INTERVIEW 8 - Rick Wood

**Questions will be indented and answers will be starting at the margin.**

Could we start by talking about your profession, what type of work you do?

I am a social worker, I have my Masters in Social Work, I am also a Certified Social Worker under the Ontario College of Certified Social Workers. My Masters degree is from Laurier University. My professional career has been interesting. It has been a long and hard process.

What year did you graduate?

1973 with my Masters degree.

What were some of the difficulties that you faced when you applied for your undergraduate courses in university.

That's going back a long ways. I started in 1963 right out of high school.

Was that here in Waterloo?

No, I went to high school in Elora, Ontario. It was a good high school, a small high school, just one floor and very understanding integrated school. There was no such thing as special education all through public school and the principal came to visit the family prior to me starting school and said we will give it a try.

So you started at grade 9 in this high school?

Yes I started grade 9 in Elora and went through to grade 13. Grade 13 in those days wrote the departmental exams. I could not write the departmental exams because of the time factor, so I wrote the same exam and they were marked locally. They gave me more time and I typed the exams. I had a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ cart with my typewriter on it and went from class to class.

So you wrote a number of exams at that time.

Yes, I wrote the whole thing.

Did you find that they could not make accommodations for you to write it with the rest of the students.

Because of the time factor, and because of the typewriter factor and at that time I had to wait 2 hours after the rest of them started before they could get a copy of the exam out of the examination room. So that was the technical part.

What were your experiences like in this high school?

Very positive. I was accepted as one of the students and they called me Car 54, there was a TV program at that time called Car 54 and the students and teachers gave me that name.

And you liked that?

Yes, it made me part of the community. I was part of the scout troupe in Elora, I was part of the Sunday school in my church.

You were certainly very integrated. Was it the same in elementary school?

Yes, I was in a regular school.

How were your experiences there, do you remember any of that?

They were very good. Teachers were helpful. That was in Elmira which is a small community north of Waterloo.

That type of things did the teachers do to make you feel part of the elementary school?

I can't remember, but I think they did nothing. Students were great.

Do you recall any incidences that were not so great.

No, not at that time. I have looked at this very carefully in that last year and a half, I met up with our next door neighbour that we used to play with and it turns out that since we saw each other her had become disabled with 2 artificial hips and an artificial shoulder.

Was that due to an accident?

No, it was congenital disease that just showed up in her genes.

Did you have a lot of things to talk about?

Yes, because it was 32 years. And now she is my neighbour again, she lives here.

What type of things did you discuss.

Everything. My parents died when I was 15 and I moved to Elora and at that time there was no real grieving, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ us forget it and go on and I am still grieving the death of my parents.

Did they die in an accident?

No, mother died of Leukaemia when I was 13. And dad died when I was 15 of a heart attack.

Do you have other brothers or sisters?

I have one sister younger than I am. So Carol and her family have become my family.

So where did you go to live after your father died?

I went to live with my aunt in Elora. That's when I went to high school.

That must have been quite an adjustment for you.

It was.

Were your parents strong factors in your upbringing?

Yes, I'm beginning to realize how strong they were and it's from talking to Carol, sometimes I would say I don't know where I got this silly notion, and she would say, I know where you got it from, your mother.

What type of notion?

Oh just caring about people.

So your mother was a very compassionate person.

Yes. As you can see by the tears.

I don't want to bring the sad memories back, I'm sorry.

It's okay, they are actually tears of joy.

It's nice to think of your parents being very special and I'm certain you will remember them for the rest of your life no matter how old you are.

Yes. I realize now that a lot of my early experiences in Elmira have been the foundation for my professional choice.

Could you explain a bit more about that?

During high school the discussion of career came up as it does with every student and I was referred to Vocational Rehab Services.

What grade were you in at the time?

I would have been in grade 11 or 12. At that time I considered social work as a career. At the time my aunt and uncle and Vocational Rehab said no, you could never do social work.

Why?

Because I was disabled.

Did you consider that a factor?

I didn't know, I was about 17.

What was the reason for looking at social work?

Because of my interests in people and things like that. My uncle and aunt thought that the new field of computers might be the better for me to pursue. So I decided to go into computers. I came over to the University of Waterloo and met with them and they were willing to take me in.

Were you interested in computers at all or was it just because it was suggested?

Yes, sciences and maths were my strong points. I enjoyed it and there was this new math program at U. of W., this would be 1962 or 1963, an undergrad program.

What did it entail?

Normally the program included a Bachelor of Science degree, but what they were willing to do is enrol me in the Arts Faculty so that I could take my Art elective plus my Maths. Instead of doing Sciences where there was lab work, I did the Arts program.

You said that you were interested in Science, but you wanted a little bit of Arts also.

Yes, we decided that the Science would not be a good choice because of the lab work.

When you talk about we, do you mean the university?

The university and myself and it was a mutual agreement.

What was their reaction when you applied for the general program.

I would say generally positive. It was a small university, interesting enough, now the centre of the campus was a cow field.

So your disability was not a question here?

Not a big one. There were no \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the disabled.

Do you think that they required it?

I don't think that they required it, the person I dealt with was the head of Maintenance.

Was this person a guiding force throughout university?

When I needed a ramp, I would call up Cal and ask if there was any way we could get a ramp into the building.

And did they put up a ramp?

Yes they did.

What about in the building, stairs, etc.

In the building it was the same thing, I stayed in residence at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ College and it wasn't two weeks before one of the students said I'm going to organize a rotating schedule so that someone will come in and help you.

So the students organized it themselves. Did you request it, or they just thought of it.

The attendant care program in Ontario didn't \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

What type of things did they assist you with?

Someone would come in in the morning and tie my shoes, twice a week someone would come in and help me with a shower. The rest of the time I struggled on my own. At meals they would come and get the meal for me.

Were you sharing a room?

I shared a room. My roommate was a character. But in terms of acceptance, I was perfectly accepted, exams, I wrote in a special room because I typed. I was given extra time.

Was there any one professor that was of particular influence to you.

No. That's one thing, unfortunately I never found a mentor in either undergrad or graduate.

How about friends?

I had a lot of school friends, I don't see too many of them anymore. The odd time I run into somebody but no real outstanding friends.

Can we talk a bit about your disability here. Would you like to tell me the nature of your disability.

I have Cerebral Palsy and it affects my speech and molelar control. Up to three or four years ago I walked with a cane. I was raised in the time were you were expected to deny your disability.

Did you do that?

Yes, I really did. My family denied it.

How could you deny it when it was visible? Did someone not question you or they did question you and you didn't talk about it.

You realize that it took you longer to do things but that was normal. No one talked about the disability.

Did you find that hard?

At the time no. I found it in later life very hard. I would say that up to the time that I graduated with Master's degree the disability really did not play a big part in my life, it was there but I chose to ignore it. After my Master's degree when I started looking for a job was the beginning of my recognizing that society and I weren't meshing together. It was a long process to find a job.

How long did it take you to find a job?

It took about 4 months.

Your experience during this time was pretty tough.

Yes it was.

What were some of the attitudes?

I did a lot of sending out resumes and not getting interviews.

Do you think that your disability was the reason for that?

Yes.

So you did declare that you had cerebral palsy.

Yes, because I knew no better because up to now my experience had been very positive. I finally did get a job out in Wayburn, Saskatchewan and I took it and moved out there, only to find three months later that what the job was was a six month manpower retraining program.

What type of retraining was it?

Hire the disabled, that kind of thing.

Did you feel cheated?

Yes. I felt crushed, it was the beginning of realities.

You mentioned a while ago that you declared it because you didn't know better. Do you think it is better to conceal it at times?

No. Society isn't ready and that seemed to be the reality.

What type of experiences did you have in this job?

When I got out there it was a new department of social work in a chronic care hospital. The hospital existed for many years as a psychiatric hospital. A well known psychiatric hospital, I had read about it in psychology and you know where they say other categories, I met a lot of those people. What had happened is that there had been \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ accident out of the hospital in the integration of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And literally they opened the door and anyone who could walk out were discharged. I think they went from 3,000 patients down to 326.

How did you feel about this movement?

I wasn't sure what was happening when I got out there. I got out there just after this had started, about a year after. I think it was 1972 when the changeover took place. I think that November the \_\_\_\_\_\_ was the magic day and I felt it was the magic day. Certainly on that day people ceased to be psychiatric and became chronic care. Unfortunately the didn't know about it and the OPA had a lot of organizational stress \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was up and before November we would know what to do and now we weren't sure what to do with the people who were left behind.

Were they more severe cases?

Very severe.

Could they go out and live in society also?

These were people who really could not live in society. They were really severely disabled. Psychiatric and disabled. We had a couple of people who were disabled. My training in university had been in administration and research, not in clinical situations. I have problems in clinical settings.

So you were suddenly left in this clinical situation.

Yes, I was hired as a minister.

What did they want you to do?

I'm not sure till this day what they wanted. They hired two of us, both right out of school. I had administrative and research training and the other person had clinical training and because she was a native of Saskatchewan, she became director and I became the commissioner, figure that one out.

So you weren't there very long.

I was there six months and then I quit. Then I spent about a year on unemployment looking for a job and doing some volunteer research.

Where were you living at this time?

In Saskatchewan. Then I moved to Regina for a while.

What were the most difficulties you were having looking for a job?

Not getting replies. I think in about a year I had about three interviews.

What was the reason for not getting interviews?

Looking back now I think it was not taking a chance with the disability. One of the interviewers I had was for a workshop manager and what they wanted me to do was, they had a bunch of retarded people that didn't work too well and my job would be to get work out of them. I said no, I don't operate that way. Another interview that was really interesting was up in the Northwest Territories and they flew me out. I had a wonderful interview and I had a sense that they really wanted me except we both agreed that part of the job was to be able to go from community to community and I would have a real difficulty getting off the pontoons of a plane into a boat. And we agreed, but if it wasn't for that I would have had that job.

So you accepted that as unfortunately one of the realities of your situation.

Yes, that's the reality.

So that is one of the times that you accepted your disability as being a reality.

I'm very fond of reality. I then came home for Christmas that year and was offered the position of a Research Assistant for a professor, a friend of mine in recreation and U. of W. I did a lot of volunteer work in the twin city and I met Joe through that.

So during the time that you did not have a job, you did volunteer work in the community.

Yes. Actually one of the reasons that I went back to school was that I started an agency for the disabled and I decided that I liked this work and I wanted to learn.

What year was this that you started the agency?

1967.

What type of work did the agency do?

It was a central recreation centre. There were three phases of it; running the dances, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ recreational and what we were hoping to be vocational. The problem was that there was no real way to look at vocational. What we looked at was more of social program.

Why do you think it was difficult to look at vocational at this time?

We had the March of Dimes running their workshop and in order to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ were severely disabled.

So it was the attitude that was predicted that these people would not be able to work, should not work. How did they view you?

The viewed me as kind of the father, I'm still the "father" of this organization.

What is this program called?

Now it is called KWA Accessibility. At one point in time it was called Services to the Physically Disabled.

Were you in contact with a lot of people who were disabled through university.

In university we did a survey and I think there were 268 people we identified at that time. It was done as a Master's thesis for another student. We were doing it for our group.

Were there other students with you who had disabilities in university?

No.

How about high school?

No, I was the only one.

How did you feel about being the only one? Did it make you special?

Well, yes I guess so.

Did you ever view yourself as being disabled or think about it or like you say you didn't reflect on it at all.

Not really.

How about doing other activities, physical activities for ......

I wasn't interested in sports. I remember one day going to Scout Camp and being left at the gate and one of the leaders said, (I was a leader at this point), where's our leader? And then they came back for me and he said, that's right I forgot you were disabled.

That was good?

Yes. Then he introduced me, it was two groups getting together and Bill introduced me as, this is Scouter Rick from Elora and he's a little slow in getting to you, but God help you when he gets to you. And that was my experience most of my life.

So it was all very positive.

Yes and there was a lot of humour.

I was told by the lady that referred me to you, she said, Oh you'll enjoy him, he knows how to be funny. Which is very nice.

I can be crabby too.

Believe me we all have our off days. No one is perfect. Humour makes it very easy.

I use humour a lot.

Do you find people with disabilities do do that or are you an exception?

I don't find a lot of disabled people do that. I, myself am one of the few professional people who are disabled.

What is the reason for that.

Just that I lived a sheltered life. I found with the two or three disabled people I know, I found that they were not using all of their talent.

In what sense?

They were in deadend jobs, maybe that's all they could do. They had gone through a professional school.

Do you think that the reason for a lot of people not having jobs right now is because of economic conditions.

Now yes, but we are talking 25 years ago.

So what do you think were the reasons for people not doing that well?

I see it as society doesn't like things that are different.

Is society ready to accept it now?

I don't think so. We have come a long way ..........

In what sense have we come a long way?

I think what has happened is that, as you know in terms of the issues around the mid 70's, year of the disabled, the issues were physical barriers. There were architectural barriers, curb cuts, doorways and they got pretty well told, at least in this community, this building is a prime example of solving of the physical barriers. We have good curb cuts, etc.

So you find it pretty accessible here. What about other buildings.

The other buildings are pretty good. Laurier built a professional building had cubicles for the disabled in the washrooms and had really gone all out and then forgot to put a level entrance. Most of what I have experienced in the negative way has been through neglect or pure stupidity.

That's not very wise, doing it in the building and then forgetting outside.

It was hilarious.

Did they correct it?

Yes they did put in a ram.

What about the cost factor, do you think that that is not an issue here?

At buildings, from what I understand, is not a big factor, renovation is though. But when they are building right at the beginning it's not.

What about other cities in other provinces?

I don't know the current status of them. I sort of left the disabled community around 1975 and went out on my own. After my experience in Saskatchewan I came back and it turned out that this professor was doing his doctoral thesis and so I did a lot of his statistical analysis for him.

What was the research regarding?

His thesis was a Leisure Module, he was looking at ways of leisure time and activity. It was very interesting and we would get a lot of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ variates stuff.

Up till now had you used your computer courses at all?

Not initially. When I came back in 1975 I was introduced to this thing called a terminal. I was used to punch cards. For three years after I graduated, I worked at Mutual Life as a computer programmer.

This is back in the 60's.

Yes, this is in the 60's. So I had worked as a computer programmer, then went back for my Masters. So we are now up to 1975. I worked with Joe for about a year and a half. I did a few contracts with other firms also around data analysis, then I got a call from the Dean of the Faculty of Social Work at Laurier and Frank said, Rick they gave me this thing called a terminal, what the hell do I do with it. So I went over there and I managed to get it turned on and get hooked into the main computer. He was so ecstatic, you need to know this guy, he's a wonderful guy. I don't know whether you'll meet him today or not.

So you worked with him for a while.

I worked with him and he said, I want you here. So I became the Research Consultant to students. I was there for 8 years.

So you had nothing to do with your social work.

Well, now I'm back into social work. During those 8 years it was in the Faculty of Social Work. I maintain that I probably did more social work than I did computer, because I was neither faculty or staff so students would come in a dump on me. And would say let's see what we can do to get you through.

So you worked on both. Did you find that that was an advantage having the computer knowledge and social work rather than being ........ What did you enjoy most about it?

The interaction with the students, the enthusiasm, the fun part of it.

Did you meet any students who were disabled during this period?

Yes, just one.

Did you ever find yourself being an influential factor as a role model to these students.

I don't think so. I wasn't aware of it. When anyone would say, I wish my son or daughter was like you, I would say, Oh, God, don't wish that. I encouraged people to be themselves. I'm no hero.

Do you not feel students need to have role models to look at and to know that you have made it and they can make it.

I tried to be a role model to all my students and I still do. I am now teaching part-time at Conestoga College in the computer program.

So now lately who are you working with?

Right now I'm working at Conestoga College and I've been there just over a year. Previous to this I was unemployed. I went through a period of depression, I functionally lost my business. When I started at U. of W. because it was part-time, I set up W. Wood & Associates as a way of, mainly for tax purposes, as a professional consulting company. I think that I would like to go through that period because I think it is important. I felt that this may be the answer to my employment, if no one will hire me on a equal basis, I'll start my own business.

And you felt you were on an equal basis in this business and you had other people working for you.

I did at one time, that was one of the mistakes I made.

Why?

Because I ran out of money. While I was at Laurier it was part-time so in the other part I dabbled in this consulting business out of my home. Even Laurier went through the consulting business and I would bill them and they would pay me. There was always a tension with Laurier because I was neither faculty or staff at this time.

Couldn't you be one of the employees?

I wasn't really an employee because they were contracts. Laurier went through a period of some dean changes and I suffered through those hoping every time something would come up.

So you found that even hanging on to this part-time situation was difficult with them.

After 8 years I realized I was making less than when I started.

Could they not somehow accommodate you because of the work you were doing for them.

They gave me a raise every year and cut my hours back. And I just felt really cheated by them so decided to quit and go out on my own. I went out on my own in a big way, I rented a huge office, I hired a secretary and a programmer and I incurred too many expenses. I realize at that time that one of the areas that I was having problems in was the physical doing of the work.

So your disability was in the way here. Did people perceive your disability as having an affect on your job.

I think they did.

What about when you were doing it for the university?

I don't think the students did but I think the staff did. I knew more about research than the faculty.

So they could have used you as a very important resource here and they didn't. What do you think were the reasons for not using you.

Pride, stubbornness.

So you did not encounter the same faculty as when you were a student. The same attitude because they had been very friendly to you up till that time.

It changed. I think it changed because as a student I was below them and now I was on par with them. And I think there was a power struggle.

How did you deal with it?

I took it for so long and then I quit, I didn't renew the contract.

Did you ever tell them how you felt?

No, not really. There were a couple of incidences where I said, look this is inappropriate. They were minor compared to the whole issue.

So they did not cooperate with you at all at this time.

No.

What about the professor that you had initially started doing the research with.

That was at U. of W. in recreation. When he was done with me, suddenly I was of no use to him.

So they never valued the work you were doing?

No. The crunch came with the recreation professor when I wrote a paper for him and I wanted to at least co-author it. He said no, he figured that he paid me and I was his lackey.

Did you start thinking that it was your disability was the only reason people were doing this.

In the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ case I came to realize that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

So you came to terms with that, that this is the way he way.

I realized in my own business was what I needed was someone to do the physical work. I was unable to do it and I went to Vocational Rehab services.

Now why did you go to them?

My idea was that they provide renovations of buildings, they provide equipment, what I want is the equipment in forms of human beings at work doing what I wanted, not forever, but till we get support.

Did you want the equipment, or did you want the people to help you get established?

Yes, I wanted the people to help me. The were very \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Partly I realize now it's because of their lack of a business sense. They did renegotiate to do a business plan, they got an accountant to do it, and as far as I'm concerned he just plain screwed them. He took money and did no work. I went on with this for 4 years. They did a 4 year assessment and told me they couldn't continue. I feel they were really incompetent people that I dealt with.

So you don't have much faith in them.

I have no respect or faith in them.

What do you think they are good for, are they good for anything?

Not much. If you know what you want and if it is very clear cut \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

So they paid your tuition.

They did for a while, I decided about the time I was thinking of leaving Laurier to go and get my Ph.D at Waterloo. I got through that and I got down to my dissertation and ran into problems.

You had started a Ph.D. program.

Yes. This was in Social Planning. All through my course work and all through my comprehensive exams, wrote 4 drafts of my dissertation and then they said, this isn't Ph.D. quality.

V.R.I. said no.

This was the university. So I never did defend my thesis I couldn't get \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for supervision, couldn't pin them down to what was wrong.

That was taking a lot of time and effort at this time. So it was only your dissertation that there was a problem with, you had completed all your requirements. Why did you not question them?

I tried but I could get no where. At this time in my life, my business was on the rocks, I spent all of the money from my mom and dad's estate, I had to go on family benefits, I had taken a young lad under my wing and he was 21 at the time going on 16. I sort of called him my son but he had found girls and was getting into trouble.

Did he have a disability? You were basically looking after him.

No, disability. He left, he was from Calgary, he left to go back to Calgary.

What year are we talking about now, the late 80's.

Yes, this would be about 1988. He left in July of 1990 and he was going to let me know when he got settled and I haven't heard from him since.

How long was he with you?

About three years. So I had him, my business, my dissertation and I fell apart in November of 1988 and was in the hospital for a week. Fortunately they didn't do anything for me. I escaped the drugs and I've just been fighting to get out of the whole situation.

Did your sister help you through this?

No.

You don't keep in touch with your sister.

Maybe three times a year. The turning point came when I met Carol and her husband Dan, who used to be our neighbours. This was a very emotional part and I couldn't make out what was being said.

This was a real turning point in my life and I've been struggling to get back on base and found it very hard living in here. There are a lot of hurting people in this building. It has been a long struggle but I have turned the corner.

Right now I do some part-time teaching and I enjoy that. I have also done some day teaching.

Does it give you enough income.

No. I'm still on family benefits. This week I have also been involved in the Association of Social Work and also the Association of System Management.

So you are still really involved in your community. What type of issues do you look at with these associations?

The ASM is primarily monthly meetings on different topics which are computer related. Just this week I was asked by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on judging some systems projects at the college, this is on a volunteer basis.

Do you find that people take advantage of your good heart, asking you to do a lot of things without paying you.

I have struggled with what do I do professionally and what do I do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. So I've been out there twice this week, once on Monday to judge the projects and once yesterday to present the awards. To me the payment was when they said the winner is..... There were 3 of them in the group and they said Yeaaa! They were back in the corner smiling. That means more than money, even though money would be nice. I'm getting a good reputation with the college, I met the dean and others. I get paid well for the hours that I teach.

Do you think something might develop from this?

I'm hoping.

That's right we all have to hope, who knows what's in store for any one of us down the road.

Most of the time I enjoy my work around here. I'm on the Finance Committee and I'm on the Member Relations, I'm chairing the Member Relations Committee. We have just gotten through our budget and we have had a flare up that we have to deal with. Two of our members are just out of hand. I'm one of the only ones, I'm not bragging, that can guide \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

You are certainly helping a lot and guiding people, I can see where your social work all comes in here.

My problem is that I don't conceal my own anger or emotions too well. I'm well known for flying off the handle at board meetings. There are some really serious problems here at the coop that we need to deal with, so between now and 3:00 I have to write three letters.

You do teach at the college but do you do anything on a formal basis where you do get paid social work out of the community or administrative wise.

I only get paid for teaching, that's all. I teach one course and I get paid for that. If I go into teach in the daytime they pay me for that.

This association that you work with that's on a volunteer basis.

Yes it is. I do quality work for them, right now I'm designing their information systems for them on the computer. I work very hard for both the associations and I'm trying to make some time for myself. I go swimming.

Do you have other friends besides the people next door, do you socialize?

Yes, I'm also very active in my church.

Are you active in any disabled groups?

No, I'm not. I'm a nominal member of a few of them. The reason is that a lot of them are angry and they don't channel their anger in a constructive way. I'm angry at times but I try to challenge it appropriately.

How do you think they could make things better?

One of the things that I really think is needed is somebody who can guide them in a professional way of achieving what they want.

Are you talking about individuals here or the groups.

Groups.

Have you ever tried to reach out to them?

Yes I have but I was told that I was too much of the establishment or you're on their side.

So they want someone angry.

The other thing I find around here especially is that I have trouble because I speak slowly, but just this morning we had a premeeting. It started last night with a letter that was just right off the wall and then I had a long discussion with a board member on what needed to be done, a long telephone discussion on what needed to be done, then was asked to meet with our staff and finally with the staff I had to tell them to be quiet and let me finish what I have to say. They let me finish and then said, you're right. From there on we were able to go constructively. I've know that one of my biggest problems is also to get the time to think of a solution.

Everyone needs time, especially when you are facing difficult problem issues.

Part of that is because everything I do takes me longer and this is where I really could use sort of an attendant that would do ....

Have you ever requested an attendant?

I do have an attendant and it has made a wonderful difference.

Did you get this attendant just recently?

About a year and a half ago.

How often does this attendant come over?

I actually have two of them, one comes every morning, gets me up and dressed, helps with my shower and gets my breakfast. I have cut down the time from 2 and 1/2 hours to 1 hour and I feel relaxed after. The other fella we go swimming three times a week and then for about 2 hours a week he'll come and we'll tackle my desk and tidy it up.

How about meals?

I also have a homemaker twice a week who does the cleaning and the laundry and she'd cook if I asked her, but I cook my own meals.

So you don't have a problem standing by the stove?

Actually I sit on the secretarial chair and it turns around.

What do you enjoy cooking?

Anything, pork chops.

What about shopping?

I do my own shopping, I have a scooter and I ride all around town. I go to the mall across the street, that's where I do a lot of my shopping. Tonight I have a meeting at Laurier so I'll take my scooter over to Laurier.

What about in the winter time, what do you do for transportation?

I use the parallel transit (town transit) a lot and wheelchairs, it's called project lift here in town and they'll take the scooter.

Do you have to pay for this?

Yes, $1.30 regular bus fare each time I take it.

Are you subsidized for this transportation?

No, I pay that. For years I took taxis everywhere and I was spending $300 a month.

So transportation is not covered at all. And your attendant care is that covered?

Attendant care is covered.

The lady who comes in to clean and do laundry.

That is covered under Red Cross. We have the integrated homemaking program in Waterloo region. That works sometimes. Right now I have two excellent homemakers, but it is very individualistic.

Was it a problem getting this facility? Did you have to argue and fight a lot for the homemakers?

I had a homemaker that just was not clean and I finally had to say look I'm ready to go to the ministry and have your funding cut. I'm not happy going that way.

So people had to go to that length to get this care?

I'm a little different because I know the people involved and it was a case of me phoning up a friend and saying move it or else. A lot of disabled people I find are afraid to do that. They'll say well this women is better than nothing, who cares if my place isn't clean.

So you think it is the people's fault for not asking.

I don't believe fault, they are not equipped the way I am. This part of me has really changed with what I have gone through. Five years ago I would say the disabled are too lazy to apply. What I have learned with going through the depression is that even when you know the system, the need that you have is so concerning that there's nothing left to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. You are tired, you're burnt out.

So the system is not doing what it is suppose to be doing.

No.

How can you make that better.

Another thing I'm doing is looking at things from the point of view of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ hierarchy of needs. It's interesting if you look at the disabled movement in that vain the basic level is physical, where we start as it was physical barriers. The next level is to belong. We are fighting to belong. The next level I think is contributing.

Where are we in this hierarchy right now.

I would say we are somewhere between belonging and contributing. We are getting involved. We are slowly becoming members of task force and belonging to the group. But I don't see a lot of contributing to the group. I see a lot of anger.

So the groups can do better.

Yes, they have to grow. I think it is a natural process, I think we can help them, I think there is a role to help people grow. A lot of counselling I have found both professionally and personally has been geared towards helping people fit in the mold.

Are you saying that society wants disabled people to fit in the mold and not create something different?

Yes. Don't grow; this isn't my problem. What I requested did not fit into their mold.

Do you think the equity program is doing this?

I don't know what equity is doing, I haven't figured that out. I get concerned, because if I understand equity right, it should level the playing field, make it even. Some of the things that I said earlier indicate that the playing field is not equal. Equity should bring it up. What I have found is that some people want equity to bring it above.

Do you think it is the disabled community that wants to bring it above?

Yes, I think so. I'll give you an example that happened here in town. We had a controversy over our fire fighters, they had brought in equity and they have an admission test and white people have to make 80% but minority groups only have to make 75% and I don't think that that is right. And of course the white man has the reverse discrimination and I agree with it. Looking at that same problem, my definition of equity is that if two people can do equally as well, ie. same score, then you base your decision on the score and their ability to do the job and not on race or colour. There are still things that both people can't do also.

Is the equity program going to accommodate what people can't do.

I don't know. Equity will never make me walk on pontoons and I don't think it should. Where I think it could have helped me was with some of the nonsense in Wayburn, over hiring the disabled. That was uneven. It could help me with some of the stuff we are doing around Wilfred Laurier because that was uneven.

So at any time they have not helped you.

I haven't used them.

How about now in the 90's do you see it helping you going out and getting a good job, a stable job.

I could see me using it if I felt comfortable with it and saying to Conestoga, I'm not even sure I can see me doing that because I'm not sure that it's right to use it that way.

So you think the disabled community could misuse it.

Yes. I have a lot of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of what that means.

Don't you think other people misuse and misjudge, why can't the disabled community.

Two wrongs don't make it right. I guess I was coming close to that when I said Conestoga.

But if you have the qualifications, doesn't that make it right?

Yes, I guess that's one way of looking at it.

So if the person has all the potential, all the requirements then why should they not... to some extent go above the normal level. Is that what it is going to take for society to change its attitude.

I would like to think that there is another way. I'm not sure there is. I would like to think that at some point, when the disabled start truly contributing to society, I would like to think that society will respond like they have with the curb cuts. That to me is true equity. What we are doing I'm not sure is true equity but we may need to do it for a while to get things going.

What do you see as the ideal utopia for the disabled community, how to achieve their goals, to be part of the community.

I'm not sure I know what utopia would be. I'm not sure what the definition of that would be.

I think it would be satisfaction.

I think that when the disabled get up to the point where they are contributing what they feel a part of, where they feel valued as truly as the next guy, then we're going to have made it, so that we don't need to be better, we don't need to feel we worked harder. You know this guy here loves me whether I walk with a cane or not and that is what I think will mean true utopia.

End of tape.