pulling people together in one place. An I think other people began to say, "Hey, let's try that too," you know. And so by the time we got in the mid to late '80's, working on the drafting of the ADA, and getting it out, we wanted it to be truly cross disability and to involve everyone. And it was an eye opener I should say for a lot of folks, because there were a lot of folks because there were a lot of physically disabled people, and a lot of blind or Deaf people who'd say, "Well, why is that important?" amongst ourselves, and we always talked amongst ourselves and sent things out, because we'd say, "That's why it's important to us."

So there was a real education bias, because within the disability community historically, and to some extent still now there's a hierarchy of who's good/bad, and of course at the top you have vision impaired people. They get an incredible amount of tax breaks, they have an incredible amount of funding. They have special privileges and laws that apply only to them. Many tax breaks and opportunities for free business, whatever go to them. So they've always been seen as the elite of disabled folks. Veterans were somewhere in there, although we all know veterans are really somewhere down here, but the perception was that veterans were higher up. And then you had different physically disabled people, and then you had sort of mid-line Deaf folks, and at the very bottom you had people with mental retardation, mental illness, people with AIDS, et cetera. So there was this feeling like, "Yeah, you guys get this, you guys..." and we're like the whole point is that we want everybody to get it because it's not a privilege based upon what's wrong with you, what's different about you, whatever language they were using to describe themselves. We are all people living with a disability, or a difference, and therefore our difference has to be accepted. We're not the ones that needs to be cured or rehabbed. Society needs to be rehabilitated. Society needs to be changed. We want our seat on the bus, we want the right to go to school--an accessible school, a school with interpreters, a school that makes reasonable accommodations to a kid with autism. We want to make this happen.

So it was powerful. So by the time we were going to hit the run, and we went through and--in terms of the actual day (inaudible) Those were the only dates. I didn't write down the dates for the early stuff. But after the bill goes, it's in all the committees, and I won't waste the time discussing all of the committee chaos and stuff, although there's stories. I'll tell you some of the stories. But by the time (inaudible) and in May, May 17th, the day before my sister's birthday, debate started. We were all down there, because I went down there, Justin paid my way to go down--went down and I was given an organizing training session at the independent living center, the National Council on Independent Living, doing a training organizing session down there, hopefully trying to get them--and that's where I first met the Connecticut ladies, "Hey, we're your counterparts, and we e-mail, and we talk on the phone and we wanted to see you!" And Shelly (inaudible) was a community organizer herself, so we were kindred spirits and we all agreed to stay in the same hotel and party while we were there. It was fun.

So the debate started then on the seventeenth, and chaos began reining. The idiots started coming out, you know, Jesse Helms, you know. They were always trying to back door "We

want to ban people with AIDS,” the whole food handler thing. “We don’t want people with certain diseases to have the right to be covered by the law. And these amendments would be heard, and then we would have to fight them and come up with information. So a compromise was brilliantly done by Senator Kennedy and Orrin Hatch and Steny Hoyer and a bunch of other folks.

KJL This is in 1990?

KM 1990. They said, “Well, lets let the Center for Disease Control decide--and the Food and Drug Administration decide who shouldn’t be touching food. Let’s have them develop a list that will be issued, that businesses have to follow.” And of course they couldn’t say no. It was brilliant. It worked, you know. One of our better ideas. And it was really something that came out of, “Well what the heck, isn’t there a list? I know in my town...” So it was one of those things that they were like, “Yes.” It was the perfect thing, because they had regulatory control that the Republicans wanted, but their homophobia was not in this bill. And there were incredible, wonderful speeches on that that I remember.

But (inaudible) was sneaking in and out. They didn’t want this, and they didn’t want that. Jesse Helms was an incredible, rude, homophobic, racist, misogynistic jerk--and that’s not the only person I’ll trash on tape--who--I remember being in a room with him discussing the transportation stuff where he says, “Why do you need more than one car train to be available? How many places do you people even get to go?” Aaaaaaaaarghhhh! And I was of course starting to like get the Irish dander up, and Kennedy’s hand goes on my hand and I looked at him and I said, “Senator,” meaning Orrin Hatch, who was there on our side, and Senator Kennedy, I said, “Is Senator Helms making a joke? If he is, it’s not very funny.” And with this squeaky little voice of mine, he turned around and he looked at me and he said, “Well, look at this little rural Maine girl with her sarcasm.” And I said, “So were you being sarcastic, Senator? Because I can’t believe you were being truthful.” And he just said, “I think you only need one car, young lady.” And I said, “No, separate is not equal. and that’s where we’re at.” And we kept going around and around and ‘round. And of course, he kept bringing it up. Everywhere. And he would have the House bring it up, you know. It was just like never ending, and toward the end the food workers and the AIDS stuff and whatever was an issue.

So the debate was on the seventeenth, and we’re down there lobbying constantly. I mean literally from the day they open at the crack of dawn, until the session closed, which could be midnight, whatever. You’re there all day. And we were not leaving them alone until we had their vote, until we knew where they stood. And we would keep going. And for some odd reason, I don’t think they thought, even though we didn’t have huge fancy technology, like iPhones, or whatever now to do it--we checked in to our little meeting place and said, “This is what Rangel from New York said, this is what, you know, Coehlo said, and this is what so-and-so said.” and whatever was gonna be. We made sure that we had the latest information, and if we heard [somebody?] was saying yes to some--say their constituents in their area, but no to people from elsewhere, we put the two together and sent them back in.

KJL Let me stop a moment and ask if you’re getting too warm.

KM No, it is kinda warm in here, but...

KJL You’re okay?

KM Yeah.

KJL So do you think the ADA was a success? Did it do what it was supposed to do?

KM Oh, Gosh! That's two questions. I'll have to tell you my mother's story. I'm kind of skipping ahead, but--is that--I think it did not as much as many of us had hoped, but more than we thought was possible at the time. And I say that because my mother was right the day--the debate started the seventeenth and (inaudible) on the twenty-second of May, 1990, the House passed it--glasses!--403, I think to twenty. I still have the names of the twenty somewhere--403 to twenty. And I was--we shifted. We were either out lobbying or we were out in the halls lobbying, because Senators don't--Senators and Congressmen don't stay on the floor. All that goes in the record, and if they're lucky their staff reads it and gives them a synopsis. They wander around and politic and do whatever, they're not sitting there--like you watch C-SPAN, they're hardly there. So we would take turns in the gallery. Well, all of the sudden it had been made clear, the compromise had been made, or whatever, and it was my turn to go in the gallery. I knew the compromise was coming, I thought, "The vote's gonna come. The vote's gonna come, you know." And so I grabbed a couple other people that I really knew would want to hear it, and I said, "Sit down here, you're gonna hear..." "What, Kathy?" And I said, "This is it, this is gonna be it" And it came.

And the House, I don't know if you've ever taken a tour of the House or Senate in DC? So the House gallery has doors, and of course in the crib section up top, there's very few open areas for wheelchairs, so of course, only so many of us could get in at a time. But anyway, we're lined, and there's standing room only and there's blind folks standing against the wall so they won't trip anybody and fall over the railing, and Deaf people in front, so they can see the interpreter better, all of those things [phone rings and there is a short interruption].

So the room is like filled, because it'd been shifting from like from the seventeenth (inaudible) in the House. The halls are filled with people, Congressmen, Senators, I mean they did not know what to do, because they're used to walking around having able bodied corporate lobbyists grab them by the arm, "Come here. Come over here, you want to have a smoke out on the portico, right?" So many smokers there, and we kept saying, "You know smoking kills, smoking gives you lung cancer." And we'd say, John, John! Get over here!" He had lost his legs to (Inaudible) disease, which sadly my sister lost her legs to--we'd say, "John, tell them what smoking does to you." We were relentless. We wanted them lobbyists away, because we had our stuff to do, so we would just, like, in their face. So they're coming and going, plus the sheer volume of space we took up. There were thousands of us there. And in weeks leading up to all of it, ADAPT, and other groups that could go down earlier and whatever, we had other litigation we were doing here in March and April, had done protests in front of the capitol, and this, that, whatever.

So now we're inside, we made a point of--we were outside letting you know how we feel, now we're inside letting you know how we feel, and we're not leaving. So we would shift people, everybody got in to see it, the historic thing. Because we figured some people were there that were just there. I mean they were timid, they were scared, they didn't know what to do even though we had training. They would go in and sit in the lobby and spend two minutes with their legislator and walk out, so we had to be preparing people, like I said, to go in and do it. But they also wanted to be there. This was a monumental trip for them. This was emotionally a

catharsis. So we're packed, all around, and of course there's also press there, and whatever, we're creeping in on the press and saying, "Did you hear about this? Did you hear about that?" "Oh really?" and "You'd better go talk to Pat Wright, you'd better go talk to..." And doing all that, and also taking their seats when they got up to go.

So we had this whole crowd of people, and the bill comes and it's eerily silent in the House, and--who the heck was it? I don't know if I put his name down--from New York. Maybe it was Fish--I can't remember--who was on the floor, I'll look to see. But they were doing it, and then the roll call was starting to take. And you would see the lights pop up. And once it hit the magic number, which we all know, for passage, there was this (Gasp). Is it gonna hit? Make it sure. Even though Bush had come out and said he was not going to veto it if compromises were made to the food handlers, and this that, whatever. We were fairly sure it was going to pass, so you could see when it gets past that, and suddenly it passes.

And you could see some of the Congresspeople, the representatives that worked on it just starting to get emotional, but they're silent, and then going, "Oh my God!" And then there was this sigh through all of us, and then within seconds, just roaring applause. Doors were flying open! And I'm saying, "Get out, get out, get out! Let other people come in and see this while the board's still lit up. Let them see it!" So I get out, and Orrin Hatch is running down the hall, and he says, "What happened, what happened?" And I said, "They passed it!" "What was the numbers, what was the numbers, McInnis?" And I said "403 to 19-20, something like that." "I gotta go look at the board, I gotta look at the board." And here he is, trying to get through disabled people, trying to look at the board, and then we were just so, like, "Wow! It's through the House." And that was amazing, that day.

So I come out, and of course, what I didn't know was since I had been calling my mom, every day to tell her stuff, or whatever, I go, and I want to call my mom. And I get waylaid by the Channel 13 guy that was down there, and the Portland Press Herald, Washington (inaudible) and this, that or whatever, and this is at nine-thirty--no, wait a minute, that was the other one--anyway, so I think it was in the morning, and it was just one of those things, you know, talking to them, you have to talk to them, and I talked to AP, and I talked to USA Today, and this, that, whatever, because we were the big bus people, we won the right to accessible transit, so they wanted to talk to me. So then, after that's done, I'm looking and we're all hugging, and I said, "I have to call my mom!" And the only place to call her was an inaccessible phone booth, right there, outside of the House gallery. So I had my friend, who was a little person--she has to get inside, and she has to, with my help, jump up on the seat to get the phone down, and dial the number. If I'd had a camera, what a picture! [Laughs]

And I called my mom, and I'm telling her it passed. She said, "Dad and I are listening to you on the radio right now!" and she says, "I love you, Honey, I'm so proud of you," you know. And I was just like, "But Mom, it still has to go to the Senate.. You know what they were doing?" And I started to complain. And my mother said, "Enough complaining. Give yourself five minutes to enjoy this." And we did, we're like, "Oh, my God, this is so great!" you know. So we went out, and I think we had Ethiopian food, and I don't know what we did. We sort of celebrated and walked by the Watergate, and did this or that, because we all hated Nixon, because Nixon had stopped all of the good amendments to 504 and the Rehab Act he stalled and he was just a jerk, so we hated him, we made jokes. But then there were a variety of other things that happened. I won't go through committees and things, because it goes House-Senate, House-Senate, House-Senate.

KJL Tell me what you were thinking when you first saw that board light up.

KM Oh, my God, it was overwhelming. I had been to DC with my sister before. I went--My sister actually went--I went down alone for the Dole thing, when I met with Elizabeth Dole, but I had taken a trip with my sister, who used to work in DC, and so I had been to the visitor's gallery and I had seen things, and seen some bills. We had worked on legislation, protection advocacy legislation with Senator Weicker, and we had worked on some Women's Equity Acts, and we had done other stuff. And do I had been down there, and been down in committee rooms and stuff. So I'd seen it. But it was different because it was quite clear that we had won civil rights, and that we had won it, for all intents and purposes--although I'm not that happy with the regulation--the actual wording of the ADA--for intents and purposes, was modeled on the Civil Rights Act of '64. Like, we had civil rights, not access to services, not independent living services and support. We had civil rights! They couldn't throw me out of the Faneuil Hall store they threw me out when I was a teenager, because I might break something, you know. They couldn't say, "You can't have a beer, because we don't serve sick people alcohol." The days of all of that stuff were hopefully beginning to be gone. We had delusions of grandeur [laughter] and that would be it. So it became overwhelming, and then as you went out, and as I let other people went in and we all--I think it was like, "Let 'em out, let other people in. Let them see this." And then we all congregated and it was like []

But it was different when it was the Senate vote. I had some out of the House--the Senate gallery, and I was furious. I was just nuts, because I was like so--"I can't believe these jerks are doing it again." Orrin Hatch had said that Jesse Helms was up to it again, and there was like all these homophobic things being said, and I was like, "I need a break. I need to go out, get some fresh air on the patio, this, that, whatever," And so I stepped out, and I just wanted to take a break, or what, and I can't remember which DREDF attorney it was that needed to be called out. We knew that it was probably going to pass because there was no opposition from the President, and it was just a matter of shutting these Republicans up that were, like being jerks, and she said, "Oh, my God, I brought my baby with me, because I knew this would be a historic day, is that dumb?" and I said, "No," and she said, "Can you hold my baby?" And I said, "Sure."

And so she went and did whatever she had to do, and she went out on the porch. And when we could hear it announced that it had passed on the twelfth--327-28, which was the compromise that involved, like I said, the food handler thing and the compromise I did not agree to that categorized transsexuals in the same category as pedophiles and drug addicts. So that, I was livid, and if I hadn't been babysitting somebody's kid, I probably would have had a say in that, but I was like, Ughhhhhhhh! But it passed with that and--so I had the baby, and I'm so excited, I'm like jumping up and down with the baby, I had jangly earrings and the baby grabs my ear, and to this day--I had to have it sewn--ripped my ear out. So I had blood coming down the side, and I had long hair, as you can tell by this (inaudible). So I immediately grabbed one of the baby's little tissues for her nose, and I wrapped it around my ear, or whatever, and she came back for the baby and she said, "Oh, my God, Kathy what happened?" "Oh, don't worry about it," you know, and I put my sweater, little sweater jacket thing that I had on to cover the blood that was on my sleeve, and we went out into the larger rotunda area, and Pat Wright was there, and Ralph Neas and Justin and Yoshiko. And I think Yoshiko was so--I mean she was dancing, I mean she was just so happy. She was literally dancing. I mean dancing, dancing around Justin, kissing him, taking his cowboy hat off and

kissing him on the head, dancing around, hugging all of us. We were all hugging each other. We were all crying, while we're waiting for the official thing, you know.

But the cheers were so deafening that the walls--the space there, the sound is incredible--were just reverberating, and the whole room felt like it was vibrating and lifting up, I mean. And then Steny Hoyer was there, and Orrin Hatch came out--both of which had family members with disabilities--and they came out, and they were saying that we did it. And I still remember we're all happy, and we're like crying, because you know it's our victory and stuff, and they began to cry, and they began to say how we taught them a lesson about how things could be done. That greatness could be achieved here in Congress, and that they were honored to be a part of it, and that they were amazed. And then they did have the graciousness to thank Lowell Weicker, who had been beat, of course, by Lieberman for his original work, Tony Coelho, who had epilepsy, and was one of our staunchest supporters, who, of course, had to leave, resign because of a scandal, and he was gracious enough to understand that if we were going to pass it, he could no longer be the face of it. And we will be forever grateful for him making that decision when so many others have stayed for their political well being.

And it was just--It was overwhelming, I mean it was just overwhelming. I remember at one point--when I get nervous, like super nervous, I get sick to my stomach. Because when I first started doing TV stuff, or whatever as a kid; and of course with the Baxter School stuff, Tom and I had death threats, and all sorts of things like that. I got nervous--public speaking, I would throw up. I ended up, realizing later I had reflux, so anytime I got nervous, everything would come out. But I was like, "Oh, God, please don't let me throw up, please don't let me throw up!" [Laughs.] And I remember Judy Heumann was like, "I was just saying the same thing to myself," you know. We were so nervous and overwhelmed that it was just so, you know, powerful that I remember thinking it's like really listening to good music. It's like, you know how you can feel it in here. Or like, the only thing I can equate it with is--as I said to my husband was--"Marrying you was close to it, but the day I held my daughter Sarah is the only thing that felt better." It just was that powerful, you know. And it was just a moment that was wild.

And then stupidly, I had given my camera to somebody that wanted to take pictures, like, 'cause I had some (inaudible) portable camera or something at the time. I wanted to take pictures on the floor, before any of (inaudible) able bodied, so they were letting them take pictures, but I don't know if it got confiscated or what, but trying to take pictures of the board and everything else and give it back to me, well he never gave it back to me, I never got it, so I never got a lot of pictures particularly from that day--some I did, but not a lot. And some got ruined, sad to say, when a builder from hell caused a flood in our basement, so a lot of my stuff is gone.

But my first thing that day afterwards was, "Look around. Look around and see what people are doing. So Steny and Orrin Hatch were crying, because we were handing them Kleenex, the girls, all of us like, with bags were handing them Kleenex. There's even a picture in there of the two of them crying. They hated that picture that was taken of them. But it was emotional, and then you looked (inaudible) in the room, and there, standing, sort of off to the side, literally like this, with a grin a mile wide, is Ted Kennedy, you know, and I went over to him, and I said, "Thank you so much, Senator." And he said, "Thank you for having my son come up and visit you that day." We had a second civil rights conference and his son, who is disabled came up and spoke to it. He said, because, you know, "Later on I want to be

involved in politics.” Which of course, later on he did, and now he’s out. But he said, “You’re a good Irish girl, right?” He said, “I heard you had to get help to dial your mom.” and I said, “Yes.” And he said, “I’m going to have one of my staff people take you to a phone.” so [he] took me to a phone and I called my mom [Laughs]. And then when I got home, I think it was, a couple of days later, or whatever, there were roses waiting for me from my brother Mark, who’s five years older than me, that only said a few words: “I am so proud of you,” which was really nice, you know. And when we got home we were like, “Wow!”

But before I left DC, I mean we partied that night and we went out. I had gone to the Jefferson memorial, and I went to the Lincoln memorial, and I went to the Vietnam Veterans memorial and got air, but also I wanted to be there where other people were seeing stuff. And what I realized then was people were saying something like, “Wasn’t some bill for you people signed today, a civil rights bill?” And I heard the words “civil rights” from other people, and veterans coming over and giving me hugs, and Vietnam veterans saying, “Now you gonna take on the VA? Now you gonna take on the VA? ‘Cause I saw Paralyzed Vets was working with you.” And I’m like, “Oh, yeah, we are,” and everything.

And then we went out and we partied a little bit and we came back, like Marilyn Gould and some DREDF’s and a bunch of us. Marilyn had work to do, she went home early, and [the] Connecticut girls hung with me for a while, and then they disappeared, so then the Kentucky boys and I went out and we went dancing and did different things and went back. But then the work got to be, “What do we do now?” you know, in terms of the signing. And we’re thinking, well this is going to be fun, you know. But we have to narrow the list down because they wanted one person from every state sort of thing, you know. We were like, “Please.” you know. We were like, “No. This is gonna be big. There were hundreds of thousands of people that worked on this.”

So they compromised we would narrow it down to about three thousand invitations that we would decide who got what. So independent living centers got some, and I made sure The Iris Network, and disability activists got--in Maine. And we had the list of who was it and where and they ended up doing some thing where those of us that were in the front rows, and then other people were here and then other people. So when people got told they had to go to different gates because their card wasn’t good enough, that sucked [Laughs]. That really sucked. People made--we didn’t know they were doing it.

But we almost didn’t go in to the signing, for two reasons. One is the weather down there, on July 24th, 25th, or whatever.¹ My mother hated to fly, so we had to come in by train. Mom was afraid of flying. So I bypassed all the fancy shindig, cocktail party stuff for the two previous days, right. And I came in with my mother the day before--left in the morning, came in in the afternoon or something. So I come in and it’s like, “You won’t believe what’s happening.” I’m like, “What are you talking about?” And my mother said, “Go ahead, talk to them and see what’s going on.” The White House was saying it was going to be too hot, and they didn’t have accessible bathrooms, and this, that, whatever. And they ended up putting in sort of accessible port-a-potty things, whatever, downstairs and this, that, whatever for people . But they were worried we were going to pass out or die, or have an epileptic seizure, or whatever. So we basically said to Orrin Hatch and Steny Hoyer, who was (inaudible), “Are

¹ The signing took place on July 26, 1990--KJL.

you kidding me?” You know. “What patronizing BS like that is coming out of Boyden Gray and George Bush. No effing way! You’re kidding! This is the very stuff we’re fighting for. No way!” So we basically said, “Look, if we’re hot, we’ll drink water and find shade. If we have to pee, you’d better make sure there’s accessible bathrooms, Okay? [Laughs] And if rains, we’ll get wet, and we’ll smile doing it.” You know? So they backed off. Then they found out that part of our tickets were AIDS activist groups, which I had started to work with, and gay and lesbian groups, and a lot of food handler worker union guys that had come around to be supportive. And they were like, [whispers] “No, no no no no!” They were going to have refreshments and we’re going to have water stations, and we’re like, “Yeah--your point?”

So I remember by the time that it’s still a controversy going on, my mother and I are going through the VIP door and Yoshiko’s coming out (inaudible) ID’s. These little things that she had made, little silver thing that says, “ADA,” with red, white and blue stuff and a flag for all of us to wear, so she would know who was who, and would help her remember people, and--and then we were passing out all of this, we were passing out, you know, the ADA house signing button for the ceremony. Everybody we hoped got that. Which one is that? Is that the ADA signing one? This is the May campaign one in the House, and then this is the signing ceremony. So we’re doing that, and Yoshiko says, “Oh, my God, you gotta talk to Pat Wright. You gotta talk to Pat Wright! Oh, my God, oh my God, oh my God! They’re trying no to let gay and lesbians in.” She went in and talked to Liz Savage, the Epilepsy Foundation, and whatever. And finally it was clear that we all sat there and we said, “F” No!”

And we grabbed C. Boyden Gray, and we said--who was Chief of Staff, of course the White House Chief of Staff--and said, “You’ve got three thousand people starting to be on the lawn, out in line, accessing. And we are going to walk up to that stage and make an announcement that you plan to ban gay and lesbian people, people with AIDS; people with communicable diseases, possibly, that you think might be whatever. Do you really want people, radicals like these folks that are saying they’re gonna do it to do it?” It was all done very calmly, saying, “Look, we made a deal, and this is what they’re saying, ‘We will walk out.’” And we had walked out before. Tom Andrews and I organized a massive walkout on changes to regulations down there. It had never been done. I don’t know why disabled people just didn’t say, “Pffff! You’re not listening to us, we’re walking out,” which we did.

And that caused a big stir. We did it all the time in Maine, we’re like, “What are you talking about? Take control of the meeting or walk out.” So, you know, we were just going to leave and stand outside and say, “Have we won our rights or not?” So they backed down. So the gay and lesbian contingent was allowed in and they were so, so touched, shocked and ticked off at the Bush administration for even thinking about it--but so shocked that we actually stood our ground and did it. And then we began to realize as one man who hugged me and kissed me on the head said, “Now I have two communities. I have the gay community. I have the disability rights community.” I said, “That’s right, you know, one for all, brother.” He said, “That’s right.”

And that was really cool, you know, to be there, so we’re--finally get in, and we’re sitting down, and like I said, the authors were in front, and there was a lot of activists, there was a ton of people, and everybody was milling around. And people didn’t care where they were supposed to sit. They were wandering to talk to people. In fact, where I was, there wasn’t supposed to be anybody, and then disabled people came and asked if they could sit in front of me and they’re the ones in that picture with Kennedy. I said, “Sure, whatever, we don’t

care.” I mean, just do it. They had chairs, just sit wherever you want, you know. We didn’t realize we were breaking protocol. It made the Secret Service kind of nervous, because we were like, (inaudible). And we were just amazed. And so Tom had wanted to come down to the ADA signing, because he was running for Congress. As you can see, I’m wearing a Tom Andrews button in my lobby thing, which is technically, I guess, against lobby law, to wear a campaign button in Congress, but I was wearing it.

[There is some noise and an interruption from checking the digital recorder]

So, on the train down, with me, my mom, and Elaine Marcus, who is Dr. Elaine Marcus, former State Rep., a friend of mine, teaches at Bates College, a disability studies professor. So she came down with Mom and me, because she had friends down there, so she came down. And Tom to come down and meet us the next day. Well, the poor guy, I’d given him his ticket, but they wouldn’t let him in, I guess until I had put my name on the back and they said “Yes.” So they escorted him to where I was and everything. And so we got there. So Tom and I-- Elaine was just chit-chatting with my mother and chit-chatting with people she knew and trying to get the whole experience in, from a disability studies perspective, she kept saying to my mother, “What do you think about the nature of this,” and like, “How are people feeling?” The reaction--she was doing her professor stuff. My mother was completely a riot, and could talk to anybody. And she would talk about this, and talk about that.

And so Tom and I are talking and he said, “Tell me [exactly?]. What is it? I mean, I know the general stuff that was in the paper, but what is in the bill, and what are the problems with it? ‘Cause there’s probably problems, right?” So I said, “Well, these are the good things.” and I started going through the bill, da, da, da, da. And these are things that really stink. This is what they did, they screwed--bd lah, blah, blah--and they did this, and they did that. And oh, yeah, regulatory, they’re gonna send it to regulatory. You know what that’s gonna do to us?” And I’m just complaining, complaining, complaining. And all of the sudden--’cause you saw Tom was here, on my side, on this side, and my Mom’s here. And she elbows me, and she leans over and the raps Tom. And she says, “Which knee is that, did you feel it?” ‘Cause he has this artificial leg. And he said, “You got the right knee to hurt.” And she said, “You are making history. All the work you guys did leading up to this--all the work Kathy, and all these people sitting here, or some that came along for the ride, like you, Tommy--all of you are here, and you’re creating history. But more importantly, you’re witnessing history. And some day there are going to be a lot of people that are on this lawn that aren’t going to be around. And you young people are going to be around.”

And I was thinking about that a lot the first time you called me when I just got off from the guy with the fake ADA people, how mad I was. It’s bad enough that able bodied people write our history. It’s bad enough that we have been beaten and stabbed and euthanized and selectively aborted because of our disabilities--not by choice, but selectively aborted because we had disabilities. We were the first people to die in the Holocaust. In excess of ten million people with disabilities have died. And you think, “Who is going to remember this?” You know? What people are going to remember what it was like? That Orrin Hatch was a peach; that he cried on the Senate floor when talking about his brother who had died? That there were people who just meant something to them. You know? And was it ever going to mean that their children would have access to real public education? That they would be able to ride a public bus, and not a para transit? That they could actually go to college--and not one class at a community center that happened to be in the same building as the doctor’s office, so that

you had to lie to go to take a class; and you would ask--beg the dentist or doctor to sign off. And you made them your primary dentist or doctor if they did it. Those days were gone, and my mother said, "Remember when they said you could not go to public school, and I had to tutor you myself at home. Remember when the football team carried you up and down the stairs at Thornton Academy. Remember when they wouldn't let you walk in your high school procession, because they said you would--quote--ruin the look of the line." Because I was in a wheelchair and my mother organized a boycott of the graduation--got all the football players, all the stars, the valedictorian--everybody--to say they wouldn't attend. And she turned to Tom and she said, "Tommy, I know your mother." And she said, "Did she not raise you to look on the bright side of it?" His mother was very religious, very devout. And the funniest human being I've ever met, and made good whoopie pies, like my mom and grandma, too, Tom's mom.

"And what would she say to you, Tom? She would say you were a star football and baseball player, and you lost your goddam leg. But you went to Bowdoin College, and then you began doing a variety of different community work. And then you began doing civil rights work. And now--and then you became a state rep., and a state senator, and now you're running for U.S. Congress. You're going to make a change for people with disabilities, more bills like this. And maybe if you're here, you can fix some of them for us by doing more amendments." And we say there and we said--I said, "But Mom." And she said, "No buts. For five minutes take a deep breath. Look at each other. You that used to have bad teeth..." Because I did because the arthritis, bad teeth, and (inaudible) my dentures. "And Tom, who had long scraggly hair" she said, "And a beard. Look at the two of you. You went from early twenties rabble rouser types to leaders of a movement that has changed this nation, and will change this world." And there we were, stupidly crying like babies. [Laughs] And [Lorraine?] looks at my mother and says, "Oh, Jean, did you have to make them cry?" [Laughs] And she said, "Yes, I did. I did have to make them cry!"

So then, when Yoshiko's coming around, she's supposed to be taking our picture, or whatever, with Ted Kennedy, and they--people in front, who she also knew, wanted a picture, so Ted bent over and took a picture. And then Tommy--I could have kicked him--I wanted a picture of my Mom with Ted, and then with Tom, empowered, I guess by my mother's words--you could see him in the picture, half getting up. He sprung right up, "Senator Kennedy, my name is Tom Andrews, I'm a (inaudible). I'm running for Congress..." He said, "Yeah," and then somebody called Senator Kennedy, "Oh, come over here, we need to..." to do whatever. And I said to my mother, "Well there's going to be opportunities later to have your picture taken with President Bush," and she said, "No thanks." (laughs) Democrat through and through.

But my sister--because my mom died three years ago, this week, the seventeenth. My sister Patty was going through stuff, and she's at my mom's house and we're sorting through my parent's stuff, and she found some of my mother's notebooks and calendars. Mom wasn't a big diary person, but at the end of the day, whatever was on her mind, or something, she would write down. And they were simple things, and she went to every softball game and every baseball game of all of us kids and stuff, and she would write about the other friends. She took many kids in from our friends that needed a place to stay, or needed supper or something. But there would be all sorts of different things, and so as we find them and photocopy them and give them to these adult people now. "This is what my mom wrote about your triple that won the game, and this is about that..." And Patty found one the other day that said, "Heading down on the train to watch the ADA signing with Kathy. So proud of

her.” Very simple, “So proud of her.” And then it was on the White House lawn, “Very hot. Very proud of her. Important day for everyone. All of them should be so proud of themselves.” And then it’s like, “Kathy dragged me from restaurant to supper.” Because I was trying to get her some different foods, but I think it was a steakhouse, or some basic kind of thing. Good thing I didn’t take her to Ethiopian or something, she wouldn’t probably eat it. Went to this restaurant. Too expensive. I told her it was too expensive. But she treated me, or something like that. And then she said--told her I couldn’t leave without talking to Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Lincoln, because my mother--of course, Connie, my sister, worked in DC, and my mother’s been to DC a few times. And so Mom said, “What are you doing? Are you going to go to the cocktail parties, or what?” And I said, “You know, Mom we didn’t have cocktail parties when it passed.

What I did immediately after hugging everybody, I went down to the printing office, and I got a first edition set of the bill.” That’s what I wanted. So that’s what I have here. Several copies, actually. And so I got those. I had tons of them. I think you could get ten, and I stupidly was handing them out to people. I meant to keep one of them for each of my siblings, but I ended up with two or three. Because somebody came, “Kathy, can I have it?” And I’m like, “Oh yeah, sure, okay.” But I was smart enough to just tuck two under me and just leave, “Well, that’s it, you know.”

So that night I said, “Yeah.” So we went to the bash that they had, I think at the train station. Mom and I, I guess after we went to the restaurant, and hung out with people and... And then we talked to the Connecticut girls and some of the paralyzed vets, and we were like, “Yeah,” I said, “Mom wants to go see Lincoln and Jefferson and you know we’d never really done that when we were down here. Mom said, “I need to go to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial because I promised this young man from Saco that I would get a rubbing of his brother’s name. And that was my mother. “I’m going down there. Have you seen the Vietnam Veterans Memorial? Have you seen your brother’s name?” “No I haven’t been down there, I can’t afford to go down there.” “I’ll get it.”

That was the way my mom was, I mean at the ADA I have one picture that I made somebody take of her and I. She’s snapping pictures of everybody else. “Kathy, is that that Pat Wright woman with Senator Kennedy? Is that Liz Savage?” She’s taking pictures of other people, but not letting me take pictures of--and she has very few pictures of me. Which was funny, she said, “Well you know you were there, you want pictures of these other people. So it was funny, but as we did that, we went to the Lincoln Memorial, and you get these emotional sort of things, and of course you know the pros and cons of Jefferson and Lincoln, or whatever. But my mother was right. Pretty cool, huh? Because they had made the back end of Lincoln accessible. Because we had added national parks as one of the things we added in to both 504 and ADA because they were not done perfectly and still aren’t. And so we had done that, and my mom was like, “I’m still ticked off you can’t walk up the stairs. There’s nothing like walking up the stairs.” So Mom walked up the front of the stairs and came back down and went with me to the accessible entrance. She walked all the way up and all the way down to come with me.

KJL: Now, I’ve seen the photos of the day people climbed up the capitol steps.

KM Yeah.

KJL Were you there that day?

KM: No, I was not. We were in the middle of several things during that time. The Association of Handicapped Persons was doing several investigations of institutions that were physically and sexually abusing people, as well as state investigations of impropriety in the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and some other stuff, so the state had cut our funding, and we had a director at the time that was doing her best, but struggling. Tom had already left to run for Congress. I was working for Common Cause and the African National Congress, and part-time at the disability place, but it was clear they were closing. Yeah, there was not money to sustain it and the vision had become less politically active, so I had moved on to national politics and to sort of other things, but David (Cann?) was the last president, and Dave's somebody that you should talk to. When they folded, which was in '89--the summer or fall of '89? I can't remember when they folded, somewhere around that year. Yes, I remember, because I gave them money to float for several months, and let's just say I didn't get much of it back--out of my life savings. And then I got in a car accident in the summer of '89, and was hospitalized for a while, broke my pelvis, and then went to work for United Mine Workers in the (inaudible) coal mine strike in Virginia. Then I immediately went to work on the ADA. So that was sort of it. The Association of Handicapped Persons was by then long since gone. So what I did was created Educate to Liberate People With Disabilities, which was all of our MAHP members, like David, like Cindy Leach, like Steve Tremblay, like Lena and basically just used our existing network that was this organization and just continued to do this work, but only around the ADA until it passed. That was pretty cool.

KJL You mentioned a couple of organizations--you mentioned one--MAHP.

KM MAHP That's the Maine Association of Handicapped Persons.

KJL That was the one that was run by Tom Andrews

KM Yeah. Well, Tom was the Executive Director at one point, and I was the President and chief organizer.

KJL That would have ben in the '80's

KM That would have been in the early '80's, yeah. It folded in '89. I think the spring or summer of '89, because I heard I was not going to get my money when I was in the hospital, that they were going to fold. That's why I went in, and David gave me the sign, and some news clips, and all the photos and stuff with the then outgoing executive director. The previous one had died, who was the last director, who said, "I don't want responsibility for any of this, so David had it, and he gave it to the director then, and we need to get those photos from her. I'll try to do that.

KJL I might want to come back. You've shown me a number of things I might want images of and I did not bring the scanner with me today, because...

KM Oh, that's okay, yeah.

KJL I can take small stuff--

KM You can swing by and scan stuff, and I can--I had my husband bring up the ADA box, which I'm devastated, because, like I said, there was moisture in the basement, so my ADA photos are stuck together. I cried. I said, "How stupid of me, putting it in the basement, but it's one of those things that I tried so hard to keep the history, but I should have taken it out years ago. But there's several of them in that book and others. But it was wild, because when we got to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial we had flags, several flags that were handed out for the ADA, that said, "ADA," and veterans, like they did for me before were coming up, but more of them, disabled vets. "I was there today. Were you there today? Yes I was," you know. "Who are you?" and got talking and there was an African American man; very tall, standing there. My mother went up to him, and she said, "Sir, can you help me?" And he's looking around and there's tons of white people around and Mom obviously doesn't sound like she's from there, and he says, "Ma'am?" and she said, "I want you to do me a favor." and she said, "It's because you're tall." (laughs) and he's "Yes, Ma'am, what?" She says, "I need that name. It's too high for me, and I want a rubbing." And I watched him do it.

So when my sister sent me the note that said, "Went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and got Dance..." who is Mark Duran's older brother, died in the war. We called him "Dance," because "...got Dance a rubbing for his brother. Nice veteran helped me out and I gave him one of my ADA flags." and that was my mother, the emotional impact, the spiritual impact of the day, how the day could continue and how the past affected that moment and it was incredible, just incredible, you know, and there were so many Vietnam veterans there, and some of them were crying, and she came over and she'd say, "My boy, my oldest boy is a Vietnam veteran, and I know how hard it was for him." And she would talk to them that whole night. And I'd watch my friend, watching my mom just chit chatting, "Has anybody taken your picture with the wall, with your buddy's name?" "No Ma'am, I didn't think to ask." "They're too busy, well I'll do it."

And I swear to goodness we didn't get to the Lincoln Memorial--because you know where it is, right?--'til close to midnight, 'til closing. And I got there. I still had the pen, and this, that, I had an outfit on, I didn't have this on. I bought that that day, or (it was given) by Justin, I should say. And so we get there, and it's close to midnight, and my mother says, "This is what I'm going to do. I'm going to walk up the stairs, and walk down, then I'm going to take my daughter here. She's one of the authors of the Americans With Disabilities Act. And some of these people are coming with us, and this nice veteran gentleman, because he doesn't want to walk up the stairs." And so the guard said, "Yes, Ma'am I'll lock the elevator." "It isn't midnight yet, you have to unlock the elevator." Mom's so great like that, Bam! you know. This is the way it is.

There were two incidences later. When I come back, I had since died my hair red, and was doing other things, and I was working with Native people then, at Native Resistance Group. And I had to be home for the weekend, which was unusual, and I'm taking the bus, and this was before I was married, and I'm getting on the bus, and one of the bus drivers, not one of them I was to be entwined by marriage with, but one of the other guys, and he's saying, "Hey, that little guy over there was just saying that he's dying to meet his hero, but he can't find this hero anywhere." And I said, "Really?" So anytime there was a young person with a disability on the bus, the bus drivers would always say to me, "Talk to them," or whatever, because sometimes they're (nervous on the bus?). So that's what I thought it was. So I go in, roll my self, self locking seat belts, not the clamps or any of that, we made sure it was independent. And I'm sitting there, and I'm talking, and the mother is there, and the mother, suddenly her

eyes get huge, just huge, and I can't figure out why she's staring at me, right? And I'm thinking, "Oh no, this is one of these bus drivers pulling jokes on me again, because they were. Once we got them involved and some of them were union and some of them weren't, they're pulling my leg somehow. So I said, "Who's your hero?" And I'm naming every Red Sock, every Celtic, 'cause we're a sports family, and I'm naming this or that, and I'm trying to think, and he had some shirt of something on and I see that, and he goes, "No, no, no." And he's busy reading this cartoon book, or whatever, comic book, and I said, "Oh, you were just talking about this hero? Can you tell me who this hero is?" And he says, "I don't know. You're disabled, right?" "Yeah." He says, "You might know her. Kathy McInnis." And I said, "I know her very well. And he looks up, and he says, "You do?" And I said, "Yes." He says, "Because of her my mom doesn't have to push me six blocks to school because the school wouldn't have a bus for me. And now I can go to the mall and meet my buddies at the comic book store that's there. and now I can do this. And she's one of the heroes my mother told me about. I have a whole bunch of disability heroes my mother told me about, but she's the only one that's alive." And he says. "You might know her. She's got long, dark hair." And I said, "No, she doesn't have long dark hair anymore."

And the mother starts to cry. I said, "She foolishly decided to die her hair red on a dare, and has kind of decided to keep it, because it always got red in the summer." And by now, the bus driver, who's letting people off; they're like waving, "No." They don't want to get off. Because they know it's me. and I said, "My name is Kathy McInnis." and he said, "Are you related to her?" And I said, "I am her." And this kid unbuckles his seat while the bus is moving, to get to me. The driver--I said, "Pull over." and he pulled over to the bus stop, and he comes over, this little kid and grabs me. The mom is crying, and he grabs me and he says, "Do you know how important you are?" And I said, "Not until now." And the driver said, "Oh, she's always thought she was important." And we laughed, and then we all cried, and the bus started applauding, and he said, "Where are you going?" and I said, "I'm going to the Maine Mall," and he says, "Can I buy you an ice cream?" I said, "Sure." And the mom said, "Great."

And to this day, I wrote down his name, and I can't for the life of me remember his name, but I know I have it, and years later there was an older lady somewhere that said, "You won't remember me, and I know you're doing your radio interview, but I'm the mother of that little boy on the bus." And I was literally in the middle of a radio interview. And she said, "Just want you to know, he's going to college next month." And kissed me on the cheek at the mall, and, "Wait, Wait!" I wanted to know more. And I didn't. But it's moments like that you realize that my mother was right. Not that I'm not now going to complain about what still needs to be done, but you just have to realize the impact it made, and the single greatest impact of the ADA was the same impact of our court ruling that declared in Maine accessible public transportation a civil right for people with disabilities. Separate is not equal. That radicalized transportation. It made every protest, ADAPT or anywhere else did possible to win, because they had something to lay as a claim, which is why we filed the lawsuit against transportation, and why we won; and why now busses have to be accessible, and why now Greyhound has to be accessible and everybody else has to be accessible. And then for the ADA, we're talking in terms of civil rights. The scary part came with regulatory stuff--interpreting the regulations, what are they saying and what are they not saying, and of course the Supreme Court. The conservative, male dominated, white, primarily then--Supreme Court, that did horrid things, you know, that stripped many parts of the ADA and later on we did the ADA Restoration Act, which was, I think 2005. And then we had to do more with some other changes because

the Supreme Court (inaudible) the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. That was in September of 2008. PL 94-142, The Education of Handicapped Children's Act, which my mother worked on, which passed the year I graduated high school, which she and other moms were part of this little newsletter thing where they would push for it. We had to put in IDEA, The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, to strengthen PL 94-142 to make clear what the sections of the rehab act meant, that applied to education, and what 504 meant, and what IDEA meant for severely disabled children. It has revolutionized the way my daughter, with her hearing impairment, is treated at school. She gets priority to sit closest to the teacher. She gets things repeated to her, she has a right to tape record if she wants; a variety of other accommodations. My niece Christie, who you should talk to, a young person, Christie McDonald, with epilepsy and Crohn's had a horrid experience with schools denying or not denying, until mom called Aunt Kathy, and shook a few apples out of the tree. But it's the regulations, and how people interpret them, and how they don't interpret them in either the person's best interest, or in the spirit of the law, as the law intended, as a civil rights law. There are still people who see it as, "I'm giving you a service." No, no, no, no. You're not discriminating against me, you're providing me with (inaudible) my rights. This is not a privilege.

KJL How much do you think is left yet to be done?

KM Oh, god, I have a list. I made a list last night. The big ones, of course are health care. Even though Obamacare, which I don't mind calling it that--even though the health care act is not what I wanted it to be because of the god-awful Tea Party and many of the other conservative, right wing Republicans that are using my ancestors, who were real patriotic revolutionaries, using that in the guise of the flag, and the guise of their corruption, and their discrimination and their homophobia and their ableism--is that we need universal health care. We need to have free health care for people. We don't need people to figure out can they afford this part of the plan, but not dental. We need to have people be able to not have to go to an independent living center to get 'x' number of hours of personal care assistant services by some formula that was set by the state, based upon whatever they felt they wanted to spend on disabled and elderly people that wanted to stay at home, versus shoving them in a nursing home.

We need universal health care, and I'm hoping that once Obamacare gets in and people get in, they have insurance, that it can expand, and it can basically put other insurance companies out of business. That's what I want. I want universal health care. Whether we're going to get that in my lifetime, I don't know, but then again, I didn't think we'd have an African-American president in my lifetime, and I cried like a baby when that happened. And even though he's been less than perfect, and he's had a horrid Congress to work with, I'm like, "I now have health care. I now get no pre-existing condition clause." I spent a great deal of my youth volunteering for disability rights groups and others because I needed to keep health insurance. And I would have to wait six to twelve months to two years on a job before I'd be covered if the employer even considered covering me. So I had no choice then. My niece is covered now on her father's insurance until she's twenty-six. And then she can get on Obamacare if she wants. Amazing. That alone, that my niece won't have to go through what I did is worth every idiotic Tea Party person that I've had to speak to, you know. Right there.

KJL Were you ever discouraged about the ADA? Did you ever...?

KM No, not about the ADA. I was pissed off, pissed off quite a lot. Jesse Helms was a horrid individual, and even towards the end when he became disabled, and he began reaching out and wanting explanations of things, he still perceived it in many ways as services. But toward the end, he started occasionally using the word “rights.” And I remember seeing that in some press release coming out of his office, and I thought, “Oh my god, could we have possibly reached him even a little?” If so, “Wow!” And so many other little moments like that. There were times when he was talking about we didn’t need all the trains accessible and times when even members of the disability coalition were saying, “But you know, they’re not really like us. They got that disease. They got AIDS because of their activity.” And I’m like, “No, you can get AIDS through blood transfusions, you can get HIV through this...”

I was working with a lot of people with AIDS, and beginning to work with ACTUP. And I was like, “Whoa, I don’t think so!” So I was disappointed by the ignorance of many parts of the disability community, but they were ignorant because they had not done what we had done in Maine and then had tried (inaudible) on the east coast. A coalition of all different disabilities. They had not done that. They had been in their little pocket, blind here, Deaf here, epilepsy here, cerebral palsy there, all fighting for the same scraps from the table for funding. So they wanted what they could get. We kept saying, “If you give up now, it’s going to be ten, twenty, thirty more years before you get it. We’re not piecemealing this baby. If we’re going to compromise, it’s going to have to be for a damn good reason.”

So there were some compromises I didn’t like, and I didn’t necessarily like the regulatory stuff, I wanted it cleaner. I wanted it similar to the regulatory process of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, where you could sue, and you could do this and that. But along with it, they decided to do all this expanded interpretation of what the law meant, which is why, later on, when we didn’t like a lot of the regs, we went back, and we didn’t like the Supreme Court decision that even narrowed the scope of disability or excluded people with disabilities or broadened or lessened the rights of employers, employees--all of that stuff. That’s why we went back to do amendments. And so it’s a struggle, you know. Freedom is a constant struggle. You know the old saying, “The price of freedom is constant vigilance.” You know, the old founding fathers and mothers.

That is what we’re aware of, so for those of us who are organizers, not the disability disease specific people, not the independent living service people, but for those of us that deal with advocacy, that deal with rights, it was all we think about. This is like, what’s next, what’s going on, what’s happening. So of course for us right now, besides everybody using the twenty fifth anniversary as a fundraiser, and to capture history, like you are, which is wonderful, and I’m glad somebody is doing that, and I’m hoping we get to talk to all the right cool people--is that the international treaty. And you get into this whole thing about how Wilson and everybody else wanted the League of Nations, wanted the UN, and even got it here in New York, but no, we don’t want to follow anything the UN says.

We are trying to get the international treaty passed, so that we have some way to deal with the continuing genocide of people with disabilities around the world, in Darfur and Ghana, and in Afghanistan, and Iraq and children in India, the infanticide--all of that, you know. In China you can only have one child, and so if you have a child with a disability, you’re either putting them in adoption, and in several cases recently, mothers go insane, and they drown their babies and put them out with the trash, because they want to tell their husband they lost the baby. These are things happening to people because they know they can only have one baby.

And China's changing slowly, because some Chinese leadership, some of the children themselves have disabilities but it's not getting to everybody that needs to know. So the treaty would really talk about disability stuff from a human rights perspective, and there's a lot of Tea Party folks that don't get it. And, to be honest, the Obama administration, that's concerned about, "Oh, well, you know, we don't want anybody interfering with our US Constitution," and this and that, well, this is not going to affect it. We've worded it so that this is what it's going to mean. So that treaty's important because we need to take the hope and the spirit and the power--the empowerment that ADA brings to other places. And in turn, we need to bring back, we need to bring back the good aspects of other countries, there are different nations, Denmark, and France, whatever, that have some really progressive things for people with mental retardation and people with mental illness. There's, of course many extraordinary programs in Ireland and other places around housing, accessible housing for folks with disabilities. So really looking at the world, and not assuming we know everything, but at the same time saying, "We've got the framework." France has got part of the framework, and we've created this treaty with the best of our universal disability civil rights in it, and all it needs is all these countries agree they're going to honor how disabled people are treated, that they're not killed if they try to vote. They have a right to go to the public school and not be stoned to death if they try.

KJL I spoke with a young man a few days ago who talked quite a bit about what it was like for him in school. He has cerebral palsy.

KM Who was that?

KJL Avery Olmstead.

KM Okay, yeah.

KJL You know him?

KM Yes.

KJL I wondered what it was like in school for you?

KM Well, I went to school through fourth grade. I walked and stuff until then. Like I said, I had metatarsal bars, braces, braces, or what. When it got difficult walking my mother, who was a strong advocate, said to the school that if I could not walk to where the bus stop was, and I could not get on the high steps, that unless they made the bus accessible, they would have to pay for a cab. So they would pay for a cab to come and pick me up, the school district, and bring me to school. But I had to take aspirin in the morning, five baby aspirin, and my grandmother gave me this cute little gold pill box with roses on it. Every single one of my teachers, and the principal and vice principal knew I had it. And it was always--those were the days, you know, '60's and '70's, where you had little dresses with pockets and stuff, and I had it in my pocket. And one teacher in particular caught me taking my pills at a water fountain and she slapped me across the face and said, "You have no right to take pills." And she set me in the nurse's office to wait until the nurse came back. Well, my teacher came looking for me because I didn't come back, and then thought, "Oh, god, what if she got sick?" being patronizing and came in the nurse's office and I said, "She got mad at me and hit me for taking the pills." So then she went and got the principal and the teacher got a talking to. But it

terrified me. So then I was allowed to use the teacher's fountain, because at the time there was a teacher's fountain, you know, in fourth grade, where they had class. I was allowed to do that, and they ended up getting a (inaudible) or whatever that they put in the classroom.

Kids were absolutely horrid. When I had to wear ace bandages on my hands or feet, they would play this game called "pie," where you run around, you were supposed to gently tap or let go of the hand, and then the other one runs around. There were boys that I went to school with that have now said they're sorry, that used to do it deliberately, like smash my hand and my hands would swell up, and I would tell the teachers would get mad at them and depending on the teacher they would either be punished or just yelled at. And it was mean--to the point that I had to tell my brothers. And as my mother said, "Let your brothers handle it." Old school, you know. And needless to say, after the talks from some of my brothers, the twins--and you guys know who you are--the twins didn't do it any more.

And it was hard, and then when I stopped, Mom had to fight, and she tutored me a home--and at first they said they weren't going to count any of the work, because Mom--this was in '76, Mom didn't have a high school diploma--excuse me, this was in '72--didn't have a high school diploma, so my mother went--she had left high school because she got married in August, and tried to go back for her senior year, and they said married women women can't attend public school. Can't attend school. So my mom couldn't finish her senior year because she was a married woman. So anyway, she went back, got her high school degree and got certified as a substitute teacher or whatever and taught me. And then she said, "You know what? You deserve a real teacher and I'm busy with the other kids," 'cause she proceeded to have more children, and so we went and got different teachers, and so we had tutors.

And then when it got to be my freshman year, and my sister was going there, and then soon my younger brother was going to go there it became real clear to my mother that "Her whole life is her brothers and sisters friends. She doesn't have her own friends. I want her to go to high school." So she was a big sports fan, as I said, and one of my younger brothers played in middle school sports, and my other other brothers played basketball and what, but we all to all the sports things, and so she started talking to the football team that she'd brought goodies to and all the time, and all these things. It's a small town, we all know each other's parents, great grandparents, forever and ever. So (she) got them to carry me up and down the stairs of Thornton Academy so that I could attend school. But the two things that really sucked were, they would not count--I did two years in one--my sophomore and junior year in one. But the teachers there, because they had not given me the testing the freshman year, I was tutored at home by one of their substitute and special ed teachers. They were going to halve sort of my grades and not count me on the final honor roll. So my mother fought that and whatever, and it was modified to some extent or what.

But it was heartbreaking. you know, like I said, they didn't want me in the line at graduation. So my mother went to the headmaster at Thornton Academy, a private school. She brought several of the boys in with her, and she said, "I've talked to them and I've talked to their parents, and we all agree there will be a boycott if Katherine is not allowed. And if I go back to that gym and Kathy is still at the foot of that stage demanding that stupid gym teacher give her her cap and gown..." Like the boys ran out to tell my mother, "Mrs. McInnis the reason she's not out--because they would help me into my mother's car--is that because that woman won't give her her cap and gown and Kathy's arguing with her. So when my mother came back in I had my cap and gown, 'cause I got right in her face and and I said, "Give me my cap

and gown.” And she went like this (inaudible) and so one of the boys went up and said, “Give it to me,” and took it from her. And so the boycott threat worked and we went and graduation happened and everybody’s fine. Ironically, years later, out of all my siblings this woman could run into is my sister Lois, who’s now disabled, but wasn’t at the time--in a grocery store. And this woman is now on crutches because of rheumatoid arthritis. And she began to say to my sister, “Oh, I’m so sorry, I didn’t understand,” or what. My sister looked at her and said, “God gotcha. That’s all I got to say.” My father, his only reaction is, “Don’t worry. What goes around comes around. God’ll get ‘em” That’s what he’d always say. “Don’t worry about (it) Katherine, they say stupid things to you. It’ll come around. God’ll get ‘em.” That’s how Dad used to say. He’s a Roman Catholic. My mother was Episcopalian; was much more pragmatic. She wanted change, she wanted it now, she didn’t want to wait for God to do it. And so that was it.

The worst one, though, was my SAT’s, in my senior year, because my sophomore-junior year I hadn’t passed certain classes yet, because I was scrambling to take them all at once but they wouldn’t let me take the junior one, so I took the senior SAT, and the guy who was with the SAT group, there was all the chairs, where you sit in them. I couldn’t transfer, I was supposed to have a table. There was no table there. Parents weren’t allowed, so my mother was downstairs. The boys carried me up and then sat down. And then realized I don’t have a table. So they go and find like a little tray table somebody had in another room. So I’m using this little tray table. And all the time this guy’s going around saying, “What the hell are you doing here? Do they let retards in?” And I am crying, and I’m upset, and I was nervous about the test and I was very shy back then. I didn’t usually say a lot. I was extremely--you wouldn’t believe it, but I rarely talked. And I was quiet. And I freaked out, and I literally just circled every single thing and threw the paper on the desk and went outside, and for the next hour waited for the boys that were going to carry me down. And they kept coming out, to go to the bathroom, “Come back in,” you know, “You’re gonna bomb it.” And I said, “I don’t care.” And I did. I think it was a god-awful--I don’t even know. I doubt if it was even nine-hundred. I don’t know what it was, I never bothered to ask. It’s probably on my transcript. And I refused to take it a second time when my mother arranged for it to be taken a second time. Because I was livid. So I later on went to make sure that under the amendments to the rehab act that accommodations for testing, like SAT’s and GMAT’ and whatever--that accommodations be made. It was something that stuck with me.

I also was approved to be accepted into Bowdoin, but the admissions director at Bowdoin, which was very grossly inaccessible, pretty much blew me off, saying, “No.” And I remember a professor at the time, Nora Gross, who is a great expert on deafness was mortified, and she did everything she could and she said, “They’re so afraid of the liability, and it’s a private college, you know...” and she said, “You bombed your SAT’s? What happened?” I told her and she said, “I could give you a test right now, and he can’t use that as an excuse.” And I said, “Screw it. I’ll go to a public school.” So I enrolled in USM, and I did that a while, and then the place was inaccessible and we had institutions to investigate for abuse and we had courthouses to make accessible and busses to make accessible and children to get education for, and laws to write, and I didn’t go back until--when did I go back? Sometime after the ADA. I can’t remember, I graduated my master’s in ’96, and I can’t remember when my undergrad was. But I met my husband there.

KJL Your masters in...?

KM I have an undergrad in social work and sociology from USM where I went back to school, because it was local and I could continue to work for the groups I was working with. And then I went to Boston College, advanced standing, so it was like a year and a half, for their dual degree program, but I never ended up doing the JD, the law degree. I got bored, and I got pregnant. So I have a master's degree, an MSW (COPA?), which is master's degree in social work, community organization public policy planning and financial administration.

So then I got pregnant and I was working at the YWCA, as the director there. I had been working for native people, but got talked by Nancy Connolly and the director of the program, a disabled woman. It was a program called Maine (inaudible) Mentoring Program by and for women and girls with disabilities. And I was on her board, and she had a serious stroke and was nonverbal, and so they said, "Apply." and so other people, other women with disabilities applied, but I got it, and it was a perfect fit, because it was part time, it was in Portland. I gave my notice to my Native friends who knew that I needed to move on because as an organizer your job is to work yourself out of existence and I felt they were doing great stuff on their own and calling me less and not paying me as much, I thought, "Go fly, birdie, Go fly!" And they do extraordinary stuff and have become incredible women and we still remain great buddies, but...

I then went to--did my graduate work, an Americorps gig, my 'Y' gig, my other part-time job, my Boston College classes, I commuted to Boston while having morning sickness for months. And I graduated pregnant. And I asked the dean of the college, who was reluctant, but I said, "Please, Dean, you're the first African American woman dean of this college and you're going to deny me, after you've let every professor in the world hand their kid a diploma--my mother handing me my diploma? I don't think so." So I wrote this long letter why my mother--and my mother said, "No, no, they should have even..." I said, "Mom." So the dean said mom could hand it with her. So I had my degree being handed to me by my mom and the dean. And Mom was like, "You know, sometimes you make big things out of little things. I didn't matter. What matters is you got your degree." And she said, "But you didn't get your law degree (laughs)." And to the very end, my mother was a tad bit disappointed in that, because my first person I wanted to be as a kid, is I wanted to be like Clarence Darrow. And I wanted to be like Emma Goldman, and my mother wasn't too thrilled with that. And I went for a time as a kid eating only vegetables and rice because I wanted to be like Ghandi, because I loved Ghandi and Martin Luther King, you know. I'm one of those baby boomers, you know.

My sister Connie worked on--as a young person with the Saco Democrats--on Democratic campaigns, including Bobby Kennedy, you know. My parents were watching the news when Bobby Kennedy was killed. I was there at home when Martin Luther King was assassinated and the news came on. I was five almost when I saw my mother ironing, watching President Kennedy in Dallas, and her talking and stuff about President Kennedy, watch him get killed, and I still remember the hassock was this cordouroy gold sort of hassock and she sat down and cried. And I sent one of my younger brothers to get water, and he said, "I can't find the step stool." He had to use a step stool and we set there and my sister was called out of school, my older sister. And you remember that. And I remember my parents being scared of Malcolm X, but agreeing with what he was saying, and then being so happy when he came back from Mecca, and my mom said, "I don't know what that Mecca place is, but it sure changed his heart. It made him see that all people black or white are okay." She says, "That's interesting, you know." She said, I think that's where their religion is, you know." My parents could be homophobic, could be racist, could be all of that, given their upbringing and what.

But through the years, though our experiences, through the experiences of my father being a liberator at D-Day, at Spearhead, 3rd Armored Division and a liberator of concentration camps, Battle of Normandy, the whole bit; when people would say that the Holocaust didn't exist, or that Jews or disable people, or Catholics, or whatever didn't die, my father would just get in their face and say, "I was there. I saw the crosses, I saw the Star of Davids, I saw the pink triangles," you know. He said, "I saw it. I saw the mounds of bones of disabled people." My father's folks, his division liberated Dora Nordhausen and Auschwitz and Dachau and others in different areas. But Dora was considered the hell of Nordhausen. And Nordhausen was where the people from Auschwitz went if they weren't well enough to stay at Auschwitz. Basically a dumping ground for people. No food, no nothing. And my father liberated one of those camps. One of his divisions, he actually stayed where he was--he was then a sergeant--long story about how he ended up being back a corporal, but... And then another division, to another camp, and that's the camp Eli Wiesel was in--the famous Jewish writer.

KJL Oh, Eli Wiesel.

KM Yeah, Eli Wiesel. And so Eli would come to the reunions of my father's division, and stuff, and when I came home from college from Gloria Davidson's class; Gloria was a great disability rights leader. Gloria made us all read Eli Wiesel and Irving Goffman. We took her classes. We went to school, we all took her disability class, it was like a rite of passage. And reading that, I remember in class, saying--my father said he was a humble person, but somehow he had found grace. He had found right in it, and was less tormented by nightmares than many of them. My father was really forever altered by that; very cynical about life and left the Catholic church. When he came back, one of the priests said to him, "The Jews," you know, "It's their own fault. My father said, "No, Father, it is not, and I'm never coming back to this church again." And my father was going to be a priest. But he went on, you know, twelve children, got married, and do a lot of other things.

I think the thing that we--my parents, you know were very open to changing. A lot of the (inaudible) struggling with AIDS were involved in the Association of Handicapped persons--became our photographers of the movement or became helpers, PCA's [personal care assistants]. It was a job that they could have that nobody was going to fire them for being being gay for, you know. It was a real blending of the community. And then Deaf folks when we did the Baxter School were split. They either hated us and gave us death threats, or ended up giving us awards later for doing that expose and getting those bastards kicked out, although I wish they had gone to jail, which they didn't. But that was the Attorney General's fault that the statute of limitations ran out and he refused to do a retro (inaudible). But c'est la vie. I hounded them for the rest of their mortal lives. I followed them wherever they went, as did many other Deaf folks and people with disabilities, and we would all sort of say, "Hey, do you here where he is, he went here. You want to write some letters and send news clippings?" "Okay, we'll do that." And we would do that. He would try to go to other Deaf schools and what and pretend that it was all (inaudible) and we would would send the clippings, we would send the Attorney General's report, and whatever. And sometimes they would let him stay, but a lot of times, they believed us and canned his ass for due cause. So, made my heart good.

KJL You've been very generous with your time, and I've immensely enjoyed your stories.

KM One other thing that I wanted to say, oh, yeah we talked about the attitude, we talked about that

KJL Yeah, we can continue the conversation.

KM Yeah, the big thing in terms of--If I had a laundry--Sarah wanted to know if I had a bucket list. (Sarah off mic, inaudible) Yeah, yeah, I have a bucket list of things that I want to do, like the tigers are endangered, and I want to hold and help save a baby tiger, rather than just donating money. I want to feed one, I want to somehow nurture them so...

KJL We got to see the tigers up at...

KM Oh, you did, they're gone though, now, aren't they? Darn! Darn, that was on my list. (Inaudible)'s uncle was going to take us. (Sarah, off mic, inaudible). Yeah, I did want to snuggle them. There's a lot. Universal health care is a big one. The international treaty is one we're focusing on right now for a lot of reasons. It is a gateway process by which we can reach out, and Judy Heumann, if you talk to Judy, who was a Berkeley during the rehab act fight and later became under Clinton Assistant Secretary of Education and does a lot of different stuff now. Judy would talk about that protest, but she would also talk about here work when she did work around international disability stuff.

How we would whine, as my mother would say. But what we didn't have, as my mother would say, but totally unaware of what other people didn't have. And Ralph Neas and his group that would take our banged up old used wheelchairs and put them together or bring them down with him to Cuba or El Salvador, or any number of place(s) because people were using wood and broken pieces of piping and what and looking at US magazines and creating their own wheelchairs with car tires to use in the field, you know. Car tires, which really was for many of us was--that'd be so great for camping and all terrain and all the sports guys racing. So that cross pollination of how we survived, that instinct to survive, to make do, to live, to accommodate our disability. And how we have to make society accommodate that difference by sharing the information that we have, and by providing the resources that we now have. There's not a person with a disability now that--a long term disabled person, not a newbie, a newly disabled person. A newly disabled person will sell their chair on eBay or on some site. A lot of other activists will send it to Ralph, or send it to many of the places that send them to countries that don't have medical equipment. Give it to the Shriners, who, if they can't use it, then then use it as material that they give to another group in exchange for being able to have access to "x," "y" or "z."

So it's the stuff that matters, looking at internationally--just like those of us were saying to DREDF and Children's Defense fund and Ralph Neas at Leadership Conference, that we were saying, "Look, you should look at the Maine Human Rights Act, you should look at the Michigan Handicapped Act, you should look at this." We kept saying, "Look at these state bills. Way more than this crap that you're sending us is this first initial draft in the eighties of the ADA." So basically the first version of what they had was like scrap because there was so so many state laws already. We're not going to support something that was worse than what we had. So we've learned as a movement, and certainly learned a lot from an organizing perspective as a community from the struggles of Martin Luther King and the Black Civil Rights Movement, and to some extent, the Women's Rights Movement. And certainly in terms of creativity, Tom Andrews and I and both did trainings at Midwest Academy, which

was an organizing workshop and Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation. And Tom was a big Saul Alinsky fan. My first *Rules for Radicals* was given to me by Tom and some other folks in that. But really being able to say, "We've got to create this change. We've got to create the environment in which to create change." So rather than trying to like, say, "What do we do?" Let's look at what we all agree is the best of what's out there. What are our dreams, what are our hopes? And then, instead of looking at who's this, who's that, and which Republican do we need to get, how many of us are disabled, you know?

By most statistics in Maine--I saw your one in fourteen or one in fifteen; one in twenty-three in Maine in terms of if you're doing complete cross-disability, including people with Crohn's, with AID's; one in twenty-three--excuse me, one in ten. For Deaf folks, it's like one in twenty-three. This is the statistics I can give you. But it's one in ten in Maine, one in ten. We have one of the highest populations of disabled folks, particularly injured workers with issues of asbestos, back injury, cancer due to asbestos production chemicals, because of ironwork, shipyard, whatever, I won't go there.

But knowing what we know about the onset of disability and what happens, and we know within our own community, we have all that hierarchy I told about. But even in the physically disabled community, the boys always got rehab services. They got to go--like (inaudible) and Steve Trembly--they got to go to college, but girls got to go to secretarial course for twelve weeks. My friend, Peggy (inaudible), who I'm not sure if she's alive or not--I haven't heard from her in years; I'll have to check. Peggy was one of the first women to ever get an undergrad degree paid by the Bureau of Rehab, and it's because she had sued a movie theater to make it accessible, because we were working on that--and she sued a movie theater, and we decided to make it a test case around rehab stuff. So she was one of the first, and so then as I get older and I went in, that was it. I was one of a handful of women that had gotten an undergrad degree, and one of less than a handful at the time, in '96, that had gotten a master's degree. Six years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

So if you ask me what needs to happen now, is, we've got this great push that we're going to clean up the crap that is there for our veterans, which they should. I have many brothers that are veterans. The services--my dad was a veteran, my father in law is a veteran. The amount of wait time it took for me to get services for my father were outrageous, and I knew what I was doing. I expedited, expedited, expedited. But it still took six months to get him an appointment, which Dad was fine with, because he was dragging his feet, but he would have been in in three months, but even then it was outrageous. So we need to look at the services we have for returning disabled veterans and we need to look at the rehab system that is in place for injured workers and people with disabilities going back to the force. We need not to give lip service by doing the old, "Please hire the handicapped." We need to have, as the ADA said, "You need to have affirmative action. You need to begin to look at people with disabilities as a protected class."

But there's so many ways, and many of us were talking about there are subtle ways where they sort of, you know, don't pick you. And you know in employment, you know, they see the hearing aid, and say, "Oh, Keith, you know, did you injure yourself?" They're not supposed to ask those questions. But if you're a person that does not know what they can and cannot ask, or want that job desperately, you're going to wait until you either get or don't get the job to say anything. And then you know if you sue them and wait eight years, you're not going to get back pay, and you're going to get very little anything else. So there really needs a consistent

thing because even though rehab is there, they hire rehab counselors, but there's not enough people with disabilities there that understand the breadth of all of it. I've been fortunate enough to use the bureau of rehab and have extraordinary workers. But I also knew what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go, what needed to happen. But there are a lot of people that don't, and there needs to be a sense of that old apprenticeship thing. If you're sixteen or seventeen, what do you want to do, then voc rehab is going to find a place to put you in. Sarah wants to be an astrophysicist, so maybe they get her an internship working with a professor of astrophysics, and maybe they get her an internship or a part time summer job at a laboratory, Jackson Laboratory, or at the planetarium at St. Joe's, or whatever. There needs to be a plan where they grasp how it ends up with a real job, not the effort to try to get a job and become at 26 a closed case.

Because in the old days, women that could be taught to cook, clean, hire their PCA, personal care assistant, then they would be closed as a homemaker, even though they were single women. It used to boggle my mind. So the gender bias is a big issue, still, within employment, still within hiring. Women with disabilities make way less than men with disabilities, we're less likely to be hired. We're more discriminated against than men with disabilities because their assumption is, "Gee, he's a disabled man. Geez, I guess he's married; he's got a wife and a kid and whatever to support." The assumption that we don't have a wife or kids, or disabled husbands or no husband, or whatever it may be. So a lot of that needs to be looked at.

And we also need to deal with the issue that Gloria Davis, who is an extraordinary human being, like I said, had her class on stigma and attitudes of disability. And she would do role playing, put the students in a class. Non-disabled students would be in a chair for a day, or have their ears plugged, or whatever. And she would always partner them with somebody else that wasn't doing it that day. She didn't want anybody to get harmed, like not hearing something, or walking down an elevator shaft or something--liability. But it was amazing, the sensory exercises that she did. And for me, because by then I wasn't shy, I was a talker. She said, "McInnis, I'm going to torture you. I'm going to make you mute." I said, "No!" And she said, "And worse, I'm going to make you ignorant of any sign language you know." And it was so hard, because my hands were terrible. I couldn't write my questions. And my handwriting's terrible anyway--couldn't write my questions fast enough, or what. But it was a powerful--and so a lot of that I took and there was a wonderful guy at Bates that also did stuff in his class, sensory exercise. He went real all-out, did some really terrifying stuff in his classes. That was pretty cool.

But that sense of education, and making people clearly understand what it was like to live with it--but then she would also--the ones she would have blind, she would put the thing over their eyes, the patches, and then wear sunglasses. And they would borrow somebody's cane, or what. The thing that affected them most was what people said to them. Even people that had seen them in that hall the day before and knew, didn't assume it was them until they said, "Oh, it's me." They were not allowed during the exercise to say, "I'm doing a sensory exercise." They could say, "Hey, I'm Bob," or whatever. "What happened to you?" "Well, obviously, today I'm blind." And it was powerful, because they were like self-pitying and crying and it was just profoundly a struggle, you know, for many of the non-disabled, as Pat Wright would say, the "TABs," the temporarily able bodied people, to really get a sense of what it was like. But the attitudes need to change because even young kids with disability, as I said to Sarah, maybe you should talk to Keith about your things at school with your hearing impairment and the bullying and what [Yes, you can], but she is a little uncomfortable about

that. She's worked out her own issues with that, or what. She's not ashamed of her. She always said to people--when she got her new hearing aid, she got a bright red one. Somebody said, "What is that red thing?" She said, "Duh! A hearing aid." I mean, she's cool about it, but maybe she'll change her mind and talk to you about it, but young people are struggling, now that accommodations are being made and you're dealing with it, the flip side of that accommodation, those with--you and Sarah, with somewhat invisible, more hidden disability don't have the immediate stigma that my hands, my chair would conjure up, or my niece Kristie, who had epilepsy, and until she had a seizure nobody knew, and now everybody knew, and then with the Crohn's, where--very uncomfortable disease and having to go to the bathroom all the time, and not always smelling great, and multiple surgeries and pain and a scar from here to here now, and... It's a struggle. It's how do you communicate that?

And then as Gloria said, in our rush--and I will give her full credit for this, girl, if you're listening up there--in our rush for civil rights--and as she said--all of you, and that includes you, McInnis--in the rush for the glory and the promise of the Americans With Disabilities Act, you left a lesser, ignorant--generally ignorant--poor, hungry folks with disabilities behind. Because they have all these laws, no money to hire lawyers; no way to access the complicated systems because the Bureau of Rehab still have many of the wait lists, they don't have more--parents are still patronizing--all of that.

So they see Kathy on TV fighting Maine Medical Center about being inaccessible, their birthing ward was inaccessible. Fighting them, and winning, and then losing an appeal thing, and then wanting to appeal again and then Maine Med chickening out and then settling with me and offering me money, which I literally threw the exorbitant amount of money in their face and said, "No. I want change. I want a new birthing unit built. I want it to be 100 percent accessible. I want an apology. These are the things I want. I don't want a penny. I don't want anybody to ever say I took a penny for my rights. Ever. You're going to do what is right, and that's it." And I was newly married, I could have used (inaudible). They knew that. No. I remember telling my brothers, they're like, "Are you crazy?" "No." "You turned it down without talking to any of us?" "Yes I did."

But within a few years after giving birth, Sarah was six or seven, one of my friends who had a disability, a severe disability, not the use of her hands, she lost it, didn't have any use of her hands. Single woman, got pregnant, had a baby, and was going to the birthing center. And my niece was going to the birthing center. And I was like, "This is so cool." And I remember my niece saying, "You can use my bathroom, Aunt Kathy (inaudible) accessible." Right in front of the nurse, you know. So those things are very powerful, and so part of what Gloria always said is, "We need to get down in those deep, deep dark places where we still are those little crippled poster kids." That we still are the Tiny Tim or the evil Captain Hook. We need to find those stereotypes that our family, our communities, our employers feel about us and that we have internalized. Because we really have internalized ableism, much like internalized racism.

And a perfect example of this and I'll out myself, is Sarah with her hearing problem. She'd had the growth removed, and then the thing patched and then she had to have another surgery and it patched. And then she had to have the eardrum attached again. And in that third surgery the bone disintegrated, one of the little bones in there disintegrated and so her hearing wasn't coming back at all. It was worse, if anything. So we had to go to another surgeon and he would have to make the decision while he was in there to put in an implant.

Well, the other surgeries were laparoscopic; little cuts here, little cuts there. Still Sarah had a little cut here when she was a baby, and a cut on her toe. You know, your little baby, your babies are perfect and whatever, and then you put the little band aid on there and--but she had this big cuff that's over her ear and he comes up and says, "Yeah, I had to put the implant in." And the little crippled kid in me that's sitting in the hospital that I used to get tortuous therapy from--or one like it. I'm trying to remember where the surgery was. Yeah, I think it was at Maine Med--and thinking, "Oh, my God." And I had had implants--knee implants, knee implants, "Okay, it's an implant."

And when Sarah was told she might get it, she says, "Way cool," you know. She has no problem with it, still has no problem with it. She wanted to know all the technology. Could it vibrate enough that she could have it react with her iTunes? She's like fifty years state of the art ahead, I guess. And so when she comes home she has this big cuff on her ear, and it looks like Princess Leia, is what she said, a huge cuff, right. So we're chuckling about it, but I have to clean it. And so I'm taking the thing off, and taking the bandage. And I'm expecting for some stupid reason--that I either didn't hear it or what---I see a huge red mark on her ear, and then I look at the back, and there's a huge cut around her entire ear, where I can tell they folded her ear over. And I start to cry. But she's on my lap, and I'm cleaning it, but she can tell, my breath, and she says, "Mom, you're not crying, are you? I thought you were more empowered than that." (Laughs). I said, but you're my baby, and now you have a scar." And she says, "That's what they make Mederma for, Mom, you know." And she says, "Nobody's going to see it," and trying to console me.

And I remember at the time thinking, "Wow, how that little seed of people, since I'm (inaudible) Christmas, and we would go out shopping and what. And people would always equate me with Tiny Tim. And my friend (inaudible) would say, "God damn you, Kathy, you have this love/hate thing with Tiny Tim. Get over it, you know!" Because I was the good, quiet, sweet kid. but my brothers and I were sarcastic. We would bet--not that we had anything, we were poor--but we would bet like, who could have an ice cream, or who could talk Mom into making chocolate chip cookies, whatever, and eat them all, you know--who could get people to say the most about Tiny Tim, right, at Christmastime. My mother knew we were doing it, so I would usually--not always, because my brothers caught on fast. I would go, "Hi. It's Christmas, you know." and they'd say, "Yes." and I'd say, "Have you seen The Christmas Carol?" So then my brother would be like, "No, you can't even mention The Christmas Carol. You can't do that. that's cheating."

But people would be patronizing, you know. But you just sort of have these images that follow you around. And my husband is now a Mason and a Shriner clown. and to go to the meetings, and of course the Shriner symbol is the kid on a shoulder with crutches. And I come there and at first one of them thought I was one of their former kids, and I'm like, "The only kid I've ever been is my mother and father's kid." And they'd look at me, and of course my husband would want to crawl into a hole somewhere, and I'd say, "This is it," whatever. But do you know that when we were doing the accessible courthouse stuff and the accessible bus stuff, one of the first calls I got was from the head of the Korah Temple Shrine. And he sent me a letter on shrine stationary saying, "This is what we do for kids. We're not like Jerry's kids, although I agree, we probably have some of those images that you don't like. But we're trying to give them a hand up. That's why we put them on our shoulder. And we help them, and we make damned sure if they need stuff afterwards, that out of our pocket comes donations to their high school graduation or to college. And here's a little

sticker.” And it was a little lobster, which I still have somewhere, with a little Shriner hat. Oh, my god! I never laughed so hard. So I got invited to the Shriner thing, and at the time it was grossly inaccessible, except for a freight elevator. So they brought me up, the first couple flights of stairs they have and then the freight elevator. And I got up, and I gave my speech, and they gave a donation to our campaign to do accessibility stuff and what. And then I was like, “Right,” and then I was being the sarcastic pain in the butt that I am--was about to (inaudible) give my speech, and they said, “One more thing. We have to take a vote before you say something.” And I said, “Oh, Okay.” I’m trying to be nice and I’m thinking, “Then I’m going to rip them one and I’m going to say, “This is how I had to enter your building, and this is where the problem lies.” They voted to start a capital campaign to make the building accessible. So I got up there and I told them the truth. I said, “My mother, when I tell her this story is gonna say, “See, I tell you Katherine, to bite your damn tongue.” Just like the other day, she would have been on my shoulder, saying, “Kathy, don’t be just telling them all the dirty laundry, bite your tongue!”

And so when I came in with Brett to his first Korah Temple ladies night that I got to go to. The feminist in me is like--I’m not an Eastern Star, or any of that stuff. They know--You’re one of the unusual girls. I said, “Yes I am. I’m one of the unusual women.” And we’re there. Ironically, some of the former RTT bus drivers, the public bus drivers, the clerks at the court--all of these guys are coming up and saying, “Oh, Kathy, I know you from this and that, and whatever.” And this elderly gentleman comes over, and he says to me, “Do you remember me?” And I’m thinking, “No, I don’t.” And he’s thin as a rail. And it was the gentleman that was the assistant to the man that wrote me the letter, but he used to be huge, I mean a large man. And he had lost a lot of weight. He says, “You never did come to try our elevator out. I guess you got too busy with that Baxter School stuff, and that ADA thing you worked on.” He said, “But we kept our promise, didn’t we?” And I said, “Yes you did.” I said, “You did.”

And I was so aware that so many times we don’t stop and think of that, you know. And when the city put in the elevator here in Saco, because I was on the city council here, I went to Portland, they invited me to come down and take my seat for the night. (Inaudible) a friend of the family gave up his seat for the night. Art gave up his seat so I could have my old board seat, to be there when the vote was dedicated and I did a symbolic dedication, or whatever. Because you have to let the things go. But you also have to be aware of what I firmly believe are the glory people, the people that know they were on the wrong side of an issue and don’t want to go down in history as being--well, you know--the President of the University of Alabama, or George Wallace, or somebody, you know--Bull Connor. They don’t want to be that, so they’re reinventing history and that frustrates me to no end.

And as I watch my friends die, maybe their obituary is mentioned on TV and maybe people show up to their funeral, that are people with disabilities that remember them. But you see them. I have gone to so many funerals. One inter when I was--they “Y” sold me (inaudible) program to the independent living center, Alpha One. Steve [Tremblay] wanted it bad, so I trusted Steve, so it went over to Steve. And we had a bad winter, and the able bodied people at Alpha One were making politically incorrect--you know, like dead man kind of jokes that you make in a morgue. To them it was a way of dealing with the sorrow of what was going on. And I know that, because I’ve been around people that do that, but I didn’t appreciate it, and I went in and talked to Steve about it. Instead of bawling their kiesters out, we sat down and talked with them about why they were doing that, and that these were people we knew,

these were people that were friends of ours, these were people that we had beers with and went to their weddings. And one particular month period, I could barely breathe, because I'd lost so many friends with AIDS, and so many friends with disabilities, but I had a friend who was in an elevator at a building in Bangor, fighting with the landlord about how the elevator kept closing on people and jamming people's wheelchairs, or stopping so that it was four inches off the ground or what. He was alone and coming back from something and he got stuck in the door. And in trying to get himself out, because he was a quad, he pulled his air vent out, and he died trapped in that elevator, 'til somebody found him. Needless to say, the very next day, any of us that could do anything were on the phone to that building to get that damn elevator fixed. And he had complained about it to different people. I had not known about it, but to different people.

But to know that he died that way was horrific, and Joe Greeley, who was in this book during our 504 stuff, where we were getting back at Reagan a Bush for their "no cracked china in the lunchroom thing--so we were using that. We had to have people dress up as Reagan. So at the 504 rally in Portland we burned the regulations we didn't like, and we had Reagan (inaudible--McInnis is off-mic for a few moments, here) ... signs, special schools for special kids, "no cracked china in our lunchrooms," some things that were really sarcastic. I tend to do sarcastic posters. I had some real good ones for native people. So Joe, who had been going to school, doing whatever, lived in South Portland. Would catch the bus, go do anything. Single guy, loved to go out, wanted to raise hell. Loved to play trivia, loved to bet on sports, or what.

And it was New Year's Eve and he was out, and he followed the same route back to his apartment, to Mill Creek and some jerk, because the roads had not been plowed well--Joe was in the road. And Joe had kept telling the guy to move over, you know, move over. Because Joe had all these flags, lights, doo-dads--God, he liked decorating that chair! Because he knew. He was out all the time. So Joe could see the guy tailing him, and he starts to bump the back of his chair--apparently, according to witnesses. He gets tired of this, so he goes up a slight embankment near the pond, the start of the walkway, there. And from what people tell us, the car made a sharp right and hit him and took off. Well, all the people standing by saw Joe rolling, so they never reported it 'til the next morning. And what had happened was, Joe wasn't rolling, Joe was skidding, and he went down off the embankment, on to (inaudible) Pond Creek. His heavy electric chair cracked into the ice and he went down and drowned because some temporarily able bodied person didn't want to give him a little bit of space on the sidewalk plowed area. And I think of that, and I think of so many other people--Gloria, who just died--a combination of health related things; Lena who died as she wanted, of old age. But so many are gone. Judy Roberts died tragically. You just think of this, and think their stories were important. They were involved in so much, and now that they're gone, to have somebody submit copy of one of our court cases, which you can walk into any of our courts and get--and take Judy Roberts' name off, and put their own on and try to submit it to a job place as something that shows what they have done is disgusting.

And their memories need to be honored. And when Alpha One and the FAME board decided for marketing reasons to change the Kim Wallace Adaptive Equipment Loan Program to MPower--a play on "empower," which nobody really gets, because they think it's kind of condescending, because it's services, and we have a right to services, so we empower our own (inaudible). Is that--when I write out my check; I've got an adaptive equipment loan to help with the kitchen that's accessible for me, and my accessible bathroom. I write out "FAME" and I write out, "The Kim Wallace Adaptive Equipment Loan Program," because

Kim died after doing great work at working with the state and Alpha One and with other organizations. And he left a wife and two twin babies and a legacy of work that his kids are gonna know meant something. So, to change it a handful of years after he died, after it was named for him was reprehensible.

So there's things even within our movement, where in the guise of wanting more stuff--a bigger piece of the service pie; a bigger piece of the community corporate greed stuff, we sell our own history. We sell our brothers and sisters, we rob each other's legacy. And that is one damn thing I can't tolerate. And I think it's important to people to say, "This is where I was when it happened." I was just talking to David, I said, "David, where were you?" He said, "Honey, you know where I was. I was where I usually am, I was down having a beer, watching you on the news. And I saw it!" And I had--before I had left DC--my sister, like I said, worked for Hathaway, and had worked alongside, had known Margaret Chase Smith, because she had been involved in the campaign and what and had great respect for Margaret Chase Smith, who Hathaway beat. Margaret loved red roses. So the only thing I could think, because Olympia Snow, with a lot of prodding from David's conservative Republican friends up in Bangor and a lot of others. We had really got her to understand, you need to come on board, and more than that, you need to be an advocate, and you really need to do this, and we want you to really do this. And so before I left I went to the Capitol Hill store. Things were really expensive! And I'm thinking, "I'm not going to have any snacks before I get to the airport!" and "No Coca Cola for me!" And I bought this one single rose that cost me my snack money, and I went in and I had hand written a note, and I left it for Olympia Snowe, and made a comment about women in Maine and leadership like her and Margaret Chase Smith, and I was very hopeful that Tom was going to become a Congressman and join her and that she would be a tremendous ally to us. And she wrote me a wonderful letter afterward, saying how touched she was that I had made a connection near and dear to the hearts of all Republican women. And when I later saw her for something else, she was like, "You're either the smartest political cookie I know, or your parents raised you right." and I said, "I think I'm both."

KJL I need to stop here, because I need to be in Portland at six.

KM It's quarter of five, yeah.

KJL So I probably ought to be getting on the road, here, but if you like, we can continue this conversation.

KM Yeah, I said to Brett, 'cause he got the box out. There's some funny stories that I think about the ADA that would be cool to know; but also just the reactions of different communities, like some of the leaders of the Deaf community, and the vision impaired community.

KJL And I'd like to capture some of the images you've shown me. I'd like to get a good photo of you

(End of interview.)