



California State Archives
State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

EDWARD V. ROBERTS

Director, California Department of Rehabilitation, 1975-1983
Activist for Severely Disabled Students, UC Berkeley, 1962-1967

September 15, September 29, and
November 3, 1994
Berkeley, California

By Susan P. O'Hara
Regional Oral History Office
University of California, Berkeley

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None.

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PREFACE

On September 25, 1985, Governor George Deukmejian signed into law A.B. 2104 (Chapter 965 of the Statutes of 1985). This legislation established, under the administration of the California State Archives, a State Government Oral History Program "to provide through the use of oral history a continuing documentation of state policy development as reflected in California's legislative and executive history."

The following interview is one of a series of oral histories undertaken for inclusion in the state program. These interviews offer insights into the actual workings of both the legislative and executive processes and policy mechanisms. They also offer an increased understanding of the men and women who create legislation and implement state policy. Further, they provide an overview of issue development in California state government and of how both the legislative and executive branches of government deal with issues and problems facing the state.

Interviewees are chosen primarily on the basis of their contributions to and influence on the policy issues of the state of California. They include members of the legislative and executive branches of state government as well as legislative staff, advocates, members of the media, and other people who played significant roles in specific issue areas of major and continuing importance to California.

By authorizing the California State Archives to work cooperatively with oral history units at California colleges and universities to conduct interviews, this program is structured to take advantage of the resources and expertise in oral history available through California's several institutionally based programs.

Participating as cooperating institutions in the State Government Oral History Program are:

Oral History Program
History Department
California State University, Fullerton

Oral History Program
Center for California Studies
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Program
Claremont Graduate School
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Oral History Program
University of California, Los Angeles

The establishment of the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program marks one of the most significant commitments made by any state toward the preservation and documentation of its governmental history. It supplements the often fragmentary historical written record by adding an organized primary source, enriching the historical information available on given topics and allowing for more thorough historical analysis. As such, the program, through the preservation and publication of interviews such as the one which follows, will be of lasting value to current and future generations of scholars, citizens, and leaders.

John F. Burns
State Archivist

July 27, 1988

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer/Editor

Susan P. O'Hara

Editor, University of California at Berkeley State Archives

State Government Oral History Program

Director, Disabled Students' Program, University of California, Berkeley,
1988-1992

Coordinator, Physically Disabled Students Residence Program, 1975-1988

M. Ed. Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois (Guidance and Counseling)

B.A. Rosary College, River Forest, Illinois (History)

Interview Time and Place

September 15, 1994

Session of one hour

September 29, 1994

Session of one hour

November 3, 1994

Session of one hour

All sessions took place in Edward V. Roberts' home in Berkeley, California.

Editing

The interviewer/editor checked the verbatim manuscript of the interview against the original tape recordings; edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling; verified proper names and prepared footnotes.

Because of Mr. Roberts' untimely death on March 14, 1995, his mother Zona Roberts approved the edited transcript with minor corrections and additions, so noted.

The interviewer/editor prepared the introductory materials.

Papers

Mr. Roberts' papers will be deposited in The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, as well as papers relating to the Disabled Students Program and the Disabled Persons Independence Movement.

Tapes and Interview Records

The original tape recordings of the interviews are in The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley. Records relating to the interview are at the Regional Oral History Office. Master tapes are deposited in the California State Archives.



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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OAKLAND
CA 94612-1500
USA

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FAX 510 763 4109
TTY 510 208 9493

EDWARD V. ROBERTS

CURRICULUM VITAE:

Born: January 23, 1939

Died: March 14, 1995

HONORS

Fellow, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation,
1985-9
Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Wright Institute,
1981
N. Neal Pike Prize, Boston University, 1990
Honorary Admiral in the Texas Navy, The State of Texas,
1992
Distinguished Service Award, President of the United
States, 1991
"Just Do It" Award, Administration on Developmental
Disabilities, 1991

EDUCATION

Ph.D. complete all but the thesis: five years graduate
study in Political Science, University of
California, Berkeley
M.A. with Distinction, University of California,
Berkeley, 1966 Major: Political Science
B.A. University of California, Berkeley, 1964
A.A. College of San Mateo, San Mateo, California,
1962

EMPLOYMENT

1983-1995

President, World Institute on Disability, Oakland,
California

Co-founder of the first non-profit organization which has
as its goals the development and advancement of a unified
body of public policy on disability issues and public
awareness of disability. Responsible for setting goals
and objectives, establishing the Board of Directors, long-
range planning and fundraising.

1975-1983

Director, California Department of Rehabilitation, Sacramento, California

Directed the principal State agency responsible for helping persons with disabilities reach social and economic independence. The department provides vocational and pre-vocational rehabilitation services to approximately 40,000 people a year. Pioneered in the areas of employment and rehabilitation services for people with severe disabilities, anti-discrimination legislation on both the state and federal levels, and developed Independent Living Program legislation. Responsible for an annual budget of \$140 million and directed a staff of 2500.

1972-1975

Executive Director, Center for Independent Living, Berkeley, California

Co-founder of the first Independent Living Program, the Center for Independent Living (CIL), and served as its executive director from 1973-1975. CIL is the international model of a community based self-help program that promotes and sustains the abilities of people with all types of disabilities to achieve economic and social integration. The CIL model has been replicated by people with disabilities in over 300 programs in the United States and internationally. The annual budget grew from \$40,000 to \$1,000,000 from 1973-1975.

1971

Dean of Students and Professor of Political Science, Common College, Woodside, California

Co-founder of a progressive educational institution for disadvantaged students. Serves as Member of its Board of Trustees.

1970-1971

Director, Project Handicapped Opportunity Program for Education (HOPE), University of California, Riverside, California

1964-1970

Co-founder and Instructor, Political Science, Nairobi College, East Palo Alto, California (1969-1970)

Consultant, Student Special Services Program, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C. (1969-1970)

Assistant to the Dean of Students and specialist on removal of attitudinal and architectural barriers, University of California, Berkeley, California (1968-1969)

Teaching Associate, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, California (1964-1967)

APPOINTMENTS

Member, Board of Directors, World Institute on Disability, Berkeley, California (1983-1995)

Member, Board of Directors, IMPACT, An International Initiative Against Avoidable Disablement, Geneva, Switzerland and East Sussex, England (1986-1995)

Member and former Vice Chairperson of Disabled Peoples' International, USA. (1982-1995)

Member, Board of Directors, World Interdependence Fund, Sacramento, California (1990-1995)

Member, Executive Committee, Greenlining Coalition, San Francisco, California (1986-1995)

Member, Board of Governors, The Association for the Preservation of the Presidential Yacht Potomac, California (1991-1995)

Member, Board of Directors, By All Means, Berkeley, California, (1989-1995)

Member, National Advisory Board, Center for Children with Chronic Illness and Disability, Minneapolis, Minnesota (1990-1995)

Member, Board of Directors, Artship Foundation, Oakland, California (1993-1995)

Chair, Board of Directors, The Assistance Dog Institute, Rohnert Park, California (1993-1995)

Member, Advisory Committee, New Hampshire Self Determination, Monadnock Developmental Services Inc., Keene, New Hampshire (1994-1995)

Member, Advisory Board, School of Medicine Substance Abuse Resources and Disability Issues, Dayton, Ohio (1993-1995)

Co-founder and Board Member of the Wright Institute, Berkeley, California (1981-1984)

Member, Board of Trustees, Common College, Woodside, California (1972-1982)

Member, Board of Trustees, Through the Looking Glass, Berkeley, California (1983-1994)

Member, Board of Directors, The Association for the Severely

Handicapped, International (1990-1993)

Member, Advisory Committee, Richmond Unified School District Technology Task Force, Richmond, California (1991-1995)

Member, Advisory Committee, Pathways to Independence, UCP of Alameda/Contra Costa Counties, California (1990-1995)

Member, Advisory Board, Catholic Charities, San Francisco, California (1987-1995)

Member, California Commission on Aging, Sacramento, California (1983-1984)

Member, State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Sacramento, California (1976-1983)

Member, California State Council on Developmental Disabilities, appointed by the Governor to plan and coordinate all state resources to insure the legal, civil and service rights of people with developmental disabilities, in public, private, local and state agencies. (1976-1983)

Member, Board of Directors, American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, Washington, D.C. (1981-1983)

Member, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), Washington, D.C. (1975-1983)

Member, National Advisory Committee on Vocational Education Models for Linking Agencies Serving the Handicapped, University of California, Berkeley (1980)

Member, California Interagency Council on Children and Youth, Sacramento, California (1981-1984)

Member, California Comprehensive Employment Training Act, California (1977-1980)

Member, Board of Trustees, United Way Area Crusade, San Francisco, California

Co-founder and Chairperson, Advisory Board, Disabled Students Program, University of California, Berkeley, California (1969)

Member, Advisory Committee, Disability Statistics Program, Institute for Health and Aging, University of California, San Francisco.

Member, National Advisory Panel, Public Advocates, San Francisco, California (1980-1987)

MAJOR SPEECHES

1995

Presenter, Partners in Policymaking Leadership Training, Colorado, (January 15), Illinois, (January 27)

"Empowerment and Civil Rights", American Medical Students' Association Conference, San Francisco, California, (March 11)

1994

"Civil Rights, Independent Living and the Role of the University", University of Colorado at Boulder - Office of Services to Disabled Persons, Boulder, Colorado, (January 19)

Presenter, Partners in Policymaking Leadership Training, Colorado (January 21), Minnesota (January 29), South Dakota (February 11), Delaware (February 26), Florida (March 19), West Virginia (May 20) and California (June 18)

"Aging and Disability: The Role of the Professional", Class on Aging and Disability, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, California, (March 10)

Address, West Virginia Assistive Technology Technician Conference, State of West Virginia Division of Development Disabilities, Charleston, West Virginia, (May 20)

"Speech Technology for the Disabled" Panel, Advance Speech and Applications and Technologies Conference, San Jose, California, (June 14)

"Leadership, People with Severe Disabilities and Community Based Rehab Agencies", International Association for Persons in Supported Employment Conference, San Francisco, California, (July 6)

"Opportunity to Work Together - Brotherhood and Sisterhood", Slovenia's Paraplegic Association's - 25th Anniversary, Slovenia, (October 12)

"Advocacy and Advocates - The Keys to Making Change", National Multiple Sclerosis Society Convention, San Francisco, California, (November 8)

1993

Presenter Partners in Policymaking Leadership Training, Delaware (January 29), South Dakota, (February 6), Minnesota, (February 23), Texas, (August 27), South Dakota, (September 3), Indiana, (September 11), Minnesota, (September 17), and North Dakota, (September 24).

"Independent Living and Personal Assistance Services Issues", Youth Institute, Moscow, Russia, (April 20)

Address, President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' 1993 Annual Conference, ADA: Gateway to Opportunity,

St. Louis, Missouri, (May 13)

"The Power of Disability", Minnesota Summer Leadership Institute, Minnesota Planning Council on Developmental Disability, Bloomington, Minnesota, (July 18 - 20)

"Youth, Art and Disability", Share the Dream, World Interdependence Fund - New Mexico, Galisteo, New Mexico, (October 9)

"Civil Rights, Independent Living and Technology", Let's Put Iowans with Disabilities in the Drivers Seat Conference, Iowa University - Iowa Program for Assistive Technology, Des Moines, Iowa, (October 18)

"Personal Assistance and Health Care Reform", American Public Health Association's: Building Healthy Environments Conference, San Francisco, California, (October 26)

Address, Disabled Peoples' International Seminar, Disabled Peoples' International's Eastern-European Seminar, Prague, Czechoslovakia, (November 10)

"Foreign Policy and Disability" and "How to Change the Exclusion of People with Disabilities", The U.S.'s Role in International Issues on Disability, Washington, DC, (November 16 - 17)

"Strategies for Independent Living", International Healthy Cities and Communities Conference, Western Consortium for Public Health, San Francisco, California, (December 8)

1992

Presenter, Partners in Policymaking Leadership Training, New York, (October 17), Minnesota, (January 18, September 19), Texas, (April 3, September 11), South Dakota, (August 21), and California, (March 20, June 27)

"The ADA - How to Effect Workable Solutions", Ability Center of Greater Toledo, Toledo, Ohio, (March 2)

Keynote, "Dreams, Diversity and Empowerment: Independent Living in the Heartland", Kansas City, Kansas, (August 11)

Keynote, American Association of Spinal Cord Injury Psychologists and Social Workers 6th Annual Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada, (September 8)

Presenter, American Paraplegia Society 38th Annual Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada, (September 9)

"ADA and Liberation", Hiring the Disabled Under the ADA: Second Annual Compton Community Conference, Los Angeles, California, (September 25)

"Empowerment and Possibilities", Family Support Conference,
Denver, Colorado, (October 9)

Keynote, Building Partnerships that Lead to Supported Employment,
RRTC - Virginia Commonwealth University, Norfolk, Virginia,
(October 14)

Presenter, Community Living Issues in Traumatic Brain Injury
Planning, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois,
(October 25)

"Supporting Youth with Disabilities", New Mexico Interdependence
Forum on Youth and Arts, Sante Fe, New Mexico, (November 12)

1991

Presenter, Partners in Policymaking Leadership Training,
Minnesota, (January 24, September 21), Illinois, (August 23),
Colorado, (March 14, November 16), Louisiana, (April 26), Texas,
(April 20) and Alabama (June 22)

"The Future of Independent Living In California", Chico Center of
Independent Living, (February 13)

Keynote, Fund for the Society for Adolescent Medicine's Annual
Meeting, Denver, (March 1)

Keynote, Enabling the Disabled in the 90's Conference, Durango,
Colorado, (March 16)

Keynote, Touch the Future: Discovering Abilities Through
Technology for Living, Learning, working and Playing, Atlanta,
Georgia, (April 3)

"Consumer Empowerment", Developmental Disabilities Commissioner's
Forum "Just Do It!", Washington, DC, (May 16)

Keynote, The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps'
Regional Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, (June 13)

Presentation, Independent Living: Preparing for the 21st Century
Conference, Oakland, California, (October 4)

Keynote, Kalamazoo Center of Independent Living's Ability
Conference, Kalamazoo, Michigan, (October 10)

Address, Public Citizen's 20th Anniversary Conference: "Taking
Back America: A New Democracy for the 90's", Washington, DC,
(October 25)

1990

Presenter, Interagency Conference, Denver, Colorado, (January 25)

Presenter, Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled's Annual Advocacy Conference, Albany, New York, (May 15)

Keynote, Center of Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania's "Consumer Control: Becoming Your Own Advocate" Conference, Camp Hill, (June 21)

Presenter, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund's Disability Law Conference, Berkeley, California, (September 8)

"Object of Charity to Civil Rights", Minnesota Partners in Policymaking, St. Paul, Minnesota, (September 15)

Keynote, Sonoma Developmental Hospital: "The Psychiatric Technician and The Disability Rights Movement", Sonoma, California, (October 10)

Presenter, Stanford University School of Medicine, Palo Alto, California, (November 5)

Keynote, Council on State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, Charleston, South Carolina, (November 14)

1988

Address, Disability Legal Education Clinical Program Conference, University of California, Berkeley, California, (January 16)

1987

"How to Take Responsibility for Health Policy: Civil Rights for the Disabled", Stanford, University, (January 23)

Testimony, State of California, Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy, (Little Hoover Commission) Topic: Access to Substance Abuse Programs by the Disabled, (January 28-31)

Address, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Oakland, California, (February 4)

Keynote, Independent Living Resource Center, Pleasant Hill, California, (February 7)

Keynote, United Cerebral Palsy of Indiana, Inc. "Living in the Community: Empowering People Who Have Disabilities", (March 12)

"Strategies for Affecting Social Change -- A Self-Advocacy Perspective", Partners in Policymaking Conference, St. Paul, Minnesota, (May 2)

Testimony, House Judiciary Committee, Fair Housing Amendments, Washington, D.C., (May 10)

Address, Center for Independent Living 15th Anniversary Dinner, San Francisco, California, (May 21)

Presenter, Communication and Handicaps Congress, Paris, (July 6)

"From Survival to Charity to Civil Rights", 12th World Congress of International Organization of Consumers Union, Madrid, Spain, (September 15)

Address, Quality of Life Conference, Washington, D.C., (September 25)

Keynote, United Cerebral Palsy of New Jersey, (October 23)

Keynote, Coalition of Texans With Disabilities, Houston, (October 30)

Keynote, The Association for Experiential Education 15th Annual Conference, Port Townsend, Washington, (November 12)

1986

Keynote, State of Washington, Department of Social and Health Services, "Making it Happen", Tacoma, Washington, (March 17-19)

Address, Western Social Science Association, 28th Conference, Reno, Nevada, (April 23-26)

Address, Rehabilitation Gazette's Third International Polio and Independent Living Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, (May 10-12)

Keynote, Pew Health Policy Fellows Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, (May 28-30)

Testimony, United States Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C. hearing on "The Protection of Handicapped Newborns", (June 26-27)

Keynote, British Columbia Coalition of the Disabled Conference, Vancouver, B.C., (September 5-8)

Symposium, United Cerebral Palsy of NYC, "Innovative Methods of Community Based Approaches to Rehabilitation", New York City, New York, (October 5-13)

Keynote, The Developmental Disabilities Planning Council; Employment Conference: "Making It Work", Ellensburg, Washington, DC, (October 8-10)

Address, National Council for International Health, "Responding to Third World Health Issues: Assumptions and Implications", University of Washington, Seattle, (October 23-24)

Address, International House of the University of California, Berkeley, California, (November 16)

1985

Keynote, Staff Conference, St. Joseph's Hospital, Anaheim,

California, (February 6)

Address, University of San Francisco, School of Medicine,
"Emotional Problems inn Physical Disability: Mind and Body",
San Francisco, California, (February 16)

Address, Annual Convention, National Science Teachers Association,
Cincinnati, Ohio, (April 19)

Co-Keynote (with Dr. Albert Sabin), Gazette International
Networking Institute, International Conference on Polio and
Independent Living, St. Louis, Missouri, (May 11)

Commencement Address, Department of Developmental Studies,
University of California, Berkeley, California, (May 17)

Keynote, National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems,
(May 19)

MEDIA

Appearance, CBS's "60 Minutes", April, 1988

Interview, "Disabled in Action", WBAI Radio, February 15, 1992

Interview, "Sylvia Live", CNN Radio, October 27, 1992

Interview, "Health Care Reform", Larry King Radio Show,
May 2, 1994

Interview, "Independent Living - Local Issues Around Las Vegas",
On a Roll, KDWN Radio Show, July 10, 1994

Appearance, People in Motion, "Ready to Live", KQED (PBS), April
7, 1995

Appearance, "When Billy Broke His Head...And Other Tales of
Wonder", KQED (PBS), June 22, 1994

ED ROBERTS' AWARD LIST
(UPDATED 4/96)

Certificate of Appreciation and Member of the National Advisory Committee on Accessible Environment, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, March 1979.

Completed Handicapped Affirmative Action Conference, Department of the Navy, United States of America, Pacific Missile Test Center, Point Mugu, California - November 5 - 6, 1980.

Resolution No. 1227, The Honorable Bruce Young, 63rd Assembly District and The Honorable William Campbell, 33rd Senatorial District, Sacramento, California, May, 1981. "Relative to the 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons."

Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, Wright Institute, June 5, 1981.

Disabled Peoples' International, Vox Nostra, 1st World Congress, Singapore, November 30 - December 4, 1981.

Nominee - Annual Media Awards, California Governor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped, February 1982. "Very pleased to honor Ed Roberts as a nominee in our Annual Media Awards competition for promoting an improved image and increasing participation of persons with disabilities both on camera and behind the scenes in the media industry - February, 1982."

Certificate of Appreciation for Contribution to Wellness Week '82, Governor's Council on Wellness and Physical Fitness, California Governor's Council on Wellness and Physical Fitness, Sacramento, California, March, 1982. "Your participation emphasizes your personal commitment to the promotion of health for all Californians."

Electronic Industries Foundation, Washington, DC, July 22, 1982, "This Certificate is Awarded to California State Department of Rehabilitation in recognition of outstanding leadership and participation in the Foundation's National Project With Industry Program to promote employment of handicapped individuals."

Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of policies instituted to increase opportunities for persons with disabilities. Governor's Committee for the Employment of the Handicapped, Sacramento, California, September, 1982.

Certificate of Appreciation, State of California Governor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped, California, September 14, 1982. "Presents this to Ed Roberts whose efforts have contributed to the Committee's goal of increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities."

Certificate of Appreciation, Progress Through Unity, California Association of Post Secondary Educators of the Disabled, Los Angeles, California, October 21-23, 1982.

California Senate Rules Committee Resolution Relative to Project Interdependence, Sacramento, California, March 3, 1983.

Fellow, John D. and Catherine T., MacArthur Foundation, 1985 - 9

Center for Independent Living, September 26, 1985. "In Appreciation for your vision - a vision you put into action so that thousands of disabled people may live independent and rewarding lives."

XII Congreso Mundial De I.O.C.U. Solidaridad De Los Consumidores: Por Un Mundo Mejor Espana Madrid, 15 - 20 De Septiembre, 1987.

N. Neal Pike Prize, Boston University, 1990

Spirit of Michael Waxman, Partner In Policymaking of Alabama, 1990 - 1991 Class.

New York City Independent Living Centers, New York, May 10, 1990. "Salute Ed Roberts with deep appreciation for all your efforts on our behalf."

Americans with Disabilities Act Award, The Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of Americans with Disabilities, October 12, 1990. "Congratulates Ed Roberts on His Historic Contributions to the Enactment of The World's First Comprehensive Civil Rights Law for People with Disabilities."

Certificate of Appreciation, The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH) Executive Board, December 5, 1990. "This is for leadership and service on the Executive Board of The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps."

Distinguished Service Award, President of the United States (George Bush), 1991.

JUST DO IT!, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, Atlanta, Georgia, May 15, 1991. "Presented to Ed Roberts In Celebration and Commendation pursuing a vision toward the American dream for all of this country's citizens; striving for a better quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities; offering inspiration

to coalesce and assert our common purpose; making the goals of independence, productivity, and integration into the community reality for and with people with developmental disabilities. Taking risks when others lacked faith and standing true to the ideal.”

PROJECT PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE, Alabama, June 25, 1991. “In Appreciation for Leading the People of Alabama in Promoting the Full Potential and Abilities of our Citizens.”

Bonnie Gellman Simon Award, Resources for Living Independently Center, October 8, 1991. “Recognizes and honors Ed Roberts for your significant contribution to enhancing the lives of people with disabilities by influencing attitudes, Promoting equal rights and increasing public awareness of the Independent Living Movement, Annual RLI Awards Luncheon.”

Honorary Admiral in the Texas Navy, State of Texas, Austin, Texas, May 1, 1992. “Senate of the State of Texas This Certifies that the Texas Flag herewith presented to Ed Roberts by Senator Chris Harris was flown above the State Capitol of the Sovereign State of Texas on April 30, 1992 in Witness whereof and pursuant to the authority vested in me, I have hereunto set my hand and official seal of office at Austin, Texas, this the 1st day of May, 1992.”

Models that Work: Partners for Independence, The Organizing Committee of the First North American Regional Conference of Rehabilitation International, October, 1993. (Awarded to WID)

Campaign Award, SDRAO of the College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California, October 1993. “ Gratefully presents this to Ed Roberts for his lifelong Barrier breaking advocacy for Students and Americans with Disabilities.”

Alumnus of the year Award, Burlingame High School, Burlingame, California, May 23, 1994.

National Institute of Art and Disabilities, San Francisco, California, October 22, 1994.

Slovenia’s Paraplegia Association, Ljubljana, Slovenia, October, 1994.

CARF “personal fulfillment and success is measured by the extent of positive impact one has on another. “ (year unknown)

POSTHUMOUS AWARDS

Courage Award, Courage Center, Golden Valley, MN, April, 1995

President's Award, Northshore Arc, Boston, Massachusetts, June, 1995

Lifetime Achievement Award, Westside Center for Independent Living, Los Angeles, California, June 23, 1995

Hall of Fame for People with Disabilities, Columbus, OH, October 14, 1995

Lanternman Award, California Association on Post-Secondary Education and Disability (CAPED), November 9, 1995, In Appreciation of Your Significant Contribution and Outstanding Service to Persons with Disabilities in California.

[Session 1, September 15, 1994]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

O'HARA: Ed, we're going to start with the early sixties. Can you start by describing what made you come to the University of California at Berkeley?

ROBERTS: It's funny, Berkeley hadn't been part of the dream. I had always heard about UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles] being so successful, so I kind of set my sights to go to UCLA. It was built after World War II, and evidently a lot of disabled veterans went there. And for a variety of reasons, I had never thought about Berkeley. Until my brother got into Berkeley. . . . He came here first.

O'HARA: Which brother?

ROBERTS: My brother Ron [Ronald W. Roberts]. But even when he came it was, "Oh, OK. Maybe that's an alternative." But it seemed so, whenever I'd come to Berkeley, which wasn't very often, it seemed like it was not very accessible, as conscious as I was about whatever that was.

Then it was really going to the College of San Mateo [1959-1962] that I met and had a counselor named Jean Wirth. She was a remarkable person. She's six foot five. She was six foot five at twelve years of age, and her father was a famous cancer surgeon, so he had all these friends around who kind of examined her to see why she grew so fast. I think she went through a lot of similar things about being an object, in a way.

I started off in English and literature [at San Mateo], and I thought I wanted to be a creative writer. Actually, no: technical writer, because I could make money at technical writing. That basically was, you write manuals for programmers. Didn't sound that challenging, but on the one hand, it sounded like it might be a thing I could make money in. I had learned how to dictate at San Mateo and to have things typed up. At the high school, I'd also learned more about writing. I did most of that with my mother. So I had some good skills.

Then I took a government class, American government. The teacher wasn't that great, the subject wasn't that great, but I loved it. I was excited by the government: How do you get things done, how do you make things happen through a government, and how do you deal with power and all. That was much

more interesting to me than English literature, or than literature. I realized I was hooked, and so did Jean Wirth, I think, because I started talking to her about it.

She said, "Well, if you're going to be into politics, the only place to go is Berkeley." And I hadn't heard much about Berkeley. But she started talking to me about it, and the more she talked about it, the more I realized maybe that was the place to be instead. It was close to home. But growing up in the Bay Area down on the Peninsula, East Bay was so far away for me. I didn't even know much about Oakland and Berkeley and this. I had heard about them, but not much.

O'HARA: Berkeley was a quiet town at that point?

ROBERTS: Yes, it was, fairly quiet. We knew the university was there. I was probably a bigger fan of Stanford than Cal. [laughs] So I paid attention to them more athletically than anything else.

But she kept telling me, "You need to go to Berkeley. Let's go over." I remember when I came over, I came over first with her. I met [Dean of Students] Arleigh Williams the first time. The dean of students of the College of San Mateo came, and I can't remember his name right now.

O'HARA: Was that Philip Morse?

ROBERTS: Yes, that's right, yes. I know Mom will remember it, but anyway.

O'HARA: She's the one who told me a while back.

ROBERTS: Yes, he came too, and he was the vice president of the college. But I think we all kind of agreed that this was the place for me. But it wasn't going to be easy. Oh my god. It all seemed sort of like a rough dream.

And then the biggest obstacle became real soon, where would I live. I think we almost gave up because of that.

O'HARA: Can we back up just a little bit?

ROBERTS: Yes, sure.

O'HARA: You came and talked with Arleigh Williams?

ROBERTS: Yes.

O'HARA: And do you recall that meeting at all? Did you feel . . .

ROBERTS: I recall the meeting. It was an interesting meeting, because . . .

O'HARA: Did you actually get in the meeting?

ROBERTS: Yes, I was there. I was there with Arleigh.

O'HARA: Was Sproul Hall . . .

ROBERTS: It was in Sproul, but I don't remember how, whether he came out to me or whether we went in.

O'HARA: I think your mother recalls that Sproul was not accessible then.

ROBERTS: It could be. But we did meet him in the hall down in the basement, or somewhere.¹ Because I remember it wasn't that long, but he was encouraging and discouraging at the same time. He said they didn't have much experience with somebody like me, but it was probably time for the university to do more. And how to do it, he wasn't really sure either.

He gave us a list of places, like the dorms, like International House, like other places, and it wasn't until we came back again and said, "Those places are too freaked out to deal with me."

O'HARA: Did you actually speak with some of them?

ROBERTS: I went to I-House,² which was also inaccessible, and Jean Wirth went in. Now, you can imagine this guy from Pakistan or somewhere just looked at her, this huge tall woman, and just kind of freaked out. "Oh, no, we don't have any students who. . . . Oh, no, we couldn't have him." And then he got the manager to say the same thing. It seemed like wherever we went, there was no opportunity.

I remember my mother and I came up a couple of other times, and then we had a flat tire on the bridge. We just barely got off the bridge. Just all kinds of small vignettes.

1. Philip Morse, Jean Wirth, and Zona Roberts came over with Ed to Berkeley to see where Ed would live. We pushed Ed up Bancroft and into a dorm where we were told, "Iron lungs won't fit into a dorm room." Phil knew Arleigh Williams and he went into Sproul to consult while we waited outside. Arleigh suggested seeing Dr. Bruyn at Cowell Hospital and we went to see him that day. --Z.R.

2. Philip Morse had lived at International House when he attended UC Berkeley and he suggested we look there as a housing possibility. --Z.R.

O'HARA: What was your mode of transportation at that time?

ROBERTS: I was in a car. I had to be lifted in and out of the car, and I would every once in a while get hurt. My knees usually would get hurt. I was long, and . . .

O'HARA: And the chair. . . . You were in a push chair, a manual chair, and that was in the trunk?

ROBERTS: The push chair laid back, yes. It worked for me, but I was used to being pushed around in it. I had no idea of how free I would be later.

But I knew I was ready to go on. I knew that. In fact, it was surprising to my mother when I graduated from the College of San Mateo [1962], and that was like incredible, and then she hears me saying. . . . Somebody said, "Are you going on?" and I said, "Oh, yes, I think I'll go to UCLA." And that's the first time she'd heard that, and that surprised her.

O'HARA: It surprised her?

ROBERTS: Oh, totally surprised her, and she thought, "Whoa. Just going through the College of San Mateo was a remarkable feat." And then she started hearing me say, "I don't want to stop here; I have to go on." I think I realized before she did that the path to my future and to my working or whatever was going to be education, totally. Because nobody was going to hire me the way I was. There was so much prejudice about disability.

I remember coming over here [Berkeley] a few times, partly just to be with my brother a little bit.

O'HARA: And where did he live?

ROBERTS: He lived at a fraternity house, the Sigma Chi house, which is on the corner of Channing and College. So he was close to campus.

O'HARA: Was that accessible? Could you get in there?

ROBERTS: No, it wasn't accessible, but they could pull me. . . . See, at this time, if I went at all, I got pulled up and down stairs. That was before I realized I was really risking my life, and that I had to do more about stairs. In order to go anywhere, I had to make sure the stairs were removed.

O'HARA: Were there any curb ramps at that time?

ROBERTS: No, there weren't any at all. Of course, when you're in a push chair, you just lean back and you tilt it. It jars you around a lot, but there were no power chairs at all. It wasn't until later.

O'HARA: When you say that the campus wasn't accessible, do you remember any specifics? Does anything pop up in your mind?

ROBERTS: I had to go to Sproul, and that was not very accessible. Anyplace I wanted to go, I had to send somebody into.¹ Even Dwinelle had stairs on one end and the other. I could go in to Dwinelle at different places. What's the big building in . . .

O'HARA: Wheeler?

ROBERTS: Yes, Wheeler. That's what I'm thinking about, Wheeler is the one that had . . .

O'HARA: With the graduated steps, kind of.

ROBERTS: Right. And Dwinelle I went in. I had a hell of a time finding the right rooms.

O'HARA: Everyone still does!

ROBERTS: Of course, everyone found out that there were these multiple floors that had been mislabeled, I guess. But then I was in political science.

O'HARA: Were you in Barrows? Was that the . . .

ROBERTS: Barrows most of the time later, but I don't remember when Barrows was built. Maybe the second year I was there it opened, or so. I don't remember when I moved there. I remember most of my political science career was there. I was there later. So that was pretty accessible, because that was brand new, and there had been a '58 law that mandated some access, so the ground floor was pretty level. It had lots of elevators, because it's seven or eight floors high, but all my professors were in there, I remember.

O'HARA: So that worked fairly well.

ROBERTS: Yes, that worked out better.

O'HARA: On the same day that you met Arleigh Williams, I understand that he referred you to Dr. [Henry] Bruyn, and Dr. Bruyn was there, or was that another appointment?

1. On our second coming to Berkeley to plan Ed's classes, we were to meet with his advisor in South Hall, the political science headquarters then. His advisor came out to meet us. --Z.R.

ROBERTS: I'm not sure if he referred me. I kind of remember that as being another appointment, that Arleigh, after Arleigh got some pressure from the vice president of the college, Phil Morse, and he didn't know what to do. So I think it was at the last minute. Arleigh must have called Henry and said, "What do we do with this guy?" And Henry said, "Well, send him up to me; I'll tell him." I think he said, "I'll tell him that he can't come here."

But then, of course, when they sent me up there. . . . I had to go to the hospital; that didn't sound very good to me. I didn't have high hopes about this. Then I remember meeting him [Bruyn], and I'm not sure if that was [the day of] the first meeting I had with Henry. But he was so friendly, and he had none of the things that a lot of the other people had. He knew a lot about polio, and he looked at me, and he thought to himself. He said out loud--I remember it was one of the first things he said--"There must be a lot of people your age from these old polio epidemics that are ready to go on now to college, and they don't have much help." I got encouraged, because I thought, Oh, well, maybe he's. . . .

He said, "Why don't we open the hospital? You could live here," and I started saying, "But I could live there like a dorm, right? I know about hospitals; I don't want to live in a hospital."

He said, "We can work those things out." I said, "I want to have my own attendants when I can. But I can't afford to hire twenty-four-hour attendants."

He said, "Well, that shouldn't be a problem. You're just one person. If you need help, you can have a button and get help. We always have attendants there anyway, every shift."

O'HARA: Orderlies?

ROBERTS: Orderlies, they called them, yes. Basically, he said, "We can hire more." I think they had them every shift, but the nurses always like to have a man around. Nurses were always women, and the orderlies were always men, and they helped lift and do a lot of that kind of thing. I think they were a little worried that I'd take his time.

O'HARA: Did you already know about attendants? Did you have attendants at home?

ROBERTS: Yes.

O'HARA: And did you call them attendants?

ROBERTS: Yes, I called them attendants. For a while, I had an attendant take me to school and back. Mom did a lot in the beginning, and then for a while we hired an attendant through Rehab [California State Department of Rehabilitation].¹ I think it was Rehab that helped me pay for it, or I had some in-home support money. I started getting that in '58, I think. I was one of the first recipients that got the full amount. When the guy came and looked at me, he said, "I can't give you less." There was \$300 a month.

O'HARA: That was probably 150 hours of attendant time.

ROBERTS: [Laughter] Yes. It seemed like so much more then. It was a little over two [dollars] an hour. I had to make sure I had an attendant that had a car. I remember I had this big guy with a little Volkswagen, but he could stuff my wheelchair behind the seat. That surprised me.

O'HARA: And you sat in the front, in a little Bug?

ROBERTS: In a Bug that went back and forth.

O'HARA: Incredible.

ROBERTS: He never hurt me; I don't remember him hurting me. But that was an important time, when I realized that I could have other people help me. My mother had helped me. Mother and Father had done most of that work. So it was like an indication that I could do that too, if I. . . . And I didn't have any trouble giving directions.

O'HARA: So you intended right from the start that you would hire helpers, attendants?

ROBERTS: Oh, yes. It was a scary time when they said, "OK. You're going to live at Cowell; you're going to pay \$300 a month for your room and board." I said, "Well, where will I get all. . . ?"

They said, "Well, we'll talk to Rehab, and they'll pay part and you pay part." So I had to have enough to pay my own attendants, plus I got some money

1. The March of Dimes paid for four hours a day, five days a week, for household help thus making it possible for Ed to live at home and for me to function during the day. Shop, take the younger boys to nursery school, et cetera. --Z.R.

to pay for the hospital's. . . . Not really services, [but] food service, and that kind of services. Some people liked me there, and everybody was friendly, but some people were worried about the. . . .

What's most interesting is that there was a young janitor there, and he was probably my best friend in the whole place. He was a guy that actually was into music and a lot of things, culture. I can't remember. He was a well-educated guy, but who had come from Chicago and tried to work at. . . . I think he started out as a manager-in-training at Marshall Field's, which is a big department store, and had a breakdown. He couldn't stand this horrible pressure to be a certain way. I'm sure he was gay; I'm sure there were a lot of other things. So he came to Berkeley and took this job at the university.

But Cowell had always very interesting people around. We talked earlier about Margaret Mead was there, and a guy named [William H.] Sheldon, who did the archetypes [somatotypes--connecting of physical characteristics with behavioral patterns] around people. Anyway, people had moved away from him [his theories], but he was very famous at that time. I can't even remember the other people, but there were several who used to come in and visit the psychiatrists. Other people who worked. . . . There were some good people working at Cowell. But it was all set up to work with students, and then these folks would come in and stay for a few days when they were passing through, or working at the university.

This friend, Chuck [Sevier] the janitor, he loved Cowell because of these people. So he would do his job in a couple of hours, and then he'd come back and he'd play music for me or watch TV. He was my companion the first year I was there. And then he brought me a stereo. He had built this original stereo of his, and he bought one, and then he brought me it, and it was a monaural. It was a speaker with a turntable and a bunch of records. That's how I started to play. . . . It's very unusual, you know. But he always kept me informed what was going on in the hospital.

And I remember being like that where I was before.¹ I remember always getting to know the janitors. [Interruption]

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

ROBERTS: Where were we?

O'HARA: The early days. Do you remember the day you moved into Cowell, and what it was like?

ROBERTS: Yes, I do. It was a combination of excitement and scary. I remember the first room I had was in the older wing. It was kind of dark. Most hospital patients' rooms are dark, although they can be. . . . It was good-sized. I remember I had to. . . . The first few days, my mother stayed there with me, which was real good, because it was scary. And my brother came each day, just to say hi and to help out wherever he could, feed me or whatever.

In the meantime, I was beginning to interview some prospective attendants. Within a couple of days, I found a guy that had been an orderly at Cowell.

O'HARA: Did you find him by just talking around, and asking questions?

ROBERTS: Actually, we got a list of the people who had applied to Cowell. I began to interview people that had applied to Cowell.

O'HARA: Oh, for some kind of staff position?

ROBERTS: Right. And I think that this particular guy was referred to me by somebody at the hospital itself. He was a black guy, obviously gay, but a very sweet man. A little burned out by the time I got him. Took me six months for me to fire him. It wasn't that he was terrible; it was a time when I was going through a lot of stuff myself, trying to figure out my own capabilities. I can remember my mother leaving, and that was kind of scary. It was nice to have the hospital people there if I needed them.

O'HARA: Were you on the third floor?

1. Ed had a remarkable facility with people and knew lots about the lives of many of the hospital workers after living with them even a short time. --Z.R.

ROBERTS: Second.

O'HARA: Second floor to start with. That was the actual hospital part.

ROBERTS: Yes, it was.

O'HARA: And so you had . . .

ROBERTS: After the first week or so, I was moved to the new wing on the end.

O'HARA: On the second floor?

ROBERTS: On the second floor, where I was. . . . The third floor was closed off, basically. They didn't use it. They only used the second floor.

O'HARA: So if you wanted to talk to somebody, there were people up there?

ROBERTS: Yes, and I had a telephone.

O'HARA: What kind of phone did you have?

ROBERTS: It was a phone that had a pad that I could hit the pad, and it would. . . . It was like a nurse's call bell, except it was hooked on to a telephone, so when I hit it, it would dial the operator. So actually, what I wound up doing was dialing outside the hospital, calling into the hospital, calling the second floor nurse's station, and getting them that way. It seems complex, but it worked very well.

O'HARA: Did you have several attendants, then?

ROBERTS: Yes, I had. But first I only had that one guy that worked a lot. I think then I had another guy who worked in the evenings, who got me back in the tank. I remember meeting some really nice people. One guy was a graduate student who was married; I don't think he had any kids. I've since lost total contact with him, but I really liked him, because he was somebody I could talk to.

O'HARA: Why did it take you so long to fire the burned-out one?

ROBERTS: I think I was a white liberal, and I wanted to really be good to the guy. I kept wondering if it was my problem, not his. One day, I remember--a lot of times this happens in my life--I get to the point on an issue where I go, "Wait a minute, this [Inaudible]." I said to myself, "It doesn't matter whether I'm wrong or right. I'm not getting the care I need from this guy because it's so difficult for him and I to be together. Do I love myself enough to take better care?" I remember, saying this to myself shocked me. [Interruption]

It took me a while to finally say, "Hey, I can do this." So I had to talk to him and let him go, and it worked fine. He was ready to go, too. It is much gentler that way, without having a lot of anger and hostility and things behind it.

O'HARA: And you said when your mother left, it was scary.

ROBERTS: Very. Yes. But there were people around, so I wasn't afraid. I just knew it was a monumental occasion, because we really hadn't been apart except for my being in the hospital. My parents would go away a couple of times on vacation.

[Interruption]

Anyway, it was a good day, though. Within a day or so I realized I was . . . I could do this, I can be free. And even though it was a halfway situation, I knew that they [Inaudible]. My big skill I had to learn was how to hire, how to describe what I wanted, but I was pretty good at talking. I've always been pretty good at talking.

O'HARA: Had you hired the attendants at home?

ROBERTS: I did mostly, but my mother helped, too. We did it together a lot.

O'HARA: So you had some experience.

ROBERTS: I had some experience, but not so. . . . This was important for me to do it for myself, and I realized what an important skill that is. It took me months to be able to let go of a person. After that, it was never so difficult. It wasn't easy at all, because you get so close to people, negative and positive.

O'HARA: Did it change your life at all to be away from home and hiring your own attendants? For instance, did you hire them at different hours than you would have at home?

ROBERTS: Yes. Well, let me think. Because when I was going to school, I hired them for the school hours, because they had to push me around. Through Rehab, I got money to hire people to be my secretary and also push me around.

O'HARA: So you had quite a few people.

ROBERTS: I had a few people by that time. I was lucky that they were willing to do that, because I couldn't have made it otherwise. Ron, the first one, not my attendant, but soon became my attendant, he was so quick and so fast.

O'HARA: Your brother?

ROBERTS: Right. He was a very good attendant when he was ready. But I had other people. I remember him being able to. . . . He'd always drink and come in late, so it would be a rush to get out. A rush in the morning. I'd be up and ready in fifteen or twenty minutes. Even washing and everything; it was so amazing. I think he still holds the record for getting me up--for getting me up too fast. So he was important. I could get him if I needed him. If I needed to go get booze or something, he could go get it. [Laughter] Until John [Hessler] later came; because I wasn't into booze at all. We figured out all the stores that would deliver booze. That was pretty weird for them, coming to a hospital. Booze, that became an issue, because the hospital was not supposed to have booze.

O'HARA: Did they deliver to the front door?

ROBERTS: No, they brought it all the way up. They knew they had to, because I. . . . Once in a while, some of the nurses would help a little bit, but it was a conflict for them, it really was. Because they knew drinking wasn't a good idea around.

O'HARA: Now, you're obviously referring to John Hessler [the second physically disabled student resident of Cowell]. Can you describe. . . . Do you remember when you first met him?

ROBERTS: It's funny, because I started hearing about. . . . Because I was the lone guy, it was kind of nice being there. I started hearing a little bit about John. He was trapped in a county hospital, he was smart, he was going to school and was really ready to come to Cal, and I wasn't sure I wanted to give up my exclusivity. [Laughter]
So I met John, and John was an imposing figure, let me tell you. He was six foot eight, and he had a huge wheelchair.

O'HARA: A manual chair?

ROBERTS: No. He had a very slow power chair, but he had a power chair. He was used to having a power chair. It surprised me how large it was. I think we got along pretty much right from the beginning. He moved in right next door to me on the second floor there. It just seemed very natural to be . . .

O'HARA: That was one year later?

ROBERTS: Yes. Now, I went through a lot of other things. I know that at the end of my first semester, I went home, I was sick. I got worse. I wound up having double

pleurisy pneumonia, which was painful. I remember I was hallucinating a lot. I was in my room at home watching television, and my brothers would bring their friends in and say, "What are you watching?" And the TV wasn't on. It was like a tape that I had inside my tank. So I got pretty sick.

They decided to get me back to Cowell. So I went back in an ambulance.

O'HARA: You mean when you were sick?

ZONA R.: You went back in a station wagon, Jeff Littke driving.

ROBERTS: Oh, the station wagon.

ZONA R.: We felt like an ambulance.

ROBERTS: Laying down. I wasn't able to sit up.

O'HARA: Why did you go back to Cowell? Because it was a hospital?

ROBERTS: Yes.

ZONA R.: Well, that's where he. . . . They were set up over there. They were expecting him. They had a whole medical staff, you know.

ROBERTS: I was pretty sick.

ZONA R.: He had pneumonia.

ROBERTS: They were worried about me. I didn't know what was happening. I remember the doctor coming in assuming I was spinal cord injured, and saying that we should catheterize me. I said no, no, that's not what I had. "I pee fine, leave me alone."

ZONA R.: No, no, up in the neck, the . . .

ROBERTS: Oh, trach; they were worried about tracheotomy.

ZONA R.: That was always the first reaction to any kind of thing when he was sick, like, "Let's give him a trach."

ROBERTS: And this was something I hadn't had at all. I was so much better off because I hadn't had a trach. So they kept, "Well, if he gets more sick, they have to do this." And I wasn't getting better. I remember something happened, it was one of the first times, I remember the middle of the night, I was terrified to go to sleep, that I'd die. Here I was, really just beginning my life, and I'm terribly sick. One night, I had this apparition. I still to this day think it was Henry Bruyn, but he denies it.

O'HARA: You mean somebody came into your room?

ROBERTS: And told me that I was dying, but that I was actually killing myself because I was so afraid of death, that if I would just relax, my body would take. . . . They were doing all they could. They had given me antibiotics. I was terrified. And this was not a heart-to-heart; this was like telling me, "You better stop this or you're going to die." It was so vivid, I remember. I remember right after going, "Ohhh." And actually going to sleep for the first time. I woke up in the morning and felt a whole lot better.

Now, if this really happened or not, I don't know, but it was perfect. It was exactly what I needed to hear. I've always remembered it, always. Because the more uptight you are about your own sickness, you create more tension in your body, and it's more difficult. It's an interesting phenomenon.

O'HARA: So that was a rather critical moment, whatever it was.

ROBERTS: Very, yes. It was very lifelike, and I'm sure it was Henry. But I think I'd heard he'd done that before. But I don't know for sure; he says no. I woke up the next day feeling a whole lot better, and knowing that I'd recover, and that was such an important issue for me, life and death. It taught me that you can actually kill yourself and your zest for life you want so much; whenever you want so little to die that you can push yourself over the edge. And I think I came to terms with death that night, in a very interesting way. It was probably the most important lesson I learned at Cal. I'm sure there were a lot of other great lessons, but it helped me take control. Because I was very. . . .

I went from there, and I started getting better and better. I was able to go back to school the next semester. I think I had not finished all my classes, because I was sick, so I wound up taking the finals. I remember not doing quite as well as I thought. I got two A's and two B's, or something like that. Which was fine, but I was used to doing better.

I was a veteran by that time; the second semester. I knew the campus, I knew myself more. I loved it, I loved the campus. I went to the football games. Every week, somebody would come and we'd sit in the field. We sat out in the

field. The athletic parts of the campus were real important. I went to Harmon Gym, although it was a bitch to get into Harmon Gym.

O'HARA: How did you get in?

ROBERTS: Well, they had to carry me in. See, those were the days, my friend. . . . It wasn't until later, after a couple of years, when I went to a history lecture. . . . I think it was California Hall, it was a history prof. It's now the administration [building]. I was getting pulled up the stairs, and the top part of my brace was removable.

O'HARA: The top part of your . . . ?

ROBERTS: The extension on the wheelchair.

O'HARA: The backrest?

ROBERTS: The backrest. It was removable. They grabbed that, and it yanked right out. I started to flip over, and some guys grabbed me and hauled me up. But I remember how afraid I was. I thought, I guess I'm going to survive, but I remember later taking it a lot more seriously and always having four people lift me, always making sure that if I had to be lifted, it was safe.

O'HARA: So you were lifted to some classes regularly?

ROBERTS: Yes. But it was not accessible. And then I began to choose classes based on access. I remember I went to Dwinelle and took classes in Scandinavian literature.

O'HARA: Because it was accessible?

ROBERTS: Well, I was carrying four classes, twelve units. I looked for one that was different, and usually very easy. I had other classes. The football team had all easy classes. So I got to meet the football players, and all their girlfriends, and I would go into these classes. They gave me a whole list, and I took a lot of them. It turned out Scandinavian literature was wonderful.

ZONA R.: I think your brother Ron turned you on to those.

ROBERTS: I think, yes. One was about Strindberg, and the other was. . . . What's the other guy's name?

O'HARA: Ibsen?

ROBERTS: Of course, Ibsen, yes.

I remember learning about how to be a university student. My brother had learned a lot about it, but I remember also wondering how to take notes, and then discovering that if you gave somebody carbon paper, they would take their notes while you're taking yours. Then I started making an announcement at the beginning of class, and usually find a good-looking young woman. Because I'd really look at their writing, so I'd get to know somebody that way, and they all loved it. Every day, they'd come by and give me the notes.

And then there were what were called Phi Beta Kappa notes. Do you remember those?

O'HARA: Yes. Fybates.

ROBERTS: Fybate notes, yes.

ZONA R.: You also learned that at College of San Mateo, having the lovely young ladies take notes for you.

ROBERTS: Yes. I actually did that first at CSM, yes.

O'HARA: [Laughter] That tradition continues, by the way, the lovely young lady idea. Many men after you thought it was a great idea.

ROBERTS: Well, it's such a simple way to take notes. And of course, to meet people and get them involved with you. So there were all these little gimmicks. I never bought Fybate notes in big supplies, because even though it was '63, '64, they were the exact notes of 1948. It just blew my mind how a professor could have the same class that many years in a row, you'd get the same notes. And of course, then you bought some packages, but you could also buy them single every day. For me, they were real helpful. I didn't read them all. Having my own notes and those really helped.

O'HARA: How did you do your reading?

ROBERTS: I had done most of my reading through high school lying in bed with a reading rack and a mouthstick turning my notes, the pages. When I went to Cal Berkeley, I started using the reading mirror. You see this big mirror above me, if you flip it over, it's a reading rack. So I had a new mouthstick made that was longer. But I had done some of this anyway, after I had my iron lung. I don't remember when I. . . . I must have got it during the College at San Mateo.

O'HARA: So you'd attach the book to the mirror with some . . .

ROBERTS: Yes, with big rubber bands in the back. You'd have these things from--did you ever see--it said "O. T. [Occupational Therapy] Fairmont." So I got the rack from Fairmont Hospital, and we'd just put it up, we'd turn a mirror over, and it had these rubber bands that you attached the book with. Then I'd take out fifty pages at a time, and they had little adjustable. . . . They held the pages up there. I could take it out from behind the pages and tuck it in. It took a little more time, but not that bad. I could be really free and independent with that, so I could read for an hour or two before I even got to the point. . . . It was really nice.

I went all the through college reading. . . . If you look at my teeth, see how crooked they are?

O'HARA: Bottom teeth?

ROBERTS: Yes, how they're pushed over? Mouthstick. The mouthstick did that, but it was worth it. So I could keep up with the reading, and I could keep up on all kinds of things.

O'HARA: Did you have exams? How did you take them?

ROBERTS: I took them. I always the first thing sat down with the professors and said. . . . I always assumed that I was going to take the exams, and how could I do them. Some professors would say, "I'll give you one of my T.A.s and you can dictate to him," or, "my secretary," or, "I'll give you a test to take home, and you have whoever you use." So it was really a variety of things. There were very few professors who weren't flexible.

O'HARA: You always handed in a written piece, then? You didn't use a tape recorder?

ROBERTS: I didn't use a tape recorder once, at all. I always did blue books, I wrote them, with somebody. It's just the same, basically. And if I'd studied well, I usually was very good. Usually there was one class that was, like Scandinavian literature, that was easier. And I read them, because I enjoyed the books and the plays, and learned a lot. I don't think I was expecting to learn a lot. [Laughter]

But I loved Berkeley. I really got into it. I felt like a star at Berkeley. I was so different than anybody else, and I started feeling that at the College of San

Mateo and Burlingame High School. I remember I had gone to Burlingame High School, at the beginning of the semester, students had come to me . . .

O'HARA: At home?

ROBERTS: And I was at home, I'd been virtually a shut-in for years. I remember when a social worker and my mother came to me and said, "If you don't begin to get out of here, you're going to stay here the rest of your life. I want my life, too." Not being cruel, but just started the re-incentive. Whenever I went to high school, I said, "Oh, God, no, it's such a hassle." I'm sure I was going to lay guilt on my mom, to show her.

So they loaded me up in the station wagon and took me to the school, and they started to unload me. It was lunchtime; there must have been 200 students, or it seemed like. They were all eating lunch around this court. So I started to get up, and every one of them turned to stare at me. My worst fear, and one of the reasons that I had not come out at all was that I was terrified of being stared at. That just indicated to me how awful it was and how ugly I was. I didn't want to put myself down in the process.

But I remember that day when they were getting me out of the car, and all of a sudden my worst fear came true: everybody was staring at me. And when I'd look up at them, they'd look away. And something remarkable occurred to me while I was there. The first thing was that it didn't hurt. For people to stare at me did not hurt me. It had been such a fear that I thought it would. The second thing that occurred to me was that maybe it wasn't all my problem, because when I looked back, they would look away. As I thought about that, why was I taking all this on as my problem when wasn't the fact they stared also their problem? It was an interesting feeling.

The third thing was, oh, it was like being a star! I think that was one of the more important times in my life, that I realized I could enjoy it. I didn't have to feel guilt or all those things that I was. . . . Anger especially. Actually, I could enjoy being stared at. If I thought of myself as a star, not just a helpless cripple. I think those things happened to me all through my life, these, "Aha!" The real "Aha." And I've talked about that a lot, not as much any more.

But why do we build the self-hatred around this stuff? Why do we accept all these old attitudes toward ourselves, and actually wind up being the people who put ourselves down? That's part of my philosophy. I began to see this whole idea of being a star as very important. It may or may not be true but . . .

O'HARA: That depends on what you do with the feeling.

ROBERTS: In many ways, I became a star. I just assumed that position.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Session 2, September 29, 1994]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

O'HARA: [Interviewer shows Ed articles] So we've had a look at these few headlines which identify you as star and a hero. You had decided in high school maybe that would be fun. How did the press get hold of you?

ROBERTS: I think it was a combination of people who knew me from the area, from Burlingame and San Mateo, because I'd gotten some awards before I left high school, like I got the Soroptomists' award as the Youth of the Year, I remember. They also helped pay for my telephone link in high school that helped me go to school, so I went from my bed.

O'HARA: The Soroptomists helped pay for that?

ROBERTS: Yes. They're a women's club. So they took me on as one of their projects. Over the years, I had different articles written about me, but I think some people just kind of decided to get some articles in the local area. At first there were some written at the university and by local papers around Berkeley. There was the story in *Parade*, I think it's called *Parade*. That's the one with Ron and I; that's *Parade* magazine. So it was at least in the Sunday supplement all over. I think that exposure then led some others to want to do local stories around Burlingame and San Mateo about "local boy makes good"--here, "Local hero."

O'HARA: Did you get any response from the *Parade* or the national article?

ROBERTS: Yes, one of the things I got to do was, we got to. . . . I told the reporter that I liked baseball and I'd never been to a Giants game, so he called the Giants and took the whole family to the game. We sat in this box seat up by the broadcast booth. I was in a push chair then, so I could be carried up and down a few stairs, at least; not too difficult.

O'HARA: This was at Candlestick [Park]?

ROBERTS: That was the only perk, I think. Yes, at Candlestick. I only did that one other time, and got so cold. Until they just did a story about me, it will be on PBS [Public Broadcasting System] next March, a series of three stories, they did a long one on me, and they as a reward took me to a Giants game. Candlestick is remodeled, and so this time I sat on the field right by the first base side. It was

the best seat I've ever had at any athletic event--except my close encounters with the third kind, when I used to go to Harmon Gym and watch basketball.

One time I was there [Harmon Gym] with a reporter, and they wanted to take pictures and they kept moving me over so they could get shots of basketball players and me. They moved me too close to the court, and I remember Washington State [University] was playing. Washington State used to have these real big bully guys, 250 pounds, who used to play tackle on football and forward on basketball. My brother Ron kept saying, "Don't go any further." I remember looking up, I was talking to this reporter, and this guy had just taken a fast break, and he threw the ball and it landed on me. He wound up. . . . I saw his face in the air. He went, "Oh, shit," and I went, "Oh, shit," and started thinking [Inaudible]. He landed on my foot pedals, which snapped back up. I thought for sure my ankle was broken.

That's the night I got arrested. That's the night as a reward after, my brother and a couple of my friends and I went out to a bar, which I don't think is still around, but anyway it was a bar that had bluegrass music. I like bluegrass music a lot. Every crack in the pavement on the way there, my foot hurt. It hurt real bad. And I'll be damned if I wasn't going to go to this bluegrass thing.

O'HARA: You mean it hurt from being hit in the game?

ROBERTS: Yes. And I thought, Oh, it could be broken, but what the hell, I'm not. . . . I didn't think it was, but I thought it would be swollen. We went there, and I remember drinking a lot, because I drank enough that my foot stopped hurting. We were drinking beer. I had enough beer to get paralyzed, but luckily I was already paralyzed, so it didn't matter. [Laughter]

Then, all of a sudden, both John and I realized that we had to pee. John had a leg bag, and I had no urinal, so we grabbed the whole pitcher. The first thing, John went out and drained his urine bag. Then he came in and said, "All right, go on out."

Now, this all started because the bathrooms weren't accessible. So I went outside, and on the way out there, when I went to the back, somebody said, "Halt." There was a flashlight hit me in the face, and he said, "What are you

doing? What are you doing here?" I said, "Oh, nothing, nothing." And of course, on the ground was this whole leg bag that John had dumped. He flashed his light there and he said, "Looks like you've already done something here." I said, "No, I can't go like that. It's probably just water. Somebody watered there."

So he let me go, and I went back in. I was totally bursting. I had to go so bad. I waited about five minutes, and then rushed back. We grabbed an old beer pitcher, and I really filled that beer pitcher up. Then we dumped it in the bush, basically. As I turned around to come back in, there was a, "Halt, you're under arrest."

I said, "What!" He said, "I warned you. You're under arrest." I looked at him, I said, "You get me, I've got to have an iron lung." He just looked at me like, What? I said, "I'll die in jail. You've got to have an iron lung." He looked at me with this look on his face like, Oh, shit. I was saying, "You've arrested me; now what are you going to do with me? Come on?"

He said. . . . The funniest line was, "I've got to call my sergeant." So he called his sergeant. The sergeant came over, and I heard the sergeant saying, "You dumb shit. Why did you arrest him? That's foolish. We can't. . . . It's not accessible. Our jail won't even take somebody in a wheelchair."

So then the sergeant came over and talked to me and said, "He's arrested you, and we know we can't take you, and we're going to let you go on your own recognizance, but we're going to report you to the university." I had no words. I remember at that time I was thinking a lot that I really wanted to have a political career. I didn't know how, but I really wanted to get into politics. And not just teach it, but really do it.

It's so funny, because two days later, Henry Bruyn pays me a visit and said, "We got this report that you were caught pissing in the street." I looked at Henry and I said, "Well, it's a slight exaggeration. The basic facts are probably true. But we were at a bar, we were drinking a lot of beer, I had to pee, and there was no way to get in the bathroom, and there was no place close, no accessible bathroom. There was a gas station close; we tried that."

I remember on my way home beginning to get a little bit more sober and hurting again, my foot. As I rolled across these cracks, the only thing I could think, and I said this to the guys that were with me, "Oh, my god, my political career is over before I started." Can you imagine, "Helpless cripple attends Cal and arrested for peeing on the street"? So I was drunk and kind of feeling like, well, that's the end of my political career. And then to have Henry come down and try to explain to him that, in fact, I didn't do anything real bad. We actually went out behind the bar.

It turned out when John had gone out there, he was a little noisy. There was an apartment next to there, and they called the police. That's why the cop was there when I got there. All this could have been prevented by . . .

O'HARA: Where was this?

ROBERTS: It had to be a mile away from the campus [in order to serve alcohol at that time]. It was past Ashby, so it was a pretty good walk from the campus. It was. . . I don't remember. Maybe I will in a bit, but I don't remember. It later closed.

O'HARA: It's gone now?

ROBERTS: I'm sure it's gone now.

O'HARA: Did they stop the game, or what happened at that moment when [you and the basketball player collided]?

ROBERTS: No, he went right on. The back of my chair flipped way up in the air. My brother Ron grabbed it, and I went, "Ohhh." I didn't know if I was hurt, but then it started hurting. I'm sure this guy landed on my foot pedals and flipped my chair in the back. Then when he jumped off, it snapped back up.

Well, that's the first story of my arrest. It was different than for political reasons, but I think Henry understood that the real problem was there was no bathroom. He still said, "I had to come down to tell you not to do this again."

O'HARA: Did this make it to the papers?

ROBERTS: I don't think so. I don't think I wanted it, and I don't think Henry wanted it. [Laughter] It was around Cowell, though, about disabled guy, helpless guy, who'd gone out and gotten drunk, and then the cop. . . I never talked to him, but the sergeant told me that he was mortified. When I said I had to have an iron

lung, he didn't know what to do. I guess he was more careful later in arresting people. Anyway, that was the whole thing.

Now, Hale [Zukas] came in '66, or '67. He came a lot later.

O'HARA: I think maybe even early seventies.

ROBERTS: Or maybe later than that, actually. What I did know is he wanted to be in the program and was rejected by Henry, because of the communication problem, I believe.

O'HARA: Oh, that was Hale?

ROBERTS: There was Hale, and there were a few other people, too.

O'HARA: Dr. Bruyn told me that he had rejected a student with cerebral palsy, and he regretted it.

ROBERTS: Yes. Well, Hale was so bright. He never should have rejected him; Hale should have been at Cowell. But Hale's family lived in Berkeley; he lived in Berkeley. So it wasn't as essential that he live at Cowell, although it would probably have been good for him and for us. They rejected a few people that I know of I met later. In a sense, when they began to reject Don, [Donald Lorence] and I told this story about Don when he first came. You could not hear him, his voice was so low.

O'HARA: You haven't told me on tape.

ROBERTS: Oh, really? Well, Don came about '68, '69, somewhere in there. And I couldn't believe when Don actually got in and I met him, I could not hear him. His voice was so low, and he was a nice guy, I liked him. But Don had lived in his room for years. His father was an engineer for Hewlett-Packard [Company], and Don went to school basically from his room. He did a lot of work in electronics. Whatever his father was doing, he had parts of and pieces of. He learned how to solder, and he was almost like a partner with his father on electronic projects. So I guess he started off building radios; he built all kinds of electronic stuff. But he wasn't used to talking.

I remember when we first saw him, he was in this push chair and very quiet. John wondered how he would get along, being so quiet. He could be quiet; you could be quiet; I wasn't that quiet. And then, Donald, after being there

a couple of days, one day he got a power chair, one of the old-fashioned six-volt chairs that had two or three batteries. It was relatively slow but had quite a bit of power. I remember the first day, they couldn't find him after he had this power chair, and we couldn't find him.

Finally, we started searching the rooms upstairs. By that time, we were on the third floor. Then somebody opened one of the doors, and there was Donald inside this room, exhausted, because he tried to yell, but they were pretty soundproof, these rooms, and [he] just didn't know what was going to happen to him. He had gone. . . . He could go in to doors, but the door closed behind him and he couldn't get out.

O'HARA: I remember.

ROBERTS: That's one of the reasons that on my office door, I insisted that they swing both ways, that I could be sure to go in and out alone. Interesting what these experiences teach you.

Then the next day, we lost Donald again and we thought, Oh, shit, he's locked [in]. We looked for him but we couldn't find him. Later, the campus police brought him back. They brought his batteries separate. We said, "What's going on? What happened?"

They said, "We pulled him out of Strawberry Creek." I said, "Well, how did he get into Strawberry Creek?" That's not easy. But he went up to the highest hill. There's a hill, I don't remember exactly where it was, but he was playing. He was so totally elated by being able to move where his whole life he'd not been able to move more than a few inches or a few feet because he couldn't push himself. With his muscular dystrophy, he was so paralyzed that he didn't have much strength to push himself. If you're living in your room, you don't go anywhere.

And then what they said was they fished him out of the creek after realizing they had seen him up in the hills rushing down, but somehow, he yelled and got a student, and the student got the police. Here was this mild, meek guy that you couldn't even understand when he spoke, unless you got real close to his mouth, and here he was a totally changed person. All this aggressiveness and all

the feelings that he'd had about being blocked, not able to move, all of a sudden he could move. And he tried everything he could think of in that chair. It did scare him to roll in the creek.

O'HARA: Did he fall out of his chair?

ROBERTS: No, he didn't fall out of his chair. He was pretty lucky, actually, and that they got him. The creek was down low, and I guess it wasn't that. . . . He just sank into some mud or something, who knows. I said, "Donald, did you actually do that?" He just got this incredible smile on his face, like, "Oh, did I love it too!" That's what he said. He said, "I didn't realize I could get into that much trouble that fast. I thought for sure I could stop, but the batteries bounced." So he lost his power.

So here was this Donald Lorence who was totally endearing to us, who had really showed us the meaning of freedom in power chairs, from someone who never moved. John and I especially were just tripped by this. All of a sudden, he started speaking so we could hear him. A lot of the ways we knew him changed so radically in a few weeks. He just all of a sudden became. . . . He was a student, and he was out, really out. He kind of tried to identify. . . . Later he decided he was gay, and all kinds of things came out of Donald that were there all the time, but he could never bring them out, I think.

He was just a wonderful example of how important it was for everybody to get a shot at. . . . If you're paralyzed physically and you don't have mobility, you've got to have it. If you're a kid and you can't move, you've got to be able to move. So all these feelings, all these things came out of him. I got almost a better education at Cowell with my fellow disabled students than I did at the university. I felt that Donald, he was a real special person, real special, and a friend. I mean, I was more disabled in many ways, but not like he was in a social way. I had at least been out, I hadn't been isolated for years, and all kinds of things. But I had no trouble talking and being articulate. I couldn't imagine being shut in for so many years. I basically was shut in for five years.

O'HARA: During your high school?

ROBERTS: Yes, during those high school years, but I got away from it. But I never stopped talking and being very vocal. There were always people around me. Unlike Donald; he had no friends, nobody around him at all. His mother and his father, and maybe his brothers were. . . . I think there was a brother and a sister, but I don't remember now.

So Donald had been there for maybe a year or two years, and somewhere before, we had gotten a new counselor for the Department of Rehabilitation. Because Butcher--Butch as they called her--

O'HARA: Catherine Butcher?

ROBERTS: This Miss Catherine Butcher, she had been my counselor, and she was just wonderful. She had this faith in John and I both that we would succeed; it was a matter more of whether they helped us in the right ways. So she was an old-fashioned counselor who would say to you, "You know what you want; what can I do to help you get there?" It seemed later that counselors stopped saying that. But I think they still are awful in many ways, thinking they know more about what you want and need than you do, which I think is dumb. Nobody knows more. That's one of the reasons I don't choose a doctor unless I know they will listen to me about myself.

O'HARA: You know, there's a story that says that you were rejected [as a client] by the Department of Rehabilitation because you were not employable.

ROBERTS: That's right.

O'HARA: Now, did that happen before Catherine came on the scene?

ROBERTS: That happened when I applied to go to Berkeley, and when I was graduating from the College of San Mateo. I went to see a counselor when I started, and basically the first thing they said to me was. . . . And the counselor had a limp, a bad leg. I went in, and they gave me some tests, and then within a couple of weeks they rejected me for service, saying that I was too disabled to go to work, and I was therefore infeasible. We said, "Oh, no you don't."

O'HARA: Who's we? Your family?

ROBERTS: My mother, myself, and Phil Morse from the College of San Mateo, and Jean Wirth.¹ At that time, the president of the College of San Mateo also knew me, and so this whole counter movement started. There were articles in the *San Mateo Times*, I think, about being rejected, but I don't know, because I think articles came out because we made it public that I had been rejected. And College of San Mateo said, "He's doing well. He can do all kinds of things. He can write. That's crazy." And this counselor, I remember him telling me that I was going to be rejected, and he believed it was important to reject me. His disability had hurt him a lot more than mine had hurt me, even though mine was a lot more disabled. He was a pretty down kind of guy. I think that it limited him more than it limited me.

O'HARA: What kind of tests did they give you?

ROBERTS: They gave me the Minnesota Multiphasic. They also wound up giving me tests . . .

O'HARA: Interest Inventory, or . . .

ROBERTS: Yes, and they gave me ink blot and some psychological tests. They said I scored off the top on aggression, and that I was too aggressive as well to be a client of Rehab. I scored real high. I turned around and I looked at this guy, and I said, "If you were paralyzed from the neck down and you wanted to do something in your life, don't you think being aggressive would make more sure that I would succeed?" He said, "Oh, yes, but you're way off the scale."

I said, "Well, I don't know, but I think it makes me more likely to succeed."

O'HARA: You said that you were eighteen, nineteen?

1. Jean Wirth and Phil Morse met with people from Vocational Rehabilitation (as it was named then) and discussed Ed's going on to college. Jean and Phil had Ed's grades and recommended support after Voc. Rehab. had turned him down saying they couldn't justify the expenditure as he was too disabled to work and earn money. Jean and Phil showed them his potential and they reversed the decision and did agree to support him financially at Cal. There was no newspaper publicity about this meeting. --Z.R.

ROBERTS: Yes. Maybe twenty. But I said that. I knew he wasn't going to accept anything. But we got the department to change within a couple of weeks, the director . . .

O'HARA: In Sacramento?

ROBERTS: Yes, that guy. His name was Alan. . . . Jeez, what was his name?¹ He was a real tall, good-looking guy, the image of a director. Only not my image of a Rehab director. Later, he was a head of INS [Immigration and Naturalization Services], which is immigration services, under [President] Ronald Reagan. Anyway. He became a kind of a friend, and he reversed the counselor's decision. One of the things I learned from that was that in dealing with bureaucracies like welfare bureaucracies and other bureaucracies, it helps when you have trouble with them to shine the light of publicity on them. They got some pretty bad articles written about them. Here was this brave quadriplegic . . .

O'HARA: Hero.

ROBERTS: Yes, hero, whose only real future would have to come because of education, getting an advanced degree to make sure he was qualified to go to work, and they're rejecting him. This horrible department was rejecting him based on some weird standard called infeasibility. And when they decided two weeks later, I already had started school, but they decided they would allow as how they'd make an experiment. That's when I got Catherine Butcher.

O'HARA: Did you contact the director yourself?

ROBERTS: No, I didn't meet him until a bit later.

O'HARA: It was just the media exposure?

ROBERTS: It was total media, and people at the College of San Mateo calling. I think they had a little more knowledge than I did on how to make it happen.

So that was a good experience. It was another one like being told I was, I couldn't graduate because I had to have P.E. [physical education] and driver training. Did I tell you that story?

1. Under Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr., the director of the Department of Rehabilitation was Warren Thompson (1963-1964); under Governor Ronald Reagan, Robert E. Howard was director and Elliot Allen was chief of Fiscal Services.

O'HARA: Not on tape.

ROBERTS: Oh. Well, I was in my senior [year in high school].

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

ROBERTS: My whole attitude toward school had changed. I had gone from a bad student in grammar school, really not an F student but basically a C student, to in high school I had become a straight-A student. I was learning how to write papers and was doing all kinds of stuff. My mother was pretty smart and helped me do a lot of stuff. Basically, I learned through her tutelage, and other students, how to write and how to take tests and all kinds of things. I was pretty proud of myself.

I filed for graduation like my brother had, because by that time I'd missed two years of school and my brother's class was my class then by that time. So I graduated with Ron, but what happened then was almost immediately, the school came back and said, "You cannot graduate. You don't have enough required credits." We said, "What? I've fulfilled all my academic [requirements]. I've taken college prep, and done very well." They said, "But you have not had driver training and P.E., and these are state requirements." I said, "I don't think I'm going to need driver training." Later we said, "Well, I've had physical therapy," and they said, "No, no, that's not good enough." I remember my mother once, in a state of sarcasm, looking at the principal and saying, "Well, we'll put him in the seat, and I will get behind him, and I will drive him--" very sarcastical, and very. . . . I laughed, because she made her point very clear, you assholes. [Laughter]

They were still going to enforce it. I remember how I felt, really awful, like I was going to have to stay longer. I was twenty-one or twenty years old already, and now. . . . I know I was totally age inappropriate. Things should be done when people's ages are relevant.

Anyway, so what we did was, we had a friend [of my mother's] who was on the school board. We picked up the phone and called Mimi Haas. She was a school psychologist, but she had run for the school board and was on the school

board. She said, "The school board can make that decision, not the school."¹ My mother was--I didn't go, but she was so afraid and so--she was just scared to speak. Which is a little bit unusual, because she had been president of PTA [Parent Teacher Association] and all kinds of things, she was pretty well known at the school. But this was so serious, it was so emotional.

I remember she went to go up to the microphone, they called her. They didn't even let her say. . . . They said basically, "We've talked about this, it's totally unreasonable, Ed will graduate." So she started crying. You'll have to interview her.

O'HARA: Oh, absolutely.

ROBERTS: I guess they kind of got the message that she was so relieved. Then she came home and told me, and I was so glad. You know, for me, that was one of the most important fights of my life. Even though my mother actually did the fight, went before the school board, I was a part of that, and it was such a helpless feeling to feel rejected when I had done so well. I felt so vindicated. I also learned a lot from that fight. You don't let people walk all over you; you do something about it. You fight for what you believe is right, and that taught me that. I think that was the model that I followed ever since, and made me a lot of what I am.

O'HARA: And that influenced your reaction to the Rehab decision?

ROBERTS: Oh, absolutely. There was no question that after that, I fought. And I often did it on my own. Well, my mother did this one. We did it together, because I didn't go to the school board, but I was. . . . I remember the assistant superintendent of schools, the number two guy in the whole district here, he knocked on the door and he came in, and we were talking. We didn't like him at all. This was my mother and I didn't like him much. Then he looked at me and he said, "Now, Ed. This won't take you long to do this, and you don't want a cheap diploma." Oh,

1. I met with Mimi Haas and we went over Ed's academic record at Burlingame to see if he had completed all necessary-for-graduation classes except driver training and physical education. Mimi assured me that he had taken and passed all academic requirements for State of California high school graduation. --Z.R.

my mother and I were so livid. After all, she was so proud, too. But I was so glad of what I did with the school.

O'HARA: What did he want you to do?

ROBERTS: He wanted me to continue in school for another year.

O'HARA: In high school, to make up for the P.E. and the drivers ed?

ROBERTS: Yes, that's what he wanted. We told him he could leave the house. My mother escorted him out the door; we were so glad. We were so happy to kick him out of the house. These guys had no concept of what it was all about. Now it would be a civil rights issue.

O'HARA: Sure, of course.

ROBERTS: It would be. So anyway, that was the most. . . . The things I remember the most were going to school and thinking I was a star, and learning that I could be, and why should I put myself down so hard? And the second was fighting and winning this graduation. I think it just empowered me a lot. So by the fight with Rehab, we were ready. And by the fight to get into Cal, we were also ready. Although I thought I was stymied by the housing thing. They said it had nothing to do with my academics; I was qualified. When Henry Bruyn offered the hospital, that changed.

Can you imagine, if two or three things had been different, I might have had a whole different kind of life. It just makes me. . . . I tell those stories to people, I want people to know about how important it is to fight for what you believe in, and to have the kind of confidence and empowerment to fight.

O'HARA: And then Catherine Butcher came on the scene right after the fight to graduate from high school?

ROBERTS: That's when I got Catherine Butcher [as rehab counselor]. I was thinking about going to Cal. This was the second. . . . Well, that's when I got Rehab for going to Cal, was when I had to fight it out. I wish I had my records, I could look and see what year it was they rejected me. Because they did help me at College of San Mateo.

O'HARA: I might be able to get those.

ROBERTS: OK, if you can, try.

O'HARA: I don't know if I have the authority to, but I could try. I'd be interested.

ROBERTS: But I wouldn't mind having them released to you. It would be very interesting to see what early writings they have.

I became a fairly notorious client, because very few clients fight to get into a system the way I did. Most of them went away. Eventually, when I won, that was a big difference. So Catherine Butcher was pleased to have me as a client. She liked the idea that I fought. She was very proud of that. She had to argue with the department for years to serve more severely disabled people. She was so fed up with the idea of creaming, which is taking those who are easiest to rehab and get them the eyeglasses or the hysterectomy or the whatever . . .

O'HARA: The least disabled?

ROBERTS: Yes, get them through, and then whether you're there or not, they'll succeed. So you close them [off the department rolls] as what is called 26 closures, which. . . . And you get credit for that, and you're a better counselor if you have more of those. It's bullshit, but that was the way they judged.

Now, once I got into Cal and they agreed to sponsor me, then Rehab was pretty good. Catherine Butcher was phenomenal. My mom liked her, I liked her. She was so easy to work with.

O'HARA: What did she do for you?

ROBERTS: She got me a secretary, she got me people to push me to and from class, and all around, and then I hired my own attendants as well. She let me sign off so that I could get the money whenever, to pay people. There were a lot of things that she did that made the system. . . . She did the system, and she got me everything I asked for, books, tuition. And when I wanted to buy extra books, she bought those. Set up accounts for me at the bookstore; that was nice. And that's what we did for all the students later.

O'HARA: Was she around for several years?

ROBERTS: She was only around for a couple, I think. I don't even know if John [Hessler] had her. She retired not too long after. Maybe four years. Then when the other students started coming in, she had retired, I think, during that time. She was so proud, she said. She came to me and said how important it was for her to work

with me and with more severe, that those were the clients she always felt she had to work with and could work with, and be successful. By that time, we were kind of a model for almost the whole country in terms of severely disabled people, going through the process of rehab and through college.

O'HARA: And that was later to become one of your main themes as director of Rehab, wasn't it?

ROBERTS: Yes, send people on. Well, what I did was, I started cutting out the easy ones. I said, "Look, we don't need. . . . If people have real heavy social problems from growing up poor, or some social milieu that will not allow them to get the kind of skills and things they need, then a small disability can be very large, but not in general." So we set up a system where we served more severely disabled. By the time I left, they were 83 percent severe, something like 70 percent. Of course, some of them monkey with definitions. But the department was really ready, I thought, to move into serving more severely disabled people.

O'HARA: Apparently, they're trying it again. [Rehabilitation Amendments, 1992]

ROBERTS: Yes, right now they are, yes. History repeats itself.

O'HARA: Did Rehab pay for the other students also, their tuition and some of their room and board?

ROBERTS: Yes, everything. Whatever the needs were for the people that came in, they were paid for. And we got a waiver at the state level so that any student that came to Cowell or the Cowell project automatically got the maximum of personal assistance, because they needed the \$300.

O'HARA: That would be from the county. Or was that from Rehab?

ROBERTS: They were all counties. They were all county departments of social welfare. Some of them would give the amount, and then we'd get fouled up because sometimes more conservative counties would give \$150 or less.

O'HARA: As far as the \$300 you needed for attendants, did that come from Rehab or from social services?

ROBERTS: Social welfare departments; that came from them. In a way, I was lucky, because Rehab was already paying out a lot of money. But they went and got a federal grant pretty quickly. I think it was \$50,000 at first, and then more, to sponsor us,

and to use that money. Because we were fairly expensive clients, and they weren't used to that at all.

I remember later, when the counselor named Karen Parker. . . . Do you remember Karen? Topp was her last name, Karen Topp. I think she was Parker before.

O'HARA: Newsome.

ROBERTS: Oh, Newsome, Karen Newsome. Anyway, it's different now again, because she's married.

O'HARA: Goodwyn, it is now.

ROBERTS: But she was so wonderful. But her budget was like \$300,000, and she was buying vans and attendants.

O'HARA: She came on the scene much later, didn't she, more like '73, something like that?

ROBERTS: Much later. But she was the best in many ways. And I also remember that she struck me as being the kind that she could do that because we were so strong, as a group. But every year, they complained about her costs, because a lot of this was case service money out of Rehab. And the top people at Rehab, many of whom had been counselors at one time, it was unheard of to spend that much money on clients. And yet, as you pointed out, how many were successful and went to work, how much they earned. That just proved how important it was to do that. But she was convinced it was. . . .

But by that time, she had a kind of freedom, because Rehab was afraid to take us on. That all started from when Catherine Butcher left, and they gave us. . . . What was her name? I'm blocking it now.

O'HARA: Lucille Withington?

ROBERTS: They assigned Lucille Withington. Now, Lucille Withington in her best day may not have been a very nice person. [Laughter] I don't have a lot of flattering remarks. But at her worst [she] was strictly an accountant who took seriously the idea she had to cut costs. Even though by that time, it was almost all federal money. Her job was to go in there and straighten these young people out, and make sure they got good grades and reported to her over and over. She came in

and laid down all these rules. At the end of each semester she had to have all our grades, and all kinds of rules about money.

But it wasn't just what she asked for, it was how she did it. Because from the beginning, she started threatening: "If you don't give me your grades, I'll cut off your money. If you don't give me this, I'll do that." By that time, there were eight or ten of us, probably eight or ten. She became the real villain in this process. All of us realized we were well on our way to freedom and independence, and no one was going to stop that.

I remember coming together with the group, we called them in, and we said, "This lady is going to be trouble. We've got to be careful what we give her and make decisions together about what we will and what we will not. It's all right to give your grades," but she said if you don't get like a 3.0, we'll kick you out of school. And all of a sudden, she lays. . . . You know, once we let her get away with a few rules, I think she got a reputation in the department that said good, and then she tried to be tougher on us, to the extent that I was working on my Ph.D. and she tried to give me subjects that I could write on. I said, "What qualifies you to. . . ?" And by that time, we were a little alienated. And she knew she couldn't take me on, though. She was not going to try to--they'd already tried that.

But what she decided was, that Don Lorence had to go. She had evaluated each student and decided that Don Lorence, and there was one other student that she decided had to go, too. I don't remember who it was. Jim or Larry or somebody.

O'HARA: Scott maybe? Scott Sorensen?

ROBERTS: Scott, yes, I bet you're right.

O'HARA: I don't know. I don't know the story.

ROBERTS: Anyway, she had decided that she was going to kick two of them out of the program. We said, "No, you can't do that." I said, "Don Lorence has already made phenomenal strides, and this guy will be employed and successful later, and so will Scott." It must have been Scott, yes. And, "You will not do this." And she said, "I am the counselor. I have the control of your money." Within a

week, she kicked them out of the program, and made them leave Cowell. That was . . .

O'HARA: Clear out their rooms and everything?

ROBERTS: Yes, clear out their rooms and get out of there. We said enough, no, and we decided to fight her. The first thing I did was went to Henry, and he said there was nothing they could do. Rehab was in charge of it. I think in a way, he kind of agreed, but he talked with them, anyway.

O'HARA: He agreed with you or with them?

ROBERTS: No, I think he might have agreed with them, that they were not the strongest, but I said, "Henry, that's not the issue. These people deserve the opportunity. They will succeed. They're both strong individuals." Anyway, he kind of sided with Rehab. We called her supervisor and said, "This is not [Inaudible], and this decision must be turned around." He said, "Well, let's meet."

We had started a series of meetings with her. I thought we were remarkably patient. We never came to real agreements with her.

O'HARA: All the students gathered?

ROBERTS: Several of them, yes.

O'HARA: And met with her?

ROBERTS: Met in large groups with her, that's right. By that time, Eleanor Smith [first rehabilitation nurse in Cowell program] was our nurse on the floor, which was remarkable because when Eleanor came, all this medical knowledge came with her about decubitus ulcers, and how to get what you need out of Medicare and Medi-Cal.

O'HARA: She gave that information?

ROBERTS: Yes. She was real sharp. She knew that system. So we started getting power chairs, and we started getting about everything we wanted from the Medicare system. That's how I got my power wheelchair later, was that she knew the words, the magic words. "Medically feasible," all the right words. We got along great, she and I especially basically ran that program, and she was super.

But then, in the middle of this fight, she decided to side with Rehab. She'd already been there two or three years, and we were very close. She said,

"They're my boss, they pay me, I have to." I'm sure Lucille Withington threatened her job. "You will be with us; we pay you." You know that message.

In the meantime, she had brought two or three people in that she was very close to before. She was a nurse before.

O'HARA: You mean students? Disabled students?

ROBERTS: Yes, students. A woman and a man. Which was fine with us. They were good. But in the middle of our struggle, the students she brought in sided with her and turned against us. There were eight of us. I think Jim and her, but all the ones that had come in. We couldn't let them get away with this. We saw loud and clear that we could be next. If we didn't get all A's, or whatever it was, we could be next, and there was no way. These other people that she brought in were more independent, often lived with her in her house and all kinds of things. And they basically turned against us.

If you've ever seen excommunication, we totally excommunicated them from our group, to the extent we wouldn't talk to them at all. They lived on the same floor, yet we thought they'd betrayed us. Of course, in the long run, they probably were thinking that they might get kicked out, too, and wanted to side with Eleanor, who had to win, may be fine. So I don't know.

But we had a series of meetings, first with her [Wirthington], where we were remarkably constrained. We tried to work these things out, because we thought we could. And then with her supervisor, a guy named Rod, that always wore dark glasses. I thought he was smoking a lot or doing coke or something. By that time, I had experimented with drugs myself, so I kind of knew what was playing.

Then I called him and I said, "Look, she is not going to [Inaudible]. I want you to come in and work with us now." And he came in, he basically saw that she. . . . We were being pretty reasonable, and she wasn't. And really, the solution we said, "She has to go." That was our bottom line. "She has to go, she will not threaten us again, and we will go to the wall on this." So my experience with the other issues with Rehab, I wound up calling the *Chronicle* and getting a reporter called, [Inaudible], and they did a story. Several of the papers did stories

saying how awful it was for these kids to be kicked out, and how awful this department was threatening this program. It was the only one like it in the world basically, and where people were actually becoming independent and going to work and doing. . . . These brave souls, these helpless cripples. And boy, did we play it up.

They got the stories in Sacramento, and it was hurting them. We turned the legislature loose on them as well. Like I went to a couple of our local assemblymen. I think even [Nicholas] Nick Petris was state senator.

O'HARA: That early? I haven't seen those articles; have you recently?

ROBERTS: No, I haven't seen them at all. I have no idea where they are.

O'HARA: I want to try to dig for those.

ROBERTS: Yes. And it vilified the counselor especially, but it vilified the department for backing her harassment of us. Within a short period of time, she was transferred to another district.

We didn't have a counselor. I remember they temporarily assigned a counselor. His name was Jerry Belchech; he's around. He now is retired. I don't remember if John [Velton, DR counselor] was involved in it then.

O'HARA: Soon after, maybe.

ROBERTS: He might have been involved in that. It turned out to be one of the first times in the history of the department that clients had ever forced the department to get rid of a counselor. We wanted her fired, but they transferred her, actually. And then retired her.

O'HARA: I think we're out of tape at this point.

ROBERTS: It's a good time to stop.

O'HARA: Yes, it's been a good hour. But I think next time, I would like to just have you reflect on that whole political process and the lessons learned.

ROBERTS: Oh, it's so important.

O'HARA: Because obviously, you were training yourselves to do some really interesting things.

ROBERTS: There's no doubt we were in training.

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[Session 3, November 3, 1994]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

O'HARA: Ed, do you remember when you first got your electric wheelchair and what was involved in that, and what the experience was?

ROBERTS: Yes.

O'HARA: What did it feel like?

ROBERTS: I'd been told my whole time that I could never drive a power wheelchair. I think I believed it. Maybe part of it was that the old E&J [Everest & Jennings] wheelchairs were very jerky. They were six volts, and they would have been very difficult for me to drive.

But about that time, a Motorette came out, it was called. The guy's name was Sean Solomon, I think. He invented this proportional drive. What he did was, he took the drive system for little electric cars and for gliders and planes, and he beefed it up and adapted it to be what was then called proportional drive. I think the Motorette was the first one to even have it.

But the most important factor of my learning how to drive a power chair was two things, I guess: one was seeing how free John was, and wishing for that for myself, and knowing that it could make a big difference in my life.

O'HARA: Up until this point, you always had someone pushing you?

ROBERTS: I was always in a push chair. I was in a recliner, push chair. It was frustrating sometimes, but in one way, it was nice to have people with me all the time. In another way, whenever we went to a museum or a place that I wanted to look, I had to stop them. And the other thing that I noticed heavily was that when people would walk up to me, they would talk to my attendant. I was almost a nonentity, being pushed around. After I got my power chair, I realized that they had to confront me. All of a sudden, there was no one else there. That was very important for me to realize that and to . . .

But what really happened for me was that . . .

O'HARA: I think I distracted you for a minute. You had two important factors, and one was John's freedom . . .

ROBERTS: One was John's freedom, and the other was I fell in love. It was a neighbor woman. Her name was Judy [Croxdale]; I still love her. But she had a son, and she lived in the apartments behind my mother's green house. That's how we met. Basically, my motivation changed. All of a sudden, I was highly motivated to get a power chair, to be alone with Judy, and to be able to go out and do things myself. And as I say, it's ridiculously inconvenient to have to have your attendant with you pushing you around when you really want to be alone with her, this woman Judy.

It was wonderful, so it was a combination of factors. I remember Eleanor Smith helped us find a chair in those days. I think it was Eleanor. It might have been after Edna [Brean] came, but I don't think so. So I kind of said that it's time I try again, let's try again. Let's see if I can't drive a chair.

One day, we got a couple of my attendants, and we put me in a chair. It was very awkward, but I discovered that with this Motorette idea, this proportional drive where the more you pull, the more you go, all I had to do was turn the controller around, because see, I couldn't push forward on it, but I could pull back. That made it even more complex, because when I pulled back and to the left, I went forward and to the right. If I pulled back and right, I went forward and to the left. So it was directly opposite, but I learned very quickly.

I remember them putting me in the chair, and I remember almost immediately crashing into the wall, but that was a thrill, because all of a sudden I could do it. And then we set my arm up in a way that I could get better hold, and pretty soon I realized that, boy, I can do this. I don't remember all the details, but I remember like Don Lorence going in a door and not being able to get out.

O'HARA: Were the controls set up that way, opposite of what you think they would be, for you specifically, or was that a standard way?

ROBERTS: No, that was only because we turned the box around. So I actually learned how to drive it with it turned around, and I didn't want to change it back. I could

have switched the wires around and changed it. By that time, I was. . . . And then we ordered a Motorette.

O'HARA: And you said this was the second time you tried? You had tried before?

ROBERTS: The first time. Well, I had tried it many years before, and I couldn't do it.

O'HARA: At a hospital or something?

ROBERTS: It was at Fairmont Hospital in San Leandro, which was an old polio hospital that I went to.

O'HARA: What was the difference? The Motorette and the motivation were different?

ROBERTS: Yes. I think the big thing was the Motorette. The second big thing was I was highly motivated. That was an important time, because I realized when you're highly motivated and have a lot of energy, you can often do things you never thought you could. I had never taken much energy towards it. I felt that I shouldn't put a lot of time and energy into it, because I couldn't do it. It's very interesting. In a lot of things I took the risk to try, this I never really did until things changed so much that I really had to, I wanted to.

O'HARA: Where were you when you tried this out the very first time?

ROBERTS: In Cowell.

O'HARA: In the halls of Cowell?

ROBERTS: I think we were on the third floor. I remember bouncing off the wall, but all of a sudden realizing, Oh, I can do this. It would take a while, but once I got the Motorette and hooked it. . . . See, that was a portable unit that hooked onto my push chair. They had real drawbacks. It spun a lot. It had direct drive right on the wheel, and if it got wet or anything, it would spin.

O'HARA: They had a reputation for being sort of bucking broncos periodically.

ROBERTS: Yes, they had a lot of power, but they also. . . . In the very beginning, it would blow a transistor, and you'd go full speed on one side. I remember one incident a little bit later when I was way up on a hill at. . . . You know the old school for the blind and deaf?

O'HARA: Yes.

ROBERTS: I was coming down, I was with my dog. His name was Tremor; he was a wonderful dog. A Malamute shepherd, but he loved to go for walks. I walked

a lot when I came back here in, must have been '72, early '73. By that time, I had good control of the chair. But I was braking, coming down, and I blew a transistor. On one side was a creek, and on the other side was a big hole there. I remember riding that chair all the way down to the bottom of the hill, because it went full speed forward on one side, and crashing into a tree and finally stopping. That thing just burned a hole in the tire as it spun. So it really wasn't the safest chair at all.

Another time I blew a transistor and jumped into the street.

O'HARA: You?

ROBERTS: Yes, the whole chair jumped right into the street.

O'HARA: Over the curb?

ROBERTS: Yes, over the curb, and I didn't fall. I almost got hit by a car though.

O'HARA: When you came down the hill and it ran into the tree, were you all right?

ROBERTS: I stopped. Yes, I was fine. Also, I learned how to, if there was no one to help, I learned to have extra transistors, and I learned how to install them. So I could describe to somebody how to install them.

O'HARA: How did you get down . . .

ROBERTS: Donald Lorence was real helpful, because he knew how to do those. So he usually had some kind of electronic person around. It was hard to find those people here in the early days. I can remember going out on campus by myself, being just totally thrilled, taking Judy out, going out to eat or just being able to do things by myself. It was a total change in my life.

O'HARA: You know, your mother said that she moved to Berkeley in '67, so could it be that your chair came later than '67?

ROBERTS: It might have been '67 or even '68.

O'HARA: Wow. So you were five or six years in a push chair at Cal.

ROBERTS: Once I came to Cal, I was there mostly in the push chair. I think Judy didn't even. . . . I think my mother rented a house and then took this house, and Judy moved in behind the house. We got together. I always wonder where she is now. I hear she got a Ph.D. and is teaching biology or something at the University of South Carolina.

O'HARA: What was her name?

ROBERTS: I don't know her last name. She got messed over by her husband, who she put through dental school, and worked, and then he dumped her after he left. After he set up his practice, he married his nurse or something. She was pretty badly hurt by that. I think we really loved each other a lot, but there was no way she was going to trust any man to support her. She had to have her. . . . That's why she wanted to go to. . . . That's why she went back to school, so she could get a job. She was pretty sure by that time she needed to have a Ph.D. or at least a master's, and she was going to be self-supporting. That was the important thing. Eventually, I think that broke us up, because I was ready to do more at the time, and she just wasn't ready for it. It was just bad timing.

Then I started noticing things like, when I approached people, they had to deal directly with me. Whereas before . . .

O'HARA: You mean with the electric wheelchair?

ROBERTS: Yes. Before, I noticed they would deal with my attendant, and that wasn't unusual. Anywhere, you'd go into a restaurant, and somebody would say, "What would he like?" I'm sure you've experienced that; you don't get that much any more, but still, every once in a while. . . . In fact, it happened in Germany with Otto [Ruderisch, attendant] just in the last month that somebody said, "What would he like?" and Otto turned to him and said, "Why don't you ask him?" I've always trained my attendants to say that. "Don't speak for me, and don't let people make me invisible." But it changed my personality, and it made me more assertive. I was already pretty assertive, but it made me more assertive.

O'HARA: How about the hill going down from Cowell out the door and down into the campus? Could you do that by yourself?

ROBERTS: No problem. One day I actually blew a transistor, and I drove right into the ivy, but luckily I stayed there. I didn't go over the edge of the hill. So those are a thrill a minute, those chairs. They were bucking broncos. They had a high speed, and there would be times if you blew a transistor, it would pop you right in the air.

But I think it was one of the things for me that it was worth taking the risk. Actually they used the wrong transistors, so I went out and bought heavier transistors.

O'HARA: Have you had a series of chairs since then?

ROBERTS: Yes. Not too many, actually. I've only had. . . . My second chair was built much more for the. . . . It was a Motorette, a portable unit that was put on it. It was a much better unit than my first wheelchair. I think this is the third one.
[tape static obscuring all speech; fast-forwarded to end]

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

O'HARA: You said that a few people moved out from Cowell. They were the first to leave.

ROBERTS: Jim [Donald] and Larry [Langdon], and I don't know who else. It might have been. . . . That was the first group of us to get out. That made us begin to think about halfway houses. I remember John [Hessler] and I talking a lot about, if we were going to leave Cowell, we had to have some--what I guess would be called a--supported living situation. I remember we abandoned that; said, "No, we're going straight out," and my own idea [?], and we'll have our own attendants. For years, we talked about halfway houses.

O'HARA: That was all revolutionary.

ROBERTS: Oh, it was.

O'HARA: And what were the factors that made you decide to eventually move out directly to apartments?

ROBERTS: I think Jim and the group were very inspirational. They just went out on their own. They just decided. . . . There were three of them, and I don't remember who the three . . .

O'HARA: Where did they live?

ROBERTS: In an apartment near campus. Turned out it had I guess an elevator, or . . .

O'HARA: Did you all visit them?

ROBERTS: I didn't. I wasn't. . . . At the time, I don't think I was that thrilled by that. I knew I wasn't ready for doing it, but it was an inspiration, I think, in a way. It said this is real possible.

I don't know. I think it was almost surrealistic. I was working on my Ph.D., and working fairly hard, and I didn't keep a lot of. . . . Keep track. But John did, and John told me a lot about what was going on and how great it was.

O'HARA: Sounds like John.

ROBERTS: Yes, and was real interested in how they were doing it. They were paying for their attendants.

O'HARA: Were John and Herb [Willsmore] the next ones to move out? John must have moved out. Did he move out before he went to France?

ROBERTS: No. I don't think so. He didn't move out until later, until after the Disabled Student Program [at UC Berkeley] pretty much started. Then he moved into a small apartment, and then he moved to a back house, I remember. I've got a picture of it, but . . .

O'HARA: On Dwight Way, I think, maybe.

ROBERTS: Yes. It was his own little place, and he loved it. He was always talking about how he was cooking, and trying different ways so he could do more. John was more interested in being more independent than I was, although I became psychologically very independent. John was the one who thought through a lot of the basic issues of what would be the Disabled Student Program, what it would look like. We knew from our own services that helped us live that you had to have a personal assistance program, and a way to find them. You had to have money to do that, so you had to guarantee people would get enough help in the community, transportation or what. There were a lot of issues that we began to put together, and that's when we decided how powerful a peer would be, too.

O'HARA: Let's see. There were a couple other students: Cathy Caulfield.

ROBERTS: Yes.

O'HARA: Do you remember. . . . Was she around?

ROBERTS: Oh, Cathy, oh, I do. It had basically been an all-male place, and Cathy just was so. . . . Fit in. Cathy was tough from the very beginning. She was her own person, and she was so glad to get away from home. I remember one day her parents came to visit her, and she was in bed with Larry, or somebody--I don't remember--but she was more free in terms of sexual experience. By that time, we were all involved in this, getting our own experiences with partners and friends, and Cathy fit in so well with us. I loved her dearly; I still do. She became a very important, special person. We were very close. We were never lovers, but we were intimately sharing. She could always come to me and talk to me about what she was feeling, and I could tell her what I was feeling too. It was really wonderful.

She was the first woman, I think, that was at Cowell. Judy Taylor came along later, and then there were a couple of others, too, that I . . .

O'HARA: Sue Ward.

ROBERTS: Sue. Sue was one that kind of chose the wrong side in that struggle. Sue decided to stay with Eleanor and was excommunicated. That's what I remember.

O'HARA: Well, she was there when I came in '71.

ROBERTS: Yes. So she was there later.

O'HARA: You mean excommunicated from the inner circle?

ROBERTS: Inner circle. Partly because she was a friend of Eleanor's. I think she had lived with Eleanor for a while. I knew Sue, but I didn't get to know her real well. I left Cowell in '69. You came when, '71?

O'HARA: Yes.

ROBERTS: I don't think I really remember. . . . I have to go see her [Cathy Caulfield], because she later had a kid, like I did, and she chose this kind of dorky guy, which was. . . . By that time, I was off, had left, and we kind of drifted apart. We still love each other, we talk. John was a part of that, too. She was kind of the maverick. I remember her parents coming and going, "Oh, shit, she's in bed with Larry," or somebody, and they just rolled right into her room, and there. . . . [makes snoring sounds]. They got very upset.

O'HARA: And I think they blamed the attendant, didn't they? I thought that was interesting.

ROBERTS: Yes. Well, they. . . . Cathy complained a lot to me about her parents. It wasn't that they didn't love her; they did, but I think they always wanted her to be something else. She was just a beautiful person. She was totally wonderful. Easy to get along with. She fit in with all these guys real well, and strong friendship. She wasn't the best student in the world, but for her, it was very important.

She also broke her neck. She was standing on a beach, and a wave hit her and knocked her over and broke her neck. Very freaky. It was somewhere in L.A. [Los Angeles]. She got out of the hospital and she hadn't been too long disabled when she got to Cowell, maybe a year, year and a half. Actually, maybe two, but very. . . . Unlike the other people who had been born disabled, for a long time. She joined us. . . . When we were fighting Rehab, and when we were fighting for our own rights, she was right there with us, helping out. She liked to drink, and she would. . . . We all were drinkers then. We weren't into dope. That happened later.

O'HARA: Henry Bruyn told me that the nurses used to be sure that you were all smoking pot.

ROBERTS: We were, later. But I think people were smoking pot, and I wasn't. Yes, I thought I was going to be a teacher, and in those days, if you got caught smoking pot, you couldn't be a teacher. Because my brother Mark, and Randy, actually turned me on before I left Cowell, I'm sure. That's what I liked much better than booze. I thought if I wanted to get high, grass was a whole lot better. I remember liquor being much more prevalent than smoking. And we tried acid . . .

O'HARA: So besides booze, you did try acid?

ROBERTS: Oh, yes, I tried acid. In fact, I always . . .

O'HARA: At Cowell?

ROBERTS: At Cowell, yes. In fact, I remember taking acid, the first time I took it, I didn't know what would happen, I didn't know if I'd lose my will to breathe, I didn't

get out of my tank. But I had this wonderful time. At that time, I had an attendant who was with us, and he had a girlfriend named Stephanie [], who's still a friend. They're both still friends. My attendant helped me take acid. I remember I'd forgotten that I had a meeting with Miss Butcher, and she was bringing up a couple of people, and I was stoned out of my mind. I only took a half of a pill; I didn't want to try the whole thing, but I was still very. . . . And I had this. . . . She came in and I went, Oh, shit, I forgot about. I realized, even though I was stoned really [Inaudible], I really had to be straight. I remember having this huge shit-eating grin in my face, and laughing a lot during the time they were there. I'm sure Miss Butcher knew that something was going on, but I don't think the other two people she brought in knew.

The second time I took acid was also with my attendant, and this is how I got up in the wheelchair. He pushed me through campus, and I don't remember what year. I don't think I had my power chair then. I remember going down Telegraph Avenue and seeing these weird faces, and when people would have dogs, their face would look like a dog. And then there was a professor who went by. He was a professor who was burned by a student. His face was terribly misshapen, and he looked down and I went, Ohhh. Because Telegraph was pretty weird in those days. There were lots of hip people and lots of people who. . . . Of course, I had this shit-eating grin on my face. A couple of people looked at me and said, "Oh, have a great time." Because they obviously were doing it too, or they had been doing acid and they just knew that I was. Because if you really look at somebody's eyes, their eyes are totally dilated. You could tell somebody was doing it.

Then I got a little alarmed, because all these people looked so different. And I saw this professor who had a terribly burned face, he looked normal. And then four blocks in, there was a Pontiac dealership, and I looked . . .

O'HARA: On Telegraph?

ROBERTS: And I saw the Pontiac, and it was like normal. It was totally the way it should have been. It was totally relieving to me that I wasn't off. Then I went to a store; it was called Park & Shop. I forget what it's called now.

O'HARA: Andronico's.

ROBERTS: Yes. And I remember looking at labels. I mean, Twinings tea and places that [?] these wonderful labels that were all different colors, but very similar. I got really caught up in all kinds of design things, features. And then I went to my friend Jeff's house and listened to music. The music sounded better than I ever heard it.

O'HARA: Did you feel like you were sort of initiated into the sixties by doing that, and part of the crowd?

ROBERTS: I think in one way. The revolution in Berkeley was my initiation more than. . . . All the National Guard on campus, and Ronald Reagan was governor and being such an asshole. The political things; that was where I was initiated. Anti-war stuff.

O'HARA: I was thinking maybe next time we could sort of go into what was going on.

ROBERTS: That sounds like fun, yes.

O'HARA: Can you talk a little bit about your job with Arleigh Williams?

ROBERTS: Arleigh Williams was my favorite person. It was Arleigh who didn't know what the hell to do with me, who referred me up to talk to Henry Bruyn, and I think called Henry and said, "Hey, this is a nice guy, I don't think we can keep him here." Arleigh got me to Henry, and Henry opened the hospital. He said, "Why don't you live here? We can make it work." He helped make a deal with me that it would be a dorm to me, I could have alcohol and--I don't think he realized to the extent--but all those things that I wanted.

Arleigh, I began to work with, around architectural design.

O'HARA: At what point? Had you been there a couple of years before that happened?

ROBERTS: Yes. I started teaching in. . . . I came in '62. In '64, I entered graduate school. So in '65, I started teaching at Ed[?] . . .

O'HARA: Teaching as a . . .

ROBERTS: A political scientist, teaching [assistant], T.A. In '64 and '63 I worked with Arleigh, before graduate school. I learned about a lot of things from Arleigh, because one of the first things we tried to do was choose buildings that should

be made accessible, and made sure that new buildings followed the state codes. By that time, there were some state [access] codes, I think.

O'HARA: I think '61 there was an early code.

ROBERTS: Yes, for the university there was. Arleigh was always a very sweet man, and always on my side I felt. Like Henry, he was a benefactor. I did less and got more money for [from?] Arleigh, but he wanted me to work part time with him. Changing the campus, just look at things.

O'HARA: That was your principal job?

ROBERTS: My job was architectural consultant, and what they can do to include students with disabilities more. And I didn't know what a plan was. But I learned about how to get things done.

For example, the first year I was there, they have a priority system for reconstruction. Arleigh and I worked on it, and I remember we said. . . . I remember that seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen was the priority for this first round. We didn't get it at all. Nothing happened. We didn't get it.

O'HARA: Do you mean the access was priority seventeen?

ROBERTS: But then I learned that they only funded the first five or the first seven priorities, and I insisted with Arleigh, "We won't do this again, we've got to be up in the top ten." He agreed, and it started to change then. I told Arleigh what I thought we should do, but he forced the university to put them up higher.

O'HARA: Do you remember some of those early, early changes that you actually saw happen?

ROBERTS: One was to Sproul. There were ramps put in down below, underneath. Another one was to Life Sciences Building, so you'd get in there. These were mostly entrance things. Another one was to Dwinelle, and another one was to Wheeler.

O'HARA: Underneath the stairs in the back?

ROBERTS: Yes.

O'HARA: That was not accessible before?

ROBERTS: It was partly accessible, but we couldn't get to everywhere. So we had to start charting out what we could do. Then they fixed the stairs in the front a little bit. If you rolled up to one end, there were no stairs. A small ramp in, so there

was a little stair there. Pretty simple, but they were very expensive, I remember. The university does something, they do it pretty expensively.

And then there were buildings like South Hall, that were almost. . . . That we just decided to leave alone. I remember there were classes that we agreed if we couldn't change the building, people could change the class. They'd move the class to a more accessible location.

O'HARA: Who did you. . . . Was it Arleigh that . . .

ROBERTS: Arleigh did a lot of it, and . . .

O'HARA: . . . was the intermediary in that?

ROBERTS: And what's the woman's name? She was a dean, too. She stayed later than Arleigh.

O'HARA: Betty Neely [Director of Student Activities and Programs]?

ROBERTS: Betty Neely was a part of our conspiracy. And Betty, I think, was smarter about things than Arleigh. She actually helped carry out a lot of the stuff. She was dean of women, I think, and I think she worked with Arleigh a lot, because . . .

O'HARA: She said she didn't really deal with disabled students until 1970, when she was sort of given DSP [Disabled Students Program].

ROBERTS: Yes. But I dealt with Betty early on. I think she was totally supportive, though; she was very supportive. Both Arleigh and Betty were like amazed by me and my [Inaudible].

O'HARA: Didn't you become an assistant dean somewhere along the line in title?

ROBERTS: Worked with Arleigh, that's right. He gave me that, an assistant to the dean. That was my role. That was my first job at the university.

O'HARA: Did you do site reviews, then, or where did you work exactly?

ROBERTS: I worked with Arleigh in his office.

O'HARA: I see, talking about it.

ROBERTS: I worked out of Cowell. I didn't really do site reviews. Arleigh had somebody that he trusted to do those.

O'HARA: Well, if they weren't accessible, it's hard to . . .

- ROBERTS: Right. But I wasn't able to get into Sproul Hall, because they did that. . . .
Right away they made, under the stairs, way in the back, there was a way in that we fixed up.
- O'HARA: Where the police department is now?
- ROBERTS: I think so.
- O'HARA: And so your job with Arleigh lasted about two years, and then you became . . . ?
- ROBERTS: I think it was more like a year, year and a half. Because that must have been '63, and then in '64. . . . Yes. I remember going to the Political Science Department and a guy named [Professor] Aaron Wildavsky, who just died, who had a mentally retarded kid. He was more empathetic; he really tried to help me. I had finished my first year and master's, and I said, "I want to teach," and he said, "Oh, we can make that happen." So that must have been '65. So I probably worked with Arleigh in '63, '64. And I got paid, and that was wonderful.
- O'HARA: Was that your first paying job?
- ROBERTS: Yes. Well, I had been a paper boy.
- O'HARA: It was your first paying job after you had had polio.
- ROBERTS: Yes, at the university. It was \$200 or \$300 a month. It was quite a bit for me at the same time. Then I became a T.A. and got more even.
- O'HARA: Can you describe a little bit how your teaching went, your second job?
- ROBERTS: It was like. . . . It was wonderful, because I started in '65, I was finishing up my master's. I remember becoming a teaching assistant then, and meeting with the professors. Usually I was. . . . At first I was teaching Poli Sci 1, which is American government, but I liked it because I got the young students.
- O'HARA: Were these discussion groups? How did that work?
- ROBERTS: We did everything. We graded blue books, we talked in sections . . .
- O'HARA: There was no professor that taught . . .
- ROBERTS: No, there was. There was a lecture professor. There could have been 800 students in one class, and then they broke [them?] us up into sections, and I taught half time. I taught two classes. I remember the thrill that I got from working with these. It was Government 1. It was a required course, and I just

was thrilled. They were mostly freshmen and sophomores, and I remember realizing, I can do this.

O'HARA: How did they respond to you?

ROBERTS: Wonderfully. I didn't have any problems with the students. I thought I might have, but students were. . . . My fondest memories almost are of being a teaching assistant. I loved teaching half time and going to school half time.

O'HARA: Were you surprised that you had the feeling that you could do this? Or were you surprised that you could do this?

ROBERTS: I was surprised I could do this, but I was. . . . I had been the kind of student that always felt I could do this better than they're doing it. A lot of professors were terrible. They simply gave their lectures. Some of them were very old lectures. I remember one, the Fybate notes were from 1948, and it was in the sixties. I don't know.

O'HARA: Were you teaching in the classroom all the time? I think I heard that you sometimes had them at your house.

ROBERTS: Small classrooms. Once in a while, I'd have them up at Cowell. I was still at Cowell. I took them outside whenever we could be out. So I had some wonderful students. And every once in a while, I meet another one around somewhere in the world. "Mr. Roberts?" I'd go, "Yeah?" When I went to Rehab, several of my students were working in the legislature. Oh, it was wonderful. In the [next] six years, I probably taught 400, 500, 600 students. I became a very big veteran. I just liked the students a lot. It was a very important confidence-builder, and very important to me to earn some money, and also to be able to do something good like that.

I remember I had a group of students that were--in one class--largely engineering students. Now, I thought these were some of the worst students I'd ever had. I was discussing with them, because they obviously were taking this course as a lot of people did because they had some requirements. They couldn't write. I mean, it was like they were ignorant, almost illiterate. They could do math and they could do. . . . I remember one day saying to myself, I've got to shake them up, I've got to do something.

That was when the Beatles came out with the song, "Nowhere Man." I brought that in and I played it for them. I looked at them and I said, "You're Nowhere people." It worked. I said, "Look, get with it. You're living in one of the most politically exciting times, the sixties, with the anti-war protesting. At least experience this; let it in." I remember, I didn't get them all, but several of them came to me and said, "You shocked us." A couple even read the books. I mean, they were that bad, it was that bad.

I taught with Nelson Polsby, and Aaron Wildavsky, and a lot of nice profs.

O'HARA: And [Professor William K.] Sandy Muir?

ROBERTS: Sandy Muir, I didn't teach with him. But I got to know him when he came to the campus. I taught mostly American government things, even those years. I did some T.A.'ing with graduate students later. But it was a very important time in my life. I really liked to work and do all kinds of things. The more education I got, the more open things were. I wasn't sure what I was going to do after. I'd given up my idea of being a technical writer. I knew I wanted to teach politics. Later I gave that up to do it.

O'HARA: To do what?

ROBERTS: To be a politician, and to be involved in . . .

O'HARA: Do you consider yourself a politician?

ROBERTS: I'm kind of more like a diplomat. More like somebody who understands a lot about politics but practices it as they get a little older. I don't see myself in the same way as the radicals in the streets. My job is to teach it in a way. Maybe I'll go back to teaching someday, but I like what I do now. I like traveling and being at WID [World Institute for Disability].

O'HARA: That's probably a good spot to stop.

ROBERTS: It's time for me to go to work.

[End Tape 3, Side B]