



Voices

OF OUR REGION

Interviewee: Carol Cocuzzi

Interviewee Number: 32

Interviewers: Athena Aardweg, Judy Barricella

& Tony Buba

Date of Interview: May 30, 2008

Voices of Our Region

Carol Cocuzzi

May 30th, 2008

Interviewers: We start off by just having you give your name and where you grew up and where you live now and a little bit about your family.

Carol: My name is Carol Ann Cocuzzi. I was born on September 7, 1961. I've lived in the Greenfield area of Pittsburgh all my life. My address is 49 Bigelow Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15207. Phone number is 412-277-4367 and I have one sister in my immediate family. She is my older sister. She's about two years older than I am. My mom and my sister, my nephew and I all live together currently in our house in Greenfield. My mom... Oh, I've had my disability basically all of my life. I think it was detected when I was about 18 months old, that I wasn't able to sit up by myself. My mom kept noticing that she would have to sit me up and then once I sat up I was okay. So, you know, back in 1961 there wasn't a whole lot of information about, you know, different types of disabilities. Specifically I have spinal muscular atrophy which is a form of muscular dystrophy. But they say it's not a true muscular dystrophy and it's where both parents have a defective gene that causes a chromosome to be off balance or something like that. So, you know, I... I grew up using crutches from the age of four until I was about 11. And then I had some surgeries on my back. I had a curvature of the spine and they... I was off my feet for a year, because of the surgery. Cause you had to go in a full body cast where you had a cast that would go from like the back of your head all the way down to your waist. Which is real heavy when you're 11 years old. So I was off of school for about a year. But then in... During that time, not being able to walk, I got a lot weaker. So they tried to teach me how to walk again after, you know, I had recovered from that surgery, but they're... I just didn't have enough strength to be able to do that. So that's when I started to use a wheelchair. And have used one ever since. And my family, I've been really lucky because I grew up in a family that was very supportive. And anything that I ever wanted to try or do in my entire life, my mom specifically, because my father died when I was seven, said, "You know what? You're never going to know until you try." So I did, you know. And that meant, you know, when I was in high school when I wanted to go to the prom and I wanted to go to dances. And even though my mom was always worried, you know, that something was going to happen to me, she let me go and do it. Because she knew that that was the only way I was going to be able to be who I am. And so, you know, I went to the prom and I went to... I went to a special education school when I was younger called Pioneer Education Center. Which at the time I went was basically just... I thought it was always just a general school like everybody else. I never really realized that we were all people with disabilities or kids with disabilities going there. And it was run like a normal school setting so you didn't, you know, you didn't feel like you were missing anything. And I went there until I was like 16 and I was mainstreamed from the special education center into like a regular school setting, which was great because I got the opportunity to... to...

to be friends with kids without disabilities as well. Because I grew up my whole life just having friends that had disabilities. And...

Interviewers: So where did you go then?

Carol: I went to Brashear High School. It was actually a very new school at the time. It was like one of the more accessible schools.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: They originally were going to send me to Taylor Allderdice.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: But the elevator was not... kept malfunctioning. And they didn't feel that it was a good setting. So Brashear was just opening so a lot of us kids from Pioneer...

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: ...you know, went there. I took business classes. I was taking typing and, you know, stenography and all these different... because at that time I wanted to be a secretary. And then I graduated in 1981 and I went to Edinboro State University which was Edinboro College at the time. And I... I... I was... Went I went to college I was going...

0:05:00

Carol: ...with... for a degree in social work. Again my family were afraid to let me go but I wanted to go. You know, I just... I wanted to be away from my family. I wanted to see if I would be able to, you know, not rely on them as much as I did when I was a kid. And I just didn't want to be around my family when I was 18, you know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I wanted to go out and experience things without having to ask permission.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: So I went to Edinboro. And I was actually only there for one year. Any my stepfather had developed cancer, so he wasn't able to work anymore. And so I left school and just started to get part time jobs doing different things, you know, a receptionist job here, a receptionist job there. And it was in 1983 through my OVR counselor, Vince

Engle, at the time. He introduced me to the United Cerebral Palsy Association. They were looking for a receptionist and through my OVR counselor I was interviewed and got the job and was working there full time as a secretary receptionist until 1988. And then in 1988 I was hired by Bill Crisner from the Center for Independent Living as their information and referral specialist. And I started to work at the Center for Independent Living which is really been something I've done ever since in different capacities. And is this... ?

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: What you want me to do?

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah. Certainly.

Carol: So I went to work in 1988 at the CIL doing information referral specialist work and it was really the first time I was introduced to the world of disability rights and advocacy. Up until then even though I did what I wanted as a kid I didn't... I didn't know anything about, you know, standing up for myself in terms of, you know, equal opportunity. I just was basically taking everybody's lead until then. And just really when I learned that I had all of these rights I was just... It was overwhelming because I became very interested in what the CIL was doing more, you know. Being an INR person wasn't just a job, because I was actually, you know, finding information that people with disabilities like myself and other family members or anybody who wanted to know information about accessibility and rights could come to me and I would have information for them that they would be able use and use effectively if that makes any kind of sense. Now I wasn't... I was... Even though I embraced disability rights I wasn't... I didn't... I wasn't like ADAPT. I didn't do things in the ADAPT kind of way if you're familiar with ADAPT and, you know, how you... to... to emphasize how important your rights are to you that you go to extremes to do things so that people will get the message. Because sometimes that's the only way that they're going to get the message.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I... I guess I went on a different route.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And I always tried to do things in a uplifting and positive way. I guess that's just because of the kind of person that I've always been, you know. I didn't... I didn't want to do things that were negative and I knew my family wouldn't be very happy with me if I like, chained myself to a bus. Although I was so tempted to go and do it. I just didn't do it because I didn't want my mom to worry.

Interviewers: Have to bail you out of jail.

Carol: That too because, I'll tell you what I came really close one time doing something really stupid as a kid where I was going to have to get bailed out and scared the bageebers out of me. I went to a concert to see the Bay City Rollers.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And I met up my one friend, it was my... a date. My date and I, we hung out with this group of people that were at the concert and they wanted to break into the hotel room of the Bay City Rollers.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: So we said, yeah we'd go do it. So we did, you know, we got real close and we... we got caught just as we were, you know, going to go on to the elevator to go up to the floor. And you know, they... they all got our names and our numbers and were going to call our parents and all that stuff. So that was the... That was the last time I was ever going to be close to seeing a jail cell. But so I did information and referral and worked very closely with a woman by the name of Mary Napalotana who was...

Track 2

Carol: ...a service coordinator at... at the time. And she worked a lot with consumers to help them with locating accessible housing, doing... building evaluations for multi-family housing to make sure that, you know, there was accessible housing for people with disabilities and just doing the whole social service end of it. And when she left the position I was promoted to the service coordinator position and just loved doing that because I... I... I got to do things like, you know, help people find housing, help them seek grants and low interest loans and funding to make their homes more accessible so that they wouldn't have to go live in a nursing home. You know, and I just loved being able to do that. I worked real closely with HUD in their housing counseling program to help people that, you know, had disabilities but might be struggling, you know, to maintain the housing they were in or wanted to find housing, locate it, but in an affordable sense. So I worked in that position for about two years and then in 1990 the American's With Disabilities Act was passed. And I actually went to the signing of the ADA which was really an exciting opportunity for me just to be on the law... on the lawn when, you know, President Bush was signing this lined act that was just going to open so many opportunities for people, you know. We were going to be able to work. We were going to be able to, you know, go to town meetings. We were going to be able to shop at our favorite store. You know. And knowing that that... from that day forward things were going to change. I mean things were going to change because people were going to

listen. And they knew that if they didn't listen there were going to be consequences. You know. And so when the ADA was passed the company moved into a program called Business Accessibility and Awareness... Disability Awareness. And basically what it was was we were going to work with businesses and help them understand what the ADA meant. We were going to explain it to them and after we explained it to them we were going to show them how to implement it. And because of the fact that I did 504 evaluations and had an understanding of accessibility requirements in the technical end of it, I moved into that part of the business. Which was very exciting because it eventually grew into a for profit company that was designed to be an affiliate of Three Rivers Center for Independent Living but the monies that we would generate as a for profit company we would send a portion of it back to the center and help it to grow services for people with disabilities. It would be a funding pool for services that may not be covered under grants or specific grants that the center would have. It just would be like kind of loose money that would help people when they would need it. So in 1994 we... myself and my partner at the time, Joan Stein, and another partner, Cliff Paine, and I left the center. Which was the first time, you know, we left and moved into a business setting in downtown Pittsburgh because it was felt that, you know, as long as, and I don't know whether I agreed with this or not, but at the time, it... it was felt that if... if we remained as a business under the Center for Independent Living people wouldn't take us seriously in order to be able to charge the fees that we needed to charge to generate money to bring back into the center. So we moved into a cen... you know, a business setting and in 1998. Well during the 19... In 1994 we did a variety of things. We provided facility evaluations to existing business to help them understand and implement the ADA regu... regulations as an existing business. And then we started to get into the design aspect of it where specifically myself reviewed plans for new construction and renovation projects. I went to classes. I took classes on blueprint reading, engineering classes, anything that I could take in order to understand what it meant to read a blueprint. So we started to do that and I did... I reviewed plans for many major projects. I worked on PNC Park, the convention center, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. I've done over, I think, in the course of my time at ADA, Inc., I... I... I must have done over 500 plan reviews, large and small scale.

0:05:00

We did a lot of multi-family housing reviews. And I also did continuing education as part of... my part of the business. What that meant is we would go... and I worked with architects and contractors, anyone in the design field, to help them understand why they needed to design with accessibility in mind. And it was great because, you know, I got to see a lot of the designer's thoughts at the time. Many of them embraced the letter of the law and also the spirit of it. There was one company, Asterreno, a wonderful architecture firm who really understood what accessibility meant, didn't see it as something they had to do but something that they wanted to do. And all of their designs showed it. And then

there were others that just did what they had to do and got mad at me when I would look at their plans and red pen it to death, you know. But it's what we were hired to do. To show them, you know, where there... if there were inconsistencies in terms of accessibility. So from 19... In 1998 also what happened was, was we learned that as long as we were fully owned by the Center for Independent Living, there were certain types of opportunities that we were missing as a business. And... So in order to be able to apply for certifications, as a woman minority owned business, and through the Department of General Services we needed to purchase a percentage of the company, 51% of the company to be considered a woman owned business, a minority owned business. And so we did that in 1998, myself and my three partners at the time, purchased 51% of the company so that we could get the certification that we thought would open up so many more opportunities for us because architects would now be able to use our services as a credit for them...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...you know...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...to bring on an accessibility con... consultant.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Which was great for us because then our message was going to get across to them and they were going to get... they were going to be able to save money, you know, because...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: The first... The bottom line with design professionals all the times is the bottom line.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: It's money. And a lot of times they didn't hire us because of our fees. You know. So we owned 51% of the company and I love what I do. I mean I just... It just... It makes me feel so good to be able to work with people, and help them understand what their designs and what they're creating is going to do to open up opportunities for people with disabilities and also it... it's a win-win situation for the business because if you open your doors I'm going to come in and I'm going to buy things, or I'm going, you know, eat at your establishments and I'm going to bring my family members and I'm going to be my friend... bring my friends and it's just going to create this great opportunity, you know, for all of us to get what we need.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: To grow. And to be a part of society. So I did that until this past year.

Interviewers: I don't know what happened.

Carol: I don't know if this is something you want to talk about.

Interviewers: Well I don't know. I... I've... Without knowing what it is, it's up to you Carol. Do you want to put it on pause. Do you want to pause the tape?

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: I mean we can pause it or...

Carol: In 2007 I left my company. We had some professional differences and as a result I'm now in the process of going to start my own business. And I'm real excited about it because it's going to give me the opportunity first of all to be able to... to work from home more. I be... I've had medical issues of the past couple of years. I had gotten a pressure sore. Which I never had a pressure sore in my entire life. But I was working long hours and because I loved what I did I wasn't paying attention to the signs.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And so I got a pressure sore and as a result had to have five surgeries...

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: ...to finally correct it.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: Like one right after the other after the other.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: And spent some time off work which, you know, didn't want to do, but I really had no choice. And so in 2007 I made the decision to leave the company.

Interviewers: Can I ask you about the com... like...

Track 3

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: You kept saying your partners because I never really understood that setup.

Carol: Okay Okay.

Interviewers: You guys, the three of you owned the...

Carol: Four of us.

Interviewers: Four of you.

Carol: Yeah. The way it worked was this. Was that we, Joan Stein and myself and my two other partners, purchased the 51% of the company from TRICL, Threes Rivers Center for Independent Living.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And were shareholders in the company.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: TRICL owned 49%.

Interviewers: Oh, they still kept...

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: ...part of it. Ahh.

Carol: And then collectively my partners and I owned 51%. So TRICL was the majority owner of the company.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: So we, you know, we were doing a lot of really terrific things and, you know, just starting to break through, you know, that five year struggle...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...to get business going. And we had our ups and downs which, you know, every normal business does and... But we had such a passion for what we did and just loved

what we did. So because of the medical issues that I had it was a real struggle for me because I was never off work for surgeries like that. I... I did have an accident several years before that but it wasn't like this.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: This really impacted by life significantly because it was an emotional thing because I was always, you know, I was worried about the business because it was at a time where I really couldn't afford to be off work. I needed to be able to work, generate revenue.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And really could have done that but the decision was made that I wouldn't. And so decided to leave in 2007. September 30 last... of last year was my last day. And just...

Interviewers: So then when you leave a company like that then do you get money back out of it?

Carol: Well it depends.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: I had to go through a separation.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And as part of the separation, you know, I had a middlement... a minimal sediment... settlement. There were issues.

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: So it wasn't a very happy separation.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Carol: And so I wanted to continue doing what I do. I love what I do and I was asked before I left, "Well now that you're leaving what are you going to do?" And I said well... I just said, "I'm going to do what I do best." And talked with my OVR counselor and she put me in touch with Working Order and I'd never heard of Working Order. And they've been a great help because they've helped me with writing my business plan, marketing and get everything... getting everything I needed together to be a business owner. Because I was a partner before and I helped make decisions between the four of

us now it was just going to be me. So I needed to evaluate, you know, am I going to be able to really do this? And, you know, yes I can. And so what I'm going to be doing is accessibility consulting on ADA, fair housing, the international building code, different accessibility laws and standards. And primarily doing plan review for new construction and renovation, continuing education, technical assistance...

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: ...and really just so excited about it because I really believe in what I do, you know. And, you know, I thank TRICL everyday for teaching me, you know...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...what peo... what rights people with disability have. And I know, it... this is probably going to sound strange, but I know that there's a reason that I use a wheelchair and I... I know there's a purpose from... with why I am the way I am. Which I... I, you know, I've never seen myself as having a disability. I sit here now. I know... I don't see the wheelchair, you know, I don't pay any attention. It's just an extension of me. It's a part of me, you know.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: So it's just I know that, you know, I can do this on my own and I'm very excited about it. And I have full support of my family. In fact, I'm going to turn it into hopefully a family owned business. I'm going to bring my sister in as a partner in about a year. I'm teaching her now the ins and outs, you know. She's lived with disability issues all her life.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And, you know, with me, having to help with me, and just being my sister, you know. And, yeah, we fought with Barbie dolls. And, yeah, we... I beat her over the head with my crutches, you know. And she threw me on the floor. I mean we did all that kind of stuff. But she's a good person and we really work well together.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: And I'm going to bring her in to help with the financial end of it. You know, doing all the bookkeeping.

0:05:00

She can keep the money. I'll spend it, you know. But it's just going to be such an exciting opportunity to be able to start this business and have support of my family. And because I had to sit them down and say, "You know, this is going to be a very busy experience." You know. I'm going to be on the go all of the time, you know. I'm going to be doing work from in the home and this is going to be disruptive to you, you know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I... I started taking classes also at the Riverside Center for Innovation.

Interviewers: Ohh. Um hmm.

Carol: There's a ten week course that is...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: It's a free cre...

Interviewers: I've worked with Emily (? - 0:05:40) a lot for a couple of years with her.

Carol: It's a great...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: I'm working with Juan Garret.

Interviewers: Okay. Yeah.

Carol: And I'm... I'm taking this 10-week class and it teaches you all the ins and outs of being a business owner, you know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: All the...

Interviewers: He's awesome (? - 0:05:50)

Carol: See I like all the fun stuff. I don't like all the other stuff that goes along with it.

Interviewers: Yeah. Right. Right

Carol: But, you know, I know that it's something I can do. And I... I know that I can help make a difference. I just... I'm starting over, you know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And it's really a scary thing...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...because I thought that I was going to be with ADA, Inc. until...

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: ...I retired.

Interviewers: Retired. Um hmm.

Carol: I never... If you would have ask me in like February of last year what I was going to be doing, I would never have had any idea that I was going to go down this road.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: And it's been like a bittersweet experience for me, you know. But the bitter's now behind and the sweet's just going to start to come out of it. So I'm ho... I'm close to getting started. I'm hoping for a July 1 startup. I'm actually going to do some independent consulting until I start my business. I have my business name.

Interviewers: What is it?

Carol: It's going to be called Accessibility Matters, LLC. I chose that because I thought of the word matters as being issues at hand.

Interviewers: Um hmm

Carol: And also that... the importance of it.

Interviewers: Right. Um hmm.

Carol: So...

Interviewers: What's LLC mean?

Carol: It's a Limited Liability Cour...

Interviewers: (? - 0:07:04)

Carol: Yeah. Company.

Interviewers: Right. Huh.

Carol: So I'm working on developing my web site right now. I just taped my video introduction.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: I know. I wanted to do something different. I went on like all these accessibility web sites and, you know, I thought I wanted to do something different so I'm doing that. And, you know, getting everything I need together to get this business off the ground. And just so excited about it.

Interviewers: Hmm. Where are you going to get business? How do... How do you go about getting that kind of business?

Carol: Well it's going to be a whole new thing. It's going to be marketing, aggressive marketing, you know. I've joined organizations like the American Institute of Architects. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Engineering Outreach organization which a colleague of mine suggest that I join. And just, you know, going out there and networking. When I left the company I brought a non-compete clause with me. So I have to honor that until it's up so...

Interviewers: A what?

Carol: A non-compete clause...

Interviewers: Oh, okay.

Carol: ...which means that within a certain radius of the City of Pittsburgh I'm not allowed to do any kind of similar services. So I have to go outside the radius to do my... my... my...

Interviewers: How long is that for?

Carol: It's... Well... It depends right now because it's... It should be one year but because I'm still a shareholder in the company I've been trying to relinquish my stocks but nobody wants it.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: So I'm still stuck with the stock. It's... I'll tell you about it.

Interviewers: Well then you should be getting dividends.

Carol: If the...

Interviewers: You know they're making money.

Carol: I don't know.

Interviewers: Well.

Carol: I'm trying to find out if they are or not. I don't know if they are or not. Probably not based on the history we've been having working.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And this is like, you know, I'm just explaining this to you so you understand.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: But it just...

Interviewers: So you can... So you're looking at... I'm just thinking of some potential for you. So... How many miles around Pittsburgh?

Carol: It's other than a 500-mile radius

Interviewers: 500?

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: Where does that go?

Carol: That goes out towards Georgia, Illinois.

Interviewers: That's wrong. That's even (? - 0:09:20) You mean you can't do anything in Pennsylvania?

Carol: No. So I... That's why I have to do aggressive marketing. I'm going... That's why I'm trying to build a dynamic web site.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: I'm going to do mailings. I'm going to call people. I'm trying to get funding together. I'm going to go for a community lending fund.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Through the CL fund to see if I can get some monies to...

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: ...send me on some trips to go do some marketing at the different AIAs. I'm going to learn Net... Net... wait what is it... Net... Net Web... WebEx and...

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: You know the online...

Interviewers: Yeah. Um hmm. It's still like...

Carol: No.

Track 4

Carol: ...marketing team.

Interviewers: It's still 500 miles. That's all the major east coast cities. Yeah.

Carol: It's big. Yeah.

Interviewers: That's a huge radius.

Carol: And yeah.

Interviewers: That's Chicago, too.

Carol: I'm bound to that until somebody takes my stocks of hand. We're try... I'm... I'm going through legal issues right now to get that taken care of. Hopefully.

Interviewers: How much do they cost. I'll take them off of you.

Carol: It's expensive.

Interviewers: Is it?

Carol: It's like \$8,000. But it's really...

Interviewers: It's not making money.

Carol: No. I wouldn't sell it to anybody really.

Interviewers: Hmm. Yeah.

Carol: You know, that's why I'm trying to... I tried to surrender it and I guess they know they've got me by the hand. Until they take...

Interviewers: Do they have any competition? Who's their competition?

Carol: Well it would be me.

Interviewers: But I mean before?

Carol: You. Do you accessibility consulting? Some.

Interviewers: Sometimes.

Carol: It could be any accessibility consultant really. But I look at it this way.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: There's enough of work out there for everybody.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I think that... I... I want to develop working relationships with people. I don't want to steal work from people. I want to, you know, anytime I can not, you know, work with people I will. But it... it's... Around here there's ADA, Inc. and really I think Penn State, Leslie Harman up there does accessibility. But there's not... On the east coast there's Mark Derry and Associates that are outside of, I think, Maryland or something. I can't remember but there's some accessibility consultants. There's accessibility consultants all across the country but the kind that do the level that all of us do, it's really you have to... You have to be careful. You can't just say one day you're going to be an accessibility consultant. You have to really know what you're talking about.

Interviewers: Do you think... Jim Costello...

Carol: Yes.

Interviewers: He does that but not to that extent.

Carol: No. Jim does more residential single-family...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...kind of...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...work. He's not... He does some commercial but not...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...not as much.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: Jim's a great person. You've got to meet him.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: And...

Interviewers: You need to hook up with HOK.

Carol: I've... I actually did PNC Park with them.

Interviewers: I know.

Carol: Now that I'm no longer with... I'm going to try to establish a connection with them but I'm trying really hard to respect the clients that my former company had and, you know...

Interviewers: 500 miles though. I'm just still getting over that. That's huge.

Carol: It is. But...

Interviewers: That's up into Boston, I mean past Boston, down to Atlanta.

Carol: Yeah it's pretty far...

Interviewers: Who... Who made up the 500 miles?

Carol: It was the... It was drawn up by TRICL attorneys and ADA, Inc. attorneys, you know.

Interviewers: Ohh. I keep forgetting that TRICL is involved.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: I was thinking it is tinier, you know, but TRICL is bigger but...

Carol: So...

Interviewers: Yeah. So you're going to see a lot of the country.

Carol: Hopefully. If I get the funding to do that...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...because I'm just now running... It's hard because right now I'm, you know, I... I was on unemployment. My unemployment just ran out so, you know,

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I really need to get this business up and running.

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: Which, you know, it's... it's scary, you know, because I'm the... I'm... I've always been the one to take care of my family.

Interviewers: Right. Um hmm.

Carol: So right now they're taking care of me and I don't like that idea, you know, so.

Interviewers: It's a lot harder (? - 0:03:23) money on the other end of that.

Carol: It is.

Interviewers: I mean.

Carol: It is. It really is but you know, I just know that once I get this business started, because I have great ideas, that it's going to go places. Because I'm going to do it the right way. You know. I'm going to really just be such a positive influence on people. And it's going to take a while, you know. I know I'm a big dreamer. I always have been. But I know that, you know, I can... I can get the word out there. And I will. Especially once my web site is up and running.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And I'm a full fledged, you know, business.

Interviewers: Well, you... When you have your web site up and running make sure you let us know what the URL is, because we'll link it from our web site.

Carol: Well it's actually... I already know what it is. We've already gotten a... I already have a web site designer.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: It's going to be www.accessibilitymatters.net.

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: You know.

Interviewers: So you hired a web site designer?

Carol: Yeah I hired a web site designer. They're called WNW Designs. In fact the designer...

Interviewers: Is Accessibility Matters all one word?

Carol: All one word. Yeah. Sort of like Riverside Center for Innovation.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: That's a long one.

Interviewers: That's okay.

Carol: But, yeah, I... I... I'm working with one of the students in my class from RCI, the Riverside Center. He's been in a web... He's been a web designer for about a year. A very nice young person. And just very... a very genuine person. Because you have to be careful.

Interviewers: You know, I did an evaluation of their program...

0:05:00

Interviewers: ...and one of the most positive things that we found from their program was the interactions and relationships in the classes, not of anything that Ron or Emily provide. Which at first they were, you know, slightly disappointed but then the more we looked at it that's... everyone kept saying was that their relationships and the... you know, both personal and professional of people in RCI now and the people that are coming in to different classes that that was the greatest help for most of the people. And a lot of these were like around five years...

Carol: Um hmm.

Interviewers: ...out of their... their system. But, yeah, they said that their most impact was the relationships that they built in the classes.

Carol: Yeah. Really. Just...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...I'm excited. And they've taught me a lot. Working Order has taught me so much especially with doing my business plan because that was a challenge. I thought it was... I thought I was going to write the business plan in a weekend. Did you think that when you started out?

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I did. I thought I was going... oh this is a breeze. I got the format and then I looked at it and I thought what are financial projections. You know. I had no idea what... Because I didn't... When I joined my company at the time I didn't do all that. My other partner did all that. You know. I was the behind-the-scenes person. You know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And I didn't do all the writing of the business plan so, you know, I just... I... I learned that it took months. It's taken me months...

Interviewers: Have you then...

Carol: ...to write it.

Interviewers: When you think about a marketing plan you don't... you don't know all you need to know...

Carol: No.

Interviewers: about marketing.

Carol: I'm... I'm...

Interviewers: You know.

Carol: Every day I add something new to my marketing plan, you know.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah.

Carol: Becau... Today I met with Marty...

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: ...and I learned something new.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. To... To help secure funding for me.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And it's just been a process. It's been a wonderful process.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Because I am so excited about...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...just doing this on my own and I know I'm going to be a lot happier. It will be more health conscious for me...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...to be able to do what I'm going to be doing.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And I'm still going to get to do what I... I do.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I'm just going to do it differently now than in the past.

Interviewers: Are you going to have other people who can travel besides you?

Carol: Actually yes. I'm going to be teaching my sister, she... well I've been teaching my sister how to do accessibility evaluations.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: So if the situation arises where we need to do one, she'll be ready to go.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: My niece, she's taking administrative classes so that when I do my report writing there's going to be somebody to proof my reports because you can not proof your own reports.

Interviewers: No. Um hmm.

Carol: So, you know, I'm... I'm really arming myself because, you know, I... I... I need to plan because if the situation would arise. Like when I do plan review I can do that from home.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Even if I'm... Like even when I was home like at... during one time when I was home I worked from home while I was recovering from my surgery. So I could like work out my hours.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Sit two hours.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: Lay two hours.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Sit two hours, you know, that whole thing.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And so with plan review I can do that. But if I have to do training or if I have to do, you know... I'm... I'm going to arm myself with people, you know. I'm going to bring people in to work with me. People I know, you know, that can do what I do. You

know. I'm... I'm not a greedy person. I'm not goi... I don't... I don't need to reap all the benefits for myself. You know. I just want to do something and create something that's going to have a positive impact on... on design professionals and business owners. Because we are 18 years in to the ADA and there are still businesses out there that when you say that, especially the smaller businesses...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: "What's the ADA?"

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: "What... What do I have to do to comply?"

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: "How much is it going to cost me?"

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. They automat... especially the smaller businesses, they... they wonder "Is this going to break my bank?"

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: But you have to go in there and you have to hold their hand.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And... And help them through the process. And that's one of the things I'm going to do, too, is try to work with some of the smaller businesses.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know, in helping them. I live in Greenfield and there are still businesses. I talk to these guys, "When are you going to get that ramp in there?" You know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I want to buy some tools to fix my... my... my door in my living room. You know. It's... It's... It's a continual process but...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...you know, there's still so much work that has to be done and people still don't get it. You know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: A lot of people do. But there's still some.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Some just don't understand it and some choose not to. Let's face it. There are people that are going to take the...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...wait and see attitude.

Interviewers: And wait...

Carol: And that's not good.

Interviewers: ...of course.

Carol: And that's when they call us in to do expert witnessing on their behalf, you know, because they didn't pay attention to the signs.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm. Carol didn't you and I do a... an interview one time with Eddie Edwards up at WPGH where it was?

Carol: Yes. I was just new. I'm... I was like still wet under my wings.

Track 5

Carol: Yeah that was so much fun.

Interviewers: That was the first time I met your mother.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: We were up on that hill in Monroeville somewhere.

Carol: Yeah. That was WPTT. Was that?

Interviewers: I don't know.

Carol: It was its... Yeah. What were we talking... We were talking about accessibi... ADA.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I think it was just passed or something like that. Or what were we talking about?

Interviewers: I have no idea.

Carol: Oh my gosh.

Interviewers: You're lucky I remembered that we were there.

Carol: Yeah. That was fun. Yeah.

Interviewers: Yeah. That was... That was something. As you were talking about, you know, your family I'm thinking I know I met your mother.

Carol: Oh yeah. My mom is 77 years old now. And she still stands on kitchen cabinets...

Interviewers: Does she?

Carol: ...to top... to wipe the tops on either of the counters.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah.

Carol: But she's just been like.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: She's taken care of me all my life and I've taken care of her all my life. She's my best friend.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. I don't do anything without her...

Interviewers: Yeah. Um hmm.

Carol: ...input.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. And... And she's really... She's going to do all the volunteer work.

Interviewers: Is she?

Carol: She's going to stuff the envelopes and you know...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...do everything that... I want to make sure she's a vital part of the business.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Because she's just always encouraged me. But, yeah, she goes almost everywhere with me that I go.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. She's slowing down a little bit now.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: So we're going through this thing like well, you know, "Why can't you go?" You know.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: Kind of like, "But I want you there."

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: And like, "Well, I don't really feel like going today, Carol." And so I'm going through that right now with her.

Interviewers: Ahh.

Carol: So getting a little bit of, you know.

Interviewers: But it seems like the rest of your family is... You said your niece is going to help...

Carol: Yes.

Interviewers: ...and so...

Carol: My niece with four children.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: Who's going to help. Yes.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: A young... young child when she had her kids.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: But, I have four beautiful... I have three beautiful nieces and a lovely little nephew who is just... Kailey Rye, she is five years old. And she was born, her mother was 17 at the time.

Interviewers: Wow.

Carol: And I... at the time she had nobody. So, you know, I took a second job and this is actually how I got my pressure sore too.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: A took a second job to help buy a crib and all the things that she needed to have...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...for the baby because she wasn't... she was 17. A baby herself.

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: So I took the job. And I didn't care because I knew she's going to have the things that she needed. Went out and bought all kinds of little clothes because we knew it was going to be a girl.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And, you know, she... she lived with her father at the beginning but then they didn't want her to have the baby. She wanted to have the baby so she moved... They lived in Scottsdale, PA, her and her father. Her mom lived in Pittsburgh with us because they divorced. But she wanted to live with her dad because her dad didn't have any rules.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And she lived with us for a short time. We had rules.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: That's why I say it was a short time because she didn't like the rules. So she moved back with her dad. And then she got pregnant and then came back to us because she knew we would support her.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: Because we've always supported each other.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Good or bad.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. And we saw it as a beautiful thing. You know. We knew it wasn't going to be easy. We knew we were going to have to help out a lot financially. And so, you know, we did. She had her first child and then she had another. You know and then another.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And then finally her fourth. But Kailey is five. Kelsey Marie she's four, she just turned four. Kaitlin May is two. She was born on Halloween. She's our boo baby. And Andrew, the only boy, Andrew Jayden, he just turned one in January.

Interviewers: Oh my gosh.

Carol: You know, she's going to need to work and she's going to need to be able to work from home. And look at the opportunity with this business. She's going to be able to do that because we have... we're going to have a server. She can work from her home. Everything can be done back and forth via the web. She'll come to the house for meetings. You know. It's all... I have it all planned out. I know exactly how I want things to happen it's just now I got to make them happen.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Which I'm excited about.

Interviewers: Yeah. Carol can we go backwards a little bit?

Carol: Sure.

Interviewers: We've interviewed a couple of... two or three people that went to Brashear and I'm just curious to see ho... hear how your... Different ages, too. Oh, different ages. Absolutely. How was your experience at Brashear?

Carol: Well it was interesting because it was a new building at the time. It was deemed accessible by the accessible standards back in 1981, you know...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...which weren't very significant. But it was better than nothing. But I was lucky because the tea... the teachers I had... Before we went in there, they... everybody... I guess they must have had a meeting and they, you know, understood that we were coming in there, we were going to have certain needs. I never had a bad experience with Brashear. You know the teachers that I worked with were always helpful. They were patient.

0:05:00

The students. I got along great with the students, you know. There were a lot of girls in my class because we were taking typing, and...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...stenography. We had maybe one or two guys, but the girls always made me feel a part of what they were doing. I mean we all sat around together. They would push me to the bus, like everyday somebody else would take me to my bus, you know, because we had to go down... down one floor and through the mechanics, you know, the auto... auto mechanics shop.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: And even just going from there to McGill, I had a great relationship the auto mechanic teacher, you know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: He understood that we needed to come through there because it was disruptive I'm sure.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: But we had to go through his class...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...to get to our vans. And so, I don't know, I just never had a bad experience. I had a really great experience. I, you know, met some great kids. But the thing was, and this was the big thing, when it came time to graduate all of my friends were at Brashear. But because of the school district and I... the fact that I lived in Greenfield, I had to graduate from Taylor Allderdice.

Interviewers: How weird is that?

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: Because I... Pioneer fought with the school, you know, the school board. But for some reason I had to graduate from that school. I knew nobody...

Interviewers: Ahh.

Carol: ...in my graduating class, you know. I did get to go to Brashear's prom, but I was not allowed to graduate from Brashear.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: Which I was really... I was pretty upset about that because I, you know, all my friends were there.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. In... it was hard too because Brashear was on the other side of town so I had to be bussed from Greenfield, you know, over to Brookline, which is where, you know, Brashear was located. So I couldn't spend a lot of after time with my friends.

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: But the time I was at school we had a lot of fun. You know we did some crazy things and, you know. Like one time my one friend, now this is just a funny story. Did you ever know Russell Silione?

Interviewers: I know that name. I don't know how I know.

Carol: We were in school and this was like during the 80s, you know, and drugs and rock and roll and all that fun stuff. Well Russell had a disability as well. And we were sitting in the hall on day in cla... you know, waiting for the van and Russell pulls this thing out from his pocket. Looked like weeds. So, you know, I... I... I had my motorized wheelchair and I pulled in front of him. I said, "You better put that back in your pocket." And he says, "What do you think that is Carol?" I says, "You shouldn't have marijuana in class." And he started laughing. Here he was Catholic and it was palm.

Interviewers: Ahh.

Carol: So I didn't know. I'm Protestant, you know. I had no idea that it was palm, you know. But, you know, we were just like, but I... I was trying to be real quiet and he's talking really loud in the hallways. And everybody was laughing and they just got it right away. I just felt like a fool, but, you know...

Interviewers: Um hmm. So how... how old are you Carol?

Carol: I'm 46...

Interviewers: So...

Carol: ...going on 21.

Interviewers: Did you know Suzanne? You know we never ask Suzanne her last name. Her maiden name.

Carol: Colet

Interviewers: Huh?

Carol: Suzanne Colet?

Interviewers: Me... Measga. Mea... Yeah is her married name? She married Eric Mea... Measga.

Carol: I wonder if that's Suzanne Colet? I went to school with a Suzanne.

Interviewers: She was a swimmer. She went... She went to Edinboro for one year for... She had CP.

Carol: Yeah. I think that's probably her.

Interviewers: Because she went to Brashear at...

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: ...the same time. Right.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: Yeah. Okay. Okay. So what did they... Was there like a critical mass of people who came from Brashear... I mean came from Pioneer to Brashear?

Carol: Yeah. It was just during the time they were starting to mainstream kids from special education settings into the regular school settings.

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: Because, you know, we were getting older and I, you know, we wanted to experience the outside world.

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: And I think Pioneer, you know, wanted us to get an idea of what the real world was going to be like. And I think a lot of it had to do with idea at the time.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Carol: You know. And so...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...you know. Yeah a bunch of us like there was about eight of us...

Interviewers: Umm. Huh.

Carol: ...that were mainstreamed from there to Brashear. And it was only Brashear because that was the only accessible school that we could go to. You know. None of the other schools had the level of accessibility because that was a brand new building. So, and it was close to Pioneer.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Track 6

Carol: So, you know. We had to go there half a day, every day for, you know, the last three years of our...

Interviewers: Oh, only a half a day?

Carol: Half a day.

Interviewers: Well what happened to the other half of the day?

Carol: We were back at Pioneer.

Interviewers: Doing what?

Carol: Doing our academics like math, social studies...

Interviewers: Ohh. So you were mainstreamed for...

Carol: Like technical...

Interviewers: Gym.

Carol: Gym

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: Yeah. We were...

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: Like the boys they would take workshop...

Interviewers: Yeah Yeah.

Carol: ...and jewelry.

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: And we, the girls took all the girl's stuff, you know, and the guys took all the guy's stuff.

Interviewers: Huh. Why didn't they let you stay there the whole day?

Carol: I don't know. I guess because it was a pilot program at the time.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: It was the first time they were going to actually mainstream kids because I think that was really the first time they talked about it. And so maybe we were a test group to see if we would be able to even socially fit in. I don't... I'm thinking that.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: ...you know. Are these kids with disabilities going to be, you know, understand what all the other kids are going through, you know. You know.

Interviewers: Is it going to work, you know?

Carol: Yeah. is it going to work? Are the guys...

Interviewers: (? - 0:01:10) here from Mars.

Carol: Are the kids that don't have disabilities going to accept people with disabilities. You know? Are they going to make fun of them or, you know. I guess I just got lucky. I had a great group...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...of kids that I was with, you know. From my other classmates I never heard anything really super negative. I don't remember any of us being teased, unless they did it behind our backs.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: But, you know, in front of us...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...we were treated...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...pretty much the same way everybody else was, you know. Except the only bad thing was they mainstreamed us but towards the end of the last class we had to leave early to go back to Pioneer to our busses to go home.

Interviewers: Oh brother.

Carol: So.

Interviewers: Oh, you couldn't even go home from the school?

Carol: No we had to go back to Pioneer, which was a 15 minute ride and then... so we... but we had to leave our classes like a half an hour early at the end to make sure we got back on time to get our vans to go home. So, you know, it was a good thing, but it has its flaws. But I guess being a new program... I was so glad to hear though, you know, that that was gone, you know. The kids, you could go... If you want to go to a school that wasn't special ed you can go where ever you want to go.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You don't have to worry about it. You can fit in right from the beginning. That's important. When kids are brought in, I think, early on, I... I... you have less problems. You know when you come in in the middle of things, you know, maybe I was just not the norm, but I think that there could very well be, you know, it maybe depends on the area, you know, how kids are brought up, different families, you know.

Interviewers: Yeah. Um hmm. Yeah.

Carol: I don't know what makes kids tease other kids. It's just...

Interviewers: I do think though that just the natural movement, you know. Like if a family moves and goes to a different school.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: There's certain things that, you just shouldn't do it.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: You know it's just too hard to make new friends...

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: ...and it's too hard to fit in...

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: ...and you're so socially worried about who you are that...

Carol: Oh, I was. I was... I was always worried, you know, that I wasn't going to get a boyfriend, or I wasn't going to be able to date or, you know, would a guy like me for who I am or are they going to just worry about this wheelchair.

Interviewers: Right.

Carol: You know, all my life. And it's just... As I got older I didn't worry about it as much but boy when I was in my early 20s all the way till I was like 30 I think, I was really worried that I was never going to get married and then after that I was so busy with my career I didn't care because I loved what I was doing.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know, but... You know I always wanted to have a family and... and children and I was blessed that I had a niece and a nephew. And now I have four beautiful little kids that I can have the opportunity of raising and giving them my little influences, you know, like country music and... Because when I was younger, remember, I used to sing country music in a band, you know. I even wanted to do that. I wanted to become a country western singer. And I did. I loved it. And..

Interviewers: Did you sing the National Anthem at PN

Carol: Um hmm.

Interviewers: ...was it PNC or was it?

Carol: PNC Park.

Interviewers: How did you forget that?

Carol: Yeah. Huh?

Interviewers: You should have told us at the beginning. These are important things.

Carol: I guess I... It's been so long. But I do remember it because I did.

Interviewers: You need to back track. Go back to like age seven and recap. No that wasn't seven. That... I know, but (? - 0:04:37)

Carol: When I was... It was in like 1989.

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: As a fundraiser for TRICL. We were going to like do something with the Pirates. So they mentioned to the Pirates that I sang. So I went...

0:05:00

Carol: ...for an audition. It was so funny because it... hundreds of people showed up for this audition. And everybody was bringing like their musical instruments and...

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: ...you know, and practicing with guitars and people behind them for background and then we all got on the field and I'm panicking, because I'm... I only know it a cappella. I don't have any music, no boom box, nothing to help back me up and make me sound good. We go on the field, the guy says, "Okay. Everybody put your boom boxes away. No guitars. No instruments."

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: "We want to hear you sing a cappella." Because you... When you're singing it was weird because at the time the feedback was horrible. You would be singing like the second line and you would just start being heard over the loud speaker. I don't know if you ev... There was this one comedian who did that...

Interviewers: Oh yeah.

Carol: ...as an act. Do you know who I'm talking about?

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: She was singing the national anthem and it would catch up with her. She would be behind like throughout the whole thing and then at the end they would catch up.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: It was real funny. And so...

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: ...you know, I tried out and I did it. I made it.

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: And actually I did that for like five years in a row. Every year I sang the national anthem and then one year I broke my legs. It was in 1985. 1995 I broke my legs in my elevator at home. Yeah. Not fun.

Interviewers: Huh uh.

Carol: It malfunctioned and threw me out. And so I did it like the day before I was supposed to sing the national anthem. So I wanted to go from the hospital...

Interviewers: (? - 0:06:43)

Carol: ...honestly. I begged the doctors, you know what, I'm only going to be there... I had casts on.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: I was protected.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: I was only going to be there for like ten minutes. Just let me go, sing...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...and I'll come right back. Well they wouldn't let me go. So I missed that year and after that I didn't sing anymore. I don't know why.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: I just guess I got busy...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...when you're involved with... It started to become a passion...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...with me, you know.

Interviewers: (? - 0:07:13) You get used to that.

Carol: And...

Interviewers: But you were start... But you were in that band. You sang with a band.

Carol: Yeah. I sang with a band, a country band for about six years on and off and I loved it, you know. I always... I... I had actually had some music published, you know, but it never... nobody ever picked it up, you know. You have to have like the rights with it. And it got published. I was excited about that. And, you know, played piano since I was like seven. Not great, but just enough to be able to write music. So, you know, that was like one of my major hobbies. That was what I wanted to do before I wanted to become an accessibility consultant.

Interviewers: Yeah. Yeah.

Carol: And that was like, my career of choice was music.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: But it just didn't work out. I don't think the music industry was really ready for people with disabilities back then. Because I have tried to get my foot in the door. I went to Nashville. I went to meet with people and I always got the same look. You know that look that you get...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...when people say... they look at you and say, "Well how are you going to do that? We don't know if we want to take that chance." You know.

Interviewers: Well I don't think they're ready for it today.

Carol: I... I... No. No. I... I have never seen... I'm just like thinking about going on *Nashville Star* just to stir things up a bit. Or find somebody that's really a great singer to go on there. I keep looking. Same with *The Apprentice*.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: They need to do something about that.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know. It's just... I even wrote to Donald Trump.

Interviewers: Did you?

Carol: Yeah. I had never heard back from them. You know. Not to be on the show but to say "Hey."

Interviewers: Yeah. Right.

Carol: You know. Do something. You... You... We can do everything that everybody on there...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...everything. And if there's something we can't do we find a way to get it done...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...by involving other people. That's good business.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know you don't have to exactly do it yourself.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You just arm yourself with the right people and you can do anything.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Disability or not a disability.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Carol: So. Yeah. So that like my little short lived musical career. Which was a great deal of fun. I enjoyed that a lot. Again support from my family.

Interviewers: Yeah. So what are you most proud of or experience I guess we could say?

Carol: My most prized?

Interviewers: Yes. Um hmm.

Carol: PNC Park is like the greatest project I think I have ever worked on. And I'll tell you why. Because the Pirates, they embraced the ADA. They knew that they needed to comply but they wanted to go above and beyond. They wanted us to look at their plans and say okay we know what we have to do. Tell us how we can make it better. And they did everything. Astorino, L. D. Astorino, at the time. Louis Astorino...

Track 7

Carol: ...was the lead architect here. HLK Sport, well know for designing accessible stadiums. We worked together as a team and we accomplished what I think is like the greatest venue here in the City of Pittsburgh right now. You know, it's an intimate ballpark, it's a small ballpark, but it is an accessible ballpark. And everybody that I talk to loves it. I have not heard one... I've heard maybe a couple issues with parking and I don't... I don't understand what the whole issues where about that because we weren't, you know, we weren't involved on that. We weren't brought in to find out what the issues were. I think it was a difference between employee parking versus the different... you know, I'm not sure.

Interviewers: Umm.

Carol: But it's just been such a great experience because we not only made the public spaces accessible but all the employee spaces, the back of the house, and the ballpar... you know, the ball player areas. The sauna room's fully accessible. You know. The whirlpool has accessible features. You know. Because it's not only the building that you build, it's everything that goes in there. It's all the products. So we made sure we looked at everything. So I think that is like my most proudest time, you know.

Interviewers: Was that Steve Greenburg?

Carol: Steve Greenburg was a major force in getting us on the team, to be a part of that.

Interviewers: I think I saw him on the street the other day.

Carol: Oh no. What's he doing on the street?

Interviewers: Not laying in the street.

Carol: Oh, I was going to say if you know Steve Greenburg with that cigar, you know, he'd just...

Interviewers: Oh, that cigar. Ohh. Ohh. We did it again Judy.

Carol: He...

Interviewers: Once in awhile it comes up.

Carol: Steve really wanted this ballpark to shine.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: You know. And it really does.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: But it was like all the people that played a part in it. It was... It was... It's my best accomplishment I think.

Interviewers: So, then what's your most challenging, both personally or professionally what's been the biggest challenge for you?

Carol: Do you want me to give you the honest answer?

Interviewers: Of course. (? – 0:02:19) Not, not... You would like to give us you know what.

Carol: My biggest challenge has been this past year.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm. Um hmm.

Carol: I've always been the kind of person that I've always been ready for everything. You know, and I could deal. Ask Judy. I've always been patient, calm, positive. I've never let anything ruffle my feathers, even if I knew I couldn't do something I just would move on to something else that I, you know, until I found what I could do. But nothing... This experience I've gone through with leaving my company that I was with for 15 years and put my heart and soul into, leaving that company for reasons I shouldn't have had to leave.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And moving past that because I loved ADA, Inc., you know. I... I... I... I loved working with the people that I thought I was working with. And just say it like that.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And moving on, you know. That's... That's... That's been the hardest thing because then I didn't think I was going to have to be 40s...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...going on 47 and thinking of a whole new career.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I mean...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I've lived 46 years thinking I could just... nothing was going to affect me.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And then this year has been... because I've never had the blues, you know, I've never been depressed and gone through some of the emotions I'm going through now. I never cried. I cry all the time. I'm like, you know, I cry when something great's happening with the business. And I cry when, you know, I struggle to do a financial projection. You know. It's such an emotional...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You have to put your whole emotion into starting a business. And when you're doing it at 47, you know, and knowing you... if you don't get business in you're going to lose your house and stuff. That's big. So you have kind of like...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...get past it and say "Okay you boo hooed, you know, you cry, you get it out of your system, and then you persevere and you move forward." So that's what I'm trying to do. So I still get the boo hoos every now and then because it's emotional. But would I trade it for anything in the world right now? Because it's so...

0:05:00

Carol: ...exciting. You know, other than that little bit of bad there's going to be a lot of good.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And that's what I'm trying to focus on.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Because I know I'm getting close.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: So, you know, I... I guess it wasn't anything me... like... I don't know what some of the challenges are that you've heard from people, like, you know, it's probably just not the norm and I'm... I don't like to sound depressing about it. So if I do I'm sorry. You know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: It's just that's the challenge.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And just trying to maintain a professionalism about it. I've been trying so hard and...

Interviewers: Some days you just want to throw a fit.

Carol: Yeah. That's a good way of putting it. Yeah. Yeah. There were a couple of those days.

Interviewers: Who was the fourth partner. There was Cliff, you, Joan...

Carol: And Penny Ready.

Interviewers: Oh, Penny Ready. I don't really know who she is. I don't know her at all but I know the name.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: When did... She didn't come in initially right?

Carol: No she came in 1998, she started. She didn't have any disability background.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: She didn't really understand. She came from a marketing background. Which we... Which was good because we needed an admit person...

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: ...and she had, you know, really... She... She pulled the company together in terms of getting us organized because we were never really organized. But we knew where everything was. You know, but never organized. So she shipped us into shape there. But she really just didn't have a full understanding of disability issues.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: And so she c... She owns 1% of the company.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: She's like the one. Joan owned 40%. Cliff and I owned 5%

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: And...

Interviewers: Joan owned the bulk of it?

Carol: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol: And Penny purchased 1% off of Joan. So that we could... I think that's how it worked.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: So. Yeah. So she came in later and she worked on a lot of our state contracts. Because she's very organized and she was good at that. She can handle that. Thank you.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: You know.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: I like to stay away from the states now.

Interviewers: Um hmm.

Carol: Give me my plans, throw me in a room and I'm good to go, you know.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Carol: But... Yeah. She made up the... She was the fourth partner. She's still there.

Interviewers: Um hmm. Who's your hero Carol?

Carol: My hero? My mom is my hero. Just because she's really had a... been dealt a hand over her whole lifetime. You know. Me and I'm not saying I was a... I was always an angel. Glad she's not here. She was going to come today.

Interviewers: Was she?

Carol: But she really, I mean, she was a single mom. My father died when I was seven. And he had had a heart attack and the weird thing about it was I was in school the day he died. And I wasn't feeling well. And I... I went to the nurse. And I was shaking. And I said to the nurse, "There's something wrong with my dad."

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: "Call my house." Well they called the house and there was no answer so she said, "Just go back to... everything's fine." Well I remember to the day, when I got home my aunt came out to get me out of the cab. Because the cab dropped us off, you know. Roy was my cab driver at the time. He bought us ice cream every Friday.

Interviewers: Ahh.

Carol: Chocolate. I always got more because I was the only girl in the cab.

Interviewers: Ahh.

Carol: It was all boys and me. So I was special. I got to sit up front. But he... she... My aunt came out and got me and I thought that was kind of odd. I was only seven but I knew something was off. And then I went in the house and there was like all kinds of people there. And then my mom explained to my sister and I what happened. So she was a single mom taking care of two children, you know. She had a lot to deal with. She had two wonderful husbands, both passed away from... My dad had a heart attack and my step father died in '87.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: And he had had brain cancer and she was not only taking care of me but she was taking care of my father and my uncle who lived with us. He had a disability. He had cerebral palsy. And he lived with us since I was seven or eight.

Interviewers: Hmm.

Carol: And...

Interviewers: Is he still around?

Carol: No. He passed away in '95. He passed away two days after I broke my legs.

Interviewers: Ohh.

Carol II

Track 1

Carol: So my mom is going...

Interviewers: (? – 00:00:02) exact with that day didn't it?

Carol: Yeah. My mom is going back and forth from the hospital.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: But she never... she never let it show to us what a struggle it was for her. You know? She always was a positive person and she always did what she had to do... you know...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ...to get by.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: You know? And took care of us kids. We never ever, as kids, we never knew anything bad was going on.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. I think that's like a trait of being alone.

Carol: You know, it's great!

Interviewers: Even now... Like if one of... one of our animals isn't feeling well, my mom doesn't tell me until like... you know, "I'm really sorry to tell you..." and I'm like, "How long was this going on?" "Well I didn't want you to worry?"

Carol: Mm hmm.

Interviewers: You know?

Carol: Mm hmm.

Interviewers: She always has that little...

Carol: But... I... you know...

Interviewers: Makes you... be a little... live carefree when you don't know.

Carol: Yeah. Mm hmm. Yeah, but she's always really been... the pos... yeah I... I always looked up to her for everything... you know... and I still do. You know? 'Cause sh... she's wise be... beyond her years and she's 77 year old... now... you know. So I think she's... she's my... my number one hero. You know? I thought for a while... I thought for a while was one of my partners.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: Honestly.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: Mm hmm.

Interviewers: Now, I'm going to ask you a question. Don't cry. Please?

Carol: I won't. I promise.

Interviewers: But if you do, that's okay.

Carol: But you know me.

Interviewers: (? – 00:01:22) But you know me and I cry a lot. Gee, I cry all the time.

Carol: Okay. That's okay.

Interviewers: Huh? You cry all the time. I better remember this. No. No. No. I don't want to make you cry.

Carol: I only cry around people that make me feel comfortable.

Interviewers: But I have to ask... I have to bring you back to ADA. Inc. because I just wanted... I want to know if part of... You said professional differences? Okay. Fine. Did any of it have to do with the fact that you have a physical disability?

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: Other than the fact that you... were out because of your... your breakdowns.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: So was it... part of it had to do with... See, I want pe... I wan... When people hear this...

Carol: Okay.

Interviewers: ...I sorta want them to know...

Carol: Okay.

Interviewers: ...like... people... You were an owner in this company.

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: And because of the disability, somethin' bad happened to you.

Carol: Yeah. Okay. I'm not going to cry...

Interviewers: That's okay. You cry.

Carol: I'm just... I worked very hard for the company.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: We... in... like... In the years that we instituted bonuses for the company, okay? Every year I earned a bonus because I worked hard. In the last quarter that I was with the company I generated 40% of the income...

Interviewers: Wow.

Carol: ...for that quarter. You know? There were times that business was slow, but that wasn't my fault. That was...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ...because of a lack of marketing...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ...that should have been... been going on consistently. You know? We'd get money in, stop marketing, run out of money, market...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: That's not how you do it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: We went round and round and round and round about it. After I started having my problems, I needed to be home... at home more.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: Specifically this last time was a little bit rough on me. You know? I had some complications after... I had the surgery. I was forced on sick leave. When I was able to work from home. My doctor said I could work from home... as long as I did it... the two hours up, two hours down.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Carol: Which... you know... I could have done the work... but I was forced on sick leave. Nobody gave me any... asked me my... my input. In fact the way it happened was... is... my partner came to my off... my hospital bed, asked me to look at a set of plans, while I was in the hospital waiting to have my surgery.

Interviewers: Your partner with 40% interest?

Carol: Yep.

Interviewers: 'Cause that would be the only person that could tell you what to do, right?

Carol: No.

Interviewers: But you were all equal... I mean... you weren't really equal partners.

Carol: We weren't equal partners, but everybody... but the one person that had the one percent had influence all over everybody else. We... brought in... or... she came to visit me. She said, "Carol, can you take a look at these plans?" You know? Because this one client was going through some litigation, they needed a review of a stadium. Just like me to look at the areas of egress.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: For emergency issues. So... you know... I was... I had a couple days before surgery... I figured, what the heck? You know?

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: I'll review the plans and... "Oh by the way, we're... you're going to be going on sick leave, effective January 16th." And I'm like, well why? She said, "Because we... we want you to recuperate." I... you know... I figured... I thought the good about it at the time, they're looking out for my best interest. Well... I had to be home seven months. But during those seven months... I could work.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: But I wasn't allowed to work...

(00:05:00)

Carol: ...except when they said, "Can you take a look at this?" Okay?

Interviewers: Did they pay you?

Carol: No. It... I did it voluntarily.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So... I was on... I was on sick leave from January to August. That's eight months. And then I said to my partners, "I have to come back to work. I... I cannot be on sick leave any more." Because I was losing my house. I was seven months behind in my mortgage. Because when you're on sick leave you only get a percentage of your income.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: Which is really... not good. When you have... when you're the one that takes care of all the...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ...gas, electric, every... I didn't have any credit cards.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: It was all utilities and stuff.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, my partners seemed to like kinda put out that I wanted to come back to work. She said, "Well, are you sure you can? Well, I have to have a doctor's excuse." I said... a doctor's note... I'm, "Oh that's fine, I can give you a doctor's note." You know? I have a great doctor, Dr. Bernacki.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: He actually took care of Bob O'Connor.

Interviewers: Seriously?

Carol: Yeah. And uh...

Interviewers: Wow! He was on TV!

Carol: Dr. Bernacki is like a wonderful doctor if you have a disability, 'cause he really listens to what you have to say.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So... I was on sick leave those seven months and then came back to work. And in..f... month and a half... it... in the... two months I think that I was back I earned... a \$5,000 bonus because I worked my tail off when I got back. I did a project where our company made \$20,000 in three weeks. I reviewed a set of construction documents. You know what that's like. That's the end stage... of construction. You know?

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: And when you're reviewing plans at that stage, it's not good.

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Carol: Um...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: People don't like you, but you do it. You... 'cause you're asked to. And it was for a project that was in Elk Grove, California.

Interviewers: Mm.

Carol: And I'm going to tell you a story in just a minute. This is... this is what's going to floor you.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, I earned the bonus. Then I had to go back in the hospital in January, have another surgery, and then a year later another one. Well, the last one... What happened was... in 2006 I went into the hospital for one week with bronchitis. I had told my partner... you know... she came to see me, she said, "Don't worry about the work. Everything'll be fine. You just take care of yourself." The day I came home from the hospital, I'm getting like these massive emails like, "Well, where are you on this? Where are you on that? What are you doing here? What are you doing there?" I mean, I was being really phys... badgered... I even... you know... badgered. And I said, "Listen, I just got home from the hospital, I'm going to try..." I was a week behind on things. And so... you know... I was working really hard to catch up. I was really still not feeling good, but I worked anyway. 'Cause I didn't want my clients to suffer either.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: You know? I know wh... when I have deadlines. So, I got really emotional and I quit that day. You know. So... "I'm not coming back. I... Forget it." And then I... realized what I was doing. I was an idiot... you know... at first I thought. So, I let the argument blow over. And... had been going round and round with my senior partner about the need for me to stay home because after this last surgery to go to the bathroom took time.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: Because when I... I'm just going to explain the process.

Interviewers: Go on.

Carol: Might as well. 'Cause peo... I... it might help people... you know... in the future. I would have to... when I have to go to the bathroom, at that time, I needed to be able to... I used a Hoyer lift to get in and out of my chair. Get undressed, get in the Hoyer lift... No. No. Get in the Hoyer lift, lay down to get on the bed to get undressed, get undressed, get back up on the Hoyer lift, go to the bathroom, and then the reverse.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: It took like an hour.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: The building I was in, they made every accommodation they could to try to accommodate me, but with... you know with the equipment that you need... there wasn't just... en... enough room.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: And... it's really hard when you work full time and you got to... pee... from like... When you go to work in the morning at 6:30 am and you don't get home until 4:30 in the afternoon, it really is hard on your kidneys.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: I didn't want to wind up with problems with my kidneys too. And so I wanted to be able to work from home more. Well my one partner, that owned the one percent, didn't like that idea because... you know... we all had to take turns answering the phone. Well, to me, that's a marginal...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ...responsibility...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ... versus what I did as my central functions of the job.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: But she didn't get it. I guess she thinks that when people are working at home they're just like sitting around, doing nothing, watching TV, blah, blah, blah. But I worked 14-hour days when I'm working at home. You know? I work harder at home, that I do when I'm in the... I was in the office, cause I'm not distracted.

Track 2

Carol: But then, they wanted me to check in every two hours. Like I would just be in the middle of a plan review, I'd have to check in... and then... you know... stop what I was doing, go back to my plans, and it just... they weren't asking the same of everybody else when they were working at home.

Interviewers: Mmm.

Carol: Well, what brought a nail to the head was that a time came when my one partner, the one with the one percent, her boyfriend was getting a potential job in Philadelphia. And she brought it to the table, and she was upset, and she says, "Well, I don't really want to leave you guys." And we all sat around the table and we thought well, how can we make this work? We'll let you work from home from Philadelphia. You can call in for conference calls. Come in for once a week for meetings. We'll make it work. We'll do whatever we have to do. But here we were an ADA consulting firm and they didn't want to provide the accommodation for me.

Interviewers: Mm. Mm hmm.

Carol: And I... had real philosophical issues... with that... and I had meetings... a couple meetings with my partner. My mom was at one of them. You can imagine how that went. And... we brought in like a mediator to...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ... to try to...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ...help fix us. 'Cause we were having, not only with just me, but everybody was fighting, and it was just like a not really good...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: And... I don't like that. I can't deal with that.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, we brought somebody in to try to fix us. And... there was just such negative attitudes flying back and forth, that I just... they wanted to... They said well, if you want to work from home, why don't we hire you as an independent contractor, and pay you \$30 an hour, but you can't work for anybody else. Well, that's like working without benefits to me.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: And I... I... I had to, at that point, bring an attorney in. And that's when it started to get not good.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So... I... I just got very upset because... you know... my one partner was doing a presentation for this organization where there were going to be 120 employers there and she was going to talk to them about the importance of bringing people with disabilities in on your team. And...

Interviewers: But she couldn't do that.

Carol: She didn't. I worked there 15 years.

Interviewers: Fifteen years...

Carol: And she didn't want to provide that accommodation for me.

Interviewers: Then... and the thought... the threat of a lawsuit... didn't touch... didn't make it then?

Carol: I... I did a stupid thing. I... My one partner Cliff... great guy... he really tried to... pull in my corner for me. And he had even said, in an email to me, that he says, "How would it fair to our clients, if they found out that we couldn't provide a reasonable accommodation in our own house?"

Interviewers: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Carol: And I didn't want to drag his name through the mud, so I decided... to not take him to court,...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: ...and settle. Which I settled for a very little amount, I think \$8,000 in severance pay.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: And uh... wh... what is worse, is that I thought after I left, that I would have fresh experiences, but... they must be Googling me... because seeing what I'm doing, whether I actually am starting the business, 'cause... you know... this non compete thing.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: Which I have been honoring completely, but I was doing an... a presentation for an organization that I belong to... SPEO. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Engineering Outreach and I guess they advertise and... We used to get their emails, so I guess Joan got one and it was at the time I was on unemployment.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, I was sitting at home one day and I got a call from The Department of Labor and Industry and... because I was being investigated for employment fraud.

Interviewers: Ah.

Carol: And I'm like... "Pardon?" I... I... what... what do you mean? I says, "I'm not working." And she says, well she says to me, "Aren't you doing a presentation on this date, doing this and this?" And I said, "Well, yes I am." I says, "But it's part of a committee that I'm on. It's just doing it as a member service. I'm not getting paid for it. I'm doing it as a member of the committee." She says, "Oh, you're not getting...?" I'm like, "No." So, the day that... of that meeting... of that committee... of that presentation I was doing for SPEO... Al and I sitting in my living room in the morning and we're having like a face to face and... I had to go through the whole process with them, which they completely understood.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: After I explained what was going on.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: That it wasn't valid. But... you know... they jumped the gun and really just...

(00:05:00)

Carol: ...messed with my credibility... a lot. It really just... I feel ve... I'm very upset about it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: And that day that I was doing the presentation, it was a closed presentation for committee members, yet my partner showed up and sat in the back of the room while I presented. So... you know... it's just been... it's just been a very difficult experience because I'm... I'm going... I'm feeling all these different things because... you know... Here we are a company that's preaching, breathing, living what we do and you're not playing by the rules. You know?

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: And we don't follow under ADA because we're less than 15 employees.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, we don't... we're not... But we are covered under The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act 'cause at the time we had five.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: Which... we had to leave our admin person go, because we couldn't afford to keep her. So...

Interviewers: Mm hmm. What...

Carol: Having to do with all... I think has been the hardest.

Interviewers: The hardest... yeah... What... when was this at... that you did this presentation?

Carol: For SPEO? It was on March 12th.

Interviewers: It was this year?

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: Oh, okay.

Carol: Mm hmm. It was at ADA training for their engineers... you know... the committee members.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: To talk about the different aspects of the ADA and...

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: But I wasn't getting paid for it. I even had... SPEO write a letter for LNI. 'Cause they said the more information you could give us, the better.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, I asked my comm... you know... my chairman

Interviewers: (? - 00:06:41)... here.

Carol: You know? Here, take it. You know? They were...

Interviewers: Hm.

Carol: They wrote it no problem.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So... but that's just like heart wrenching because I'm not that kind of person to begin with. I would never... Oh my God. I can't even... I can't even fathom them thinking that I would, but they're just... They were doing it to be mean and...

Interviewers: So, they're still keeping track of you?

Carol: I think, but I'm not going to let it get to me.

Interviewers: No.

Carol: I just got to get past this noncompete thing, which... we're... I... my attorney's been trying to talk to TRICL to see if they'll let me out, and they just won't let me out.

Interviewers: Why?

Carol: I don't know.

Interviewers: Who... who, is it at Three Rivers that...

Carol: It's the board.

Interviewers: Which board?

Carol: Because... see... we all... the stocks that we own, we're not... none of us are all paid up on our stocks.

Interviewers: Oh.

Carol: So... like I'm... I paid like \$2,000 into it, but then I couldn't afford to pay it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, I don't... I di... I owe whatever on it and Joan owes her... We... all of us owe on it.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: So, I don't know what the twist is. I'm trying... we're trying to figure out... what the issue is... I might have to wind up paying it back and then them giving it back to me. Buy me out. I don't know. It's really...

Interviewers: Which corp... which corp., Carol?

Carol: TRICL.

Interviewers: I mean... the parent corp... .

Carol: Yeah.

Interviewers: Or the...

Carol: The parent corporation.

Interviewers: The parent corp.

Carol: Mm hmm.

Interviewers: Who's the president?

Carol: I don't know.

Interviewers: Hm.

Carol: I don't know. I don't know if it's Bill Stelley or... I'm not sure who the chairman is, or... you know... 'cause we've been trying to have conversations with Ralph Manning. He's such a wonderful man, Ralph Manning. But... you know... he has to protect his client.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: I... you know... you... you got to do what you have to do, so we're just trying to get it out... professionally... you know... It's just... as long as I hold these shares, even after October, if I still hold these shares, I'm still held... to the noncompete until these are gone, which I... I think they know that.

Interviewers: Yeah.

Carol: So as long... as I play by the rules, which they know I will, then... they're not going to let me out of it. Because this company, this kind of work, you can... generate a nice amount of income on it if you do it right.

Interviewers: Mm hmm.

Carol: You know? It can be a very lucrative business.

Interviewer: Well, and I think just the fact that they're Googleing you, they obviously know you know what you are doing and... you know... They're afraid of you. They're trustworthy. Like they know that...

Carol: A... everybody's telling me that that's why.

Interviewer: Which... (? – 00:09:07)

Carol: But they don't have to be afraid of me. I'm not going to go... You know? I mean I... I figure there's... We could... compete... you know... be competitively...

Interviewers: I think we're done with it. Yeah.